

Truth - As viewed from the Tanakh

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Truth is the one English word which is most used when it comes to religions. You hear statements like. We have the truth and they don't. I am seeking truth. Even some organization use truth in their name. With all this focus on truth, what do the Hebrew words mean that are translated as truth in the Tanakh.

There are 3 words in Hebrew, which are translated in English as truth. When we think of the word truth we think of a set of principles or facts that make what we believe as being true. But is this really what these Hebrew words mean. Today we will look at each of these terms and see what their meanings are and whether it matches our conceptions of the word we use "Truth".

The First word is Emet. (Aleph-Mem-Tav) (571, BDB pg. 54) which is a noun. It is the contracted form of the next word.

The Second word is Emunat (Aleph-Mem-Nun-Thav) (530, BDB pg. 53) which is also a noun. Which is from the next word.

The Third word is Amen (Nun-Sofit-Mem-Aleph) (543, BDB pg. 53) that is an adverb. It is translated as Verily, Truly.

In examining the first word Emet. We see the following usages for this word in English.

Bereshit/Genesis 24:27

27 and said: Blessed be YHVH, Elohey of my lord Avraham, who has not relinquished his faithfulness **and his trustworthiness** (va'amito **אֱמֶתוֹ**) from my lord! While as for me, YHVH has led me on the journey to the house of my lord's brothers!

This is a form of truth.

Bereshit/Genesis 24:48-49

48 and in homage I bowed low before YHVH, and blessed YHVH, Elohey of my lord Avraham, who led me on the **true** (emet **אֱמֶת**) journey to take the daughter of my lord's brother for his son. 49 So now, if you wish to deal faithfully **and truly** (ve'emet **וְאֱמֶת**) with my lord, tell me, and if not, tell me, that I may (know to) turn right or left.

Avraham's servant give credit to Yehovah that he is the Elohim of Truth.

Bereshit/Genesis 32:11

11 Too small am I **for all** the faithfulness **and trust** (**umikol haemet** **וּמִכֹּל-הָאֱמֶת**) that you have shown your servant. For with only my rod did I cross this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.

It was a true thing he saw in his eyes.

Bereshit/Genesis 42:16

16 Send one of you to fetch your brother, while (the rest of) you remain as prisoners. Thus will your words be tested, whether there **is truth** (**haemet** **הָאֱמֶת**) in you or not- as Pharaoh lives, indeed, you are spies!

Check whether you are true in what you say.

Bereshit/Genesis 47:29

29 Now when Yisrael's days drew near to death, he called his son Yosef and said to him: Pray, if I have found favor in your eyes, pray put your hand under my thigh- deal with me faithfully **and truly** (**ve'emet** **וְאֱמֶת**): pray do not bury me in Egypt!

A part of making a promise.

Shemot/Exodus 18:19-22 (21)

19 So now, hearken to my voice, I will advise you, so that Elohim may be-there with you: Be-there, yourself, for the people in relation to Elohim. You yourself should have the matters come to Elohim; 20 You should make clear to them the laws and the instructions, you should make known to them the way they should go, and the deeds that they should do; 21 but you-you are to have the vision (to select) from all the people men of caliber, holding Elohim in awe, men of **truth** (**emet** **אֱמֶת**), hating gain, you should set (them) over them as chiefs of thousands, chiefs of hundreds, chiefs of fifties, and chiefs of tens, 22 so that they may judge the people at all times. So shall it be: every great matter they shall bring before you, but every small matter they shall judge by themselves. Make (it) light upon you, and let them bear (it) with you.

The men that the people were to select were men of Truth who were trained to render judgement. These were to be the leaders in Israel.

Shemot/Exodus 34:6-7 (6)

6 And YHVH passed before his face and called out: YHVH YHVH Elohim, showing-mercy, showing-favor, long-suffering in anger, abundant in loyalty **and faithfulness**

(**ve'emet/and truth אמת**), 7 keeping loyalty to the thousandth (generation), bearing iniquity, rebellion and sin, yet not clearing, clearing (the guilty), calling-to-account the iniquity of the fathers upon the sons and upon sons' sons, to the third and fourth (generation)!

Even Elohim deals in mercy and truth.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 13:13-17 (15)

13 When you hear in one of your towns that YHVH your Elohim is giving you to settle in, saying: 14 Men, base-fellows have gone out from among you and have driven-away the settlers of their town, saying: Let us go, let us serve other Elohim-whom you have not known: 15 then you are to inquire, to examine and to investigate well, and (if) here:

the claim is certain (and) **true (emet אמת)** this abomination was (indeed) done in your midst- 16 strike-down, strike-down the settlers of that town with the edge of the sword, devote it to destruction, it and all that is in it, and its animals, with the edge of the sword, 17 and all its booty, you are to gather to the middle of its (town) square, and are to burn with fire the town and all its booty, completely, to YHVH your Elohim; it shall be a mound for the ages, you are not to build (on it) again!

