



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

BIBLE FOUNDATIONS

Hebrew Words That Reveal God's Character

What the Old Testament's Words Teach About Who God Is

The Short Answer

The Old Testament uses rich Hebrew words to describe God's character - His compassion, grace, patience, steadfast love, faithfulness, holiness, righteousness, justice, goodness, forgiveness, and covenant commitment.

These words are valuable because they help readers notice truths that can be difficult to capture with a single English word. But Hebrew is not a secret code, and no dictionary definition can replace reading Scripture in context.

One of the most important passages is Exodus 34:6-7, where God describes Himself as compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness - while also forgiving sin and remaining perfectly just.

The rest of Scripture repeatedly returns to this description. And in the New Testament, God's character is revealed most clearly in Jesus Christ.

The goal is not merely to learn Hebrew words. The goal is to know the God those words describe.

Exodus 34:5-7 · Psalm 103:8-14 · Psalm 145:8-9 · Micah 7:18-20 · John 1:14-18

Opening Memory Anchor

God's character is not discovered by guessing what He is like. God has revealed what He is like.



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PART ONE BEGINNER GUIDE

A Note About Pronunciation

The pronunciation guides in this study are simple English approximations intended to help beginners read the words aloud. They are not technical linguistic transcriptions, and pronunciation may vary among Hebrew-speaking traditions.

1. WHY STUDY HEBREW WORDS THAT DESCRIBE GOD?

The Old Testament was written primarily in Hebrew, with smaller portions written in Aramaic. English translations faithfully communicate its message, but languages do not always match one another word-for-word. Sometimes one Hebrew word can be translated several different ways depending on context.

For example, the Hebrew word *hesed* may appear in English Bibles as steadfast love, lovingkindness, faithful love, mercy, or covenant loyalty. This does not mean English translations are unreliable. It means translation requires communicating meaning from one real language into another.

Studying important Hebrew words can help readers notice repeated biblical themes, understand why translations sometimes differ, recognize connections between passages, and appreciate dimensions of God's character that may otherwise be missed. But the Hebrew word itself is never more authoritative than Scripture. The goal is not hidden meanings. The goal is to understand more carefully what the Bible actually says.

Memory Anchor

Hebrew can deepen Bible study. Context still determines meaning.

2. WHERE DOES GOD DESCRIBE HIS OWN CHARACTER?

One of the most important passages in the entire Old Testament is Exodus 34:5-7. Read Exodus 32-34 for the larger context. Israel has recently committed a devastating act of rebellion. While Moses is on Mount Sinai receiving God's covenant instructions, the people make and worship a golden calf. God would be entirely just to judge them. Moses intercedes.

Then, in Exodus 34, God passes before Moses and proclaims His name and character. Read Exodus 34:6-7 slowly. God describes Himself as compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, abounding in faithfulness, forgiving, and just.

This matters because God is describing Himself. These are not merely human opinions about what God might be like. Later writers repeatedly echo this description. See Numbers 14:18; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 86:15; Psalm 103:8; Psalm 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2. Exodus 34:6-7 becomes one of Scripture's foundational descriptions of God's character.



3. WHAT DOES RAHUM TEACH ABOUT GOD?

HEBREW: רַחוּם_ TRANSLITERATION: Rahum PRONUNCIATION: rah-KHOOM

COMMON MEANING: Compassionate / Merciful KEY PASSAGES: Exodus 34:6; Deuteronomy 4:31; Psalm 103:8

The first character description proclaimed in Exodus 34:6 is often translated "merciful" or "compassionate." The Hebrew word is rahum. It describes deep compassion toward someone in need. This is not detached sympathy. God sees human weakness and suffering and responds with compassion.

Read Psalm 103:8-14. The psalm echoes Exodus 34 and compares God's compassion toward His people with a father's compassion toward his children because God knows human weakness: "He remembers that we are dust." God's compassion does not mean sin is unimportant. Exodus 34 itself holds compassion and justice together. God is not cold, distant, or indifferent toward His creatures.

4. WHAT DOES HANNUN TEACH ABOUT GOD?

HEBREW: חַנּוּן_ TRANSLITERATION: Hannun PRONUNCIATION: khah-NOON

COMMON MEANING: Gracious KEY PASSAGES: Exodus 34:6; Psalm 86:15; Psalm 145:8

God also describes Himself as hannun - gracious. Grace is favor that is not earned. That is especially striking in Exodus 34 because Israel has just violated the covenant. God's graciousness is not a reward for Israel's impressive faithfulness. It reveals something about God Himself.

