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Summary

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◀ 160. ahabah ▶

Lexical Summary

ahabah: Love

Original Word: אַהַבָּה

Part of Speech: Noun Feminine

Transliteration: ahabah

Pronunciation: ah-hah-VAH

Phonetic Spelling: (a-hab-aw)



1. love

Strong's Exhaustive Concordance

love

Feminine of ['ahab](#) and meaning the same -- love.

see HEBREW ['ahab](#)

NAS Exhaustive Concordance

Word Origin

from [aheb](#)

Definition

love (noun)

NASB Translation

love (28), lovesick* (2), lovingly (1).

NAS Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible with Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries
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Brown-Driver-Briggs

אהבה **noun feminine love** (= Infinitive of אהב q. v.) — absolute א' [Proverbs 10:12](#) 18t.; construct אהבת [Jeremiah 2:2](#) 3t.; suffix אהבתי [Psalm 109:4](#); [Psalm](#)



[Ecclesiastes 9:6](#) — *love*, especially Wisdom Literature & late.

1 human (to human object) absolute [Ecclesiastes 9:1,6](#) (both "" [שׁוֹנֵאָה](#)) so [Proverbs 10:12](#); [Proverbs 15:17](#); compare [Proverbs 27:5](#); see also [Proverbs 17:9](#); of man toward man [Psalm 109:4](#); [Psalm 109:5](#); love for one's self ([נִפְשׁוֹ](#)) [1 Samuel 20:17](#); between man & woman [Songs 2:4,5](#); [Songs 5:8](#); [Songs 8:6,7](#) (twice in verse); [Proverbs 5:19](#) compare also [2 Samuel 1:26](#) ([נְשִׁים א'](#)); personified [Songs 2:7](#); [Songs 3:5](#); [Songs 7:7](#); [Songs 8:4](#); compare figurative use [Songs 3:10](#); of mere sexual desire [2 Samuel 13:15](#); figurative of Jerusalem's love to י' [Jeremiah 2:2](#) ([כְּלוּלַתֶּיִח א'](#)), & of love of adulter. Jesus. [Jeremiah 2:33](#).

2 God's love to his people [Hosea 11:4](#) ([עֲבֹתוֹת א'](#)) [Jeremiah 31:3](#); [Isaiah 63:9](#); [Zephaniah 3:17](#).

אהד (= אחד ? see Thes.)

Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, Unabridged, Electronic Database.

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The noun אָהַבָה ('ahavah) appears roughly forty times in the Old Testament and gathers within itself the full range of “love” in human experience—romantic attraction, covenant loyalty, family affection, devotion to God, and even misplaced or illicit desire. The term bridges Genesis to post-exilic writings, demonstrating that love is neither a late development nor a merely human sentiment but a reality rooted in God’s own character and purposes.

Divine Covenant Love

'Ahavah most often reveals the gracious initiative of the LORD toward His people. Moses reminds Israel that “it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath He swore to your fathers” that He redeemed them from Egypt ([Deuteronomy 7:8](#)). The prophets echo this theme after centuries of rebellion: “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have drawn you with loving devotion” ([Jeremiah 31:3](#)). Hosea dramatizes the same covenant love when the LORD commands the prophet to “love a woman beloved of her companion yet an adulteress, just as the LORD loves the children of Israel” ([Hosea 3:1](#)).

'Ahavah then discloses divine faithfulness that



Though the verb “to love” dominates calls to love God, the noun also portrays genuine devotion flowing back to Him. Ezra records that out of God’s “steadfast love” ([Ezra 7:28](#)) the writer found courage to reform worship. The mutuality of covenant emerges: God loves His people, and they love Him by obedience ([Deuteronomy 10:12-13](#)) and worship ([Psalm 116:1](#), where the noun underlies the personal declaration, “I love the LORD”).

Marriage and Romantic Affection

The first occurrence of 'ahavah concerns Jacob’s seven years of labor for Rachel: they “seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her” ([Genesis 29:20](#)). Song of Solomon elevates marital love to poetic celebration: “Many waters cannot quench love; rivers cannot sweep it away” ([Song of Solomon 8:7](#)). While the book honors physical delight, it frames it within covenant commitment, foreshadowing the New Testament union of Christ and His church ([Ephesians 5:25-32](#)).

Family and Kinship



love motivates discipline ([Proverbs 13:24](#)) and undergirds generational blessing ([1 Kings 3:3](#) records Solomon's early love for the LORD learned from David).

Friendship and Loyal Commitment

David's lament for Jonathan employs 'ahavah to describe covenant friendship: "Your love to me was more wonderful than the love of women" ([2 Samuel 1:26](#)). Such passages portray self-giving camaraderie that strengthens leaders, preserves kingdoms, and models Christ's own statement, "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends" ([John 15:13](#)).

National and Royal Contexts

Queen Sheba credits Israel's stability to divine affection: "Because of the LORD's everlasting love for Israel, He has made you king to carry out justice and righteousness" ([1 Kings 10:9](#)). Royal 'ahavah thus carries ethical demands—kings are to reflect God's love by safeguarding equity and covenant law.

