

# Lovingkindness-Definition of Hesed

## LOVINGKINDNESS

### Hesed - Chesed - Heced

- See also on this page - [Definition of Hebrew word - Racham](#)

**Lovingkindness** ([02617](#)) (**Hesed/Chesed/Heced**) is the idea of faithful love in action and often in the OT refers to God's lovingkindness expressed in His covenant relationship with Israel (His "loyal love" to His "Wife" Israel [cp Hos 2:18, 19, 20-see [note](#), Is 54:5, Je 31:32] = His "loyalty to covenant"). God's **hesed** His denotes persistent and unconditional tenderness, kindness, and mercy, a relationship in which He seeks after man with love and mercy (cp God immediately seeking man Ge 3:9, who was immediately hiding Ge 3:8 trying to cover their shame Ge 3:7 - contrast God's lovingkindness manifest by spilling blood to provide skins to cover their shame! Ge 3:21). **Hesed** expresses both God's loyalty to His covenant and His love for His people along with a faithfulness to keep His promises.

As you consider the Hebrew word **hesed**, be aware that versions other than **NAS** often translate hesed as "**mercy**". There is another Hebrew word **racham** (07355) which is also translated "mercy". While the English translations do not always distinguish between **hesed** and **racham**, clearly they are distinct as demonstrated by their use in the same passage (13x in NAS - Ps 25:6 40:11 51:1 69:16 103:4 Isa 54:8 54:10 63:7 Jer 16:5 Lam 3:22 3:32 Ho 2:19 Zec 7:9) for example...

In an outburst of anger I hid My face from you for a moment; but with everlasting**lovingkindness** (hesed) I will have **compassion** (racham) on you," Says the LORD your Redeemer. (Isa 54:8)

For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, But My**lovingkindness** (hesed) will not be removed from you, And My covenant of peace will not be shaken," Says the LORD who has **compassion** (racham) on you. (Isa 54:10)

The LORD'S **lovingkindnesses** (hesed) indeed never cease, For His **compassions** (racham) never fail. (Lam 3:22)

**Comment:** It is intriguing to note the frequent occurrence of **hesed** with "**morning**" - Ps 59:16, Ps 90:14 Ps 92:2, Ps 143:8, Ho 6:4 Lam 3:22, 23. What a great way to start the day - praying for (Ps 17:7) and praising God for His faithful, unailing, steadfast love to His beloved in Christ. (See **Spurgeon's sermon** on Lam 3:22-23 = [The Novelties of Divine Mercy](#))

For if He causes grief, then He will have**compassion** (racham) according to His abundant **lovingkindness** (hesed). (Lam 3:32)

I shall make mention of the **lovingkindnesses** of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has granted them according to His **compassion**, and according to the multitude of His **lovingkindnesses**. (Isa 63:7)

The **Septuagint (LXX)** usually translates **hesed** with the Greek word **eleos** [[word study](#)] (or the related verb **eleeo**) while the Latin Vulgate uses the word *miser cordia* (mercy + heart).

**Vine** writes that...

In general, one may identify three basic meanings of **hesed**, and these 3 meanings always interact -- **strength**, **steadfastness**, and **love**. Any understanding of **hesed** that fails to suggest all three inevitably loses some of its richness. **Love** by itself easily becomes sentimentalized or universalized apart from the covenant. Yet **strength** or **steadfastness** suggests only the fulfillment of a legal (or similar) obligation. **Hesed** refers primarily to mutual and reciprocal rights and obligations between the parties of a relationship (especially Jehovah and Israel). But hesed is not only a matter of obligation but is also of generosity. It is not only a matter of loyalty, but also of mercy. **Hesed** implies personal involvement and commitment in a relationship beyond the rule of law. ([Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words](#)) (Bolding added)

## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COVENANT AND LOVINGKINDNESS

**Hesed** is related to the Biblical of **covenant (definition)** and also to the idea of grace in that **hesed** was (is) extended by God when it was not deserved (in truth **hesed** is never deserved!) God's **hesed** is His persistent, unconditional tenderness, kindness, and mercy, a relationship in which God seeks after man with love and mercy (cp God immediately seeking Adam after he had sinned - Ge 3:6, 7, 8, 9). The counterpart of human **hesed** is pictured in the loving bride (in the OT = Israel = Is 54:5, Je 31:32) who clings to her beloved bridegroom (Jehovah). The initial state of betrothal between God and Israel is the period from Israel's deliverance out of Egypt to the establishment of the covenant at Sinai and it will be fulfilled in the future (Ho 2:18, 19, 20).

**Ralph Davis** in his comments on 2Sa 9:1, 2, 3, 4, 7 writes that in this chapter,

**hesed** (three times, 2Sa 9:1, 3, 7) is the devoted love promised within a covenant; **hesed** is love that is willing to commit itself to another by making its promise a matter of solemn record. So when David mentions **hesed** and 'for Jonathan's sake' we know he is alluding to the sacred commitment Jonathan had asked David to make in 1Sa 20:15: 'And you must not cut off your devoted love (**hesed**) from my house forever, not even when Yahweh cuts off each one of David's enemies from the face of the ground.' And David had gone on oath about that. Now (2Sa 9:1-13) he is preparing to fulfil that pledge. ([Ralph Davis, D. Focus on the Bible: 2 Samuel](#)) (See notes on **Mephibosheth**)

**Comment: See also** association of **covenant** and **hesed** in 1Sa 20:8,9 where David seeks **hesed** based on the fact that he and Jonathan had **cut covenant** - cp first time they cut covenant in 1Sa 18:1, 2, 3, 4 and second time [this time specifically including the descendants] in 1Sa 20:15, 16, 17.

**Davis** commenting on 1 Samuel 20 adds that

**hesed** often has that flavor: it is not merely love, but loyal love; not merely kindness, but dependable kindness; not merely affection, but affection that has committed itself. In our passage then David appeals to Jonathan to treat him with "devoted love." He has reason to believe Jonathan will do so because Jonathan has so promised in a "covenant of Yahweh." Hence the covenant gives him reason to look for and depend upon **hesed**, devoted love. It is crucial, however, to remember that Jonathan's covenant itself was the expression of love, initiated by love (1Sa 18:1, 3). The order is: love gives itself in covenant and gladly promises devoted love in that covenant; the covenant partner then rests in the security of that promise and may appeal to it, as David does here." The text is not merely describing a relation of David and Jonathan; rather, the text is extending its comfort to any Israelite who will receive it. Its message is: In confusion and trouble, you take yourself to the one person who has made a covenant with you. In David's disintegrating world there was yet one space of sanity, one refuge still intact — Jonathan. There was covenant; there David could expect **hesed**. There was kindness in a raw world.

We should not be surprised then when we catch believers in the Bible in the act of doing what David did in 1 Samuel 20: running to the one dependable refuge that remains, to the One who has bound himself to them by covenant and from whom they can expect **hesed**-like treatment (see, e.g., Neh. 1:5; Ps 13:5; 17:7; 25:6, 7). But that **hesed** ultimately flows not from a formal covenant promise but from the very nature of the covenant God, Yahweh, who is "rich in **hesed** and fidelity" (Ex 34:6) (**Note:** It is important to remember that in the context of Exodus 34 Israel had absolutely no claim on Yahweh's **hesed** because they had broken the covenant in the bull-calf worship [Ex 32]. If Israel receives **hesed**, it will only be because it flows from Yahweh's heart — because of what/who he is, "rich in **hesed** and fidelity." Hence **hesed** really passes over into grace [Hebrew = *chen*], which is, as my father used to say, something for nothing — when we don't deserve anything). You will never perish when you fall into the abyss of God's lovingkindness. Ultimately, that is our only recourse. And, of course, the One "rich in **hesed** and fidelity" has come near to his beleaguered people; for if we translate the Hebrew of Exodus 34:6 into Greek and then into traditional English we are facing him who is "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). You seek **hesed** and simply find yourself in the arms of Jesus Christ. Don't forget what David has taught you: in confusion and trouble, you take yourself to the one who has made a covenant with you. He is the only recourse in uncertainty. ([BORROW 1 Samuel Looking on the heart](#))

**R Laird Harrison** writes that...

When we come to the **hesed** of God... God was in covenant relation with the patriarchs and with Israel.

Therefore His hesed can be called covenant hesed without contradiction. But by the same token God's righteousness, judgment, fidelity, etc. could be called covenant judgment, etc.

**NET Note** on **Hesed** in Ruth - The noun חֶסֶד (khesed, "devotion") is a key thematic term in the book of Ruth (see Ru 1:8, Ru 2:20; 3:10). G. R. Clark suggests that חֶסֶד "is not merely an attitude or an emotion; it is an emotion that leads to an activity beneficial to the recipient"; an act of חֶסֶד is "a beneficent action performed, in the context of a deep and enduring commitment between two persons or parties, by one who is able to render assistance to the needy party who in the circumstances is unable to help him—or herself" (The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible [JSOTSup], 267). HALOT 336–337 s.v. חֶסֶד defines the word as "loyalty" or "faithfulness." Other appropriate glosses might be "commitment" and "devotion."

**C Hassell Bullock** writes that...

The moral core of the covenant, however, was described by another word, hesed, a rich concept requiring multiple terms in translation, such as "steadfast love," "lovingkindness," "mercy," "faithfulness," "trustworthiness," and "loyalty." This "trustworthiness" or "loyalty" that characterized God is set down in the ethical centerpiece of the law, the Ten Commandments, where God declares that he will show **hesed** "to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments" (Ex 20:6). In some instances, it (hesed) also carries the idea of compassion (Jer 16:5). Whereas God related to Israel with a **steadfastness of love and compassion**, Israel should also relate to him with the same kind of loving loyalty (**Editorial comment**: Even as would a faithful wife to her loving husband). The prophet Micah (Mic 6:8) articulated it most clearly: "He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy (hesed), and to walk humbly with your God." Thus, at Sinai God spells out his holy and loving character toward Israel and calls Israel to the same kind of holy living and loving loyalty toward him and toward their neighbors. ([God - Baker's Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology - Online - This is an excellent resource!](#)) ([Hardbound book](#))

Some writers feel that **devotion** is one of single best English words one could use to sum up the meaning of the Hebrew word **hesed**. The English word **devotion** describes the state of being ardently dedicated, in love with and loyal to another person. The RSV attempts to bring this out by its translation, **steadfast love** (Play **Don Moen's** beautiful chorus [Your Steadfast Love](#)).

**Vine** adds that...

Biblical usage frequently speaks of someone "doing," "showing," or "keeping" hesed. The concrete content of the word is especially evident when it is used in the plural (eg, La 3:22). God's "mercies," "kindnesses," or "faithfulnesses" are His specific, concrete acts of redemptive love in fulfillment of His covenant promises. An example appears in Isaiah 55:3

And I will make an everlasting **covenant** (beriyth) with you, according to the faithful (aman = 0539 = speaks of certainty) **mercies** (hesed) shown to David.

**Comment**: Note that in this context "**mercies**" is used almost as a synonym for God's covenant promises. Notice also that the use of **hesed** (lovingkindness) and covenant (**beriyth**) emphasizes the close association of God's lovingkindness and His covenant. Here are the other 13 OT verses which use **hesed** and **beriyth** in the same verse - Dt 7:9 Dt 7:12 1Sa 20:8 1 Ki 8:23 2 Chr 6:14 Neh 1:5 Neh 9:32 Ps 25:10 Ps 89:28 Ps 106:45 Isa 54:10 Isa 55:3 Da 9:4.