The matter is found to be true.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 17:2-6 (4)

2 When there is found among you, within one of your gates that YHVH your Elohim is giving you, a man or a woman that does what is ill in the eyes of YHVH your Elohim, to cross his covenant, 3 going and serving other Elohim and prostrating oneself to them -to the sun or to the moon or to any of the forces of heaven that I have not commanded, 4 and it is told to you, you are to hear and you are to inquire well, and (if) here: **true (emet**

אמת) and correct is the matter -this abomination was done in Israel- 5 then you are to take out that man or that woman who did this evil thing, (out) to your gates, the man or the woman; you are to stone them with stones, so that they die. 6 On the statement of two witnesses or three witnesses shall the one worthy-of-death be put-to-death; he shall not be put-to-death on the statement of one witness.

Here the truth must be determined or searched for.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 22:20-21 (20)

20 But if this matter was **true (emet אמת)** -there were not found signs-of-virginity on the girl- 21 they are to bring out the girl to the entrance of her father's house and are to stone her, the men of her town, with stones so that she dies, for she has done a disgrace in Israel by playing-the-whore in her father's house. So you shall burn out the evil from your midst!

Agin the matter is searched out to whether it is true or not.

Yehoshua/Joshua 2:12-14

12 Now, since I have shown loyalty to you, swear to me by YHVH that you in turn will show loyalty to my family. Provide me with a reliable sign (ot emet **אות אמת**)

13 that you will spare the lives of my father and mother, my brothers and sisters, and all who belong to them, and save us from death.” 14 The men answered her, “Our persons are pledged for yours, even to death! If you do not disclose this mission of ours, we will show you **true (ve’emet ואמת)** loyalty when YHVH gives us the land.”

We act in a way with is true to our word. In verse 14 actually says “chased ve’emet” – mercy and truth.

Yehoshua/Joshua 24:14-15

14 “Now, therefore, revere YHVH and serve Him **with undivided loyalty (ube’emet וּבְאֵמֶת)**; put away the Elohims that your forefathers served beyond the Euphrates and in Egypt, and serve YHVH. 15 Or, if you are loath to serve YHVH, choose this day which ones you are going to serve—the Elohims that your forefathers served beyond the Euphrates, or those of the Amorites in whose land you are settled; but I and my household will serve YHVH.”

Truth used in a form to show faithfulness which is similar to emunnah.

Tehillim/Psalm 15

1 A psalm of David. LORD, who may sojourn in Your tent, who may dwell on Your holy mountain? 2 He who lives without blame, who does what is right, and in his heart acknowledges the **truth (emet אמת)**; 3 whose tongue is not given to evil; who has never done harm to his fellow, or borne reproach for [his acts toward] his neighbor; 4 for whom a contemptible man is abhorrent, but who honors those who fear YHVH; who stands by his oath even to his hurt; 5 who has never lent money at interest, or accepted a bribe against the innocent. The man who acts thus shall never be shaken.

In his words he states things truly.

Tehillim/Psalms 19:9-12

9 The precepts of YHVH are just, rejoicing the heart; the instruction of YHVH is lucid, making the eyes light up. 10 The fear of YHVH is pure, abiding forever; the judgments of YHVH are **true (emet אמת)**, righteous altogether, 11 more desirable than gold, than much fine gold; sweeter than honey, than drippings of the comb. 12 Your servant pays them heed; in obeying them there is much reward.

The words of Yehovah are true.

Mishlei/Proverbs 3:1-8

1 My son, do not forget my teaching, But let your mind retain my commandments; 2 For they will bestow on you length of days, Years of life and well-being. 3 **Let fidelity and steadfastness (chesed ve'emet אמת וחסד)** not leave you; Bind them about your throat, Write them on the tablet of your mind, 4 And you will find favor and approbation In the eyes of Elohim and man. 5 Trust in YHVH with all your heart, And do not rely on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths smooth. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear YHVH and shun evil. 8 It will be a cure for your body, A tonic for your bones.

Mercy and Truth are to be how we order our lives.

Yeshiyahu/Isaiah 38:1-8

1 In those days Hezekiah fell dangerously ill. The prophet Isaiah son of Amoz came and said to him, "Thus said YHVH: Set your affairs in order, for you are going to die; you will not get well." 2 Thereupon Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to YHVH. 3 "Please, O LORD," he said, "remember how I have walked before You

sincerely (be'emet באמת) and wholeheartedly, and have done what is pleasing to You." And Hezekiah wept profusely.

