

English: faithfulness, faith

אמונה

Transliteration: e•mu•na

171. A few days ago we began a new series that has a connection to the previous series, 'fruit,' in its metaphorical manifestation. It consists of the qualities noted in Galatians 5:22-23 as the fruits of the Spirit. If you missed the Hebrew Word from the Lord titled 'the fruit of the Spirit,' we recommend that you read it now. You can find it in a previous email from about two weeks ago. **The seventh fruit of the Spirit is 'faithfulness,' 'che•sed.'**

Interestingly, the word 'e•mu•na' appears only 25 times in the Old Testament, whereas it is mentioned 158 times in the New Testament. Naturally, most of the references are imploring people to adopt faithfulness. Why then is there such a deep gap in the number of times it is mentioned? One reason is that an explicit, paramount definition of faith does not exist in Judaism*. Another explanation is that in the days of antiquity more people had faith, but the question was what kind of faith was it? As time progresses there are more people who think that the answer to world-existence questions lies in science and humanism - a philosophical and ethical stance that emphasizes the value and agency of human beings, individually and collectively, and generally prefers critical thinking and evidence such as rationalism and empiricism (science) over established doctrine or faith.

The most prevalent complaint of Old Testament prophets was not aimed at the agnostic, but rather at Jews who followed other gods. The prophets' call was for returning to God rather than strengthening their rickety faith. The latter was the major call in the New Testament: "*But you, beloved, keep building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit*" (Jude 1:20). This is a rather positive call. You can sense the discontentment in the way Jesus, Yeshua, speaks to Peter, Keyfa: "*But when he saw that the wind was strong, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me!' Immediately Jesus stretched out his hand, took hold of him, and said to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?'*" (Matthew 14:30-31).

The apostles themselves recognized that their faithfulness was insufficient: "*The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith'*" (Luke 17:5).

No wonder that Maimonides (Rambam, 1135-1204) who authored the 13 Principles of the Jewish Faith begins each one with the words: 'a•ni ma•a•min be•e•mu•na she•le•ma...' ('I believe with complete faith'). The 12th Principle says: "I believe with complete faith in the coming of the Messiah, and though he may delay, nevertheless I wait for his coming every day."

*One time only, faith in God is mentioned in the 24 books of the Old Testament. In verse 10 of the Book of Isaiah, Chapter 43, the commandment to know God is followed by the commandments to believe and to understand God, denoting descending importance. Hence, an explicit, paramount definition of faith does not exist in Judaism.