... The association of hesed with "covenant" keeps it from being misunderstood as mere providence or love for all creatures; it applies primarily to God's particular love for His chosen and covenanted people. "Covenant" also stresses the reciprocity of the relationship; but since God's hesed is ultimately beyond the covenant, it will not ultimately be abandoned, even when the human partner is unfaithful and must be disciplined (Isa. 54:8, 10). Since its final triumph and implementation is eschatological, hesed can imply the goal and end of all salvation-history (Ps. 85:7, 10; 130:7; Mic. 7:20). ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

**Delitzsch** says God's **hesed** is...

the Divine Love condescending to His creatures, more especially to sinners, in unmerited kindness.

Here is love, vast as the ocean,  
**Lovingkindness as the flood,**  
When the Prince of Life, our Ransom,  
Shed for us His precious blood.

Who His love will not remember?  
Who can cease to sing His praise?  
He can never be forgotten,  
Throughout Heav'n's eternal days.

[Here Is Love \(play\)](#)

**Alec Motyer** has described God's **hesed** or covenant love as

combining the warmth of God's fellowship with the security of God's faithfulness.

**Dr Charles Ryrie** writes that...

In the OT, communion, deliverance, enabling, enlightenment, guidance, forgiveness, hope, praise, preservation are all based on God's **hesed**.

**Huey** adds that

**hesed** encompasses deeds of mercy performed by a more powerful party for the benefit of the weaker one.

**Ralph Davis** writes that...

hesed is the devoted love promised within a covenant; hesed is love that is willing to commit itself to another by making its promise a matter of solemn record. (Ralph Davis, D. Focus on the Bible: 2 Samuel)

An act of **hesed** presupposes the existence of a relationship between the parties involved. Where no formal relationship has previously been recognized, the person exercising **hesed** has chosen to treat the recipient as if such a relationship did exist.

**Vine** notes that

Hesed has both God and man as its subject. When man is the subject of checed, the word usually describes the person's kindness or loyalty to another; cf. 2Sa 9:7... Only rarely is the term applied explicitly to man's affection or fidelity toward God; the clearest example is probably Jer 2:2... Man exercises checed toward various units within the community—toward family and relatives, but also to friends, guests, masters, and servants. Hesed toward the lowly and needy is often specified. The Bible prominently uses the term hesed to summarize and characterize a life of sanctification within, and in response to, the covenant. Thus, Ho 6:6 states that God desires "mercy [RSV, "steadfast love"] and not sacrifice" (i.e., faithful living in addition to worship). Similarly, Mic 6:8 features checed in the prophets' summary of biblical ethics: "and what doth the Lord require of thee, but... to love mercy?" Behind all these uses with man as subject, however, stand the repeated references to God's hesed. It is one of His most central characteristics. God's loving-kindness is offered to His people, who need redemption from sin, enemies, and troubles. A recurrent refrain describing God's nature is "abounding/plenteous in hesed" (Ex 34:6; Neh 9:17; Ps 103:8; Jonah 4:2). The entire history of Yahweh's covenantal relationship with Israel can be summarized in terms of checed. It is the one permanent element in the flux of covenantal history. Even the Creation is the result of God's checed (Ps 136:5-9). His love lasts for a "thousand generations" (Dt. 7:9; cf. Dt. 5:10 and Ex 20:6), indeed "forever" (especially in the refrains of certain psalms, such as Ps. 136). ([Vine's Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and New Testament Words](#))

The Hebrew word **hesed** is one of Jehovah's chief attributes. God's loving-kindness (hesed) is offered to His people, who need redemption from sin, enemies, and troubles. A recurrent refrain describing God's nature is **abounding** in hesed (Ex 34:6; Neh 9:17; Ps 103:8; Jonah 4:2, Lam 3:22). Indeed, **hesed** is one of the most important words in the OT, and is often translated in the KJV as "**lovingkindness**" or "**mercy**".

All Depends on Our Possessing

When with sorrow I am stricken,  
Hope my heart anew will quicken,  
All my longing shall be stilled.  
To His **lovingkindness** tender  
Soul and body I surrender;  
For on Him alone I build.

Hesed indicates **faithfulness** to a relationship. To show **kindness** or **hesed** is to act in a loyal, loving way to a person. This is true of kindness in human relationships and of the kindness God shows us. In 2Sa 9:1-13 we see the beautiful example of David showing "hesed" to crippled Mephibosheth, the surviving son of Jonathan with whom David had a covenant relationship.

Then David said, "Is there yet anyone left of the house of Saul, that I may show him **kindness (hesed; Lxx = eleos)** for Jonathan's sake?"... 3 And the king said, "Is there not yet anyone of the house of Saul to whom I may show the **kindness (hesed; Lxx = eleos)** of God?" And Ziba said to the king, "There is still a son of Jonathan who is crippled in both feet."... 6 And Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, came to David and fell on his face and prostrated himself. And David said, "Mephibosheth." And he said, "Here is your servant!" 7 And David said to him, "Do not fear, for I will surely show **kindness (hesed; Lxx = eleos)** (**What does hesed "counter" in this context? Are you fearful? Consider praying David's prayer in Ps 17:7-see note below**) to you for the sake of your father Jonathan, and will restore to you all the land of your grandfather Saul; and you shall eat at my table regularly." (2 Sa 9:1, 3, 6,7)

**Covenant:** This passage clearly shows how a David a man after God's own heart seeks to honor the covenant which he had cut with Jonathan. Jonathan is not longer alive but David understands that the hesed or loyal love associated with covenant called for David to extend the covenant blessings to Jonathan's offspring, Mephibosheth (See study of **Mephibosheth**).

**Hesed** is central to God's character and is closely tied to His **covenant** with His Chosen people; in fact the **covenant** may be thought of as the relationship from which the **hesed** flows. However, God's **hesed** is not bound by the covenant itself, and though men may prove unfaithful to this relationship, God's **hesed** is everlasting (Isa 54:8).

Since it is a quality of God hesed should also characterize His people; therefore it is called for in them ("mercy," Mic 6:8; Zech 7:9; cf. Ho 4:1; 12:6). On their part it is loyalty to His covenant expressed in obedience and acts of mercy and compassion toward their fellows.

## OT USES OF HESED

**Hesed** - 246x in 239 verses in the **NAS** -

Ge 19:19; 20:13; 21:23; 24:12, 14, 27, 49; 32:10; 39:21; 40:14; 47:29; Ex 15:13; 20:6; 34:6f; Num 14:18f; Deut 5:10; 7:9, 12; Josh 2:12, 14; Judg 1:24; 8:35; Ruth 1:8; 2:20; 3:10; 1Sa 15:6; 20:8, 14f; 2 Sam 2:5f; 3:8; 7:15; 9:1, 3, 7; 10:2; 15:20; 16:17; 22:51; 1 Kgs 2:7; 3:6; 8:23; 20:31; 1 Chr 16:34, 41; 17:13; 19:2; 2 Chr 1:8; 5:13; 6:14, 42; 7:3, 6; 20:21; 24:22; 32:32; 35:26; Ezra 3:11; 7:28; 9:9; Neh 1:5; 9:17, 32; 13:14, 22; Es 2:9, 17; Job 6:14; 10:12; 37:13; Ps 5:7; 6:4; 13:5; 17:7; 18:50; 21:7; 23:6; 25:6f, 10; 26:3; 31:7, 16, 21; 32:10; 33:5, 18, 22; 36:5, 7, 10; 40:10f; 42:8; 44:26; 48:9; 51:1; 52:1, 8; 57:3, 10; 59:10, 16f; 61:7; 62:12; 63:3; 66:20; 69:13, 16; 77:8; 85:7, 10; 86:5, 13, 15; 88:11; 89:1f, 14, 24, 28, 33, 49; 90:14; 92:2; 94:18; 98:3; 100:5; 101:1; 103:4, 8, 11, 17; 106:1, 7, 45; 107:1, 8, 15, 21, 31, 43; 108:4; 109:12, 16, 21, 26; 115:1; 117:2; 118:1ff, 29; 119:41, 64, 76, 88, 124, 149, 159; 130:7; 136:1, 2, 3; 138:2, 8; 141:5; 143:8, 12; 144:2; 145:8; 147:11; Pr 3:3; 11:17; 14:22; 16:6; 19:22; 20:6, 28; 21:21; 31:26; Isa 16:5; 40:6; 54:8, 10; 55:3; 57:1; 63:7; Jer 2:2; 9:24; 16:5; 31:3; 32:18; 33:11; Lam 3:22, 32; Dan 1:9; 9:4; Hos 2:19; 4:1; 6:4, 6; 10:12; 12:6; Joel 2:13; Jonah 2:8; 4:2; Mic 6:8; 7:18, 20; Zech 7:9

**Hesed** is rendered in the **NAS** as - deeds of devotion(2), devotion(1), devout(1), faithfulness(1), favor(2), good(1), kindly(7), kindness(32), kindnesses(1), loveliness(1), lovingkindness(176), lovingkindnesses(7), loyal deeds(1), loyalty(6), mercies(1), merciful(2), mercy(1), righteousness(1), unchanging love(2).

## BIBLICAL DESCRIPTION OF HESED

**Hesed** can be "defined" or described Biblically as His **lovingkindness** to man (Ge 19:19; 24:12; Ex 15:13; 20:6; 2 Sa 2:6; 7:15; 1 Ki 3:6; 8:23; 2 Ch 6:14; Ezr 7:28; Job 10:12; Ps 17:7; Pr 16:6; Je 9:24; 32:18; Hos 2:19), as **abundant and great** (Ex 34:6; Nu 14:18, 19; 1 Ki 3:6; 2 Ch 1:8; Ne 9:17; 13:22; Ps 5:7; 33:5; 86:5, 13; 119:64; 136; La 3:32; Joe 2:13; Jon 4:2), as **everlasting** (1Ch 16:34, 41; 2 Ch 5:13; Ezr 3:11; Ps 100:5; 118:1, 2, 3, 4; Is 54:8, 10; Je 33:11; La 3:22), as that which **can be trusted** (Ps 13:5; 52:8), as that in which **we can rejoice** (Ps 31:7, Ps 59:16), as that which **evokes** (or should evoke) **gratitude** (Ps 107:8, 15, 21, 31, 138:2), as that which is **proclaimed** (Is 63:7, Ps 92:2), as **precious** (Ps 36:7-see notes below), as **good** (Ps 69:16), as **marvelous** (Ps 17:7-see notes below; Ps 31:21), as **multitudinous** (Isa 63:7), as **great** (Ps 117:2) as **better than life** (Ps 63:3), as that for which saints should pray (Ps 17:7, 25:6, 143:8, 36:10, Ge 24:12, 2Sa 2:6)

One can also gain some sense of the "variegated" meaning of **hesed** by observing the Biblical effects or associations of **hesed** on individuals (some contexts speak of Israel) -- **drawn by** God's hesed (Jer 31:3), **preserved by** God's hesed (Ps 40:11), **revived according to** God's hesed (Ps 119:88), **comforted by** God's hesed (Ps 119:76), **looking for forgiveness** of one's sins through God's hesed (Ps 51:1), **receiving mercy** through God's hesed (Israel = Isa 54:8), **heard by God on the basis of** His hesed (Ps



119:149), to be **pondered in worship** (Ps 48:9), **expecting** God's hesed when in affliction (Ps 42:7,8), **crowned** with God's hesed (Ps 103:4).

### [O Bless the Lord, My Soul \(play\)](#)

Then bless His holy Name,  
Whose grace hath made thee whole,  
Whose **lovingkindness** crowns thy days!  
O bless the Lord, my soul!

Here are some select OT uses of **Hesed**...

