

Bring the Text into Context

1. View scripture with an Eastern mindset - We bring a contemporary, Western mindset filled with assumptions to the text that are often not the same as an ancient, Eastern mindset. One is not right and the other wrong, but it is extremely important to understand the Eastern mindset as a start point because scripture was written from and to people holding an ancient, Eastern mindset.

2. View scripture in light of its Judeo roots - Scripture was written out of a rich Jewish heritage of traditions, forms, styles, values, and linguistics, and its own mindset. Incorporating these factors is critical to accurately understand the text and its authors.

3. Choose “literature” over “literal. - What type of literature did God use for different books. Understanding the genre of literature give insight into the intent of the book, what to look for, and keys for how to understand it in a way that’s honest to who God inspired it.

4. The text wasn’t written in a vacuum - Read scripture in light of the unique situation it was written in. What was the situation, and background? Why did the author feel a need to write it. What did the author intend by their words? What were the cultural norms relevant to the text? How would the original readers and hearers understand it?

5. Don’t put answers on the text, that the text isn’t trying to answer - Stay within the scope of the author’s understanding and intention when applying or thinking of doctrine. This is how you can make scripture say anything. What did the original author intend to speak to? What did the original author understand, and care about?

6. Scripture was written for you not to you - Don’t assume universal application. Just because God worked with people in a certain way at one point, doesn’t mean He intended to apply it to all people for all time, in the same way. From a Christocentric approach we’re not seeking to expand doctrine. Doctrine can come later if needed, and always subject to the purpose of cultivating a faith relationship with God, and healthy relationship with others.

7. Words Matter - Understanding the original languages spoken and written, as well as the processes of translating scripture through other languages is critical to having a healthy understanding of what we read today.

Foundational Value: Be Honest to the Text

Scripture deserves to be understood on its own terms, not forced into our cultural expectations. All 66 books of Scripture were written from an Eastern mindset - not because Eastern thinking is superior to Western thinking, but because that's simply the historical reality. Both cultural approaches have tremendous value and offer unique insights into life and truth.

The goal isn't to abandon our Western perspective, but to recognize when it might prevent us from hearing what the biblical authors were actually trying to say. We want to step into their world first, understand their message in their context, and then thoughtfully apply those truths to our own cultural setting.

The Rabbi and the Frog Story:

A biology class was dissecting a frog to understand how the heart and organs work - a thoroughly Western approach to learning through systematic analysis. A Rabbi walked in and asked a simple question: "Did the frog have a name?"

His question revealed something the students had missed entirely. In their focus on understanding the mechanics, they had lost sight of the individual life, the story, the relationship. The Eastern mind asks different questions: not just "how does this work?" but "who was this?" and "what does this mean for the community?"

Both approaches matter. Both reveal truth. But to understand Scripture honestly, we must begin with the questions the biblical authors were asking, not just the questions we would ask.

Eastern vs. Western Mindsets

Use of Language

Western Mindset	Eastern Mindset
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Express truth through definitions and systems Use explanations and doctrines Love prose, outlines, bullet points Ask "What is God like?" → Definition ie - "Sovereign, omniscient, unchanging" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Express truth through symbolism and narrative Tell what happened, paint pictures Use poetry, symbolism, pictures, and story Ask "What is God like?" → Picture ie - "Like a tower, like a shepherd, like a lion, like rain"

Hebrew poetry is fundamentally different from Western poetry - it uses "parallelism" (echoing thought in partnered lines) rather than rhyme or meter. This meaning-based structure survives translation with little loss, unlike Western poetry that relies on sound. An example of Hebrew poetry - Chiasm. Chiasm is "the use of inverted parallelism of form and/or content which moves toward and away from a strategic central component." It creates bilateral symmetry about a central axis. We can find Chiasm throughout the scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation.

Chiasm is a Hebrew literary structure where ideas are presented and then repeated in reverse order, forming a mirror pattern (A–B–C–B'–A'). This was a common technique in ancient Jewish writing to highlight the central idea of a passage and to aid memorization. The middle point (the "hinge") is usually the theological or narrative focus.

