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Contend Earnestly for the Faith
Jude 3 and Second Peter 1:5-7

Contend for the faith DIG: What did Jude start out to write about? But what did he end up writing about? Why the change? What are the three different kinds of love described in the New Covenant? Which one is used of God's love for us? What does contend for the faith mean to you? What are the seven virtues required to pursue a godly life during the last days?

REFLECT: When was the last time the Holy Spirit stopped you in your tracks and had you change direction on a certain path you were going? How willing were you to change your plans? How do you contend for the faith in your own personal life? Are you always prepared to give an answer for the hope that you have? How are you doing on the seven virtues needed to pursue a godly life during the last days?



God's beloved ones, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend earnestly for the faith that was once for all passed on to God's people (Jude 3).

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith moral excellence; and to moral excellence, full knowledge; and to full knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual

affection, love (2 Peter 1:5-7).

Jude begins to explain **his** original purpose. **God's beloved ones (3a CJB).** By using the word **beloved** is how he, like others, begins a new section. By calling them **God's beloved**, he not only signals the beginning of a new section, but points to the fact that they are believers. **Beloved** is *agapetoi*, a plural adjective, meaning *beloved ones*, that are *divinely-loved ones,* loved by **ADONAI. God's** Word is for **God's** people. It will have little meaning to those who have not been born into **His** family, for **the person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Ruach ha-Kodesh (First Corinthians 2:14).**

How wonderful that we are **loved** by **ADONAI**! There are three words for **love** in the Greek New Covenant. The first is *eros*, which is a passionate *love*, with sensual desires and longing. It is an intimate kind of *love* that thinks of itself. Next is *phileo*, or a human, family kind of *love* **(Matthew 10:37)**. Although it may be passionate and enduring, it may also be fickle and changing.

The other, higher word for **love**, *agapao*, is the one used in **Jude**. It is the word for divine **love**, never changing. It is the **love** of **John 3:16**, a self-sacrificing **love** that thinks of others. How much it means to be the recipients of this kind of *agapao love*, especially when called to pass through **suffering**. **Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of the Messiah, so that you may be overjoyed when His** Sh'khinah **glory is revealed (First Peter 4:12).** This would be an encouragement for believers **in the last days** of apostasy.

Jude's original intent was **to write** to believers about their common **salvation**. **Although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share**, or *koinoneo*, literally *to become a partner*, something happened that changed **his** mind. **The Holy Spirit** impressed upon him that **he** should write about defending the **faith**. **He** wrote: **I felt the necessity to write (3b NASB).** Like Paul, who wrote to the church at Corinth: **For I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel (First Corinthians 9:16b). Jude felt the necessity**, a heavy burden, **to write.** The Greek word for **necessity**, *anagkazo*, means *to necessitate, compel, drive to, constrain*. In fact, *agcho*, the root of the noun can be literally defined as *compressed.* The compulsion to write Jewish believers about

their common **salvation** was curtailed when the overwhelming power of **the Holy Spirit** laid upon his heart **the necessity** of writing in defense of their **faith.** What might have otherwise have been merely a letter from one believer to another became a letter by **the Ruach Ha'Kodesh** to the whole Church, a part of the canon of Scripture.

To you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith (3c NASB). Jude could not resist **appealing** (*parakaleo* meaning *exhorting* or *encouraging*) to his Jewish readers that they should **contend earnestly for the faith.** The word for **contend earnestly**, *epagonizomai*, means *to defend the truth continually and passionately* and is found only here in the B'rit Chadashah. But the same idea is seem in **First Timothy 1:18, may fight the battle well, 6:12, fight the good fight;** and **Second Timothy 4:7,** where Rabbi Sha'ul says: **I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith**. This is where we get the English word *agony* or *agonize*. The Adversary wants to take our **faith** away, and it is our duty to fight so as to defend it and retain it.

The present tense of the infinitive, *epagonizomai*, indicates that the contending has no end. It goes on and on, during our whole lifetime. **Jude** develops the history of the apostasy from the earliest beginnings that crept into the midst of believers to corrupt it, down to its judgment at the Second Coming. The apostasy has come, like cancer, it reaches out and grows. The apostates continue to appear and spread **their** destructive heresies and deny **the Lord Yeshua Messiah**. The battle does not stop, it cannot stop until **He** returns with **His** holy ones.[15] The defense of **the faith** may well be a costly thing; but that defense is a duty which falls on every generation of the Church.

It is interesting that the Greek word for **appealing**, *parakaleo*, is the verb of the noun *parakletos*, applied to **the Holy Spirit** (the *paraclete*) as our **comforting Counselor** in **John 16:7**. The **comforting Counselor** is one called alongside to help. There is, therefore, a sense in which, through this letter, **Jude** is called to our side to help us with counsel and advice in a time of great darkness.