(Rahab to the Jewish spies sent by Joshua) Now therefore, please swear to me by the LORD (Jehovah), since I have dealt **kindly** with you, that you also will deal **kindly (hesed)** with my father's household, and give me a pledge of truth (Jos 2:12)

**Comment: Hesed** means loyal, steadfast, or faithful love based on a promise, agreement, or covenant. Sometimes the word is used of God's covenant-love for His people and sometimes, as here, of relationships on the human level. Rahab's request was that the spies make a **hesed** agreement with her and her father's family, just as she had made a **hesed** agreement with them by sparing their lives. (BORROW [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

(David speaking to Jonathan, Saul's son) Therefore deal (do or work) **kindly** (lovingkindness) with your servant (Saul), for you have brought your servant (David) into a **covenant of the LORD** with you (Jonathan). But if there is iniquity in me, put me to death yourself; for why then should you bring me to your father?" (1Sa 20:8)

**Comment:** David is referencing the **covenant** (see study of **berit/berith/beriyth**) initiated by Jonathan with David because of his filial love for him (1Sa 18:3), and so on the basis of the solemn binding covenant which Jonathan has cut David appeals to his covenant partner to demonstrate kindness (In **Septuagint/LXX eleos** = kindness or concern expressed for someone in need, mercy, compassion, pity, clemency). David understood the binding nature of covenant, especially when cut between men of integrity. (**See related studies** - Covenant: The Exchange of Robes; Covenant: The Exchange of Armor and Belts)

but My **lovingkindness** (hesed; Lxx = eleos) shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever." (2Sa 7:15, 16).

**Comment:** "Your throne shall be established forever" refers to an immutable covenant promise which will be fulfilled with the establishment of Messiah's glorious, eternal Kingdom.

But as for me, by Thine abundant **lovingkindness** I will enter Thy house, At Thy holy temple I will bow in reverence for Thee. (Ps 5:7)

Return, O LORD (Jehovah), rescue my soul; Save me because of Thy **lovingkindness**. (Ps 6:4)

**Comment:** Notice David's understanding and reliance upon God's covenant relationship with him. While he does not use the specific word "covenant", David does appeal to God's lovingkindness which is inextricably bound to His covenant of grace with fallen men like David.

(David prayed) Wondrously show Thy **lovingkindness**, (KJV = Show thy marvelous lovingkindness) O Savior (Heb = 03467 = **yasha** = deliver, rescue - related to **Yeshua** ~ NT "Jesus"; Lxx = **sozo** = to save) of those who take refuge (Heb = 02620 = **chacah** = flee for protection, confide in, put trust in, hope in; Lxx = **elpizo** = to hope) at Thy right hand From those who rise up against them. (Psalm 17:7)

**Comment:** What a great prayer by David. Have you ever prayed this prayer? Do you dare pray such a prayer? Hebrews 4:16-note invites us to pray boldly drawing "near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need." Given this truth, dare we NOT pray this great prayer? Oh beloved, let us offer up this prayer and "test (Jehovah) now in this, if (He) will not open for (us) the windows of heaven, and pour out for (us) a blessing until it overflows" (Mal 3:10) in Christ Jesus Who became poor that we through His poverty might become rich.(2Co 8:9) Amen

**Spurgeon writes:** What deep depression some of us have had! We have gone to the bottom of the

mountains, and the bars of the earth seemed to hold us there. We feel as John Fawcett's hymn puts it:

My soul, with various tempests tossed,  
Her hopes overturned, her projects crossed,  
Sees every day new straits attend,  
And wonders where the scene will end.

But after just one glimpse of God's everlasting love, we are near God's right hand.

Pray for this experience: "Show Your marvelous **lovingkindness**" (Ps. 17:7). He will do it! He will bring you up, out, and through—not necessarily in the way you would like to come, but in the best way. (Listen to the entire Mp3 of Spurgeon's wonderful sermon on this verse wherein he repeatedly challenges us to pray this simple but profound prayer - [Marvelous Lovingkindness - Psalm 17:7 - Mp3](#) ; If you'd rather just read the sermon = [Marvelous Loving-Kindness - Psalm 17:7](#))

O Thou that ever savest those  
Whose trust on Thee is stayed,  
Preserving them from all their foes  
By Thine almighty aid,  
**Let me Thy lovingkindness see,  
Thy wondrous mercy, full and free.**

Surely goodness and **lovingkindness** (Amplified = "unfailing love" - **hesed**; Lxx = **eleos**) will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD (Jehovah) forever. (Ps 23:6)

**Comment:** Lovingkindness together with goodness suggests the steady kindness and support that one can count on in the family or between firm friends ("Friend" is also a **covenant** term). With the non-lying God these qualities are not merely solid and dependable, but vigorous—for to follow does not mean here to bring up the rear but to pursue, as surely as His judgments pursue the wicked (Ps 83:15-[note](#))."

**Spurgeon comments:** Surely **goodness** (tob - 02896) and **mercy** shall follow me all the days of my life. This is a fact as indisputable as it is encouraging, and therefore a heavenly verily, or "**surely**" is set as a seal upon it (Ed: That speaks also of how certain is God's **covenant** goodness and mercy!). This sentence may be read, "only goodness and mercy," for there shall be unmingled mercy in our history. These twin guardian angels will always be with me at my back and my beck. Just as when great princes go abroad they must not go unattended, so it is with the believer. **Goodness and mercy** follow him always -- all the days of his life -- the black days as well as the bright days, the days of fasting as well as the days of feasting, the dreary days of winter as well as the bright days of summer. Goodness supplies our needs, and mercy blots out our sins.

#### **A "SHEEP DOG" NAMED "LOVINGKINDNESS"**

**Stedman comments:** Some quaint commentator has said that those two words goodness and mercy (**hesed**) are God's "*sheep dogs*". This is the Shepherd's Psalm. David wrote it when he was but a lad, keeping sheep. In referring to the goodness and mercy of God, he is referring to the sheep dogs that nip at the heels of the flock and keep them in line, driving them into place. "Surely Goodness and Mercy shall follow me all the days of my life," nipping at my heels, humiliating me, turning me back from that which looks good but is really evil, keeping me from getting what I think I *need*, and what I think I *want*. But in the end we must name these what God names them -- goodness and mercy!

How precious (Heb = yaqar = 03368 = precious in the sense of being rare and valuable; excellent; splendid; weighty; noble) is Thy **lovingkindness**, O God! And the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Thy wings. (Ps 36:7)

**Spurgeon comments:** Here we enter into the Holy of Holies. Benevolence, and mercy, and justice, are everywhere, but the excellence of that mercy (**hesed**) only those have known whose faith has lifted the veil and passed into the brighter presence of the Lord; these behold the excellency of the Lord's mercy (**hesed**). The word translated **excellent** may be rendered "**precious**;" no gem or pearl can ever equal in value a sense of the Lord's love. This is such a brilliant as angels wear. King's regalia are a beggarly collection of worthless pebbles when compared with the tender mercies (**hesed**) of Jehovah.

**David could not estimate it, and therefore, after putting a note of admiration, he left our hearts and**

**imagination, and, better still, our experience, to fill up the rest.** He writes "how excellent" because he cannot tell us the half of it. Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings. The best of reasons for the best of courses. The figure is very beautiful. The Lord overshadows his people as a hen protects her brood, or as an eagle covers its young; and we as the little ones run under the blessed shelter and feel at rest. To cower down under the wings of God is so sweet. Although the enemy be far too strong for us, we have no fear, for we nestle under the Lord's wing. O that more of Adam's race knew the excellency of the heavenly shelter! It made Jesus weep to see how they refused it: our tears may well lament the same evil.

Because Thy **lovingkindness** is better than life, My lips will praise Thee. (Ps 63:3)

**Spurgeon comments:** A reason for that which went before (Ps 63:2), as well as for that which follows (Ps 63:4). Life is dear, but God's love is dearer. To dwell with God is better than life at its best; life at ease, in a palace, in health, in honour, in wealth, in pleasure; yea, a thousand lives are not equal to the eternal life which abides in Jehovah's smile. In him we truly live, and move, and have our being; the withdrawal of the light of His countenance is as the shadow of death to us: hence we cannot but long after the Lord's gracious appearing.

Life is to many men a doubtful good:  
**lovingkindness** is an unquestioned boon:

life is but transient,  
mercy (**hesed**) is everlasting:

life is shared in by the lowest animals,  
but the **lovingkindness** of the Lord  
is the peculiar portion of the chosen.

**Thomas Brooks (Puritan writer):** Thy lovingkindness is better than life; or, better than lives, as the Hebrew hath it (chaiim). Divine favour (**hesed**) is better than life; it is better than life with all its revenues, with all its appurtenances, as honours, riches, pleasures, applause, etc.; yea, it is better than many lives put together. Now you know at what a high rate men value their lives; they will bleed, sweat, vomit, purge, part with an estate, yea, with a limb, yea, limbs, to preserve their lives. As he cried out, "Give me any deformity, any torment, any misery, so you spare my life." **Now, though life be so dear and precious to a man, yet a deserted soul prizes the returnings of divine favour upon him above life, yea, above many lives.** Many men have been weary of their lives, as is evident in Scripture and history; but no man was ever yet found that was weary of the love and favour (**hesed**) of God. No man sets so high a price upon the sun as he that hath long lain in a dark dungeon, etc.

My **lovingkindness** I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall be confirmed to him. (Ps 89:33)

**Comment:** The context is the covenant with David (cp 2Sa 7:15,16) but is applicable to all who have entered the new covenant by grace through faith. Note the association of hesed with covenant (beriyth).

**Spurgeon's comment** (Ps 89:33KJV begins with "Nevertheless"): Nevertheless. And a glorious nevertheless too! Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him. O glorious fear killing sentence! This crowns the covenant with exceeding glory. Mercy (**hesed**) may seem to depart from the Lord's chosen, but it shall never altogether do so. Jesus still enjoys the divine favour, and we are in Him, and therefore under the most trying circumstances the Lord's **lovingkindness** to each one of his chosen will endure the strain. If the covenant could be made void by our sins it would have been void long ere this; and if renewed its tenure would not be worth an hour's purchase if it had remained dependent upon us. God may leave His people, and they may thereby suffer much and fall very low, but utterly and altogether He never can remove His love from them; for that would be to cast a reflection upon His own truth, and this He will never allow, for He adds, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. Man fails in all points, but God in none. To be faithful is one of the eternal characteristics of God, in which He always places a great part of his glory: His truth is one of his peculiar treasures and crown jewels, and He will never endure that it should be tarnished in any degree. This passage sweetly assures us that the heirs of glory shall not be utterly cast off. Let those deny the safety of the saints who choose to do so, we have not so learned Christ. We believe in the gospel rod (speaking of God's discipline - He 12:5, 6, 7, 8), but not in the penal sword for the adopted sons (Ro 8:15, Ro 8:23, Gal 4:5, Ep 1:5).

Who is wise? Let him give heed to these things; and consider (an understanding resulting from comparative



study that leads to an understanding which is superior to mere gathering of data) the **lovingkindnesses** of the LORD. (Ps 107:13)

**Spurgeon's comment:** Those who notice providence shall never be long without a providence notice. It is wise to observe what the Lord doth, for he is wonderful in counsel; has given us eyes to see with, and it is foolish to close them when there is most to observe; but we must observe wisely, otherwise we may soon confuse ourselves and others with hasty reflections upon the dealings of the Lord.

**In a thousand ways the lovingkindness of the Lord is shown** and if we will prudently watch, we shall come to a better understanding of it.