Example 1 – Flood Story (Genesis 6–9, simplified)

The long flood narrative is a massive chiasm. A very simplified version looks like this:

- **A:** God resolves to destroy the earth (6:11–13)
- **B:** Noah builds the ark (6:14–22)
- **C:** The floodwaters come (7:11–24)
- **D: God remembers Noah** (8:1) ← central hinge
- **C':** The floodwaters recede (8:2–5)
- **B':** Noah leaves the ark (8:15–19)
- **A':** God promises never again to destroy all life (8:20–22; 9:11)

The central focus ("God remembered Noah") is the theological heart: God's faithfulness in the midst of judgment.

Key insight: 98% of Scripture is written in narrative form - even legislative portions like the purity code in Deuteronomy is contained within a story.

Numbers

Western Mindset	Eastern Mindset
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Numbers are seen primarily as - precise, empirical data, we use it for math, or measurements.• ie 12 inches = 12 inches, $2+2=4$• Quantity-focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Numbers can be symbolic and expressive• Quality or quantity, depending on context• Example: Jesus says forgive "70 times 7" - not exactly 490 times!

In ancient Hebrew, numbers were written as words rather than symbols. Writing numbers as words made texts more reliable and less prone to copying errors.

Sometimes numbers are approximate or symbolic. Psalm 90:10's "seventy to eighty years" isn't exact limits but general ranges. The "7,000 who hadn't bowed to Baal" represents a faithful remnant rather than exact count.

Biblical Number Symbolism:

- **Seven:** Completion, perfection, or with people it is symbolic of the nations
- **Three:** Redemption, Trinity
- **Twelve:** Community, God's people (12 tribes, 12 disciples)
- **144:** God's complete community (12 x 12)
- **Forty:** Testing, trial, difficulty

Applied Example - Deuteronomy 5:9-10: This passage uses contrasting parallelism (poetry) to show God's heart:

- God may discipline "2-3 generations" for those who hate him
- But God blesses "1000 generations" for those who love him

The point isn't mathematical precision but expressing how God's grace vastly outweighs his judgment. Compare with Ezekiel 18:20 where God says he won't punish children for parents' sins - from a Western mindset this seems to be a contradiction but this would not be true from an Eastern mindset. The use of numbers combined with the types of poetry used, we understand it as expressing something totally different. Parts of Ezekiel 18 do not contradict because they are about two completely different things.

Social Structure

Western Mindset	Eastern Mindset
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individualistic culture ● Values the "rugged individual" ● Focus on personal rights and freedoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collectivist culture ● Shame and honor culture ● Community well-being over individual desires ● Biblical examples: Joseph and Potiphar's reaction - in Eastern culture, Potiphar had to publicly support his wife to maintain family honor, regardless of what he privately believed about her accusation

1. Collectivist vs. Individualist Studies: People in collectivist societies think more 'holistically,' focusing on relationships and context, while individualistic societies focus on separate elements. Eye-tracking studies show East Asians spend more time looking at background context, while Americans focus on the main subject. Research supports that people in collectivist societies tend to think more **holistically**, focusing on relationships and context, while those in individualistic societies employ a more **analytic** or element-focused approach. Eye-tracking studies validate that East Asians often spend more time viewing backgrounds and context in scenes, whereas Americans tend to concentrate on the main subject or object.

2. Debt Culture: In Eastern culture, if anyone did a favor for you, you were in their debt, and they could require you to pay them back at any time. Until then, you belonged to them. This is why Abraham refused the king of Sodom's reward - he didn't want to be in debt (Genesis 14:21-24).

3. Hospitality Rules: Hospitality was essential for equal/higher social status, but hosts wouldn't eat with guests outside their covenant. You ate meals only with those you'd call family. Those of lower status could be ignored without shame.

- Core Principles:
 - **Sacred Duty** - They believe that a person who becomes their guest is sent to them by God. So hospitality becomes a sacred duty.

- When reading through Genesis 18 we see Abraham outworking this. He "ran to meet" the three men, "hastened into the tent," "ran unto the herd," and "hasted to dress" the calf.
- Now assess the Christmas story - and how Mary and Joseph were not able to find a room. Something fishy is going on...
- **Automatic Response** - There would be a space always ready for a guest to occupy. All guests are welcome.
- **Protection Rights** - Guests had the right to stay for 3 days. If they did not stay the whole duration, the host was expected to make sure their guests were safe on their travels. That could include prepared food, water, and/or goods for their journey. It also included protection with force.

4. Education System: Education happened in the family - sons learned from fathers and continued the father's trade. Later, students could follow a mentor, living with and emulating their life (like Jesus' disciples). Education was always communal, about following community traditions.

