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BRIDGES FOR PEACE

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ATTRIBUTES

for Challenging

TIMES



wisdom
courage
faithfulness
love



ATTRIBUTES for Challenging TIMES

"I don't know what you are facing today, but I believe the Lord is speaking to us all that He will give us wisdom and courage to continue faithfully with love in His service even in difficult times."

Rebecca Brimmer



IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL THERE IS A STARTLING EXAMPLE OF GOD

communicating in a highly unusual way. Suddenly in the midst of a feast, a hand appears and begins writing on the wall. One morning as I was lying in bed, I had a similar experience. I can't say if I had drifted back to sleep and was dreaming or if I had a mini-vision. I saw a hand writing on a whiteboard. Four words appeared: **wisdom, courage, faithfulness, and love**. Immediately, I sensed that it was a significant message for me and Bridges for Peace. Our board was meeting in Jerusalem that week, and as a board, we prayed into this message. We understood that we were going to need these attributes and prayed that God would strengthen us in these areas.

Three weeks later, a massive earthquake struck Japan followed by a devastating tsunami. In that situation, we needed **wisdom** to know how to continue ministering in Japan, our second most influential nation in regards to financial giving. Our Japanese team needed **courage** in the midst of overwhelming disaster. We were challenged to **faithfully** continue our projects in Israel and around the world while facing a possible financial downturn. And, we were reminded to let everything be done with **love**.

Since then, I have often been reminded of these attributes. When faced with any situation, I am asking myself, "How can I respond with wisdom, courage, faithfulness and love?" I don't know what you are facing today, but I believe the Lord is speaking to us all that He will give us wisdom and courage to continue faithfully with love in His service even in difficult times. "Wisdom" is the Hebrew Word Study in the August *Dispatch* and "faith" was in our April *Dispatch*, but it is important to have them repeated here for this teaching.



Wisdom—Chokmah (חכמה)

I frequently pray for wisdom, as I am sure all leaders do. Often, only the most difficult problems reach my desk since everything that can be solved by others has already been dealt with. I simply could not do my job without wisdom from the Lord. When King Solomon became king, he also recognized his need for wisdom. The Lord appeared to him one night and said, “Ask! What shall I give you?” Solomon responded, “Now give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people; for who can judge this great people of Yours?” (2 Chron. 1:7, 10).

The most common Hebrew word for wisdom is *chokmah* (חכמה). It includes the concepts of skill, shrewdness, insight, moral discernment, understanding of justice, intelligence, and prudence. *The Encyclopedia Judaica for Youth*, called *My Jewish World*, summarizes wisdom this way: “It was a way of thinking and attitude of life that emphasized experience, reasoning, morality and the concerns of man as man rather than as Israelite. Wisdom, however, was not considered to be just intellectual ability or capacity; true wisdom had to be based on the fear of God and on a moral way of life.”

The Bible is replete with references to wisdom, the wise, and wise ones. We are told that wisdom is a treasure (Prov. 8:11); those who find it will be happy (Prov. 3:13); it is better to have wisdom than gold (Prov. 16:16); those who find wisdom find life (Prov. 8:35); and wisdom is better than weapons of war (Eccles. 9:18).

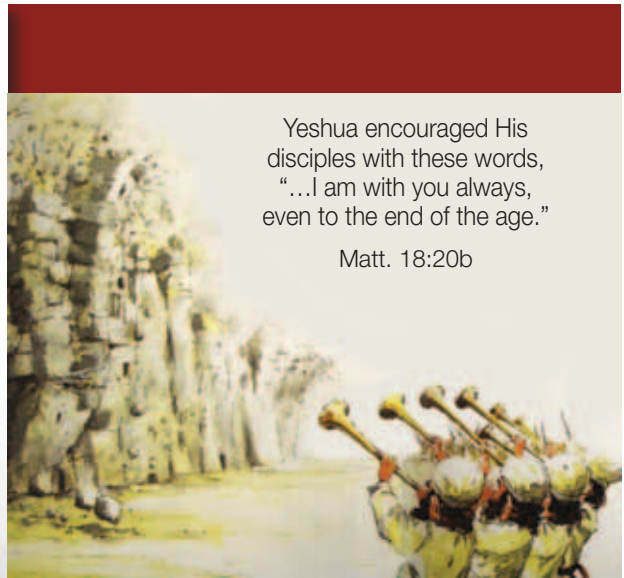
Other Word Associations

Wisdom is associated with at least three other words in the Bible: knowledge, the fear of the Lord, and instruction. It is possible to have great knowledge and not possess wisdom. I have heard it said that it is better to have no education and be wise than to be highly educated and not have wisdom. I have known people of great intelligence, even possessing doctorates, who didn’t know how to apply their vast knowledge wisely. Jewish understanding is that it is not possible for a person to acquire wisdom through their own intelligence. He must attain wisdom through studying the *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.) or by learning from sages. Elijah Gaon (1720–1797), a scholar of the *Talmud* (rabbinic commentary on Jewish tradition and the Hebrew Scriptures) from Lithuania, acknowledged God as the source of wisdom when he said, “Wisdom and Torah flow from one source.”