**To understand the delightful attribute of lovingkindness is an attainment as pleasant it is profitable: those who are proficient scholars in this art will be among sweetest singers to the glory of Jehovah.**

In that day (this is a prophecy to be fulfilled at His **Second Coming**) I will also **make a covenant** (cut a **covenant** - compare Jehovah's promise in Ro 11:25, 26, 27-notes = "**this is My covenant** [diatheke] **with them when I take away their sins**") for them with the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and will make them lie down in safety. And I will betroth you (Israel - see comment below) to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In **lovingkindness** (Hesed) and in compassion, and I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness (Heb = 0530 = emunah = certainty, fidelity, steadiness, moral steadfastness, integrity characteristic of God Dt 32:4 - in context Israel will likewise now be firmly faithful to her "Husband", Jehovah). Then you will know (Speaks of intimacy - which was echoed in the OT promise of the New Covenant - Je 31:31, 32, 33, 34 "they shall all know [intimately] Me" - see **New Covenant in the OT**) the LORD (Jehovah). (Hos 2:18, 19, 20)

**Comment:** In the context of **cutting a covenant**, Jehovah is promising Israel, His "wife" (Is 54:5, Je 31:32) that he would betroth her to Him forever. **Betrothal** (notice that God promises betrothal three times!) in the OT was similar to modern "**engagement**" but was far more binding (modern engagements in so many cases being virtually meaningless) and involved a formal proceeding, undertaken by a friend or legal representative on the part of the bridegroom and by the parents on the part of the bride. From the time of betrothal the woman was regarded as the lawful wife of the man to whom she was betrothed (Dt 28:30; Jdg14:2, 8; Mt1:18-21). The betrothal was confirmed by oaths and accompanied with presents to the bride. The act of betrothal was celebrated by a feast, and among the modern Jews it is the custom in some parts for the bridegroom to place a ring on the bride's finger. The ring was regarded among the Hebrews as a token of fidelity (Ge 41:42) and of adoption into a family (Lk 15:22). Betrothal could be dissolved only by a legal divorce. Infidelity during that period on the part of the bride might even be punishable by death (Dt 22:23,24). Joseph was a "righteous man" (Mt 1:19), who loved Mary who was pregnant with Jesus and was unwilling to divorce her (break the betrothal) for supposed "infidelity".

Notice the use of **hesed** in the context of what is clearly a covenant (which her includes betrothal), in which God Himself as the loyal, steadfast, faithful Lover of Israel initiates the covenant and betrothal with His "wife". This use of **hesed** stresses the idea of a belonging together of those involved in the love relationship. Here it connotes God's amazing faithful love for His frequently unfaithful people.

For I delight in **loyalty** (hesed; Lxx = eleos) rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. (Hos 6:6)

**Comment:** Jesus quotes this desire of God in Mt 9:13 and Mt 12:7. His point is that the demonstration of mercy is more pleasing to God than external conformity to the law. Jehovah desires the loving obedience of His people more than their animal sacrifices. As an (important) aside, note that the **knowledge** Hosea describes is not just a bookish collection of information but is *experiential* knowledge of the Living God. Knowledge of His written Word cannot be separated from personal knowledge of God. To know God is to live in harmony with His will, and to live in harmony with His will we must know His will through His Word.

Sow with a view to righteousness, reap in accordance with kindness (hesed;Lxx = eleos). Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the LORD until He comes to rain righteousness on you. (Hos 10:12)

He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD (Jehovah) require of you But to do (i.e., to promote) justice, to love **kindness** (hesed; Lxx = eleos), and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8)

**Comment:** What God calls us to is a godly or god-like hesed and what God requires, He always

empowers! Let us all strive according to His power (grace, Spirit) which works mightily within us to be "Micah 6:8 men and women" for the glory of His great Name. Amen!

**NET Note:** What the LORD really wants from you. Now the prophet switches roles and answers the hypothetical worshiper's question. He makes it clear that the LORD desires proper attitudes more than ritual and sacrifice.

**Hesed** is often accompanied by the word **'emeth**, usually translated as **truth** (105/127) but is also translated **faithfulness** (19/127 faithfulness, faithful, faithfully) = Ge 24:27 24:49 32:10 47:29 Ex 34:6 Josh 2:12 2:14 2Sa 2:6 15:20 1 Ki 3:6 Ps 25:10 26:3 40:10,11 57:3, 10 61:7 69:13 85:10 86:15 89:14 108:4 115:1 117:2 138:2 Pr 3:3 14:22 16:6 20:28 Isa 16:5 Hos 4:1 Mic 7:20 Zec 7:9. The Lord's Word is reliable and so He is faithful (trustworthy), a truth which strengthens the concept of God's covenant loyalty.

### **Awake, My Soul, to Joyful Lays**

Samuel Medley (1782)

Awake, my soul, to joyful lays,  
And sing thy great Redeemer's praise;  
He justly claims a song from me -  
His **lovingkindness**, O how free!  
**Lovingkindness, lovingkindness,**  
His **lovingkindness**, O how free!

He saw me ruined in the fall,  
Yet loved me notwithstanding all;  
He saved me from my lost estate -  
His **lovingkindness**, O how great!  
**Lovingkindness, lovingkindness,**  
His **lovingkindness**, O how great!

Though numerous hosts of mighty foes,  
Though earth and hell my way oppose,  
He safely leads my soul along -  
His **lovingkindness**, O how strong!  
**Lovingkindness, lovingkindness,**  
His **lovingkindness**, O how strong!

When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,  
Has gathered thick and thundered loud,  
He near my soul has always stood -  
His **lovingkindness**, O how good!  
**Lovingkindness, lovingkindness,**  
His **lovingkindness**, O how good!

Often I feel my sinful heart  
Prone from my Jesus to depart;  
But though I have him oft forgot,  
His **lovingkindness** changes not.  
**Lovingkindness, lovingkindness,**  
His **lovingkindness** changes not.

Soon I shall pass the gloomy vale,  
Soon all my mortal powers must fail;  
O! may my last expiring breath  
His **lovingkindness** sing in death.  
**Lovingkindness, lovingkindness,**  
His **lovingkindness** sing in death.

Then let me mount and soar away  
To the bright world of endless day;  
And sing with raptures and surprise,

His **lovingkindness** in the skies.  
**Lovingkindness, lovingkindness,**  
His **lovingkindness** in the skies.

## SPURGEON ON LOVINGKINDNESS

### Sermons...

- [Unparalleled Loving Kindnesses - Psalm 89:49](#)
- [Marvelous Loving-Kindness - Psalm 17:7](#) or listen to the [Mp3 version](#)
- [A Song Concerning Loving Kindnesses](#)
- [The Novelties of Divine Mercy - Lamentations 3:22, 23](#)

**Spurgeon** exhorts to be like David as described in 1Sa 17:37)...

Come, then, let us recall the Lord's former lovingkindnesses. We could not have hoped to be delivered aforetime by our own strength; yet the Lord delivered us. Will He not again save us? We are sure He will. (Faith's Checkbook, Feb 22)

**Spurgeon** on Isaiah 63:7 "I will mention the **lovingkindnesses** of Jehovah"...

And canst thou not do this? Are there no mercies (lovingkindnesses) which thou hast experienced? What though thou art gloomy now, canst thou forget that blessed hour when Jesus met thee, and said, "Come unto me"? Canst thou not remember that rapturous moment when he snapped thy fetters, dashed thy chains to the earth, and said, "I came to break thy bonds and set thee free"? Or if the love of thine espousals be forgotten, there must surely be some precious milestone along the road of life not quite grown over with moss, on which thou canst read a happy memorial of his mercy (lovingkindness) towards thee? What, didst thou never have a sickness like that which thou art suffering now, and did he not restore thee? Were you never poor before, and did He not supply thy wants? Were you never in straits before, and did He not deliver thee? Arise, go to the river of thine experience, and pull up a few bulrushes, and plait them into an ark, wherein thine infant-faith may float safely on the stream. Forget not what thy God has done for thee; turn over the book of thy remembrance, and consider the days of old. Canst thou not remember the hill Mizar? Did the Lord never meet with thee at Hermon? Hast thou never climbed the Delectable Mountains? Hast thou never been helped in time of need? Nay, I know thou hast. Go back, then, a little way to the choice mercies of yesterday, and though all may be dark now, light up the lamps of the past, they shall glitter through the darkness, and thou shalt trust in the Lord till the day break and the shadows flee away. "Remember, O Lord, Thy tender mercies and Thy **lovingkindnesses**, for they have been ever of old." (Ps 25:6)

## LOVINGKINDNESS

Hebrew - **hesed** - **chesed** - **cheded**

(Modified from 1915 International Std Bible Encyclopedia)

Lovingkindness is derived from **hacad**, meaning perhaps, "to bend or bow oneself," "to incline oneself"; hence, "to be gracious or merciful."

When used of God **hesed** denotes, in general, "the Divine Love condescending to His creatures, more especially to sinners, in unmerited kindness" (Delitzsch).

It is frequently associated with **forgiveness**, and is practically equivalent to "**mercy**" or "**mercifulness**" - E.g., Ex 20:6; 34:6f, Nu 14:18; Mic 7:18. This quality in Yahweh was one by which He sought to bind His people to Himself. It is greatly magnified in the Old Testament, highly extolled and gloried in, in many of the psalms (Ps 136:1ff echoes His lovingkindness in all 26 verses). In Dt 7:12 **hesed** is associated with the **covenant** (in context referring to the unconditional covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob = "your forefathers"), and in 2Sa 7:15 with the covenant with David (see Isa 55:3, quoted in Acts 13:34 by Paul preaching on the Sabbath in the synagogue in [Pisidia Antioch](#)). God's lovingkindness therefore was a divine blessing upon which one could always rely.

Since lovingkindness was such an essential and distinctive attribute of God, the prophets taught that **lovingkindness** (often rendered "kindness") should also characterize God's people and so it is noted in the oft quoted passage in Micah 6:8 (cp Zec 7:9 = kindness). Sadly the nation of Israel failed for the most part to demonstrate **lovingkindness/kindness** and this was a cause of the Lord's controversy with them (Ho 4:1) and His call for their repentance (Ho 12:6).

Cheyne (Encyclopedia Biblica) regards hesed as denoting paternal affection on God's part, answered by filial and loyal affection and brotherly love on man's part (philadelphia in the New Testament).

The word "**lovingkindness**" does not occur in the NT but equivalents would include "mercy" "goodness," "kindness," "brotherly love".

>Remembering that hesed is often translated "mercy" here is an overview of the Mercy of God with links to sermon discussions of each subtopic...

## Mercy of God

The following material is a unique resource from **Charles Simeon's** massive (13,000 pages) collection of sermons entitled **Horae Homileticae**. If you are not familiar with this great man of God read ink to [read John Piper's sketch](#) of his life.

illustrated, [I. 536–538](#), [V. 198–201](#), [X. 337–347](#).

Its greatness, [VIII. 174–178](#), [XIV. 356](#): especially in forbearing vengeance, [II. 62](#).

Never sought in vain, [II. 590, 591](#).

How it is to be sought, [II. 591, 592](#).

Displayed in the case of Manasseh, [IV. 221](#);

Displayed to the most obstinate sinners, [VIII. 490–492](#).

Marvellous, [V. 39](#).

All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, [V. 155–158](#).

Mercies of God, enumerated, [I. 437, 438](#). On what terms bestowed, [439, 440](#).

Past mercies pleaded before God, [I. 519–524](#).

Past mercies to be marked, [II. 555](#);

Past mercies to be gratefully remembered, [X. 564, 565](#);

Past mercies - the knowledge of them perpetuated, [IX. 313–318](#).

Past mercies - How to be improved, [III. 66](#).

Past mercies - Memorials of them, [III. 145–150](#).

Past mercies -The duty of commemorating them, [III. 150–154](#).