5. Community Entertainment: No individual sports - just group activities. In entertainment, the community came together to tell stories or participate in group performances. Function and practicality mattered more than image.

Sin and Error

Western Mindset	Eastern Mindset
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sins of the individual ● Legislative approach (speed limit = 55 mph) ● Emphasizes what you believe and do ● Sin defined by incorrect thinking or behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sins of the community/nation ● Honor and shame culture - is the driving value behind many sins ● Emphasizes how a person acts/behaves relationally more than their beliefs ● Sin as relational violation

Christocentric view of sin: acting against love

People who endorse collectivistic values are more likely to experience group-based emotions like shame, guilt, and regret for actions by family members or community.

In collectivistic cultures, needs and goals of the group usurp individual desires and personal interests. Interdependence is assumed rather than individual autonomy.

Definition: Sin is the misuse of my dominion to violate a relationship with God, others, or myself.

Honor/Shame Dynamics: Honor was inherited and fiercely protected. Personal failings weren't just individual burdens but collective stains on familial reputation. The Torah served as a guide to honorable living - violations resulted in public shaming or ostracism.

Example: Luke 15:11-32 Jesus tells a parable of a younger son who shames his entire family.

Eternal Life

Western Mindset	Eastern Mindset
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Something that starts when you die● Destination or reward● Detached from this world● Time-focused ("eternal" = forever)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Available here and now● Life that's in harmony with God● Quality of life in the present● Relationship-focused

Greek Words for Life:

- **Bios** ['bi.os] (βίος): Physical life, breathing, biological existence
- When Jesus tells the parable of the seeds, he describes seed that fell among the thorns as being choked by the worries of "life". Here the word **bios** is used.
- **Zoe** [zo'i] (ζωή): Life-giving, quality of being, spiritual life
- When Jesus said "I come to bring life and bring it to the full." He used **zoe**. He brings a life of value worth living.
- **Psuche** [psi'çi] (ψυχή): life, self, inner being; originally "breath" or "life force."
- When Jesus says "What does it profit to gain the world and lose your life?" he uses **psuche** - meaning you could be wealthy and powerful but lose the essence of who you are.

Faith

Western Mindset	Eastern Mindset
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Intellectual - belief, assent to ideas● You think it to be true● Expressed in creeds, doctrines, statements of faith● Seeks to explain truth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Relational - experiences with God● You trust based on relationship● Expressed in story, struggle, mystery● Seeks to tell what happened

Jewish traditions seek to establish and evolve values through ritualized repetition (like Passover meal) rather than systematizing theology. Jewish approach doesn't try to resolve every issue or draw everything to conclusion.

Examples:

- Western: Luther's 95 Theses (systematic theology)
- Eastern: Abraham's willingness to follow God to the land of Canaan, and trust God's promise to bless the world through his family. (will he trust?)

God

Western Mindset	Eastern Mindset
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Seeks to prove God's existence through apologetics and rational arguments● Focus on defining God - systematic theology, attributes, doctrines● Defending God against intellectual challenges● Emphasis on what God is like● God as object of study and theological systematization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Assumes God's existence● Focus on how God sees and relates to people● Understanding God through story and relationship● Emphasis on what God does and how God moves toward humanity● God as active participant in the narrative

The East takes an apophatic approach to theology (saying what God is NOT) while the West takes a cataphatic approach (systematically defining what God IS). Eastern: "God is unknowable in his essence, but we can encounter him through his energies." Western: Focus on systematic definitions and rational understanding.

Example:

- Western: omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, immutable
- Eastern: How God encounters and relates to people. ie - Story of Abraham, Joseph, and Paul (Acts 9)

Truth

Western Mindset	Eastern Mindset
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Rational, scientific, factual● Focus on "how" it was done● What is actual and provable● To know something intellectually	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Experiential, spiritual● Focus on "who and what" - the story● To be known relationally● Yadah [ja:'da:]: Intimate knowing

Greek Words for Knowing:

- **Oida** [ôj.da]: To know by seeing, factual awareness
- **Gignosko** [gig.nô:.sko:]: To know through experience and relationship

When Jesus says "I know my sheep and my sheep know me" (John 10:14), he uses **gignosko** - experiential, relational knowing.

The Truth About Truth: Not Relativism, But Dynamic

The Western Fear: If truth isn't static and factual, it becomes relativism where anyone can decide what's true.