4 Then the word of YHVH came to Isaiah: 5 "Go and tell Hezekiah: Thus said YHVH, the Elohim of your father David: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears. I hereby add fifteen years to your life. 6 I will also rescue you and this city from the hands of the king of Assyria. I will protect this city. 7 And this is the sign for you from YHVH that YHVH will do the thing that He has promised: 8 I am going to make the shadow on the steps, which has descended on the dial of Ahaz because of the sun, recede ten steps." And the sun[’s shadow] receded ten steps, the same steps as it had descended.

Here Melekh Hiz'qi'yahu (King Hezekiah) reminds Yehovah of how he lived his life and he is merciful to him.

Let us look at Emunah

Shemot/Exodus 17:12

12 Now Moshe's hands are heavy; so they took a stone and placed it under him, and he sat down on it, while Aharon and Hur supported his hands, one on this-side and one on that-side. So his hands remained **steadfast (emunah אֱמוּנָה)**, until the sun came in.

Devarim/Deuteronomy 32:3-4

3 For the name of YHVH I proclaim, give greatness to our Elohim! 4 The Rock, whole-and-perfect are his deeds, for all his ways are just. A Elohim **steadfast (emunah אֱמוּנָה)**, (with) no corruption, equitable and upright is he.

Tehillim/Psalms 33:4-5

4 For the word of YHVH is right; His every deed is **faithful (be'emunah בְּאֱמוּנָה)**. 5 He loves what is right and just; the earth is full of YHVH's faithful care.

Tehillim/Psalms 40:10

10 I proclaimed [Your] righteousness in a great congregation; see, I did not withhold my words; O LORD, You must know it. 11 I did not keep Your beneficence to myself; I declared Your faithful deliverance; I did not fail to speak of Your steadfast love in a great congregation.

Mishlei/Proverbs 12:17

17 He who testifies faithfully tells the truth, But a false witness, deceit.

Mishlei/Proverbs 28:20

20 A dependable man will receive many blessings, But one in a hurry to get rich will not go unpunished.

The third word is Amen.

Bamidbar/Numbers 5:20-22 (22)

20 But you, if you strayed under your husband('s authority), if you made-yourself-tamei, and a man gave you his emission, other than your husband: 21 the priest is to have the woman swear the oath curse, and the priest is to say to the woman: may YHVH make you a curse and a cause-for-oath in the midst of your kinspeople, when YHVH makes your thigh fall and your belly flood; 22 may this Water of Bitterness enter your innards, to cause the belly to flood and the thigh to fall! And the woman is to say: Amen! Amen! (

אָמֵן אָמֵן)

Devarim/Deuteronomy 27:14

14 And all the Levites are to speak up and say to every man of Israel, (with) voice raised: 15 Damned be the man who makes a carved-image or molten-thing, an abomination to YHVH, made by the hands of an engraver, and sets (it) up in secret! And all the people

are to speak up and say: Amen! אָמֵן

16 Damned be he that insults his father or his mother! And all the people are to say:

Amen! אָמֵן

17 Damned be he that moves back the territory-marker of his neighbor! And all the people are to say: Amen! אָמֵן

18 Damned be he that leads-astay a blind-person in the way! And all the people are to say: Amen! אָמֵן

19 Damned be he that casts aside the case of a sojourner, an orphan, or a widow! And all the people are to say: Amen! אָמֵן

20 Damned be he that lies with the wife of his father, for he has exposed the skirt of his father! And all the people are to say: Amen! אָמֵן

21 Damned be he that lies with any animal! And all the people are to say: Amen! אָמֵן

22 Damned be he that lies with his sister, the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother! And all the people are to say: Amen! אָמֵן

23 Damned be he that lies with his mother-in-law! And all the people are to say: Amen! אָמֵן

24 Damned be he that strikes down his neighbor in secret! And all the people are to say: Amen! אָמֵן

25 Damned be he that takes a bribe, (thus) striking-down a life (through) innocent blood!

And all the people are to say: Amen! אָמֵן

26 Damned be he that does not fulfill the words of this Instruction, to observe them! And

all the people are to say: Amen! אָמֵן

Nehemyah/Nehemia 5:12-13

12 They replied, “We shall give them back, and not demand anything of them; we shall do just as you say.” Summoning the priests, I put them under oath to keep this promise.

13 I also shook out the bosom of my garment and said, “So may Elohim shake free of his household and property any man who fails to keep this promise; may he be thus

shaken out and stripped.” All the assembled answered, “Amen, (אָמֵן)” and praised YHVH.

The people kept this promise.