

## **“Maturity” and “Accountability” are NOT in the Bible**

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Did that statement surprise you? It did me. Recently, I was told that it was not appropriate to speak or teach about “maturity” because it isn’t in the Bible. Last week I was told that accountability is a “therapist word” that isn’t a Biblical concept. Words often associated with personal growth or counseling are apparently suspect. If a teacher of the Word uses personal growth/counseling language, some say it destroys their credibility, and conversely, in a secular setting we know that sometimes Scriptural terminology discredits a professional speaker. This viewpoint would be evidence of the kind of **either/or-- black/white** thinking that is indicative of our general western world view and quite different from the Hebraic form of block logic— **both/and--** found in the Scriptures.

**If true**, these statements would essentially invalidate all that I have known to be necessary as people walk through life, work through emotional and experiential trauma, and grow in faith. Apparently those of us who deal with both might as well hang up our mentoring and shepherding “hats”! While it is true that the KJV does not include either of these words, it is also true that **the concepts are not only present, but foundational** to our call as those who follow the God of Jacob and His Son, our Messiah Yeshua ben David.

I would prefer to think that the people who have spoken these things are in the minority and simply are ill-informed. Or perhaps it could be that they are just rather concrete in their thinking, unable to consider abstract concepts. Some people reject concepts like maturity and accountability because they see them as “psychology-based” and thus invalid, maybe even demonic! Perhaps the most troubling of all are those who do know that these concepts are crucial to our faith walk and heartily support them... **until** they come face to face with personal accountability or maturity issues. Then, suddenly, they are no longer valid or Scriptural... or really perhaps just inconvenient?

It is true that the KJV does not include these specific words. It must be remembered that every English Bible is a translation from the original languages. Both concepts **are** present. ESV and NIV both **do** use words like “mature” and “maturity” but someone who believes that only the KJV is a true translation may reject that. Very briefly stated, accountability has to do with integrity, yieldedness to appropriate authority, letting “your yes be yes and your no be no,” among other things (*Mathew 5:37*). As for maturity, being “made perfect” is one way English

translators have dealt with that concept (*Deut. 18:13, 1 Kings 8:61, Mathew 19:21, 2 Cor. 13:11, Phil. 3:15, 2 Ti 3:17, James 1:4*). The Hebrew word, *Tamiym* (*Strong's # 8459*), is used of sacrificial animals as well as of people. It has to do with completion, wholeness, soundness, maturity, and is a study in itself! This is what Paul was aiming for when he encouraged people to be perfect, without spot or blemish, as the Bride awaiting our Groom (*Eph. 5:27*). We will never be “perfect” in the usual English sense of “without error” but as we draw near to our Messiah and are renewed by the transforming of our minds, we do move toward fullness, completion and wholeness!

The Hebraic context of Scripture is very functionally based in observable things, particularly every aspect of nature and growing things. If maturity, which implies growth, were not a “Biblical concept,” it would be odd indeed that our inerrant, infallible, God-Breathed Word so consistently uses agricultural examples, wouldn't it? This is one of the many “types” or metaphors seen throughout Scripture. We learn of the Seed of the Woman who will overcome the adversary almost immediately. Later in the parables, Yeshua told us about different kinds of faith using the metaphor of the seed, including the “weed seeds” sown by the enemy! We yearn to be like a tree firmly planted, like the Cedars of Lebanon, to abide in the Vine as His Branches, of the One Who is the Branch from the stump of Jesse... you get the picture. At the same time, we want to be a strong straight tree rather than a twisted one, which is seen in the Hebrew word for counsel being “*Etzah*” from a root word “*etz*” meaning “trees.” It is the wise firm leading of the elders, those more mature, that is compared to a straight tall tree. A sapling could never bear the strain nor should we expect it to! (You may enjoy my PowerPoint study on “*Of Men and Trees*” to be found at our website.)

Those who most recently questioned my use of these terms are not ill-informed. One of them has a degree in Bible studies and the other is developing a reputation as an international Bible teacher. In other situations, people have been taught very plainly that the only true “type” is one that the text specifically identifies (i.e. Adam/Messiah), and any other metaphor is suspect. This limitation is in itself reinforced in those who have difficulty thinking abstractly. By way of example, children's brains are geared to more concrete thinking. The ability to comprehend abstract concepts is connected in many ways with physical brain maturation. Also, some people simply are concrete thinkers and no matter their age will not be able to easily appreciate abstractions and metaphors. Many people have yet to learn how to do –and are intimidated by– word studies getting beyond the many translation issues that always prove a challenge when trying to fully convey meaning through a different language.

For those who reject all psychological sounding information, I have great empathy. Most of my graduate school study materials are long gone as I recognized how little value they were and

indeed, often misleading. Yet it is true that our Creator designed us with mind, will and emotions, in His image. There are helpful things to be learned from the study of them, concepts that we need to pay attention to, taking care of “our part” of the sanctification process even as we trust Him to do “His part.” (*Barb’s Hand Teaching PowerPoint* is a brief presentation on this aspect. *The Life Model* materials and Cloud and Townsend’s materials are among the best examples I know.)

But those who recognize and acknowledge these concepts as valid for everybody else, excusing themselves, are a matter of grave concern. I’d say Yeshua spoke of them as people who honor Him with their lips but whose hearts are far from Him (*Isaiah 29:13; Mathew 15:8, Mark 7:6*).

We are called to be the Priesthood of all Believers in Messiah Yeshua but we are not all yet ready to be in that capacity. The author of Hebrews was among those who spoke of the need for maturity and the need to grow past the basic understandings of our faith. Having been renewed by the transforming of our minds, we mature and are able to know how to hold ourselves and others accountable.

*But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil.*

**Hebrews 5:14 ESV**

*You will find many articles on the importance of personal growth, maturity and accountability in the Body of Messiah at our website. [www.set-apart-ministries.org](http://www.set-apart-ministries.org)*