

Hope

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. Hebrews 6:19

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Everybody needs hope, but, sadly, there is a lot of hopelessness in our world. In this study we will explore what the Bible says about hope, so at the end we should all be a lot more hopeful. (Hopefully!).

What is hope?

The dictionary defines hope as:

- *a desire for some good with an expectation of obtaining it, or a belief that it is obtainable.*
- *a confidence or pleasing expectancy regarding something that is thought to be desirable.*

This is **natural** hope. We wish for something desirable, and look forward to obtaining it.

Biblical hope adds some extra dimensions to this natural hope.

Hope in the Old Testament

Many Hebrew words are used to express hope in the Old Testament. There is no Hebrew word that means "expectation of some good thing" like the word for hope (*elpis*) used in the New Testament.

Some 15 different Hebrew words are translated as 'hope' in our English Bibles. Sometimes these Hebrew words are translated as 'faith', 'trust', 'confidence', 'expectation', 'longing', etc. but this in no way devalues the importance of hope in the Old Testament. Rather, it demonstrates the wonderful variety of ways that Old Testament characters had of expressing themselves, and especially of expressing their hope in God.

Some of the Hebrew words translated as hope are:

בטח *batach*: trust, with a secondary meaning of hope

חֹסֶה *chasah*: refuge, shelter, trust in for safety and protection

אַשׁ *ya'ash*: despair, lack of hope

בָּטַח *basal*: the loins, trusting or hoping with the confidence of the place where a man's strength comes from

The most significant words used for hope in the Old Testament are *yachal/tohelet* and *qawah/tikvah*

יָחַל *yachal*: to wait, to hope, to wait patiently; to long for; so far disappointing but still hoping and waiting

תְּהִלָּה *tohelet*: a hope, expectation (typically in God). This is the noun form of *yachal*.

Yachal/tohelet is only found in Hebrew with no connection to any other ancient language. The hope expressed in this word almost always requires an object to be waited for, usually God, God's word, God's law, or actions of God. A few times it has no object but the meaning is "to wait continually."

Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him; I will surely defend my ways to His face. Job 13:15

We wait in hope for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. In Him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in His holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in You. Psalm 33:20-22

But now, Lord, what do I look for? My hope is in You. Psalm 39:7

קָוָה qawah: to hope strongly; to stretch out the mind in a straight direction towards an object of hope or expectation; to await, to hope for.

קוה) tiqvah hope, cord. Tiqvah focuses on the duration and quality of human life (like a cord made up of many strands), both in its uncertainty and in its fulfilment. **Tiqvah** can be used a noun or a verb. Interestingly, it is used more as a verb in the Psalms and prophets and more as a noun in the wisdom literature.

There is surely a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off. Proverbs 23:18

No one who hopes in You will ever be put to shame, but shame will come on those who are treacherous without cause. Psalm 25:3

Yachal and **qawah**, or **tohelet** and **tiqvah** often appear in parallel, so that “to wait” and “to hope” seem to go together in Hebrew thought. **Yachal** is often used in connection with stillness or silence, as well as looking forward expectantly. The object waited for is always good, but the subject doesn’t necessarily receive the desired outcome, which is a topic of complaint. **Yachal** often appears in the formula “wait for God,” or ‘wait patiently’ when it is used in a lament.

This reflects a central aspect of Judaism: waiting for God, especially waiting for the coming of Messiah.

Hatikvah - the Hope - is the National Anthem of the State of Israel.

(The ‘hope’ here is not a hope for the coming Messiah, but a hope to be *‘a free people in our land – the land of Zion and Jerusalem’*).

כל עוד בלבב פנימה נפש יהודי הומיה ולפאתי מזרח קדימה עין לציון צופיה	As long as deep within the heart, The Jewish spirit yearns, And forward to the east To Zion, the eye turns,
עוד לא אבדה תקותנו התקוה בת שנות אלפים להיות עם חפשי בארצנו ארץ ציון וירושלים	Our hope is not yet lost, The hope of two thousand years, To be a free people in our land, The land of Zion and Jerusalem.

Yachal has more of an individual sense of waiting, while **tiqvah** has to do with the expectant hope of the whole Hebrew community and its hope. Hope of a personal afterlife was not part of Jewish thought when the Old Testament was collated, so peoples’ hopes were thought to perish when they died. (This is often stated in Proverbs. It later became the source of a rift in belief between the Pharisees and the Sadducees).

Hope for the future refers to the whole community and requires the faithfulness of God’s people over time. This explains the various laments where it seems David, Solomon and other writers were not feeling fulfilled in their personal life (especially because the wicked were flourishing) but hoped in God to work out His purposes for the community in days to come. Each person’s acts of waiting and trusting in the long-term hope contribute to the coming of the hoped-for *shalom* of God, and this provides meaning while enduring suffering and trials.