Read Psalm 145:8-9. The psalm again echoes Exodus 34: "The LORD is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." Then it adds, "The LORD is good to all." Grace originates in God's character. God does not become gracious because human beings deserve it. He is gracious.

5. WHAT DOES "SLOW TO ANGER" MEAN IN HEBREW?

HEBREW: אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם_ TRANSLITERATION: Erekh Appayim PRONUNCIATION: EH-rekh ah-PAH-yeem

COMMON MEANING: Slow to Anger / Patient KEY PASSAGES: Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:18; Psalm 103:8

The Hebrew expression translated "slow to anger" is unusually vivid. Erekh carries the idea of being long. Appayim is related to a Hebrew word for the nose or nostrils and is used idiomatically in connection with anger. The expression communicates that God is not quick-tempered. He is patient.

This does not mean God never becomes angry. Scripture repeatedly teaches that God responds to evil with righteous anger. The point is that God is not impulsive, irritable, or emotionally unstable. Read Numbers 14:11-20: Israel rebels again, and Moses appeals directly to God's revealed character. God's patience gives sinners opportunity for repentance, but patience should never be confused with indifference toward evil.

Memory Anchor

God is slow to anger - not because sin does not matter, but because patience belongs to His character.

6. WHAT DOES HESED MEAN?

HEBREW: חֶסֶד_ TRANSLITERATION: Hesed PRONUNCIATION: HEH-sed

COMMON MEANING: Steadfast Love / Faithful Love / Lovingkindness / Mercy / Covenant Loyalty KEY PASSAGES: Exodus 34:6-7; Psalm 136; Micah 7:18-20

Hesed is one of the most important Hebrew words for understanding God's character. It is also difficult to represent with one English word. Depending on context, English translations may use steadfast love, faithful love, lovingkindness, mercy, or similar expressions.

The word can communicate a rich combination of love, kindness, loyalty, and faithfulness expressed within relationship. When Scripture speaks of God's hesed, the emphasis is often not merely that God feels affection. God faithfully acts in love. Read Psalm 136: the repeated declaration that God's hesed endures forever is connected with what God actually does - He creates, rescues, leads, remembers, and provides.



7. DOES HESED ALWAYS MEAN "COVENANT LOVE"?

Not necessarily. Hesed is frequently connected with covenant relationships, and "covenant love" can sometimes be a helpful explanation. But the Hebrew word itself does not automatically mean "covenant" every time it appears. Context determines meaning. Human beings can also show hesed toward one another in narratives involving kindness, loyalty, and faithful treatment.

It is therefore more precise to say: God's hesed is often displayed through His covenant faithfulness. That is better than claiming: Hesed literally means covenant love. The distinction protects Bible study from turning helpful summaries into inaccurate dictionary definitions.

8. WHAT DOES EMET TEACH ABOUT GOD?

HEBREW: אֱמֶת, TRANSLITERATION: Emet PRONUNCIATION: eh-MET

COMMON MEANING: Truth / Faithfulness / Reliability KEY PASSAGES: Exodus 34:6; Psalm 25:10; Psalm 86:15

Exodus 34 describes God as abounding in hesed and emet. Emet is often translated truth, faithfulness, or reliability. The word emphasizes what is firm, dependable, and trustworthy. God is not deceptive. He is not unreliable. He does not make promises casually and then abandon them.

Read Deuteronomy 7:9 and Psalm 119:160. The God who speaks truth is Himself trustworthy. This makes hesed and emet a powerful pairing: God's love is faithful, and God's faithfulness is loving. His people can trust Him because His character does not shift with circumstances.

9. WHAT DOES NASA TEACH ABOUT GOD'S FORGIVENESS?

HEBREW: נָסָא, TRANSLITERATION: Nasa PRONUNCIATION: nah-SAH

COMMON MEANING: To Lift / Carry / Bear / Forgive KEY PASSAGES: Exodus 34:7; Numbers 14:18-19; Micah 7:18

Exodus 34:7 says that God forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin. The Hebrew verb is nasa. Its broader range includes lifting, carrying, bearing, or taking something away. In certain contexts, including Exodus 34, it describes forgiveness. This does not mean nasa always means "forgive"; context determines the meaning.

The word can picture guilt as something borne or carried away. Read Numbers 14:18-19 and Micah 7:18. Biblical forgiveness does not mean God pretends evil never happened. It means God acts mercifully toward guilty people rather than giving them the full judgment their sin deserves. The Gospel later reveals the deepest cost of forgiveness: sin is not ignored - it is dealt with through Christ.