Seven times in Scripture, the concepts of the “fear of the Lord” (*yireh Adonai* יראה יהוה) and wisdom (*chokmah*) are linked, such as in Proverbs 9:10: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.” (The other six are Job 28:28; Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7, 15:33; Isa. 11:2, 33:6.) In the ArtScroll commentary on Mishlei (Proverbs), Rabbi Eliezer Ginsburg says, “This frequent repetition indicates the importance of the link between the two. God is the creator of the universe and life; all wisdom emanates from Him. It is impossible to understand man’s place in the design of the universe without reverential awe of God and submission to His will, indeed it is the only starting point that will lead man to his true goal.” He goes on to quote the *Mishnah*: “If there is no wisdom, there is no fear of God” (Avot 3:21).

The term *mussar* (מוסר) (instruction, discipline, ethical teaching, or affliction) is often connected to wisdom in the Bible. In Proverbs 1:2–3, King Solomon says, “To know wisdom and instruction, to perceive the words of understanding, to receive the instruction of wisdom, justice, judgment and equity.” Rabbi Ginsburg says, “Given man’s natural tendency toward the negative as the Torah states, ‘since the imagery of man’s heart is evil from his youth’ (Genesis 8:21), he needs mussar.” When we fear God, we are in awe of His greatness, mercy, salvation, and also His righteous judgment. Indeed, God may use difficulties, rebukes, and afflictions to bring us to the place of wisdom attained by fearing God.





Yeshua encouraged His disciples with these words, "...I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

Matt. 18:20b

Courage— Amatz (אִמָּץ)

"Courage is being scared to death, but saddling up anyway."

John Wayne

Fear seems to grip the hearts of modern-day men and women. Certainly the headlines give much cause for fear and trembling. Everywhere we turn, we hear predictions of disaster. Some say that a double dip recession is inevitable. Others draw our attention to the dangers of globalism. Wars and rumors of wars were not only predicted by Yeshua (Jesus) as a precursor to the end of the age but are evident in our world today. An increase in lawlessness and moral bankruptcy alarm even those of faith. Natural disasters claiming lives and property often threaten to overwhelm us with fear. We need courage in these days as never before.

In the Bible, the Hebrew word most often translated as courage is *amatz* (אִמָּץ), and it means to be strong, alert, courageous, brave, stout, bold, solid, and hard. Several times, this word is used in relation to Joshua. Just before Moses died, he encouraged Joshua and the Children of Israel three times by saying, "*Be strong and of good courage*" (Deut. 31:6, 7, 23). It seems obvious to me that when the Children of Israel stood with Joshua on the banks of the Jordan River, they were assailed with fear. When God spoke to Joshua, twice He said, "*Be strong and of good courage*" (Josh. 1:6, 9) and then, "*Be strong and very courageous,*" (1:7). Again in Joshua 10:25, Joshua reminded the leaders that God had told them to be strong and courageous.

Having courage doesn't mean that you have no fear. Rather, it means that in the face of fear-some reality, you stand up and face the obstacle. John Wayne, the American actor who played in many cowboy movies, once said, "Courage is being scared to death, but saddling up anyway." The American satirist Mark Twain defined courage by saying, "Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear—not absence of fear." Hungarian journalist Arthur Koestler said, "Courage is never to let your actions be influenced by your fears."

I remember joining a group of friends to go rappelling (abseiling) off the cliffs near Qumran in the Judean Desert. I was connected to the ropes, had all the proper equipment, and had watched several others safely descend the 85-meter (279-foot) cliff. As I stepped off the edge, my body leaning back into the ropes, one of the youngsters with the party asked me what the descent looked like. As I looked down, my friends at the bottom looked like ants. Suddenly fear gripped my heart, and I was paralyzed. I couldn't move up or down. Finally realizing that the only way out of this situation was to go down, I prayed and asked God to help me. With God's help and courage in the face of fear, I successfully and safely reached my goal.

In Joshua's case, God didn't just tell him to buck up and get the job done! He encouraged Joshua, saying, "*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go*" (Josh. 1:9).

Then as now, there was a need for courage because of very real threats. In biblical times, they faced giants and walled cities in their conquest of the Land. Today, we face huge challenges and



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problems, and often we don't see a clear solution. We must be strong and courageous and remind ourselves that God is always with us. Yeshua encouraged His disciples with these words, "...I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 18:20b). Since we haven't yet arrived at the end of the age, I personally find great encouragement in these words.