There is an illustration from the TaNaKh of this twofold attitude of the believer toward **the faith**. When **Nehemiah's** men were building the wall of Jerusalem, enemies tried to keep them from doing **God's** work, just as enemies seek to keep us from doing **God's** work today. **Half the men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people who were building the wall.**

Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the shofar stayed with me (Nehemiah 4:16-18).

The parallel in **Jude** is remarkable. On the one hand, we are to be building ourselves up in **the faith**; on the other hand, we are to be **contending earnestly for the faith**. **Nehemiah's** men had **swords** of steel. We have **the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17b)**. As we build for **ADONAI**, we must defend ourselves against our great Adversary and all who are deceived by him into denying our **faith**. Those who labored in **Nehemiah's** day were constantly alert for the sound of **the shofar**. We are listening for **the shofar** of **God**, which will end our struggle against the powers of darkness in this world (see my commentary on **Revelation, to see link click By – The Rapture of the Church**).[16]

Peter tells us how we are to **contend earnestly for the faith.** He says: **Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have (First Peter 3:15).** The phrase, **give an answer,** in the Greek is a technical term for a court of law, speaking of an attorney presenting a verbal defense for his client. This is the duty of all believers. But the intensity of the defense must be adjusted to the intensity of the opposition that comes from the Adversary through the world **(First John 2:15-17)**.[17]

Our contending is to be for **the faith**. **The Holy Spirit** did not use the word *salvation*, or the word ***gospel***. Yes, **faith** concerns our salvation, and it has much to do with **the gospel**, but it is a more inclusive term than either. The word **faith** in Greek has the definite article, meaning it is *the* **faith**, emphasizing the entire B'rit Chadashah. No one passage defines it. **The faith** encompasses **the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27 NASB)**.

What kind of **faith** was it? It **was once for all passed on to God's people (3d CJB).** Consequently, any claim to further revelation in these **last days** is in itself evidence of apostasy. The author to the **Hebrews** drew a similar conclusion when he said that **God has spoken** definitively and conclusively through **His Son in the last days (Hebrews 1:1-2)**. Near the beginning of the Bible, in the heart of **the Word of God**, and on the last page we find warnings against attempting to add to **God's** revelation **(Deut 4:3; Proverbs 30:6** and **Rev 22:18)**.

The idea is that **ADONAI** gave **the faith** to believers as a deposit of truth to be

guarded. It is not something that we have discovered or produced by ourselves, but it goes back to **the LORD Himself** who is **the Giver**, as implied in this context by the passive voice of the participle. It is **God** and **God** alone who has given this **faith**. Just as there is no other **faith** than this, there is also no one else to give it but **ADONAI**.

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith (Second Peter 1:5a). Faith saves, but not if so-called "believers" are merely passive spectators of their path to salvation, for then **they** are **barren and unfruitful** and fail to make **their being called and chosen a certainty (First Peter 1:8** and **10a CJB,** also see **James 2:13-26)**. Instead, **they** deceive themselves into thinking **they** are saved when in fact **they** are not **(Hebrews 6:4-6)**. The Greek verb for **add** is *epichoregeo* and it is the source for the English word *chorus* and *choreography*. It literally means *to gather a chorus.* The only way to be certain one will be able to survive **the last days** of apostasy before **the Lord** returns to gather **His** *chorus* of believers, is first and foremost by being saved **(Second Corinthians 15:3b-4)**, then by letting **ADONAI** act through you as you develop **the seven virtues** required to pursue a **godly** life.[18]

First, moral excellence (Second Peter 1:5b). Peter uses the word *arete,* which was the classical Greek term for virtue. It was an admirable expression of moral heroism, viewed as the divinely given ability to excel in courageous deeds. It came to consist of the most outstanding quality in a person's life, or the excellent fulfillment of a duty **(Philippians 4:8-9)**. *Arete* never meant a life of religious seclusion, but that which is demonstrated in the normal course of living. Sha'ul pursued such **moral excellence** when he said: **I keep pursuing the goal in order to win the prize offered by God's upward calling in the Messiah Yeshua (Philippians 3:14 CJB,** also see Second **Corinthians 5:9; First Thessalonians 4:1** and **10).**

Second, full knowledge (Second Peter 1:5b). Peter is referring to gaining **full knowledge** and **faith** in **Jesus the Messiah**. The more you know about **Him**, the more you will know **Him**, which will **add to your faith.** Thus, this virtue is related to illumination **(Second Corinthians 4:6)**, which is having our mind accurately enlightened about the truth of the Bible **(Colossians 3:10; Titus 1:1; Second Peter 1:3** and **3:18)**, and involves diligent study and meditation on it **(Deuteronomy 11:18; Job 23:12; Psalm 119:97** and **105; John 5:39; Acts 17:11; 2 Timothy 2:15)**, so as to acquire **the mind of Christ (First Corinthians 2:16).**

Third, self-control (Second Peter 1:6a). The Greek word *egkrateia* literally means *holding oneself in* **(Galatians 5:23).** Sha'ul identified **self-control** as one of the fruits of the Spirit **(Galatians 5:23;** also see **First Corinthians 7:9, 9:25; Titus 1:8)**. Genuine knowledge of **Yeshua** can never exist apart from **self-control (First Peter 1:14)**. In contrast to this virtue, the false teachers of every age are characterized by sensuality **(Jude 7; Second Peter 2:2)**; they live for soft and comforting pleasures **(2 Peter 2:13)**, never ceasing to think of adultery, and are enslaved by corruption **(Second Peter 2:14** and **19)**. Due to **your self-control, you** will be able to **add to your faith** during the apostasy.

