THE NEW SHOFAR

Grant me, O Lord my God, a mind to know you, a heart to seek you, wisdom to find you, conduct pleasing to you, faithful perseverance in waiting for you and a hope of finally embracing you. Amen **Thomas Aquinas**

Doubting Thomas

Hebrew origins of the verb "to believe"

In the Hebrew language, the ideas of "belief," "trust," and "faith" are not separated as they often are in English theological discourse. They are unified through a single linguistic root: A-M-N. From this root come the words: *EMUNAH: **Faith** EMUN: **Trus**t AMEN: **A declaration of trust, belief, or affirmation***. So, when a Hebrew speaker ends a prayer with "Amen," they are saying, "I trust," or "I affirm this to be true." To have *EMUNAH* in someone or something is to both believe it to be true and to actively trust it with our very lives. It is a lived posture. We do not merely think faith; we walk it, breathe it, embody it. *EMUNAH* means relational trust that manifests itself in action.

Faith as Trust, Not Intellectual Proof

In modern Western Christianity, faith is often presented as intellectual belief—affirming theological propositions as true. But biblical *EMUNAH* is richer than this. Its not about agreeing with a creed; its about trusting the Creator with your very breath. This is why Paul quotes Habakkuk in Romans 1:17: *The righteous shall live by EMUNAH.* This does not mean that people are saved merely because they agree with a doctrinal checklist presented to them from a leaflet. It means that they live out their relationship with God in faithful trust.

The Role of Faith in Salvation

Jews believe that their place in the covenant and in the world to come was secured by God's loving grace. Their works were not to earn salvation but to live a blessed life and to honour the covenant. What matters is (1) being part of the covenant community and (2) remaining faithful. Faith in Jesus as Messiah was thus the continuation and the climax of this Jewish *faith* tradition. To say, I believe in Jesus" means: *I entrust myself to this person Jesus, this Son of David, this Anointed One, who embodies God's salvation*.

Faith That Grows

Faith is not binary. It grows, shifts, bends, and reforms. Peter's faith was something of a roller coaster. One day he said, *"You are the Christ,"* and the next day he denied knowing Jesus. Yet Jesus never disowned him. Instead, He reinstated him in a leadership ministry among the other Apostles. This is *faith-fulness* from God's side. He is faithful even when we are not. As Paul writes: *If we are not faithful, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.* (2 Timothy 2:13) EMUNAH, biblical faith is not about having perfect faith. Its about holding onto the One who is perfectly faithful. Its not about never doubting. Its about returning after we do.

EMUNAH and the Covenant Relationship

In Hebrew thought, *EMUNAH* is not merely intellectual assent but a covenantal loyalty. This is not just believing in God like we believe in gravity—its trusting Him with our life, aligning ourself to His heart, His ways, and His promises. *EMUNAH* calls us to respond to God not with intermittent belief but with lifelong allegiance. In the Old Testament, covenantal language speaks of God's relationship with His people. When He called Israel His "bride,"

He was expressing a relationship founded not just on law but on faithfulness—on mutual *EMUNAH*. He was loyal to them, even when they were unfaithful. And in response, He desired a people whose trust in Him was not merely theological, but deeply relational.

This is why, when Israel abandoned God for idols, it was not described merely as "bad behaviour" but as "adultery!" The prophets do not accuse Israel of breaking rules—they accuse her of breaking trust (*EMUN*). God longed not simply for religious observance but for renewed *EMUNAH*—a return to trust, to fidelity, to intimacy.

The Faith of Jesus

In Christian theology, we often speak of "faith in Jesus." But the New Testament also speaks of the "faith of Jesus." In Greek, that phrase can be translated either as "faith in Christ" or "the faithfulness of Christ." Both are true. Jesus had *EMUNAH* too. He trusted His Father—even unto death. In Gethsemane, He wrestled with fear and anguish, even asking for the cup to pass. And yet, He entrusted Himself to the Father's will. This was *EMUNAH* in its purest form: not cheerful optimism, but courageous trust in the face of suffering. This means that our salvation does not merely depend on our ability to have perfect faith—it depends on the perfect faithfulness of Jesus. When our *EMUNAH* falters, His does not.

Faith Expresses Itself in Action

Only God saves. It means that real *EMUNAH*—like real love—manifests in visible ways. James, who wrote *"faith without works is dead"* (James 2:17), was arguing against a hollow faith—a faith that lives in the head but never reaches the hands. Real EMUNAH leads to transformation. It opens our hearts. It gives. It forgives. It obeys. It loves sacrificially. Not out of fear of punishment, but out of trust in the One who is good. Always good.

Faith and Faithfulness

In Hebrew, *EMUNAH* is not just belief—it is fidelity. God is the one who never gives up, never lets go, never walks away. God is faithful even when we are not. He keeps His promises. He pursues us when we run. He builds us up when we fall apart. He forgives seventy times seven. Faith in the Bible is not merely what we believe. Its who we trust. And ultimately, its who we become. As we grow in *EMUNAH*, we become more faithful. More trustworthy. More like God.

EMUNAH also invites us to rest. Too many religious people live in anxiety—unsure if we have done enough, prayed enough, believed enough. But *EMUNAH* says: trust Him. He will not let you go. His grip is stronger than yours. Our salvation is not held up by our performance, but by His promise. *Come to me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.* (Matthew 11:28) This is the rest of *EMUNAH*. Not a lazy kind of rest, but a deep confidence in the faithfulness of God. We are safe in God's hands. We do not need to climb to heaven; heaven has come to us. We do not need to prove our worth; our worth was vindicated at the cross. We can breathe. We can rest. We can rejoice. We are His. And He is faithful.

Thomas had problems in believing when the message came to him from the Apostles. He finally believed when he encountered Jesus personally, and that it the nature of true Faith. It is a relationship growing out of trust, knowing that God, from the very beginning of all things has proved himself to be reliable and faithful. Always has been. Always will be. It is on that certainty that the Christian life is lived out.