Past mercies to be to be thankfully acknowledged, [IV. 11](#).

The believer adoring God for his mercies, [V. 188–191](#).

Extent of the divine mercy, [VI. 55](#).

Mercy and judgment grounds of praise, [VI. 181–185](#).

The duty of praising God for his mercies, [VI. 205–2](#) ; [204-209](#), [235–238](#) [485–490](#); esp of God's mercy, [VI. 213, 214](#).

The effects which national mercies should produce on us, [VI. 220–222](#).

God the source of all our mercies, [VI. 388, 389](#).

The acknowledgment of him in them, the truest source of the enjoyment of them, [VI. 389](#).

A view of God in his providential mercies will encourage us to apply to him for the blessings of his grace, [VI. 389, 390](#);

an encouragement to prayer, [VI. 411–415](#); a call to contemplate and adore God for his mercy, God the source of all our mercies [VI. 433–436](#).

Temporal mercies a ground of praise, God the source of all our mercies [VI. 512–516](#).

God more ready to shew mercy than to execute judgment, [VII. 147](#).

To be praised for his mercies, especially on recovery from sickness, [VII. 105–108](#).

Past mercies to be remembered, and made the ground of future expectations, [VIII. 296, 297](#).

The contempt, with which God's richest mercies are treated, [IX. 105–110](#).

The mercy of God to his people, [IX. 307–310](#).

His mercy contrasted with our sinfulness, [IX. 311, 312](#).

The extent of God's mercy on the renewed soul, [IX. 380–386](#).

They are not given according to our merits, [IX. 444–448](#).

Mercy preferred to sacrifice, [X. 61–65](#).

The mercy of God delineated by Jonah, and illustrated in his history, [X. 269–274](#).

The proper improvement of God's mercies, [X. 356–359](#).

The duty of thankfulness for them, [X. 402–408](#).

The mercy of God, specially displayed in the incarnation of Christ, [XI. 230](#).

Sure ground of hope for all who feel their need of mercy, [XIV. 191](#).

God's mercy to the vilest sinners, [XVI. 166–170](#).

How Christians are to look for the mercy of Christ unto eternal life, [XX. 570](#).

## RACHAM COMPASSION, MERCY

**Racham** ([07355](#)) means to show love for, to love deeply, to feel, show or have compassion on, to be compassionate, show pity or mercy (Hab 3:2-note), to experience compassion (in the plural - Ho 1:6). Racham speaks of tender, heart-felt concern. To tenderly regard someone or tenderly love especially as parents love their infant child.

**Racham** refers to **compassion** which stirs one's emotions (like a parent for their child - see below). **Racham** expresses a deep and tender feeling of compassion, such as is aroused by the sight of weakness or suffering in those that are dear and/or need help. Racham pictures the expression of "a sympathetic view of another's distress, motivating helpful action." (John Frame)

The truths about God's racham should stimulate in His children a desire to seek to imitate His tender feelings of compassion to those who don't necessarily deserve our compassion but who are in need of it. As the Puritan **Thomas Manton** once said...

The right spring of mercy is a sense of God's mercy; it is a thank-offering, not a sin-offering.

### Thomas Adams

He that demands mercy and shows none ruins the bridge over which he himself is to pass.

Or as **Thomas Fuller** once asked...

If God should have no more mercy on us than we have charity one to another, what would become of us?

**Albert Barnes** convicts us all with his wise comment that...

Nowhere do we imitate God more than in showing mercy.

**Racham** can refer to God's compassion upon the lost, leading to salvation (Isa 55:7) and is frequently used for God's temporal blessings upon His people, either as bestowed or as withheld (Is 14:1; Je 13:14; 21:7; 33:26; 42:12; Zech 10:6). As Ezekiel 39:25 says

Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will now bring Jacob back from captivity and will have **compassion [racham]** on all the people of Israel.

As you study the OT uses of **racham**, notice a "common theme" that often depicts the objects of God's **racham** as alienated or helpless. Does this not make this Hebrew word even more precious to all of us who stand continually in need of His boundless **racham**, especially when we all too often make choices that do not honor His Name! How deep is His compassion -- throughout eternity we will find that the depths of His mercy and compassion will never be fully plumbed. **Beloved, if you think eternity is going to be "boring", you need to think again, and to ponder His attributes like mercy/compassion/tender love, remembering that each of His attributes is infinite in breadth and length and height and depth! How great is our God!**

As I was writing these notes, I was reminded of my great sins yesterday, the nature of which is not important (except to say they were "great" especially in light of the truth I know about God), and how I today have personally experienced His unmerited **racham**. The thought overwhelmed me and yet gave me a desire to plead with Him for even a greater outpouring of His **racham** today. **Have you ever been broken and contrite and pleaded with Him for racham?** His bestowal can bring you a blessed sense of surpassing peace and a glorious restoration of intimate fellowship.

It is important to remember that God's **racham** is not merely a passive emotion, but His active desire to in some way aid the distress of those who are the blessed objects of His compassion (Read through the 45 OT uses of **racham** below and observe how often **racham** is associated with some active "intervention" by Jehovah - e.g., see Pr 28:13 a verse in which can all find comfort -- assuming we choose to confess rather than cover our sin!).

The majority of Bible uses of **racham** have God as the subject (the Giver) and someone or something in the temporal world as the object (the recipient). (See Ho 2:4, 23; Zech. 1:16; 10:6, and Ps. 145:9).

**Racham** refers to demonstration of a deep love (a compassion which is protective, reflecting the feelings of the more powerful for the inferior) the basis of which is some "natural" bond, Isaiah 49:15 being an excellent example...

Can a woman forget her nursing child, and have no **compassion** on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.

In a similar use (Ps 102:13), David uses the **racham** of a father toward his children to picture Jehovah's deep feelings toward those who are in His family (cp Jn 1:12, 13, 1Jn 3:1, 2, 10), **Spurgeon** noting that

Fathers feel for their children, especially when they are in pain, they would like to suffer in their stead, their sighs and groans cut them to the quick: thus sensitive towards us is our heavenly Father.

God wants parents to tenderly love their offspring and to show compassion toward all who are weak and defenseless. God sets the example by His constant compassion for the helpless and undeserving (Is 54:8, 10).

**Baker** writes that **racham**...

pictures a deep, kindly sympathy and sorrow felt for another who has been struck with affliction or misfortune, accompanied with a desire to relieve the suffering. ([Baker, W. The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament: AMG](#))

**Racham** is thought to be derived from **rehem/rechem** (07358) which is the Hebrew word for **womb**

**Rechem** (07358) translated = **birth**(3), **born**\*(1), **maiden**(1), **maidens**(1), **mother**(1), **womb**(22), **wombs**(1) = 30x in 28 verses in the **NAS** = Ge 20:18; 29:31; 30:22; 49:25; Exod 13:2, 12, 15; 34:19; Nu 3:12; 8:16; 12:12; 18:15; Judg 5:30; 1 Sa 1:5f; Job 3:11; 10:18; 24:20; 38:8; Ps 22:10; 58:3; 110:3; Pr 30:16; Isa 46:3; Jer 1:5; 20:17f; Hos 9:14.

**Mike Butterworth** writes that **racham** (and the cognates or related words)...

... goes beyond the realm of legal right into the realm of grace and hope, and dependence on the willingness of another party to show favor. ([New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis: 3:1095. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House](#)).

**Allen Guenther** writes that...

When **racham** describes God's love, **it is always a love which stretches out to the wounded, the alienated, the obstinate, and willfully disobedient child. It restores God's people from under judgment. It is not love in a neutral context. This is not love at first sight.** For example, God says: "I will restore their fortunes, and will have mercy on them" (Jer 33:26). "In



overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you" (Is 54:8).

**Racham** appears in parallel with mercy and restore the fortunes of, pointing to its unique emphasis as love that restores. **As such, it always describes God's concern for His people, and never expresses his love for the nations generally.** (Believer's Church Bible Commentary)

TWOT writes that **racham**...

In the Piel it is used for the **deep inward feeling** we know variously as compassion, pity, mercy... Racham is used infrequently (12/47) of men. It is used only once in the Qal when the Psalmist confesses his **love** for Jehovah (Ps 18:1 "I **love** You, O LORD, my strength"). The depth of this love is shown by the connection of this word with **rehem** (womb) and **racham**. Compare Isaiah (Is 49:15) who uses it of a mother's love toward her nursing baby. It can also refer to a father's love (Ps 103:13 "Just as a father has **compassion** on his children").

Apparently this verb connotes **the feeling of mercy** which men have for each other by virtue of the fact that they are human beings (Jer 50:42) and which is most easily prompted by small babies (Isa 13:18) or other helpless people. It is this **natural mercy for the helpless** that Israel's and Babylon's enemies will lack in their cruelty (Is 13:18; Je 6:23), although God may give Israel's enemies such feeling (compassion) (1Ki 8:50; Je 42:12)...

This root is frequently used of God. It incorporates two concepts: first, the strong tie God has with those whom He has called as his children (Ps 103:13). God looks upon His own as a father looks upon his children; He has pity on them (cf. Mic 7:17). The second concept is that of God's unconditioned choice (chanen, grace, 02603). God tells Moses that he is gracious and merciful to whomever He chooses (Ex 33:19). ([Harris, R L, Archer, G L & Waltke, B K Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament. Moody Press](#))

The **English dictionary** makes the following distinctions on **compassion and mercy**...

SHOW COMPASSION: Show sympathetic consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it; includes the capacity for sharing the painful feelings of another; implies pity coupled with an urgent desire to aid or to spare

SHOW MERCY: exhibit compassion or forbearance shown especially to an offender or to one subject to one's power; show lenient or compassionate treatment; show compassionate treatment of those in distress; manifest a disposition to show kindness or compassion, esp compassion that forbears punishing even when justice demands it.

In his older but still excellent work (Synonyms of the Old Testament), **Robert Girdlestone** writes that...

**Racham** expresses a deep and tender feeling of compassion, such as is aroused by the sight of weakness or suffering in those that are dear to us or need our help. It is rendered pity or pitiful in a few passages. Thus Ps. 103:13, 'Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him;' Ps. 106:46, 'He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives;' Lam. 4:10, 'The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children.' It is curious that the word 'pitiful' should have had its meaning so altered in modern times as to be hardly understood in the passage last cited.

Racham is rendered 'mercy' several times, and is the origin of the word Ruhamah, which occurs in Hos. 2:1. Jacob used it to express his strong feeling on sending Benjamin with his brothers into Egypt, 'God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and Benjamin' (Gen. 43:14). It is an element in the character of God, who shows mercy on whom He will show mercy (Exod. 33:19), and is merciful as well as gracious (Ex. 34:6, Deut. 4:31). Accordingly David says, 'Let us fall now into the hands of God, for his mercies are abounding' (2 Sam. 24:14). Mercy (misericordia) is really the same thing as pity, though the words have gradually assumed rather different senses.

