

Hebrew Words For Integrity

There are three Hebrew words which relate to integrity. These are “tamim”, “tom” and “tam”.

In the context of humans being blameless before God, the Hebrew word “tamim” means “sound, wholesome, unimpaired, innocent, having integrity”.¹ “Tamim” is used in Genesis 6:9, 17:1, Deuteronomy 18:13, 32:4, 2 Samuel 22:24, 22:26, 22:31, 22:33, Job 12:4, Psalm 15:2, 18:23, 18:25 (twice), 18:30, 18:32, 37:18, 84:11, 101:2, 101:6, Proverbs 2:21, 11:5, 11:20, 28:10, 28:18 and Amos 5:10.

“Tamim” is used in Deuteronomy 32:4, 2 Samuel 22:31 and Psalm 18:30 in relation to God’s perfection. But when used in relation to humans, “tamim” does not mean sinless perfection. In Genesis 6:9, Noah is said to be “tamim” or “blameless” or “having integrity” in his generation. But Noah sinned by getting drunk (see Genesis 9:21). He was therefore not permanently sinlessly perfect. Noah was justified by God’s grace through faith (see Genesis 6:8, 6:9 and Hebrews 11:7).

The Hebrew word “tom” means “integrity”² in Genesis 20:5, 20:6, 1 Kings 9:4, Psalm 7:8, 25:21, 26:1, 26:11, 41:12, 78:72, 101:2, Proverbs 2:7, 10:9, 10:29, 13:6, 19:1, 20:7 and 28:6.

The Hebrew word “tam” means “complete, morally innocent, having integrity” in the context of Job 1:1, 1:8, 2:3, 8:20, Psalm 37:37 and Proverbs 29:10.³

Job 1:1 records Job was blameless. In Job 1:8 and 2:3, God declares Job was blameless. In Job 7:20-21 and 14:16-17, Job admits he had sinned. In Job 42:6, Job confirms his own sinfulness: ***“Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.”*** It is therefore obvious being blameless before God does not mean permanent sinless perfection.

At first, Job could not understand why God willingly permitted someone like him who was blameless before God to suffer (see Job 9:22 and 12:4). He did not realize God is not obligated to bless the blameless in the form of totally merited rewards. Because the blameless have sinned, they deserve immediate physical death and eternal separation from God. But in His grace and mercy, God forgives the blameless and blesses them.

¹ Brown, Driver and Briggs, pages 10-11.

² Ibid, page 1070.

³ Ibid, page 1071.