Fourth, perseverance (Second Peter 1:6b). Believers should add **perseverance** (*hupomone*) to **self-control.** The word **perseverance** or endurance often describes what believers need to exhibit **(Romans 5:3-4; Colossians 1:11; First Thessalonians 1:3-4; First Timothy 6:11; Second Timothy 3:10; Titus 2:2; Hebrews 12:1; James 1:3-4; Revelation 2:2-3, 19).** The need to **persevere** was especially important in the situation **Peter** addressed, for the false teachers were threatening the messianic synagogues and attracting others to follow them **(Second Peter 2:2)**, entangling them in the heresy **(Second Peter 2:20-22). Moral excellence** must be combined with **the full knowledge** of **Yeshua Messiah** and **self control** to be able to **persevere**.[19]

Fifth, godliness (Second Peter 1:7a). At the heart of spiritual pursuit is **godliness**, from the term *eusebeia,* meaning *reverence for God* **(Second Peter 1:3; 3:11; First Timothy 2:2. 6:6; First Corinthians 10:31)**. Rabbi Sha'ul instructed **Timothy** that such reverence toward **ADONAI** is the highest priority because of its eternal **value**. **Godliness, he** wrote, **has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come (First Timothy 4:8**; also see **Acts 2:25-28).**

Sixth, mutual affection (Second Peter 1:7b). Flowing out of the vertical reverence for **ADONAI** in every area of life is the horizontal virtue of **mutual affection. Peter** undoubtedly recalled what **Yeshua** had told the religious leaders of Jerusalem: **One of them, an expert in the Oral Law** (see my commentary on **The Life of Christ Ei – The Oral Law**)**, testing Him with this question, "Rabbi, which is the greatest commandment in the Torah?" Jesus replied: Love ADONAI your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Torah and the Prophets are dependent on these two laws (Matthew 22:35-40).**[20]

Seventh, love (Second Peter 1:7c). Believer's pursuit of **mutual affection** to one another flows from the highest of all virtues – **love**. For those who **love** the **God** of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, **love** for others (especially fellow believers) has always been inseparable from **love** of **the LORD (John 13:34, 15:12; First Thessalonians 4:9; First John 3:23, 4:7, 21)**. This is the familiar *agape*, sacrificial, selfless **love** of the will **(Matthew 5:43-44; Mark 10:21; Luke 6:35; John 14:21, 23; Romans 12:9, 1 Corinthians 8:1; 2 Corinthians 8:8; Galatians 5:13-14; Ephesians 1:15; Philippians 1:9; Colossians 1:4; First Thess 3:6; Hebrews 10:24, 1 John 4:7-12).** Paul said **love** is the goal of instruction in **the faith (1 Timothy 1:5)**. It is **the most excellent way (1 Corinthians 12:31** to **13:13)**, the virtue that sums up all the others **(Colossians 3:14)**. Anyone who **loves** will possess the other virtues **Peter** mentioned.[21] Now **Jude** gives the reason why those messianic believers should **contend earnestly for the faith**. False teachers had crept into **their** midst, as we shall see next.

Aaron (a member of our Beit Knesset) owns a stunning sports car. It's a Viper. It's a thing of beauty. And it has a powerful engine with 10 cylinders. Most of us common folks have cars with 6 and 8 cylinders . . . but this car has TEN cylinders. I'm pretty sure it can take you anywhere you want to go as fast as you'll ever want to go. Well, let's say I come into some money, and I decide to buy Phil's sports car, and he's kind enough to sell it to me. But buying that car just about taps me out. Money gets tight and I have to start cutting some corners. And one of the places I decide to cut corners is in the oil I buy for oil changes. The oil I'm supposed to put in that vehicle begins to look a little too expensive for my budget, so I decide to go down to the grocery store and buy some Wesson cooking oil. I mean – it is oil isn't it? Now, what do you think is going to happen to that car? It'll turn over just once, and then that engine isn't going to be worth much. On the outside it will probably still be a beautiful sports car but on the inside . . . the power of its engine will be destroyed. It will ultimately be unable to take me to the places I want to go. And that is what **God** tells us about **the faith that was once for all passed on to God's people**. If I go changing the oil and putting something in the engine that doesn't belong I might still have a good looking chassis on the outside, but on the inside . . . I'll have destroyed the power that the Church has to help people get where they want to go.[22]