**Racham** also represents the beautiful expression 'tender mercy' wherever it occurs; thus the Psalmist prays, 'According to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions' (Ps. 51:1). It is the only word rendered 'mercy,' with two exceptions (Jer. 3:12, and Dan. 4:27), in the prophetic books of the OT, being specially used in them to mark the tenderness with which God regards His people in their downcast condition. It is rendered 'compassion' and 'bowels of compassion' in all passages where these expressions are found in the A. V., with the exception of Exod. 2:6, 1 Sam. 23:21, 2 Chr. 36:15, 17, and Ezek. 16:5, where a less forcible word (לחן) is used. Racham has twice been rendered 'love,' viz. in Ps. 18:1 and Dan. 1:9. With regard to the first of these passages, 'I will love thee, O Lord, my strength,' the word seems at first sight out of place, because there can be no element of pity in man's love to God; but it expresses here the depth and tenderness of the Psalmist's feeling; and it may be observed that in this passage the word is used not in the Piel or intensive voice (as in all other passages), but in the Kal, or simple active voice. (Free online version -

[Synonyms of the Old Testament - suggestion and read Girdlestone's entire chapter on "Grace, Pity, Love and Mercy"\)](#)

The most prominent rendering for **racham** in the **Septuagint (LXX)** is *oiktirmos*. This word occurs five times in the N.T., twice as the attribute of God (Ro 12:1, and 2Co 1:3), and three times as a quality to be manifested in our dealings with one another (Phil. 2:1; Col. 3:12; see also Heb. 10:28)

**Louis Berkhof** writes that

Another important aspect of the goodness and love of God is His mercy or tender compassion. The Hebrew word most generally used for this is **hesed**. There is another word, however, which expresses a deep and tender compassion, namely, the word **racham**, which is beautifully rendered by "tender mercy" in our English Bible. The Septuagint and the New Testament employ the Greek word **eleos** to designate the mercy of God. If the **grace of God** contemplates man as guilty before God, and therefore in need of forgiveness, the **mercy of God** contemplates him as one who is bearing the consequences of sin, who is in a pitiable condition, and who therefore needs divine help. It may be defined as the goodness or love of God shown to those who are in misery or distress, irrespective of their deserts. In His mercy God reveals Himself as a compassionate God, who pities those who are in misery and is ever ready to relieve their distress.

**John Calvin** commenting on Ps 18:1 (in which David uses **racham**)

This is the rendering of the French version. The word in the Hebrew text, which is רחם, **racham**, is very expressive. "רחם," says Cocceius, "est intime ac medullitus cum motu omnium viscerum diligere;" — "is to love with the deepest and strongest affections of the heart, with all of all the bowels." Ainsworth reads, "I will dearly love thee ;" Street, "I love thee exceedingly ;" Bishop Horne, "With all the yearnings of affection I will love thee, O Jehovah ;" and Dr Adam Clarke, "From my inmost bowels will I love thee, O Lord." The word, therefore, denotes the tenderness and intensity of David's emotions.

A number of passages use **racham** to speak of compassion (or lack of) as it relates to enemies (1Ki 8:50; Isa 13:18; Jer 6:23; 21:7; 42:12; 50:42).

In Psalm 18:1 **racham** is used to convey the sense of deep, unconditional **love** and even the **Septuagint (LXX)** translates it with the verb **agapao**.

**Butterworth** adds that ..

The most common use for this verb (*racham*) is of God as either having compassion (Ex 34:19; Dt 13:17; 30:3; 2Ki 13:23; Isa 14:1) or not having compassion (Isa 27:11) on His people. In the latter case its use shows the seriousness of Israel's plight in that "their Maker has no compassion (רחם - *racham*) on them, and their Creator shows them no favor (חסד)." Yet the compassionate God cannot leave His people in a state of alienation. This is the message of hope given by the prophets. For example, Jeremiah proclaimed, "Is not Ephraim my dear son, the child in whom I delight? Though I often speak against him, I still remember him. Therefore my heart yearns for him; I have great **compassion** (רחם) for him" (Jer 31:20). The book of Zechariah encourages the postexilic community to keep their hope fixed on Yahweh: "I will strengthen the house of Judah and save the house of Joseph. I will restore them because I have **compassion** (רחם) on them. They will be as though I had not rejected them, for I am the Lord their God and I will answer them" (Zech 10:6).

The verb רחם (*racham*) is also used of human beings, usually as regards their behavior as conquerors (BDB, 933). Isa 13:18 refers to the Medes who will "have no mercy on infants nor will they look with compassion on children" (cf. Jer 6:23; 21:7; 50:42). ([New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis: 3:1095. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House](#)).

**Carpenter** writes that...

It is not overstating the case to say that Israel exists because God is a compassionate God who lives and acts according to who He is. Yet, in His sovereignty and divine wisdom He will show compassion (Ex. 33:19)... In the time of Israel's rebellion with the golden calf at Mount Sinai, the Lord showed Himself to be compassionate by forgiving His people and reestablishing the covenant on the basis of who He is, not who they were (Ex 34). Israel's rebellion in the time of Micah had reached such proportions that again Israel was on the verge of destruction. But, Micah humbly pleaded to a God who pardons and removes the sins of His people. His plea was well informed; he knew the story of Israel's rebellion and the responses of her "compassionate"—that is,

racham—God. Perhaps He would again have compassion upon His people (Micah 7:19)... If it had not been for the compassion of the Lord towards His people, they would not have continued to exist. But, He rescued them and remains eternally compassionate towards them. (Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words: 200 Greek and 200 Hebrew Words Defined and Explained)

**Racham** - 48x in 45v in the **NAS** - Rendered in the **NAS** as - compassion(1), compassionate(1), find compassion(1), finds mercy(1), had(2), had compassion(2), has compassion(4), have compassion(20), have had compassion(1), have mercy(2), have pity(1), have... compassion(3), have... mercy(2), love(1), mercy(1), obtained compassion(1), Ruhamah(1), show compassion(2), surely have mercy(1).

**Racham** is rendered in the **KJV** as - mercy 32, compassion 8, pity 3, love 1, merciful 1, Ruhamah 1, surely 1

Here are the 45 uses of **Racham** in the **NAS**...

Exodus 33:19 And He said, "I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name of the LORD before you; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show **compassion** (Lxx = oikteiro) on whom I will show **compassion** (Lxx = oikteiro)."

**Comment:** Romans 9:15 quotes this verse and applies it to the sovereignty of God.

**Spurgeon's Sermon** on Ex 33:18-23 = [God's Glory and His Goodness](#)

Deuteronomy 13:17 "Nothing from that which is put under the ban shall cling to your hand, in order that the LORD may turn from His burning anger and show mercy to you, and have **compassion** (Hebrew = racham; Lxx = **eleeo**) on you and make you increase, just as He has sworn to your fathers,

Deuteronomy 30:3-note then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have **compassion** on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you.

**Comment:** Here we see that racham is a action word, not just an affective (feelings word - deep feelings of pity God has for Israel) as reflected in His promised regathering of Israel. When is "**then**"? The events in this section can only refer to the time of the return of Messiah at His **Second Coming**. Even older commentators like like **Matthew Henry** agree that "this chapter is a plain intimation of the mercy God has in store for Israel in the latter days. This passage refers to the prophetic warnings of the last two chapters, which have been mainly fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, and in their dispersion to the present day; and there can be no doubt that the prophetic promise contained in these verses yet remain to come to pass. The Jewish nation shall in some future period, perhaps not very distant, be converted to the faith of Christ; and, many think, again settled in the land of Canaan. The language here used is in a great measure absolute promises; not merely a conditional engagement, but declaring an event assuredly to take place. For the Lord himself here engages to "circumcise their hearts;" (Dt 30:6) and when regenerating grace has removed corrupt nature, and Divine love has supplanted the love of sin, they certainly will reflect, repent, return to God, and obey him; and he will rejoice in doing them good. The change that will be wrought upon them will not be only outward, or consisting in mere opinions; it will reach to their souls. It will produce in them an utter hatred of all sin, and a fervent love to God, as their reconciled God in Christ Jesus; they will love Him with all their hearts, and with all their soul. They are very far from this state of mind at present, but so were the murderers of the Lord Jesus, on the day of Pentecost; who yet in one hour were converted unto God. So shall it be in the day of God's power; **a nation shall be born in a day**; the Lord will hasten it in his time. As a conditional promise this passage belongs to all persons and all people, not to Israel only; it assures us that the greatest sinners, if they repent and are converted, shall have their sins pardoned, and be restored to God's favour. (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary)

**Dr Charles Ryrie writes:** A prediction of the regathering of Israel from all the nations to which she was scattered. This regathering will occur at the second coming of Christ (Dt 30:3; cf. Mark 13:26, 27) and will include: (1) restoration to the land of Palestine (Dt 30:5), (2) a work of grace in the people's hearts (Dt 30:6; see Dt 10:16 and Jer. 31:31, 32, 33, 34), (3) judgment of Israel's enemies (Dt 30:7; cf. Joel 3:1,2), and (4) prosperity in the land (Dt 30:9; cf. Amos 9:11-15). ([The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Translation: 1995. Moody Publishers](#))

1 Kings 8:50 and forgive Your people who have sinned against You and all their transgressions which they have transgressed against You, and make them objects of **compassion** before those who have taken them captive, that they may have **compassion** on them

**Comment:** A "prophetic prayer" by Solomon, anticipating Judah's exile into Babylon, pleading with God that even in the face of Judah's sins and transgressions, God would intervene in such a way that the guilty captives would experience compassion, even though they did not deserve compassion. Such a move surely reflects God's sovereign rule over human hearts, even

unbelieving hearts, and is surely motivated by His own deep seated feelings or **racham**. Psalm 106:46 records God's affirmative answer to Solomon's request, spoken some 400 years prior to their Babylonian captivity! I wonder if we understand the "timeless" nature of our prayers (e.g., praying for our yet unborn children, grandchildren, etc to come to know Christ as Lord and Savior. Would God answer such a prayer even though we the one who prayed such a prayer no longer by physically alive? I think we know the answer.)

2 Kings 13:23 But the LORD was gracious (chanan = to have mercy on, Lxx = **eleeo**) to them and had **compassion** (Hebrew = **racham**; Lxx = **oikteiro**) on them and turned to them because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them or cast them from His presence until now.

**Comment:** Note that in this case God's **racham** is a reflection of the unconditional covenant He cut with Abraham, the promises of which flowed through the son of promise Isaac and through the line of Jacob (Israel).

2 Kings 13:25 Then Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again from the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael the cities which he had taken in war from the hand of Jehoahaz his father. Three times Joash defeated him and recovered the cities of Israel.

2 Kings 14:3 He ([Joash](#) - 2Ki 14:1) did right in the sight of the LORD, yet not like David his father; he did according to all that Joash his father had done.

Psalm 18:1 For the choir director. A Psalm of David the servant of the LORD, who spoke to the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. And he said, "**I love** (Hebrew = **racham**; Lxx = **agapao**) You, O LORD, my strength."

**Spurgeon comments:** I will love thee, O Lord. With strong, hearty affection will I cling to thee; as a child to its parent, or a spouse to her husband. The word is intensely forcible, the **love (racham)** is of the **deepest kind**.

**"I will love heartily, with my inmost bowels."**

Here is a fixed resolution to abide in the nearest and most intimate union with the Most High. Our triune God deserves the warmest love of all our hearts. Father, Son and Spirit have each a claim upon our love. The solemn purpose never to cease loving naturally springs from present fervor of affection. It is wrong to make rash resolutions, but this when made in the strength of God is most wise and fitting.

My strength. Our God is the strength of our life, our graces, our works, our hopes, our conflicts, our victories. This verse is not found in 2Sa 22:1-51, and is a most precious addition, placed above all and after all to form the pinnacle of the temple, the apex of the pyramid. **Love is still the crowning grace.**

Psalm 102:13 You will arise and have **compassion** (Hebrew = **racham**; Lxx = **oikteiro**) on Zion; For it is time to be gracious to her, For the appointed time has come.

**Spurgeon comments:** He (The psalmist) firmly believed and boldly prophesied that apparent inaction on God's part would turn to effective working. Others might remain sluggish in the matter, but the Lord would most surely bestir himself. Zion had been chosen of old, highly favoured, gloriously inhabited, and wondrously preserved, and therefore by the memory of her past **mercies** it was certain that **mercy** would again be showed to her.