Love Distorted: Idolatry and Lust



love,” becomes violent lust and tragedy ([2 Samuel 13:15](#)). Solomon’s “love” for foreign women ([1 Kings 11:2](#)) leads to idolatry and national division. The prophets indict Israel for loving wage and ritual more than the LORD ([Hosea 9:1](#); [Amos 4:5](#)), underscoring that love severed from God’s holiness becomes destructive.

Wisdom Literature and Ethical Preference

Ecclesiastes contrasts 'ahavah with envy ([Ecclesiastes 9:6](#)), noting that in the grave human passions cease, urging readers to fear God now. Proverbs ties love to righteousness and truth ([Proverbs 20:28](#)), teaching that covenant love and faithfulness guard kings and secure their thrones.

Prophetic and Messianic Trajectory

Isaiah envisions a restored Zion called “Sought After, a city not forsaken” ([Isaiah 62:12](#)), grounded in the LORD’s delighted love. In the Servant Songs, love motivates redemptive suffering ([Isaiah 53](#)), anticipating the Messianic fulfillment in Jesus Christ, in whom divine 'ahavah reaches its climax.



The Septuagint frequently renders 'ahavah with agapē, the primary New Testament word for God's self-giving love ([John 3:16](#); [Romans 5:8](#)). The continuity shows that the gospel does not introduce a new ethic but reveals the fulfillment of long-promised covenant love. Paul quotes the Shema to affirm the comprehensive duty: "Love your neighbor as yourself" ([Romans 13:9](#)), grounding Christian ethics in the same covenant fabric.

Ministry and Discipleship Implications

1. Worship: Recognizing God's "everlasting love" nurtures assurance and gratitude in corporate praise.
2. Preaching: Prophetic texts call congregations to covenant faithfulness, exposing idols that still vie for our love.
3. Pastoral Care: Marital and familial passages equip counseling that upholds lifelong covenant commitment and sacrificial affection.
4. Mission: Divine love motivates outreach—"I have loved you... therefore I have drawn you" ([Jeremiah 31:3](#)) models gracious invitation to the nations.
5. Spiritual Formation: Meditation on 'ahavah trains believers to order loves rightly—God first, neighbor



Representative Occurrences of אהבה

- [Genesis 29:20](#) – Jacob’s service for Rachel
- [2 Samuel 1:26](#) – David mourns Jonathan
- [1 Kings 10:9](#) – Sheba on the LORD’s love for Israel
- [2 Samuel 13:15](#) – Amnon’s perverted desire
- [Psalm 109:4](#) – “In return for my love they accuse me”
- [Proverbs 15:17](#) – Love in the household
- [Song of Solomon 8:6-7](#) – Love stronger than death
- [Isaiah 63:9](#) – Redeeming love in all Israel’s distress
- [Jeremiah 31:3](#) – Everlasting love and drawing grace
- [Hosea 11:4](#) – Cords of human kindness, bands of love

Summary

Throughout the Old Testament, 'ahavah intertwines divine initiative and human response. Whether tender or jealous, steadfast or tragically misdirected, love shapes covenant history, personal relationships, wisdom ethics, and prophetic hope—all culminating in the unfailing love revealed in Jesus Christ and echoed in the church’s life and mission.



he would keep

INT: because loved the LORD and kept

1 Samuel 18:3

HEB: וַיִּדְוֶה בְּרִית בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ אֶת־וְכַפְשׁוֹ׃

KJV: a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

INT: David A covenant loved himself

1 Samuel 20:17

HEB: אֶת־דָּוִד בְּאַהֲבָתוֹ אֶת־כִּי־

NAS: again because of his love for him, because

KJV: again, because he loved him: for he loved

INT: vow David of his love because of his love

1 Samuel 20:17

HEB: אֶת־כִּי־ אַהֲבַת נַפְשׁוֹ אֶהְבֹּ׃

KJV: him: for he loved him as he loved his own soul.

INT: of his love because of his love life loved

2 Samuel 1:26

HEB: מְאֹד נִפְלְאָתָה אַהֲבָתְךָ לִי מֵאַהֲבַת

NAS: pleasant to me. Your love to me was more

KJV: pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful,



[2 Samuel 1:26](#)

HEB: אַהֲבִיתָ לִי מֵאַהֲבַת נָשִׁים:

NAS: wonderful Than the love of women.

KJV: to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.