The Eastern Reality: Truth is **anchored but unfolding** - not relative, but dynamic. It's rooted in something solid but grows and unfolds through experience. It accepts the reality that we are finite beings and can not fully understand everything.

Case Study: Does God Change His Mind?

Passages Saying God Doesn't Change:

- Malachi 3:6: "I the Lord do not change"
- James 1:17: God "does not change like shifting shadows"

Passages Showing God Changing:

- Exodus 32:14: "So the LORD changed His mind" [NASB]
- Amos 7:3:
 - "The LORD changed His mind about this" [NASB]
 - "The LORD relented concerning this" [KJV]
- Hosea 11:8: "My heart is changed within me" [NIV]

Western Response: Create systematic theology to resolve the "contradiction". It seeks to find scientific ways to describe God's nature in an unchanging way.

Examining Scripture from with a Christocentric lens

1. **Start with Jesus** - When it comes to sinning and failure what does Jesus desire? Mercy, forgiveness, restored relationship.
2. **Trust the Story** - Is there anything important to keep in mind about the larger story God is telling through these passages? God is always meeting people where they are, even after they have sinned or made a wreck of things.
3. **Bring the Text into Context** - If we start with an Eastern mindset, one that sees truth as anchored in God, but unfolding - The question we're not seeking is a theological answer to: Does God change?

Walk through each text with the 3 lenses above

Malachi (God Does Not Change)

Mal 3:5

God keeps pointing out the sin (going against love) the people are committing. This deserves harsh punishment, destruction, that change can't fix — and they would have had great fear about it. God says: don't fear.

Mal 3:6

God says He doesn't change. The important question is: Why does God not change? Because He is a God of peace. He has always extended grace and mercy to even their forefathers. Trust the story of God's grace & mercy.

James (God Does Not Change)

James 1:13

People are struggling with temptation. A Jew would see that God is fickle like other gods, or God has gone back on His promises, if this means Jesus rising and His against them. That is why they are struggling with temptation.

James 1:17

God provides goodness & blessing. Trust the Story – Gen 1. God's original dream was always to bless the creation He loves. It was all an act of grace.

So (James 1:17) trust this, because God does not change. He is the same God of grace, forgiveness, and blessing.

Exodus (God Changes His Mind)

Chapter 32

The people become fearful because Moses hasn't returned from the mountain. The people then build a golden calf and commit idolatry. (Sin is relational violation – or goes against what love would do.)

Exodus 32:10

God decides that He will destroy them for their rejection and sin. He will start over and build a new nation with Moses.

Exodus 32:11–13

Moses chats with Him.

Exodus 32:14 God changes His mind and extends grace & mercy.

Christian teaching (relational question, not abstract question) Why does God change? Answer: to give grace.

Notice: God may or may not change, but the Meta-Narrative is still true. The main thing is God meeting people where they are to extend grace and mercy.

If we start with Jesus not doctrines – We see stories in the O.T. that foreshadow the heart of Jesus. He came for mercy, not judgment.

Amos 7

The Northern Kingdom is abusing people in ways that break covenant.

Amos 6:11 – God gives the command to destroy Israel into bits.

Amos 7:2 – Amos cries out for God to stop and forgive.

Amos 7:3, 6 – Then God changes. Twice He says He changed.

Why does God do this? Answer: To forgive them. If we start with a Western mind-set on Scripture it can get in the way of what Scripture is actually doing. But starting with an Eastern mindset gives us relational/ questions. Maybe if we have too have a doctrine about whether God can change or not, it could be: God gets to change His mind about whether He will change or not.

The Unfolding Truth:

- When God "doesn't change" → He remains committed to grace and mercy
- When God "changes his mind" → He chooses grace and mercy over judgment
- **Both point to the same heart:** God's relentless pursuit of relationship

Meta-Narrative Connection: God continually moves toward humanity, inviting us into a relationship of faith and love.