10. WHAT DOES QADOSH TEACH ABOUT GOD?

HEBREW: קָדוֹשׁ, TRANSLITERATION: Qadosh PRONUNCIATION: kah-DOHSH

COMMON MEANING: Holy KEY PASSAGES: Isaiah 6:1-7; Isaiah 57:15

Isaiah's vision of God's throne includes one of Scripture's most memorable declarations: "Holy, holy, holy." The Hebrew word is qadosh. Holiness includes the idea of being set apart, but God's holiness should not be reduced merely to "separate." God is utterly unique, morally pure, majestic, and exalted above creation.

Read Isaiah 6:1-7. Isaiah recognizes his own sinfulness, but the passage does not end with Isaiah destroyed. God provides cleansing. The holy God is also the God who graciously makes the unclean clean.

11. WHAT DOES TSADDIQ TEACH ABOUT GOD?

HEBREW: צַדִּיק, TRANSLITERATION: Tsaddiq PRONUNCIATION: tsah-DEEK

COMMON MEANING: Righteous / Just KEY PASSAGES: Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 11:7; Psalm 145:17

To say God is righteous means He is always morally right. He never acts wickedly, corrupts justice, or needs to correct a moral defect within Himself. Human standards do not make God righteous; God's character is the ultimate standard of righteousness.

Read Psalm 145:17: "The LORD is righteous in all his ways." God's compassion and grace never require Him to stop being righteous. His righteousness and mercy are not competing personalities. Both belong perfectly to the same God.



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12. WHAT DOES MISHPAT TEACH ABOUT GOD?

HEBREW: מִשְׁפָּט TRANSLITERATION: Mishpat PRONUNCIATION: meesh-PAHT

COMMON MEANING: Justice / Judgment / Legal Decision KEY PASSAGES: Deuteronomy 32:4; Psalm 89:14; Isaiah 30:18

Mishpat is often translated justice or judgment. Its precise meaning depends on context. When connected with God's character and rule, it reminds readers that God governs rightly. Read Psalm 89:14: righteousness and justice are described as the foundation of God's throne.

Biblical justice includes more than punishing wrongdoers. It includes judging rightly, defending what is right, and governing without corruption or favoritism. God cannot be bribed or manipulated. He never lacks information, misunderstands evidence, or issues an unjust verdict. Human justice can fail. God's justice does not.

13. HOW CAN GOD BE BOTH MERCIFUL AND JUST?

This question stands at the heart of Exodus 34:6-7. God declares that He is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. Then the passage says He forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin - but also that He will not simply clear the guilty.

How can God forgive sinners while remaining perfectly just? Scripture gradually unfolds the answer. God does not save by pretending sin never happened. Sin is real. Guilt is real. Justice is real. And mercy is real.

Read Romans 3:21-26. At the cross, God does not abandon justice in order to show mercy. Jesus bears sin. God remains just while justifying those who have faith in Jesus. The cross reveals that God's mercy and justice are not enemies. Both flow from His perfect character.

PART TWO

WANT TO GO DEEPER?

INTERMEDIATE

14. WHAT DOES IT MEAN THAT GOD "VISITS THE INIQUITY OF THE FATHERS ON THE CHILDREN"?

Exodus 34:7 continues with difficult language about God "visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation." This should not be ignored, especially because the passage is central to this study.

Does Scripture teach that innocent children are automatically counted personally guilty for their parents' sins? No. Deuteronomy 24:16 says children are not to be put to death for their fathers and fathers are not to be put to death for their children; each person is accountable for personal sin. Ezekiel 18:19-20 likewise says, "The soul who sins shall die."

At the same time, Scripture recognizes that sin can produce consequences across generations. A parent's idolatry, violence, injustice, addiction, abuse, or rebellion may deeply affect children and grandchildren, and later generations may continue the same patterns. Exodus 20:5-6 places similar language in a covenant context, contrasting generations of those who hate God with God's steadfast love toward those who love Him and keep His commandments.

The exact relationship between corporate consequences and individual accountability requires careful interpretation. But two biblical truths are clear: each person is morally accountable before God, and sin can create consequences that reach far beyond the person who first commits it.

Memory Anchor

Sin can leave consequences across generations, but Scripture does not teach inherited personal guilt for another person's sin.



15. WHAT DOES QANNA MEAN WHEN THE BIBLE SAYS GOD IS "JEALOUS"?

HEBREW: קָנָא _ TRANSLITERATION: Qanna PRONUNCIATION: kah-NAH

COMMON MEANING: Jealous KEY PASSAGES: Exodus 20:3-6; Exodus 34:14; Deuteronomy 4:23-24

Calling God "jealous" can sound troubling because human jealousy is often sinful. It can involve envy, insecurity, possessiveness, resentment, or wanting something that rightfully belongs to someone else. That is not what Scripture means when it describes God as qanna.