Psalm 103:13 Just as a father has **compassion** (Hebrew = **racham**; Lxx = **oikteiro**) on his children, So the LORD has compassion (chanan - heartfelt response by someone who has something to give to one who has a need) on those who fear Him.

**From Spurgeon's sermon:** DAVID sang of the **compassionate pitifulness** of our heavenly Father, who will not always chide, nor keep his anger for ever. He had proved in relation to himself that the Lord is not easily provoked, but is plenteous in mercy. Remembering how feeble and how frail we are, the Lord bears and forbears with his weak and sinful children, and is gentle towards them as a nurse with her child. Although our own observation has proved this to be true, and our experience every day goes to show how truthfully David sang, yet assuredly the clearest display of the patience and pity of God towards us may be seen in the life of him in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Therefore, instead of speaking upon providential patience, I shall bid you gaze upon God in Christ Jesus, and see there how human weaknesses and follies are pitied of the Lord. With a text from the Old Testament, I purpose to take you straight away to the New, and the tenderness and pitifulness of the Father shall be illustrated by the meekness and lowliness of the Son towards his immediate disciples, the apostles. While the Holy Spirit shows you thus the pity of Jesus Christ towards his own personal attendants, you will see as in a glass his pity towards you. (for full sermon see [The Tender Pity of the Lord](#)) (For another Spurgeon sermon on Psalm 103:13 see [God's Fatherly Pity](#))

**Spurgeon comments in The Treasury of David:** To those who truly reverence (fear) His holy name, the Lord is a father and

acts as such. These He pities, for in the very best of men the Lord sees much to **pity**, and when they are at their best state they still need His compassion. This should check every propensity to pride, though at the same time it should yield us the richest comfort.

Fathers feel for their children, especially when they are in pain, they would like to suffer in their stead, their sighs and groans cut them to the quick: thus sensitive towards us is our heavenly Father. We do not adore a god of stone, but the living God, who is tenderness itself. He is at this moment compassionating us, for the word is in the present tense; his pity never fails to flow, and we never cease to need it.

**Like as a father pitieth his children**, etc. A chaplain to seamen, at an American port, visited a sailor who appeared to be near death. He spoke kindly to the man upon the state of his soul, and directed him to cast himself on Jesus. With an oath, the sick man bade him begone. The chaplain then told him that he must be faithful to him, for if he died impenitent he would be lost for ever. The man was sullen and silent, and pretended to fall asleep. The visit was repeated more than once, with similar ill success. At length the chaplain, suspecting that the sailor was a Scotchman, repeated a verse of the old version of the Psalms:

"Such pity as a father hath  
Unto his children dear.  
Like pity shows the Lord to such  
As worship him in fear."

Tears started into the sailor's eyes as he listened to these words. The chaplain asked him if he had not had a pious mother. The man broke into tears. Yes, his mother had, in years gone by, taught him these words, and had also prayed to God for him. Since then he had been a wanderer by sea and land; but the memory of her faith and love moved his heart. The appeals made to him were blessed by the Spirit of God. His life was spared, and proved the reality of his conversion.

**Matthew Henry**: The father pitieth his children that are weak in knowledge, and instructs them; pities them when they are froward (perverse, disobedient), and bears with them; pities them when they are sick, and comforts them; when they are fallen, and helps them up again; when they have offended, and upon their submission, forgives them; when they are wronged, and rights them. Thus "the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."

**Sir R. Baker**: Though it be commonly said, "It is better to be envied, than pitied;" yet here it is not so: but it is a far happier thing to be pitied of God, than to be envied of men.

Psalm 116:5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; Yes, our God is **compassionate**. (**racham**) (merciful KJV)

**Spurgeon comments**: Yea, our God is merciful, or compassionate, tender, pitiful, full of mercy. We who have accepted Him as ours have no doubt as to His mercy, for he would never have been our God if he had not been merciful. See how the attribute of righteousness seems to stand between two guards of love: -- **gracious, righteous, merciful**. The sword of justice is scabarded in a jeweled sheath of grace. (**Ed**: Wow! Hallelujah!)

**John Gwyther**: Our God is merciful. **Mercy** is God's darling attribute; and by his infinite wisdom he has enabled mercy to triumph over justice (Jas 2:13) without in any degree violating his honour or His truth. The character of merciful is that by which our God seems to delight in being known.

Proverbs 28:13 He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find **compassion**.

"Here's pardon for transgressions past,  
It matters not how black they're cast  
And O, my soul, with wonder view  
For sins to come here's pardon too."

**Comment**: It is interesting that the **Septuagint (LXX)** translates **racham** in this passage with the verb **agapao** speaking of God's unconditional love.

**NET Bible comments that to conceal**: means refusing to acknowledge them (transgressions) in confession, and perhaps rationalizing them away. On the other hand there is the one who both "**confesses**" and "**forsakes**" the sin. To "**confess**" sins means to acknowledge them, to say the same thing about them that God does... In other passages the verb "**conceal**" is used of God's forgiveness – he covers over the iniquity (Ps 32:1). Whoever acknowledges sin, God will cover it; whoever covers it, God will lay it open

Isaiah 9:17-note (In context God is speaking to the Northern Kingdom who has not turned to Him for protection but to an alliance

with the pagan Syrians!) Therefore the Lord does not take pleasure in their young men, Nor does He have **pity** on their orphans or their widows; For every one of them is godless and an evildoer, And every mouth is speaking foolishness. In spite of all this, His anger does not turn away And His hand is still stretched out.

**Comment:** For the Lord not to have pity on the the orphans or widows somehow speaks to the depths of depravity to which the Northern Kingdom had descended ("every one of them is godless and an evildoer"! ) This is a frightening verse for any man, woman, nation or people who would presume upon (take for granted) the great compassion of Jehovah! This reminds me of the foolish presumption of the skeptic infidel and God hater Voltaire who foolishly quipped "*God will forgive; that is His business*". Yes, that is true but God is perfectly righteous and just and therefore He must punish sins that are not covered by the blood of His Son!

Isaiah 13:18 And their bows (see Is 13:17 = **Medes** led by Cyrus the Great, defeated **Babylon** in 539BC, cp Daniel's record = Da 5:28, 30, 31-**note**) will mow down the young men, They will not even have **compassion** on the fruit of the womb, nor will their eye pity children.

**Motyer comments:** The verb **have no mercy** contains the word for '**womb**' and is used of **compassion** which stirs the emotions.

Isaiah 14:1 When the LORD will have **compassion** on Jacob and again choose Israel, and settle them in their own land, then strangers will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob.

**Comment:** I agree with **John MacArthur's** interpretation (especially in light of Is 14:3 - "rest" can hardly describe the situation after return from Babylonian exile). MacArthur writes: While having some reference to the release from Babylonian captivity, the primary view in this chapter is identified in these opening verses (Is 14:1,2,3). The prophet looked at the final Babylon at the end of the tribulation (see **Great Tribulation**). The language is that which characterizes conditions during the millennial kingdom (see **Millennium**) after the judgment of the final Babylon. The destruction of future Babylon is integrally connected with the deliverance of Israel from bondage. Babylon must perish so that the Lord may exalt His people (see [The Destruction of Babylon](#)). God's **compassion** (racham) for physical Israel receives fuller development in Isaiah 40–46. ([MacArthur, J.: The MacArthur Study Bible Nashville: Word](#))

Isaiah 27:11 When its limbs are dry, they are broken off; Women come and make a fire with them, For they are not a people of discernment, Therefore their Maker will not have **compassion** on them. And their Creator will not be gracious (chanan) to them.

**Comment:** **Grace/gracious** (chanan 02603 = have mercy, be gracious, take pity, be kind, i.e., show an act. of kindness, compassion, or benefice to another) and **racham** are coupled in several OT passages - Ex 33:19, 2 Ki 13:23, Ps 102:13, Isa 27:11, Isa 30:18.

Isaiah 30:18 Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have **compassion** on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him.

**Comment by Ryrie:** Isa 30:18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26 A description of the glories of the Millennium, though the day of the great slaughter (Is 30:25) refers to Armageddon. ([The Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Translation: 1995. Moody Publishers](#))

**Comment:** And so in this context Jehovah's **racham** or compassion will be realized in the restoration of Israel to the promised land during the **Millennium**.

Isaiah 49:10 "They will not hunger or thirst, Nor will the scorching heat or sun strike them down; For He who has **compassion** on them will lead them and will guide them to springs of water.

**Ryrie Comments** (John MacArthur's comment essentially agrees as does John Martin in the Bible Knowledge Commentary) that Isa 49:8-12 speak of: Israel's restoration in the millennial kingdom and characteristics of that time.

Isaiah 49:13 Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! For the LORD has comforted His people and will have **compassion** on His afflicted.

**Comment:** Who will receive God's **compassion**? The "**afflicted**" (Hebrew = **ani** = the humble; Lxx = **tapeinos**) which are really those who are humble in heart.

Isaiah 49:15 (God is answering "Zion" who feels that Jehovah has forsaken her) "Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no **compassion** on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you.

**Comment:** Jehovah encourages His people who will be in captivity which this poignant picture -- Could ever a mother forget her



nursing child? Even if that unlikely event transpired, God would be found more faithful, never forgetting Israel because of His faithfulness to His covenant promises. To underscore God's covenant faithfulness He adds "Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me." (Is 49:16)

**NET Bible comments:** The Lord has an innate attachment to Zion, just like a mother does for her infant child. But even if mothers were to suddenly abandon their children, the Lord would never forsake Zion. In other words, the Lord's attachment to Zion is like a mother's attachment to her infant child, but even stronger. ([NET Bible](#))

Isaiah 54:8 (**Context:** Is 54:5 alludes to Israel as God's "wife" - and here we see He is taking her back) "In an outburst of anger I hid My face from you for a moment, But with everlasting lovingkindness (hesed) (**Ed:** Everlasting hesed is related to God's everlasting covenant with Abraham = Ge 17:7) I will have **compassion** (racham) on you," Says the LORD your **Redeemer** (**See word study on [goel/ga'al](#)**).

Isaiah 54:10 "For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, But My lovingkindness (hesed) will not be removed from you, And My covenant of peace will not be shaken," Says the LORD who has **compassion** on you.

**John Martin comments on Isaiah 54:9,10 writing that:** After the Flood, in which God executed His anger against the world's depravity, He promised never again to devastate the earth in the same way (Ge 9:11). Similarly God promised that the day is coming when He will **never... rebuke Israel again**. Statements like this show that Isaiah was speaking of the millennial kingdom (**Millennium**) rather than the return from the Babylonian Captivity, for the nation has suffered God's anger many times since the postexilic return. Even if the world could be punished again as in the Flood, God's **love** (hesed cf. Isa 54:8) and **compassion** will never cease. The **covenant of peace** (also mentioned in Ezek 34:25; 37:26) refers to this promise which God had just made. God will give His people lasting peace (cf. Isa 9:7; 32:17,18; 54:13; 55:12; 66:12; Je 30:10; 33:6, 9; 46:27). (BORROW [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

Isaiah 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have **compassion** (Hebrew = racham; , Lxx = **eleeo**) on him, and to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

**Comment:** This verse presents a good picture of genuine heart repentance... not just feeling sorry (like world does) for your evil deeds but truly turning from them and unto Jehovah (cp 1Th 1:9-note). God waits to have mercy (racham) upon him and to "pardon abundantly" (lit., "*He will multiply to pardon*"), clearly demonstrating the divine action linked with His divine **compassion**.

Isaiah 60:10 "Foreigners will build up your walls, and their kings will minister to you; For in My wrath I struck you, and in My favor (Hebrew = ratson = delight, pleasure, grace, kindness) I have had **compassion** (Hebrew = racham; Lxx = **agapao**) on you.