Perhaps this concept of hope is still relevant as we face a world full of hopelessness, despair and torment? Perhaps it is more important for us to help create a community of *shalom*, rather than focusing so much on our personal comfort?

So, in the Old Testament hope has its source and fulfilment in God and in the coming of Messiah. God’s people were to wait for Him in trust, obedience and expectation.

For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11

Hope in the New Testament

The Greek word for hope used throughout the New Testament is ἐλπίς **elpis**. Its verb form is ἐλπίζω **elpizo**. Typically, these words are translated as ‘hope’ or ‘to hope’, but occasionally they are translated as ‘faith’, ‘confidence’, or ‘trust’.

Elpis (hope) is an expectation or anticipation of something that is in the future. There is an element of waiting in faith and an assurance that what is hoped for will come to pass and that it will be for the good. The Old Testament looked forward in hope for the coming of Messiah, while the New Testament bases its hope on the fact that Jesus has come, and on the certainty of His resurrection. **Christian hope** means we can look forward with confidence and assurance. Jesus has risen from the dead so we can trust Him for the future. What He says is going to happen will surely come to pass. That is especially true of the Kingdom of God, and its ultimate fulfilment in eternity.

... for the law made nothing perfect, and a better hope is introduced, by which we draw near to God.
Hebrews 7:19

... having hope toward God, which these also themselves look for, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. Acts 24:15

... the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel. Colossians 1:5

The source of our Christian hope

Everyone has **natural** hope. It is part of the human DNA to be able to hope, and also to lose and regain this hope. That is how God made us. We are *fearfully and wonderfully made*. Psalm 139:14.

The Old Testament added to this **natural** hope by enabling the Hebrew community to have their hope grounded in God. This gave them purpose and security as a nation and became central in the identity of the nation of Israel.

The New Testament adds even more to this by explaining the source of our **Christian hope** and how we can experience all of its blessings.

- **Hope is based on faith.**

In Romans Paul describes the centrality of faith in the Christian life. Jesus rose from the dead. We believe this, put our trust in Him and so become children of God. Our lives are then built on a foundation that is secure and trustworthy. This gives an assurance and confidence to our hope.

Hope is not a thing.
It's a Person!

Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." Romans 4:18

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy became our father again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 1 Peter 1:3

Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. Hebrews 11:1

- **Hope is maintained by trust**

We believe in a God who is unchanging and unchangeable, so we have a strong foundation for our hope. On our life journey God begins to reveal His will to us, and we learn how to hear His voice. We believe Him, trust Him, obey Him, and our hope stays strong.

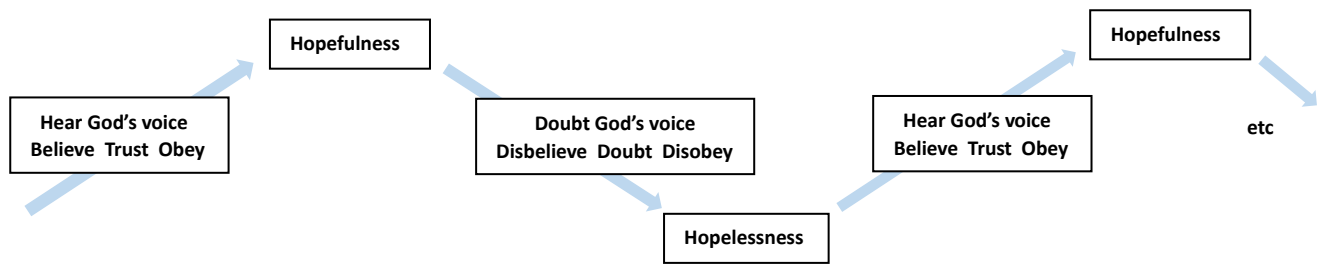
I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. Psalm 27:13.

Central in this is hearing God's voice through the Scriptures.

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. Romans 15:4.

Occasionally, however, we may doubt the Lord, or do things that hurt our relationship with Him. **Hope** quickly departs and we begin to experience **hopelessness**. This sets up a pattern in which we go through cycles of ups and downs as we trust God, then doubt Him, then rebuild our trust

(These are sometimes called 'wilderness experiences').



Mature Christians soon learn that it is much better to believe, trust and obey the Lord. Their hope remains secure.

... if you continue in your faith, established and firm, and do not move from the hope held out in the gospel. This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant. Colossians 1:23

... to those who go on with good works in the hope of glory and honour and salvation from death, He will give eternal life. Romans 2:7

Blessings that come from our Christian hope

Therefore, do not cast from you your confident hope, for it will receive a vast reward. Hebrews 10:35

- **Our lives are anchored in Christ.** He is the foundation on which our futures are built.