Read Exodus 34:14. The context concerns idolatry and covenant loyalty. Israel belongs in covenant relationship with YHWH, and worshiping other gods is repeatedly compared to marital unfaithfulness. God's jealousy reflects His rightful claim to the worship and covenant faithfulness of His people. God does not envy another god who possesses something He lacks; there is no rival deity equal to Him.

Sinful human jealousy says: "I want what belongs to someone else."

God's righteous jealousy says: "Do not give to another what rightly belongs to God."

16. WHAT DOES TOV TEACH ABOUT GOD?

HEBREW: טוֹב TRANSLITERATION: Tov PRONUNCIATION: TOHV

COMMON MEANING: Good KEY PASSAGES: Psalm 34:8; Psalm 100:5; Psalm 119:68

Tov is a common Hebrew word meaning good. It appears from Genesis 1, where God repeatedly declares His creation good. Scripture also describes God Himself as good. Read Psalm 119:68: "You are good and do good." His actions flow from His character.

This becomes especially important when circumstances are painful or confusing. Scripture does not teach that everything people experience is pleasant, nor does it require believers to call evil good. Job wrestles with suffering he does not understand. Habakkuk struggles with God's use of a violent nation in judgment. Lamentations grieves catastrophic loss and judgment.

These books do not solve suffering by minimizing pain. They model honest lament, difficult questions, and continued trust in God's character. Biblical faith therefore does not define God's goodness by whether life currently feels easy. It learns God's character from His revelation, even when His purposes remain difficult to understand.

17. WHAT DOES AHAVAH TEACH ABOUT GOD'S LOVE?

HEBREW: אָהָבָה _ TRANSLITERATION: Ahavah PRONUNCIATION: ah-hah-VAH

COMMON MEANING: Love KEY PASSAGES: Deuteronomy 7:7-9; Hosea 11:1-9; Jeremiah 31:3

RELATED VERB: אָהַב - Ahav, "to love." The Old Testament speaks clearly about God's love. Read Deuteronomy 7:7-8. God explains that He did not choose Israel because Israel was the largest or most impressive nation. He set His love upon them because He loved them and remained faithful to His promise.

Hosea 11 provides another powerful picture. God describes loving Israel, calling His son out of Egypt, teaching His people to walk, and caring for them even as they turn away. God's love is not sentimental blindness toward sin. The same prophets who proclaim God's love also announce judgment. Yet divine judgment does not erase divine love. God's love is holy, faithful, and purposeful.

18. WHAT DOES SHALOM REVEAL ABOUT GOD'S PURPOSES?

HEBREW: שָׁלוֹם TRANSLITERATION: Shalom PRONUNCIATION: shah-LOHM

COMMON MEANING: Peace / Wholeness / Well-Being KEY PASSAGES: Judges 6:23-24; Isaiah 9:6-7; Isaiah 26:3

Shalom is often translated peace. Depending on context, it can carry a broader sense of wholeness, well-being, completeness, or things being as they should be. In Judges 6, Gideon builds an altar called "YHWH is Peace." Isaiah later promises a coming ruler called the Prince of Peace.

Biblical peace is not merely inner calm. Sin has fractured humanity's relationship with God, one another, creation, and even the human heart. God's redemptive purposes move toward restoration. Romans 5:1 announces peace with God through Jesus, and Revelation 21:1-5 looks toward new creation where death, mourning, crying, and pain are defeated.



19. WHY ARE HESED AND EMET OFTEN FOUND TOGETHER?

Exodus 34:6 describes God as abounding in hesed and emet - steadfast love and faithfulness. This pairing appears elsewhere in the Old Testament. See Genesis 24:27; Psalm 25:10; Psalm 85:10; Psalm 89:14. Together the words communicate that God's love is dependable and His faithfulness is not cold. God does not merely make promises. He lovingly keeps them.

This combination becomes especially significant in John 1:14-18, where John describes Jesus as "full of grace and truth." John writes in Greek, not Hebrew, and "grace and truth" should not simply be treated as a mechanical word-for-word translation of hesed and emet. However, many readers and scholars have recognized a strong conceptual echo of the Old Testament revelation of God's character, especially Exodus 34. John is presenting Jesus as the climactic revelation of God.

Memory Anchor

The God who revealed His steadfast love and faithfulness to Moses reveals His character most fully in Jesus.

20. HOW CAN HEBREW WORD STUDIES GO WRONG?

Hebrew can deepen biblical understanding, but word studies can become misleading when ordinary language is treated like a secret code. Three common mistakes deserve special caution.