Jeremiah 6:23 (Jeremiah is describing the cruelty of the Babylonians when they invade Judah) "They seize bow and spear; They are cruel and have no **mercy**; Their voice roars like the sea, And they ride on horses, Arrayed as a man for the battle Against you, O daughter of Zion!"

Jeremiah 12:15 "And it will come about that after I have uprooted them, I will again have **compassion** on them; and I will bring them back, each one to his inheritance and each one to his land.

**Comment:** After Babylonian captivity to fulfill the 70 years of failing to keep the "sabbath year" (failure to let the land rest every seventh year - see Lv 25:4, 26:34, 35, 2Chr 36:21, Jer 25:11, 12, 29:10, Da 9:2-**note**), Judah would be benefactors of the **compassion** of the Lord. His compassion would be evidenced by His returning them to the land of Israel after the captivity.

Jeremiah 13:14 "I will dash them (leaders in Judah - Je 13:13) against each other, both the fathers and the sons together," declares the LORD. "I will not show pity nor be sorry nor have **compassion** (Hebrew = **racham**; Lxx = **oikteiro**) so as not to destroy them.""

**Comment:** As alluded to in an earlier passage the depths of God boundless compassion can be reached. This is (or should be) a frightening thought to any one who is not safe in the "ark" of Christ (Acts 16:31).

Jeremiah 21:7 "Then afterwards," declares the LORD, "I will give over Zedekiah king of Judah and his servants and the people, even those who survive in this city from the pestilence, the sword and the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their foes and into the hand of those who seek their lives; and he will strike them down with the edge of the sword. He (Nebuchadnezzar) will not spare them nor have pity nor **compassion**. (This same couplet of pity and compassion is used also in Jer 13:14)""

Jeremiah 30:18 "Thus says the LORD, 'Behold, I will restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob And have **compassion** on his dwelling places; And the city will be rebuilt on its ruin, And the palace will stand on its rightful place.

**Comment:** This is not a reference to the Church as suggested by the Disciple's Study Bible. A literal reading of the text cannot

(or at least should not) allow one to escape the fact that this passage is a clear reference to restored Israel ("tents of Jacob") and Jerusalem ("the city will be rebuilt") (See **Millennium**) So here we see the prophet Jeremiah offering the people hope in the midst of their captivity (cp Hab 3:2)

Jeremiah 31:20 "Is Ephraim (referring to Israel) My dear son? Is he a delightful child? Indeed, as often as I have spoken against him, I certainly still remember him; Therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have **mercy** on him," declares the LORD.

Jeremiah 33:26 (**Context** = reiteration of the promised permanence of God's new covenant with Israel - Je 33:25, cp Je 31:31, 32, 33, 34, esp Je 31:35, 36, 37) then I would reject the descendants of Jacob and David My servant, not taking from his descendants rulers over the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But I will restore their fortunes and will have **mercy** on them."

Jeremiah 42:12 'I will also show you (Judah) **compassion**, so that he (see Je 42:11) will have **compassion** on you and restore you to your own soil.

[The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#) (BORROW): Jer 42:7-12. Jeremiah prayed for the people, and **10 days later** God answered his request. Jeremiah called together the group and gave them God's answer. If they would stay in the land, God promised to build them up. They were not to be afraid of the Babylonians because God would deliver them from any harm from their hands. Indeed God vowed that Nebuchadnezzar would have **compassion** (**racham**, "show tender concern"), a characteristic not usually associated with the Babylonians (cf. Jer 6:23; 21:7).

**THOUGHT** - Does not this truth - that the Babylonians were hardly known for demonstrating compassion to their enemies [!] - in a sense illustrate God's "fatherly" racham, His tender loving pity for His chosen people who were in exile for their continual spiritual harlotry and failure to keep the Sabbath rest for the land every 7 years. Yes, they were in the dire straits of Babylon because of their own sins and were in great need of compassion, which God sovereignly supplied through His workings in the heart of the wicked Babylonians. How awesome is our God! Beloved, if He so sweetly and sovereignly acted for rebellious Judah, will He not be willing to show His tender mercies to us His own family members [1Jn 3:1-[note](#), et al] in whatever dire strait we might currently find ourselves as the result of our sin which has called forth His hand of loving discipline?! Remember that He is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. Hallelujah. Thank you Yeshua for continually showering Your racham on your people who are so undeserving. Amen.)

Jeremiah 50:42 "They (Cyrus the Great and the Medo-Persians in 539BC) seize their bow and javelin; They are cruel and have no **mercy**. Their voice roars like the sea; and they ride on horses, marshalled like a man for the battle against you, O daughter of Babylon.

Lamentations 3:22 The LORD'S lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His **compassions** never fail.

Lamentations 3:32 For if He causes grief, Then He will have **compassion** according to His abundant lovingkindness (hesed).

**Comment:** The previous verse says "For the Lord will not reject forever" (La 3:31). Here we see His compassion implies His active pity and it is rooted in His abundant lovingkindness (hesed) or covenant love.

Ezekiel 39:25 Therefore thus says the Lord GOD, "Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for My holy name.

Hosea 1:6 Then she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. And the LORD said to him, "Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have **compassion** on the house of Israel, that I would ever forgive them. 7 "But I will have **compassion** on the house of Judah and deliver them by the LORD their God, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen."

**Believer's Church Bible Commentary: Lo-ruhamah.** Not-pitied. Not-shown-compassion. The choice of words at this point is crucial to the message of Hosea. The root verb, **racham**, expresses the love, compassion, and pity a mother feels for her children. It is warm and intense. It carries no sexual overtones. When **racham** describes God's love, **it is always a love which stretches out to the wounded, the alienated, the obstinate, and willfully disobedient child. It restores God's people from under judgment. It is not love in a neutral context. This is not love at first sight.** For example, God says: "I will restore their fortunes, and will have mercy on them" (Jer 33:26). "In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you" (Is 54:8). **Racham** appears in parallel with mercy and restore the fortunes of, pointing to its unique emphasis as love that restores. **As such, it always describes God's concern for His people, and never expresses his love for the nations generally.** (Guenther, Allen)

Hosea 2:1 Say to your brothers, "Ammi," and to your sisters, "Ruhamah (**racham** - literally "she has obtained compassion")."

Hosea 2:4 "Also, I will have no compassion on her children, Because they are children of harlotry.

Hosea 2:23 "I will sow her for Myself in the land. I will also have **compassion** on her who had not obtained **compassion**, And I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they will say, 'You are my God!'"

**Comment:** Hosea refers here to Israel and not to the Gentiles looking forward to the time when Israel will be restored as God's people and as His beloved. But when Paul quotes them in (Ro 9:25-note) he applies them to the call of the Gentiles. What right does Paul have to make such a radical change? The answer is that the Holy Spirit who inspired the words in the first place has the right to reinterpret or reapply them later.

Hosea 14:3 "Assyria will not save us, We will not ride on horses; Nor will we say again, 'Our god,' To the work of our hands; For in You the orphan finds **mercy**."

**Believer's Church Bible Commentary:** The case has been made in the notes under Hosea 1:6 that **racham** should be read as **restoring love**. In the Hebrew Bible, it regularly refers to a mercy which extends life to one who has come under judgment (cf. La 3:32; Isa. 14:1; Jer 33:26; Zech. 10:6). The **restoring love** comes from the very agent who is bringing the judgment, most frequently God. At one point this love is directed even to the dwellings in the city of Jerusalem (Jer 30:18-note), resulting in the reconstruction of the city. The verb **racham** appears in Hosea in Hos 1:6, 7; 2:4, 23; Hos 14:3. Each instance refers to a recovery or restoration of what has been lost or is deficient (cf. Hos 14:3). It never describes the process of initiating a relationship, as does **ahab** (Hebrew for love first found in Ge 22:2), the more common and more far-reaching word for **love** in Hosea (Hosea 2:5 2:7 2:10 2:12 2:13 3:1 4:18 9:1 9:10 10:11 11:1 12:7 14:4). The verb **ahab** connotes choice and a (continuing) relationship characterized by affection and intimacy. **Restorative love** characterizes God's relationship to a sinful people; it is motivated by deep affection growing out of a prior relationship. Withholding **racham** is an act of judgment or is motivated by cruelty (Jer 6:22,23; 50:42). (Guenther, Allen)

Micah 7:19 He will again have **compassion** on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins Into the depths of the sea.

**Henry Morris writes:** Micah 7:18,19, climaxing the Old Testament message of the prophet Micah, comprise a beautiful testimony to God's saving gospel. He pardons all our iniquities forever. Furthermore, He will "subdue" them in our personal lives by the compelling love of His **compassion**, and our sins will not be remembered any more.

**Constable writes that God:** ... would subdue their iniquities as though they were insects that He stepped on and obliterated. He would do away with their sins as surely as someone gets rid of something permanently by throwing it into the sea (cf. Ps 103:12). The use of three words for sin in verses 18 and 19 (iniquity, rebellious acts, and sins) gives added assurance of forgiveness. God will forgive all types of Israel's sins.

See Spurgeon's sermon on Micah 7:19 - [Sin Subdued](#)

Habakkuk 3:2 LORD, I have heard the report about You and I fear. O LORD, revive Your work in the midst of the years, In the midst of the years make it known; In wrath remember **mercy**.

**Guzik Comments:** **In the midst of the years make it known** Habakkuk longs for God to do a work that is evident to everyone as a work of God. He prays that revival would be known at a definite time and place (in the midst of the years), not just as an idea in someone's head. **In wrath remember mercy:** Habakkuk prays knowing well that they don't deserve revival, so he prays for mercy. The idea is, "LORD, I know that we deserve your wrath, but in the midst of your wrath remember mercy and send revival among us."

**Spurgeon...** Sorrowfully, not wishing to be an accuser of the brethren, it does seem to me that considering the responsibilities which were laid upon us, and the means which God has given us, the church generally, (there are blessed exceptions!) has done so little for Christ that if 'Ichabod' were written right across its brow, and it were banished from God's house, it would have its deserts. We cannot therefore appeal to merit, it must be mercy. (from his sermon [A Message from God to His Church and People](#)) (See Spurgeon's other sermon on Habakkuk 3:2 - [Spiritual Revival—The Need of the Church](#))

Zechariah 1:12 Then the **Angel of the LORD** said, "O LORD of hosts, how long will You have no **compassion** for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which You have been indignant these seventy years?"

**F Duane Lindsey comments:** The intercession of the Angel of the Lord is unusual, for this divine Messenger is usually seen representing God to people rather than functioning in an intercessory role representing people to God. That the divine Messenger addressed the Lord Almighty in prayer supports a distinction of Persons in the Godhead, and contributes to the implicit doctrine of the Trinity in the Old Testament. The lament formula How long? expresses the deep need of Israel to have

the Lord act on her behalf. The 70 years of promised Captivity were over (cf. Jer. 25:12; 29:10), but the city was still not rebuilt. (BORROW [The Bible Knowledge Commentary](#))

Zechariah 10:6 "I will strengthen the house of Judah, And I will save the house of Joseph, And I will bring them back, Because I have had compassion on them; And they will be as though I had not rejected them, For I am the LORD their God and I will answer them.

**Comment:** Why will God strengthen and save and bring back? The basis of these acts is His **compassion**. In this context, **compassion** (racham) overlaps somewhat with grace for each of these Divine acts reflects His unmerited favor (compare "grace") to a nation that hardly deserved His favor (none of us of course "deserve" God's favor). God is referring of course not to all Israel but to the believing **remnant** which He would bring through the fire of the **Great Tribulation**.