We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. Hebrews 6:19

.... to whom God was pleased to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Colossians 1:27

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus according to the commandment of God our Savior, and Christ Jesus our hope. 1 Timothy 1:1

- **We have confidence as we face the future,** regardless of any difficulties we may face.

I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. Philippians 1:20

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Romans 12:2

Yes, we ourselves have had the answer of death in ourselves, so that our hope might not be in ourselves, but in God who is able to give life to the dead. 2 Corinthians 1:9

... in the hope that I may attain to the resurrection from among the dead. Philippians 3:11

- **We learn to wait on God and be patient.** This builds character in our lives.

For we, through the Spirit, by faith wait for the hope of righteousness. Galatians 5:5

But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. Romans 8:25

For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what they already have? Romans 8:24

... if it is so that you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the Good News which you heard, which is being proclaimed in all creation under heaven. Colossians 1:23

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Romans 12:2

But let us, since we belong to the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and, for a helmet, the hope of salvation. 1 Thessalonians 5:8

Not only that, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us. Romans 5:3-5

Because you have the knowledge that the testing of your faith gives you the power of going on in hope. James 1:3

- **We are saved from hopelessness and all its horrible consequences**

But we don't want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who have fallen asleep, so that you don't grieve like the rest, who have no hope. 1 Thessalonians 4:13

... having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Ephesians 1:18

- **We have assurance as we face our death and future life in eternity**

If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. 1 Corinthians 15:19

... and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. Acts 24:15

... that, being justified by his grace, we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Titus 3:7

We desire that each one of you may show the same diligence to the fullness of hope even to the end. Hebrews 6:11

The relationship between faith, hope and love.

Hope is based on faith, and maintained by trust and obedience. This builds character in our lives, especially resilience in the face of difficulties. Out of this we are able to express the various fruits of the Holy Spirit – the first and greatest of which is love.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Galatians 5:22,23.

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 1 Corinthians 13:7.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Corinthians 13:13.

This explains why hope is so important, (and perhaps why God is described as the God of hope).

If we lose our hope, it is very difficult to express the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and live out our Christian lives in a genuine way.

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13.

... whom you, having been given the true word, the good news of your salvation, and through your faith in him, were given the sign of the Holy Spirit of hope, Ephesians 1:13.

Hope is central in God's plan of redemption

Before the foundation of the world God planned for us to have fellowship with Him. The Bible from beginning to end shows how He brought this about:

Creation - fall - need for redemption due to the fall - promise of redemption - incomplete redemption through law and sacrifice - promise of Messiah - complete redemption through the Cross – full restoration in eternity.

Hope is central at every stage.

... in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time. Titus 1:2

We wait in hope for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. In Him our hearts rejoice, for we trust in His holy name. May your unfailing love be with us, Lord, even as we put our hope in You. Psalm 33:20-22

Again, Isaiah says, "There will be the root of Jesse, He who arises to rule over the Gentiles; in Him the Gentiles will hope." Romans 15:12

Which is that the Gentiles have a part in the heritage, and in the same body, and in the same hope in Christ through the good news. Ephesians 3:6

There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called. Ephesians 4:4

... because of the hope which is laid up for you in the heavens, of which you heard before in the word of the truth of the Good News. Colossians 1:5

Our blessed hope

... while we wait for the blessed hope - the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Titus 2:13

Our hope, and the hope of all God's people who have gone before, will one day be fulfilled. As the culmination of God's redemption, He will fellowship with His people for eternity in a new heavens and a new earth. Isaiah 65:17, 2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1.

This will be the fulfilment of all that God planned when He created the universe and placed people on the earth. What a blessed hope!

And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. Revelation 21:3

Case study: Jonah – a man who lost and regained hope a number of times. See Jonah Chapters 1-4.

Jonah was a prophet, some 800 years before Christ. The story of how he disobeyed God, and then came to his senses in the belly of a great fish is well known. What is less well known is that Jonah then obeyed God and preached in the big city of Nineveh. When the people repented Jonah got angry with God for sending him all the way to Nineveh then not bringing judgement on its people. Jonah lost his hope many times during this adventure, especially when he refused to obey God or when he wouldn't trust God. Then, when he put his trust in the Lord and did what God wanted, Jonah's hope returned.

Jonah's ups and downs in hopefulness seem pretty typical for Christians today. The good news is that God was faithful to Jonah, as He is to us, and when Jonah obeyed the Lord, he experienced great blessing. Nothing has changed!

In this study we have seen that our Christian hope is based on strong faith in the Lord, and on living our lives trusting and obeying Him. In a world of hopelessness how wonderful that Christians can stand firm in hope, knowing that our lives are built on Christ the solid rock.

For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future". Jeremiah 29:11