

Belief **by Jennifer Ross**

Gen: 15:5-6

5Then He [the LORD] brought him [Abraham] outside and said, “Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.” And He said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” 6And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him as righteousness.

Genesis 15:6 is that famous verse that is recited by many to support the idea that redemption is all about believing. Believing is an undeniable factor in our relationship with G-d, but let us dig a little deeper.

There is NO word in Hebrew that means ‘**believe**’. Hebrew is a concrete language and culture. It is based upon tangibles. In Hebrew the world is experienced through the senses of touch, taste, smell, sound and sight; and things of the world are described by their function or characteristics. This is the Eastern way of thinking.

The other way of thinking is the Greek way, also referred to many times as the ‘Western’ way. The Western way of thinking is abstract. It experiences the world through the mind and describes the world through appearances.

It is confusing, and sometimes impossible, when you try and read the Scriptures with a Western mindset. Translators, in order to try and get the point across, resorted to abstract words and ideas that western thinkers could easily grasp hold of. But abstract ideas are just that, abstract! When you read the Scriptures with your mind instead of through your senses, you are left with a muddled paint-by-numbers picture... with no numbers. So the Westerner wants to know “what colors do I use?”, “what kind of paintbrush do I use?” and “why does G-d make this picture look like this when my mind thinks it should look differently?” The scriptures do not answer their questions. The answers are not there because to the Hebrew who wrote the Scriptures as designed by G-d, there were no questions. Concrete. Concrete. Concrete.

For example: At the beginning of this paper I suggested that we “*dig a little deeper.*”

Eastern thought would understand that I am suggesting work and sweat and the possibility of blisters to make a hole deeper with the end result being to find water. A Western translator could very easily translate this phrase into “*let’s think about this more thoroughly.*”

So the Westerner is sitting on a stool with his chin on his hand....thinking. If he does finally figure out that he is supposed to dig.....he wants to know how deep? How wide? What kind of tool? And why is he digging a hole? His abstract stream of thought has taken him so far away, he doesn’t even remember that we are talking about belief.

The Hebrew dug. He is sweaty and tired, smiling and thanking G-d that water has been found. He is “experiencing” what the action of digging produced.

If Genesis 15:6 inspires those of us who ‘believe’, we should understand just what exactly it means *to believe* in the Hebrew since there is no word for it. If we base our spiritual lives on G-d’s Word, it helps to know what His Word really says.

The word translated into ‘believed’ in the original Hebrew text is *aman*. It is a Hebrew root word that means “firm” or “sure”. (Remember... senses and function.) This little, three letter Hebrew root word (Aleph -Mem -Nun) has been translated into *believe(d), trust(y), sure, steadfast, verified, nurse, father, faithful, bring up, firm, established, continuance* and *stand fast...* to name a few.

Firm ground does not give. A firm arm is strong (destructive or protective, depending on the context). Firm care leads to recovery. A firm jaw can mean steadfast but a firm neck is stubborn....you get the picture? A firm step can be confident and upright, but if we read Proverbs 14:15 we are told that “**The simple believes (aman) every word but the prudent considers well his steps**”.

Here we are told that a simple man is firm in all. We can understand that being firm in all things is irrational and can lead to pride or anger or over-confidence or danger. Of course, that is according to the Western way of thinking. The Eastern way of thinking knows that there is soft ground and firm ground, wet ground and rocky ground, high ground and low ground, etc. so it is wise to watch your step. A firm step on soft ground is over-confidence and not upright!

“And he believed in the LORD...”

literally says:

“And he was firm in the LORD...”

Believing IN G-d puts the focus on G-d’s existence. It doesn’t require anything but an *abstract* submission to the *idea* that He exists, much like a child living in the United States who ‘believes’ in the Tooth Fairy. If parents forget to exchange that tooth for money, and the child wakes up the next day without his reward, how long will the child continue to believe? What did the child surrender except for a tooth that fell out? What kind of relationship does that child have with the Tooth Fairy except to get something they did not work for from someone who seems to exist solely for the purpose of making them happy? Unfortunately, this is very similar to the way a lot of people view our Creator. Belief doesn’t take effort.

THIS WRITER DOES NOT BELIEVE IN G-D. **I BELIEVE G-D.**

Believing G-d places the focus on you. Believing G-d is standing firm in Him. Believing G-d requires submission to His authority. Believing G-d is knowing what He says is true

and *knowing* He is with you...not *hoping* that He is. Believing G-d is delighting in Him, regardless of the circumstances. Believing Him is a systematic walk during which you continue to empty yourself of yourself, so that He can fill you up according to His purposes. It is praying for His will to be done and not your own.