Faithfulness—*Emunah* (אמונה)

I'll never forget the conversation I had with Dr. Bernard Resnikov, who at the time was the Director Emeritus of the American Jewish Committee. I knew him as Bernie, a warm grandfatherly man who had an incredible way of communicating. Bernie was talking with me about the importance of interfaith dialogue between Christians and Jews. I knew that he participated in many such gatherings, even sponsoring some of them.

As we talked, he confessed to me that he was quite curious about the way Christians thought, and so he would often listen in on their conversations with each other after the official meetings were over. He related to me that he discovered as he listened in on hallway conversations that Christians were often arguing about what they believed about something. He went on to tell me some of the things we argue about, such as when the rapture will occur or if our salvation is eternally secure. I was a little bit surprised that he knew so much about our disagreements!

However, then Bernie said something that really shocked me. He told me that it wasn't that way in Jewish circles. I remember challenging him on that statement saying, "But, there are often discussions and arguments about every kind of subject here in Israel. There is even a joke that says if you have two Jews, you have three opinions."

Bernie assured me that I was misunderstanding, giving me the following example. He said, "If I am reading the *Torah* and read that I am supposed to keep the Sabbath holy, and I want to understand it better, I look around me and find someone who is keeping the Sabbath." Bernie explained, "I wouldn't ask my friend what he believed about the passage, I would ask him how he did it." Then he said the words that are forever blazoned on my memory, "Because frankly, Becky, if someone is not doing it, what do I care what they believe."

Faith Produces Faithfulness

After studying Hebrew, I understand where Dr. Resnikov was coming from. You see, in Hebrew, the word for faith and faithfulness is the same—*emunah* (אמונה). The word comes from the root word *emun* (אמון). The words *amen* (אמן) (so be it), *eman* (אמן) (to confirm), *haemeen* (האמין) (to believe, trust, confide in) all share the same *shoresh* (root). A covenant, convention, or treaty can also be described by the word *amanah* (אמנה), which has the same root. Basically, the idea is that if someone has faith, he will be a faithful, covenant-keeping person. He will have the character trait of faithfulness evident in his daily actions.

Webster's New World Dictionary describes faith as "unquestioning belief, esp. in God, religion." This carries with it the connotation of a person having complete trust and reliance in the one they put their faith in. Faithful or faithfulness describes the way someone acts, and the words used by *Webster's* to define it are loyal, conscientious, accurate, and exact. The faithful, according to *Webster's*, are said to be true believers or loyal followers.

Although the words are clearly related in English, I somehow viewed faith as an internal reality, which had to do with my beliefs or what I thought about something. Faithfulness

"If someone is not doing it, what do I care what they believe."

Dr. Bernard Resnikov



"If someone has faith, he will be a faithful, covenant-keeping person. He will have the character trait of faithfulness evident in his daily actions."

Rebecca Brimmer

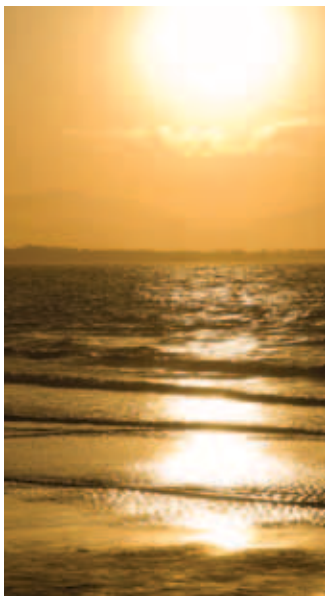


“To become a Christian, one must believe, have faith, [and] trust. To live as a practicing and active Christian, one must show faithfulness. It is part of that complex of attributes known as the ‘the fruit of the Spirit’ (Gal. 5:22)”

Dr. G. Douglas Young
the founder of
Bridges for Peace

“Through the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.”

Lam. 3:22–23



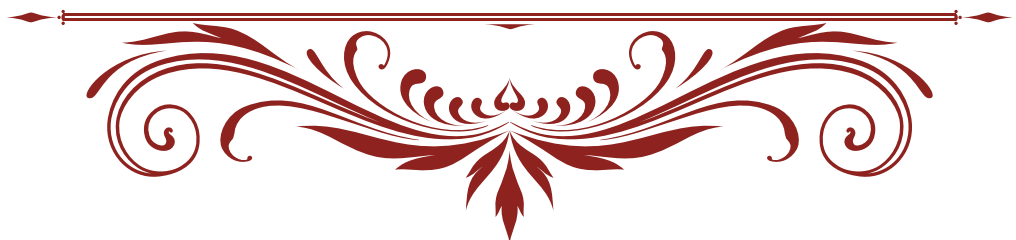
to me was a totally different concept, which had more to do with what I did. Since living in Israel and coming to understand the Bible from the Hebrew language, I have been challenged to see that these two words are so intertwined that it should be impossible to comprehend how one could have one without the other.