Understanding Judeo Roots

Core Jewish Interpretive Values

1. "Never read Scripture alone" (Rabbi Thomas)

- Scripture was always read, taught, and discussed communally
- Wrestling with Scripture is part of the spiritual journey
- The goal isn't always to get "the right answer" but to engage in holy struggle

2. Learning through discovery

- Rabbis celebrated students who couldn't figure out answers - they would dance!
- Wrestling with mystery is a gift, not a failure
- Discovery is more valuable than being told information

3. Not everything needs resolution

- Eastern thought is comfortable with tension and mystery
- Some questions are meant to draw us deeper, not be solved
- Example: The story of Jephthah's vow

4. Establishing and evolving values

- Jewish traditions ritualize values through repeated practices
- Values can be both anchored and evolving
- Example: Passover meal retells and reapplies the story

Jewish Literary Devices

1. P'shat (Face Value)

- The literal, straightforward reading of the text
- Most Christian Bible study and expository preaching operates at this level
- **Important:** P'shat is not shallow or less valuable - it can be profoundly meaningful
- The different levels don't contradict each other; deeper levels aren't "more true"
- Example from Parable of the Soils: The basic agricultural analogy Jesus explained

2. Remez (Hint)

- Connections to Hebrew Scripture passages
- Requires intimate knowledge of the Old Testament text (which Jewish students had memorized)
- Look for things that "seem weird" or don't fit - these often point to the remez
- Example: The "100, 60, 30" progression in the Parable of the Soils
 - "Hundredfold" only appears one other time in Scripture: Genesis 26:12 (Isaac's story)
 - This connects to Isaac's faithfulness in the land despite opposition
 - Jesus is saying: "Stay faithful in the land and the mission of God will work"

3. Drash (Truth Hidden in Story)

- The deeper meaning unlocked by following the remez to its Old Testament source
- Always meant to be discussed in groups (havurah) - like Jesus's 12 disciples
- Multiple perspectives and wrestling with the text is essential
- The goal isn't finding "the answer" but engaging deeply with Scripture
- **Key insight:** "The answer's not that important, but wrestling with the Text is because that's where the power lies"

4. Sod (Mystery)

- Supernatural revelation that cannot be taught by humans
- Given directly by God/Holy Spirit
- Example: Peter's confession "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"
- Jesus's response: "Man did not reveal this to you, but my Father in heaven"

Practical Application

For Modern Readers

- We need much greater familiarity with Hebrew Scriptures to understand Jesus's teachings
- Use tools like BibleGateway.com to search for keywords and find connections
- Form study groups (havurah) to discuss and wrestle with texts together
- Look for things that seem odd or out of place in Jesus's teachings

The Challenge

- Many Christians act like experts on Jesus but don't understand what he was actually doing as a Jewish rabbi
- Jesus's teachings, when properly understood, "go for the jugular" and challenge religious people
- Ray Vander Laan's experience: Orthodox Jewish rabbis at Yeshiva University knew Jesus's teachings on Hebrew texts better than he did as a Christian

The Circumcision Example

Old Testament: Circumcision is the "everlasting covenant" - the permanent mark of God's people (Genesis 17:13)

The Challenge: Greeks saw circumcision as mutilation of God's perfect artwork (the human body)

Acts 15: When Greeks begin following Jesus, Jewish Christians say "Scripture is clear - circumcision is forever!"

The Apostles' Decision: "We will not require circumcision because it would be difficult" (Acts 15:19)

The Point: Truth was anchored in God's heart for inclusion but unfolded as the gospel reached the nations. The spirit of the covenant (bringing all nations to God) trumped the letter of the law.

Key Questions for Bible Study

Mindset Questions:

1. **Am I reading this with Western assumptions about logic, individualism, and systematic theology?**
2. **What would this passage mean to someone with an Eastern, collectivist, relationship-focused worldview?**
3. **If numbers appear, are they meant mathematically or symbolically?**
4. **Is this passage trying to give me systematic doctrine, or invite me into relationship with God?**

Truth Questions:

1. **How does this passage reveal God's heart toward humanity?**
2. **Does my interpretation lead toward the Tree of Life (faith/relationship) or Tree of Knowledge (control/certainty)?**
3. **How does this connect to the meta-narrative of God moving toward humanity?**

4. Reflection Questions

Easy/Starting Questions:

1. Which mindset (Eastern or Western) do you naturally lean toward and why?
2. Can you identify times when you've approached the Bible more like a textbook than a story?
3. How does understanding the difference between bios, zoe, and psuche change how you read verses about "life"?
4. What examples of symbolic numbers have you noticed in your own culture?

Deeper Reflection:

1. How might your Western assumptions about individualism affect how you read passages about community responsibility?
2. When you think about "knowing God," do you primarily think oida (factual awareness) or gignosko (experiential relationship)?
3. How does the concept of truth being "anchored but unfolding" challenge or comfort you?
4. Where do you see evidence of the meta-narrative (God moving toward humanity) in your own life?

