Melissa Briggs MA, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, has been teaching Hebrew in the UK for more than five years.

Tikvah תִּקְוָה

Cling to Hope

Israel's devotion to hope is truly awe-inspiring. What would a people ravaged by millennia of persecution and exile choose as their national anthem? What hymn would the Survivors of the Holocaust choose to sing? No one would have blamed them for lamenting as Ezekiel did:

*"our bones are dried up; our hope (**tikvah**) is lost" (Ezekiel 37:11).* But, remarkably, the collective heart song of the Jewish people instead declares: *"Our hope is NOT yet lost, our hope of two thousand years, to be a free nation in our Land, the Land of Zion and Jerusalem".*

The words to this anthem, *"Ha-**Tikvah**"*, were written in 1878, seventy years before their long-awaited hope was finally realised. The hope that the Jewish People had placed in their faithful God and in His promise to replant them in their homeland, was a hope firmly planted in truth: *"And there is hope (**tikvah**) in your end, says the LORD, that your children shall come again to their own border" (Jeremiah 31:17).*

"Ha-Tikvah" means "the hope" in Hebrew. ***"Tikvah"*** תִּקְוָה is an expectant waiting for a desired outcome. It derives from the Hebrew verb ***qavah*** קָוָה which means to gather together, wait for, hope for, or bind (by twisting) together. While the idea of hope in English is abstract, this Hebrew root word for hope offers a more concrete visual of hope as an ever-strengthening rope as fibres are collected and then twisted together. A thin thread may be faster and simpler to make than a shipyard-standard rope, but it certainly would not hold up under pressure. To make a durable, useful rope the process of binding and twisting many threads together is essential.

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In light of its link to ***qavah, tikvah*** also has a secondary, more literal meaning of a "cord". In fact, Rahab's scarlet cord, a beautiful symbol of the hope of salvation, was called a ***tikvah*** in Hebrew (*Joshua 2:18*). Another Hebrew word from the same root is ***qaveh*** קָוֶה which similarly means a (measuring) cord that can be used for binding (*Jeremiah 31:39*).

As we hope and wait upon the Lord for His direction, His timing, and His action, our faith and character can be built-up: *"But they that hope/wait expectantly (**qavah**) upon the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31).*

Our microwave-oven, instant-gratification culture has taught us that waiting is a waste, but the Hebraic viewpoint values the process and outcome of expectantly waiting. Unlike English, "wait" and "hope" are used interchangeably in Hebrew (see Psalm 130:5-6). The Biblical mind-set views circumstances that require waiting on the Lord as immensely valuable. They offer an opportunity to exercise the fruit of the Spirit and for the Lord to slowly transform and build our character to become increasingly like Jesus: *"… We also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:3-5).*

In the English language we casually use the word "hope" with the down-graded meaning of a wishful thought or desire: "I hope it doesn't rain this weekend"; "I hope he makes the football team"; "I hope to see you again soon". This can cloud our understanding of Biblical ***tikvah***, which in contrast, is a guaranteed assurance that if the Lord says it will come to pass, then it will do so. *"Surely there is a future, and your hope (**tikvah**) will not be cut off" (Proverbs 23:18).* Cling to Biblical hope like the sturdy rope that it is!

We may not know the details of how and when, but the substance of our hope is secure and firm. Hope is summed up in the person of our Lord Jesus the Messiah. He is our hope incarnate and He will not fail. But let us steer away from the dangerous temptation of offering false hope—to ourselves or to one another—in the form of unfounded "assurances" that contradict or go beyond what the Scriptures say. *"My soul, you wait only upon God; for my expectation (**tikvah**) is from him" (Psalm 62:5).*

Hope is a gift that God has given His children. Hope comforts us in our sorrows, fills us with courage to face our daily walk, and envisions us for the future. Hope is freely available, though it is a choice. It requires the investment of knowledge and trust. To have true hope is to abide in Him as we actively await and anticipate the Lord to do what He has promised to do. We can reject the lies that we are helpless and hopeless, and choose instead to believe His truth, to obey His commandments, and to claim His promises. Then hope has fertile soil in which to grow and flourish in our lives.

*"For you are my hope (**tikvah**), O LORD God: you are my trust from my youth" (Psalm 71:5).*

May we be like the *"prisoners of the **tikvah**" (Zechariah 9:12)* —inseparable from our hope. And may we be like Abraham who grasped firmly to hope amidst great trials, even when all the odds seemed stacked against him in "impossible" situations: *"For when God made a promise to Abraham….after he had **patiently endured**, he obtained the promise….[so] we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to **lay hold of the hope** set before us. **This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast**… (Hebrews 6:13-19 condensed).*