A word that we are all familiar with, *amen* (pronounced *Ah-main*, not *Aye-men*), comes from the root *aman*. It is a firm answer of acceptance and surrender to what was said.

In the Book of Romans, the apostle Paul is trying to explain a very difficult truth to the Jewish believers living in Rome: That following G-d's instruction in Torah is not what redemption is based on. It was difficult for the Jews to come to grips with this. Torah was essential to the Jewish people as a way to show their obedience to and sanctification by G-d. And even though they were firm in Yeshua's sacrifice, they still understood Torah to be G-d's instructions for a Holy People. So as they watched Gentiles come into the fold with no knowledge (and consequently, it seemed, no respect) for G-d's Word, the Jewish believers had a tendency to think of themselves as 'better' than the Gentiles and apparently boasted in this fact. They couldn't accept that these 'pagans' could be worthy to the G-d of Israel if they wouldn't even circumcise themselves as an outward sign of their grafting in. Paul wanted to make it clear to them that the LORD has no room for boasting and that all men are equal in sin.

Paul states in **Romans 3:20**:

“By the deeds of Torah no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by Torah is the knowledge of sin.”

The sign of the covenant with G-d as established through Abraham was circumcision. Males from the nations who surrendered to G-d showed their devotion and became part of Israel by undergoing circumcision, regardless of their age. What Paul is saying here is that no flesh will be justified (more specifically...no lack of flesh) because the New Covenant and new sign was Yeshua!

To bring all of this into perspective, I will show you a present day situation that may shed some light on what was going on in Rome. I am a Jewish believer. G-d tells us in Torah not to eat unclean animals so therefore, I don't eat them. When I see a fellow believer eating bacon-wrapped shrimp... my skin crawls. It is an uncontrolled reaction. However, if I thought that I was better than that person and less guilty of sin because I was doing what my Father wished in regards to dietary laws, I would be WRONG. I would be boasting in my obedience. I don't follow Torah to earn 'points'. I follow Torah because I love my Father.

By G-d's grace I know that His redemption through the blood of Messiah is available to us all, Jew and Gentile, One in Him. We are all at different stages on our paths in this race and are to be as a family, helping one another along.

In the situation above, if the person were to push a bacon-wrapped shrimp in my face and encourage me to eat it because we are all under Grace, he/she would be WRONG. G-d expects us to be firm in Him. His instructions in Torah are for us all.

Recall for a moment Jacob's son, Joseph, when tempted by Potiphar's wife in Egypt. His thoughts were not "Oh, I shouldn't," or "It would be fun but I might get caught." His response to her was "**How can you ask me to sin against my G-d?**" Now THAT is powerful! THAT is firmness in G-d!

In fact, if we read further in **Genesis** to **Chapter 26**, the LORD appears to Abraham's son, Isaac, and reiterates the same promise that He had made to Abraham in Genesis 15. But we get the details in **verses 4-5** that explain what it meant that Abraham was "*firm in the LORD*".

4"And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed; 5 because Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My Torah."

Paul, in Rome, tries to explain this, continuing in **Romans 3:27-30**:

27"Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law [is boasting excluded]? [The law] of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of Torah. 29Or is He the G-d of the Jews only? Is He not also the G-d of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, 30 since there is one G-d who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith.

The word 'faith' in Hebrew is 'emunah' and within it you can see the root word *aman*. Firmness. Faith. Faithfulness. We are justified by our firmness in G-d, not by our deeds since we will always fall short! I may not eat lobsters and pork chops, but I know that I have not always observed the Sabbath as He would have me do. I know that I have had bad thoughts and have said unkind words. But Avinu (our Father) will justify us through our firmness in Him. Firmness in Him is firmness in His atoning sacrifice, Yeshua, and our firm desire to please Him through our firm obedience and firm repentance when we see our sin through Torah.

As we saw earlier, *aman* can also be translated as 'established'. Not only is Paul telling us all that it is the 'law of firmness' that justifies us, he states in the next verse, **verse 31**, that Torah is made firm through our firmness in G-d! He asks:

31Do we then make void Torah through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish Torah."

He is literally saying "Are G-d's instructions made void through our firmness? No! Our firmness in Him strengthens His instructions."

Torah shows us **HOW** to walk as a redeemed people under the blood of Messiah. And all of this is to show to the **world** the Glory of the G-d who sanctifies us!

An even more encouraging confirmation of all of this is what Paul says next in **Romans 4:3!**

“For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed G-d and it was accounted to him as righteousness.”

He doesn't say that Abraham believed in G-d, does he?

Peace and blessings to you all!