James talks about the concepts of faith (belief) and works (faithfulness) when he says, “*What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works [faithfulness]? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead... Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works and by works faith was made perfect?... For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also*” (James 2:14–17, 21–22, 26).

The person whose faith is not deeply rooted in his heart will often not be faithful in his behavior, but the person of real faith will exhibit faithfulness in his actions. Dr. G. Douglas Young, the founder of Bridges for Peace, wrote in the Bible dictionary he authored: “To become a Christian, one must believe, have faith, trust. To live as a practicing and active Christian, one must show faithfulness. It is part of that complex of attributes known as the ‘the fruit of the Spirit’ (Gal. 5:22).”

Faithfulness Glorifies God

Yeshua said, “*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven*” (Matt. 5:16). Isn’t it interesting that Yeshua doesn’t say “argue about what you believe” but says that our faithfulness exhibited in good works will bring glory to God? I pray that you will be filled with *emunah*. May our faith so fill our hearts and minds that our lives reflect the faithful compassionate God that we serve through our faithful deeds. “*Through the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness*” (Lam. 3:22–23).



Love—Ahavah (אהבה)

As a Christian, when I think of the word “love,” the first thing that comes to mind are the words of Yeshua when asked by some scribes, “Which is the first commandment of all?” (Mark 12:28). He said, “The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (vv. 29–31).

This is a very Jewish historical event. Jewish scribes come to Yeshua, a Jewish leader and ask about the commandments (*mitzvot*), and Yeshua answers by quoting Scriptures which are foundational to Jewish faith and practice. He starts by quoting the *Shema* (“Hear O Israel: The LORD your God, the LORD is one!”) from Deuteronomy 6:4, 5 and then quotes Leviticus 19:18. In the Matthew account of this event (22:34–40), Yeshua goes on to say that “on these two commandments hang all the Law [Torah] and the Prophets [Neviim].” What is Yeshua saying? It seems logical to me that if we truly love our God with the intensity of heart, soul, mind, and strength, then we will choose to follow His ways, and if we love our neighbor, then we will not sin against him.

Jewish Thought

To understand the Jewish understanding of love, let’s see what some Jewish authors think. Rabbis Akiva (second century) and Hillel (first century) regarded love of your neighbor a basic precept of the *Torah*. The authors of *My Jewish World* say, “From this commandment was drawn moral responsibility toward all men, including gentiles.” When Rabbi Akiva was being killed by the Romans, the *Talmud* says that he calmly recited the *Shema* even though in agony. He believed that loving God with all your soul meant even if you lost your life for Him. He died with the *Shema* on His lips.

William Silverman said, “Any rabbi or teacher of Judaism yesterday or today, asked to state the foremost principle of Judaism, must respond with the *Shema* and the prayer called *v’ohavto* (and thou shalt love). It is significant to note that in the Gospel according to St. Mark, Jesus responds to a query as follows...” Silverman then quotes the above passage in Mark followed by, “This statement [by Jesus] is consistent with the Jewish tradition that teaches: the first and most sacred commandment is to love God. The second is the love of man. It is only when the love of God fills the heart of man that he is able to elevate himself to a Divine communion with the Most High. If one has the love of God, He needs nothing else.”

The Maggid of Zlotchov (a scholarly Jewish preacher of a Hasidic dynasty originating in Eastern Europe) was asked by his students about the *Talmud* saying that Abraham had kept all the laws. How could this be, they questioned, since the *Torah* (laws) had not yet been given? He answered, “All that is needed is to love God. If you are about to do something, and you think it might lessen your love, then you know it is sin. If you are about to do something, and it will increase your love, you will know that your will is in keeping with the will of God. This is what Abraham did.”



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“The first of all the commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Mark 12:29–31





Maimonides (12th-century Jewish philosopher) wrote: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” means that you should honor him as you would like to be honored yourself. Whoever glories in the humiliation of others has no share in the future world.” Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888) stated: “To love God means to realize that life has value only through God. We love God by loving the Torah and meeting its commands. There should be nothing dearer to us than the faithfulness which we owe to God.”

The Defining Factor

John says, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God, and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love” (I John 4:7–8). Yeshua told His followers that it is love that identifies a true follower: “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34–35).

Today, as you face the difficulties that are unique to you, I encourage you to ask the Lord to give you a fresh revelation of how He wants you to live in the midst of trying circumstances. May you be filled with wisdom, courage, faithfulness, and love—attributes needed for these challenging times.

By Rev. Rebecca J. Brimmer
International President and CEO

WISDOM
COURAGE
FAITHFULNESS
LOVE

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All Scripture is taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.