Application Questions:

1. How can you practice reading Scripture more communally rather than individually?
2. What "systematic doctrines" might you need to hold more loosely in favor of relationship with God?
3. How can you embrace the wrestling/struggling aspect of faith rather than needing all the answers?
4. In what areas of your life do you need to trust the unfolding nature of God's truth rather than demanding immediate clarity?

Challenge Questions:

1. Are there biblical passages that you've avoided because they don't fit your systematic theology?
2. How might your view of salvation change if you emphasized the quality of life (zoe) over the quantity of life (bios)?
3. What would it look like to prioritize God's heart over doctrinal consistency?
4. How can you distinguish between truth that's anchored (non-negotiable) versus truth that's unfolding (contextual application)?

Recommended BEMA Podcast Episodes

- **Episode 0 “Introductory Lesson”** - The difference between East and West Mindset
 - **Episode 1 “Trust the Story”** - An example of a Chiasm, found in the creation story
 - **Episode 110 “Jewish Hermeneutics”** - More insight on how Jews read the text
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Book Recommendation - From Glenn

Misreading Scripture with Western Eyes - Richard and O'Brien

Glossary of Terms

Bios (βίος): Greek word for physical, biological life - the fact of being alive rather than dead.

Chiasm: A literary device where grammatical structures reverse in successive phrases to create emphasis and emotional impact.

Christocentric Hermeneutic: An approach to interpreting Scripture that keeps Jesus at the center, using His life and teachings as the primary lens.

Collectivist Culture: A cultural approach that prioritizes community well-being, honor/shame dynamics, and group identity over individual rights.

Dynamic Truth: Truth that is anchored in unchanging principles but unfolds and applies differently in various contexts - not relativistic but relational.

Eastern Mindset: A cultural approach emphasizing relationships, community, symbolism, narrative, and experiential knowledge - characteristic of biblical cultures.

Essenes: Jewish sect that withdrew to desert communities like Qumran, rejecting both Hellenistic compromise and violent resistance. Likely authored the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Euangelion: Greek word for "good news" or "gospel" - used by Alexander the Great for his Hellenistic message before being adopted by Christians.

Gignosko: Greek word meaning to know through experience and relationship, deeper than intellectual awareness.

Hasidim: "Pious ones" - Jewish groups that rejected Hellenistic compromise and established fundamentalist communities in Galilee.

Hellenism: Greek worldview that made humanity "the measure of all things" - the first systematic man-centered culture in history.

Herodians: Non-priestly Jews who embraced both Jewish identity and Hellenistic culture, supporting Herod's rule.

Hermeneutic: The method and principles used for interpreting and applying Scripture.

Individualistic Culture: A cultural approach emphasizing personal rights, individual achievement, and self-reliance - characteristic of Western cultures.

Maccabean Revolt: Jewish uprising (167 BC) that overthrew Seleucid rule and reclaimed the temple, celebrated in Hanukkah.

Meta-narrative: The overarching story connecting all biblical texts - God continually moving toward humanity, inviting relationship.

Oida: Greek word meaning to know intellectually, through seeing or factual awareness.

Pharisees: Jewish sect that resisted Hellenism through absolute obedience to Torah, developing detailed religious practices.

Psuche (ψυχή): Greek word for soul - the complete non-physical person including will, emotions, values, and heart.

Remez: A Jewish interpretive technique where one text hints at another Scripture passage to add deeper meaning.

Sadducees: Jewish priestly class that embraced Hellenistic culture while maintaining religious authority.

Static Truth: Understanding truth as unchanging, factual, and systematic - characteristic of Western approaches.

Western Mindset: A cultural approach emphasizing logic, individualism, systematic thinking, and factual knowledge - characteristic of modern cultures.

Yadah: Hebrew word for intimate, experiential knowing - often used for sexual intimacy but also deep relational knowledge.

Zealots: Jewish sect that resisted Hellenism through armed violence, seeking to overthrow foreign rule by force.

Zoe (ζωή): Greek word for quality of life, spiritual vitality, and life-giving essence - more than mere biological existence.

"The question is not whether God changes or doesn't change. The question is: what does God want us to get out of Scripture? Correct facts, or relationship?"

"Truth is anchored but unfolding - it grows, it's not static, it's going somewhere."