INT: wonderful your love the love of women

[2 Samuel 13:15](#)

HEB: אֲשֶׁר שָׁנְאָה מֵאַהֲבָהּ אֲשֶׁר אָהָבָהּ

NAS: than the love with which

KJV: her [was] greater than the love wherewith he had loved

INT: which hated the love which had loved

[1 Kings 10:9](#)

HEB: כִּסֵּא יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאַהֲבַת יְהוָה אֶת-

KJV: because the LORD loved Israel

INT: the throne of Israel loved the LORD Israel

[1 Kings 11:2](#)

HEB: דָּבַק שְׁלֹמֹה לְאַהֲבָהּ:

INT: held Solomon love

[2 Chronicles 2:11](#)

HEB: אֶל- שְׁלֹמֹה בְּאַהֲבַת יְהוָה אֶת-



[2 Chronicles 9:8](#)

HEB: ליהוה אלהיך באהבת אלהיך את-

KJV: because thy God loved Israel,

INT: God your God loved your God Israel

[Psalm 109:4](#)

HEB: תחת אהבתי ישטנוני ואני

NAS: In return for my love they act as my accusers;

KJV: For my love they are my adversaries:

INT: return my love act I

[Psalm 109:5](#)

HEB: ישנאה תחת אהבתי:

NAS: for good And hatred for my love.

KJV: for good, and hatred for my love.

INT: and hatred Thahash my love

[Proverbs 5:19](#)

HEB: בכל עת באהבתה תשגה תמיד:

NAS: Be exhilarated always with her love.

KJV: always with her love.

INT: all times her love be exhilarated always

[Proverbs 10:12](#)

HEB: פשעים תכסה אהבה:



Proverbs 15:17**HEB:** אֲרֵחַת יֶרֶק וְאַהֲבָה־ שָׁם מְשׁוֹר**NAS:** where love is Than**KJV:** of herbs where love is, than a stalled**INT:** dish of vegetables love where ox**Proverbs 17:9****HEB:** פֹּשַׁע מִבְּקֵשׁ אַהֲבָה וְשִׁנְיָה בְּדִבָּר**NAS:** seeks love, But he who repeats**KJV:** seeketh love; but he that repeateth**INT:** A transgression seeks love repeats A matter**Proverbs 27:5****HEB:** תּוֹכַחַת מְגֵלָה מֵאַהֲבָה מְסֻתְרֶת:**NAS:** rebuke Than love that is concealed.**KJV:** [is] better than secret love.**INT:** rebuke is open love is concealed**Ecclesiastes 9:1****HEB:** הָאֵלֵהִים גַּם־ אַהֲבָה גַּם־ שִׂנְאָה**NAS:** whether [it will be] love or**KJV:** either love or hatred**INT:** of God whether love or hatred**Ecclesiastes 9:6**

KJV: Also their love, and their hatred,

INT: Indeed their love Indeed their hate

Songs 2:4

HEB: וְדָגְלוּ עָלַי אַהֲבָה:

NAS: And his banner over me is love.

KJV: and his banner over me [was] love.

INT: and his banner over is love

Songs 2:5

HEB: כִּי חֹלֵת אַהֲבָה אָנִי:

KJV: for I [am] sick of love.

INT: Because I sick of love I

Songs 2:7

HEB: תְּעוֹרְרוּ אֶת־הָאַהֲבָה עַד שֶׁתִּחַפֵּץ:

NAS: or awaken [my] love Until

KJV: nor awake [my] love, till he please.

INT: or awaken love Until pleases

Songs 3:5

HEB: תְּעוֹרְרוּ אֶת־הָאַהֲבָה עַד שֶׁתִּחַפֵּץ:

NAS: or awaken [my] love Until

KJV: nor awake [my] love, till he please.

INT: or awaken love Until pleases



KJV: thereof being paved [with] love, for the daughters

INT: interior fitted lovingly the daughters of Jerusalem

40 Occurrences

Strong's Hebrew 160

40 Occurrences

'a·hă·bāh — 11 Occ.

'a·hă·bat — 2 Occ.

'a·hă·bā·tām — 2 Occ.

'a·hă·bā·tə·kā — 1 Occ.

'a·hă·bā·tî — 2 Occ.

bā·'a·hă·bāh — 1 Occ.

bə·'a·hă·bat — 3 Occ.

bə·'a·hă·bā·tāh — 1 Occ.

bə·'a·hă·bā·tōw — 4 Occ.

hā·'a·hă·bāh — 4 Occ.

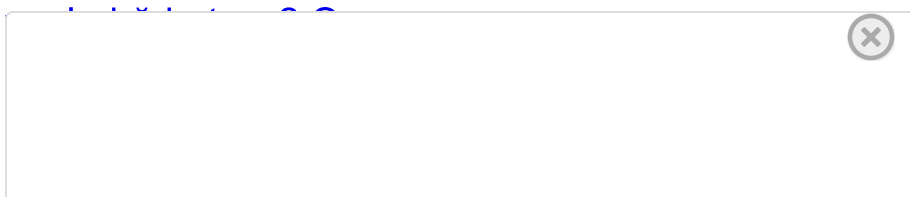
kə·'a·hă·bat — 1 Occ.

lə·'a·hă·bāh — 1 Occ.

mê·'a·hă·bāh — 2 Occ.

mê·'a·hă·bat — 2 Occ.

wə·'a·hă·bāh- — 1 Occ.







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