FIRST: IMPORTING EVERY DICTIONARY MEANING INTO ONE VERSE. A lexicon records possible meanings, but one occurrence usually does not carry every meaning at once. Context determines which sense is appropriate.

SECOND: MAKING ETYMOLOGY CONTROL THE MEANING. A word's historical origin or root can sometimes be helpful, but it does not automatically define how the word functions in a particular passage. Meaning comes primarily from actual usage.

THIRD: BUILDING HIDDEN MESSAGES FROM HEBREW LETTERS OR PICTOGRAPHS. Early alphabetic forms have historical connections with pictorial signs, but biblical Hebrew words function as words in a developed language. Their meanings are determined by grammar, context, and usage - not by combining speculative symbolic meanings assigned to individual letters.

A better question is always: What does this word mean in this sentence and passage? For fuller treatment of responsible Hebrew study, see 3Nails Studies #246-#248.

Bible-Study Safeguard

Original-language tools should clarify Scripture - not create meanings the biblical authors never communicated.

21. DOES LEARNING HEBREW MAKE SOMEONE A BETTER CHRISTIAN?

Not necessarily. Biblical Hebrew is a valuable tool. It can deepen study and help readers understand Scripture more carefully. But knowledge of Hebrew does not automatically produce faith, wisdom, holiness, humility, love, or obedience.

Read John 5:39-40. The goal of Bible study is not intellectual superiority. Knowledge should produce greater humility before God. A person who knows no Hebrew but faithfully trusts and obeys Scripture may understand its central message better than someone who knows Hebrew grammar but refuses the God Scripture reveals. Language study is a tool. Discipleship is the goal.

22. HOW DOES JESUS REVEAL THE CHARACTER DESCRIBED IN THESE HEBREW WORDS?

The New Testament does not simply give Jesus a list of Hebrew vocabulary words. Instead, it presents Him as the clearest revelation of God's character. John 1:14-18 reveals grace and truth. Matthew 9:35-36 shows Jesus' compassion. Mark 10:17-22 shows Him loving while speaking difficult truth. John 2:13-17 shows zeal that is not passive indifference toward dishonor and evil.

At the cross, holiness, righteousness, justice, mercy, faithfulness, and love converge. Romans 5:6-8 says God demonstrates His love through Christ's death for sinners. 2 Corinthians 5:21 speaks of righteousness through Christ. Revelation 19:11 presents Jesus judging in righteousness.

The biblical portrait is not: "The Old Testament God is angry, while Jesus is loving." Scripture presents one coherent revelation of God. The God who describes Himself in Exodus 34 as compassionate, gracious, patient, loving, faithful, forgiving, and just is the God whose character is revealed most fully in Jesus Christ.



23. WHICH CHARACTERISTIC OF GOD IS MOST IMPORTANT?

Scripture does not invite readers to divide God into competing pieces. God is not part love, part holiness, part justice, and part mercy. God is perfectly and consistently who He is.

His love is holy. His holiness is loving. His justice is righteous. His mercy is not unjust. His patience is not moral indifference. His jealousy is not sinful insecurity. His goodness is not weakness. Human beings sometimes experience tension between virtues because human character is imperfect. God does not. Every aspect of His character exists in perfect harmony.

This is one reason Exodus 34:6-7 is so important. Compassion and justice appear in the same revelation. God does not have to choose between being loving and being holy. He is perfectly both.

THE GOSPEL CONNECTION

Exodus 34 reveals a God who is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, abounding in faithfulness, forgiving, and just. Humanity desperately needs every one of these truths. Sin is not merely a mistake. It is rebellion against a holy and righteous God. Because God is just, sin cannot simply be declared irrelevant. Because God is merciful, sinners are not without hope.

The Gospel shows how these truths meet. Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, became truly human without ceasing to be divine. He lived the righteous life sinners have failed to live. He died for sins. He rose bodily from the dead. Read Romans 3:21-26. At the cross, God does not stop being just in order to become merciful. God demonstrates His righteousness while providing salvation for sinners.

God's steadfast love acts. God's faithfulness keeps His promises. God's justice takes sin seriously. God's grace provides what sinners cannot earn. God's mercy welcomes those who repent and trust Christ. And God's purpose leads toward shalom - reconciliation with God now and ultimately the restoration of creation. The Gospel does not reveal a different God from the God of Exodus 34. It reveals how astonishingly faithful God has always been to His character and promises.

QUICK REFERENCE

RAHUM רַחוּם	Compassionate / Merciful	Exodus 34:6	God sees weakness and need with compassion.
HANNUN חַנוּן	Gracious	Exodus 34:6	God gives favor that is not earned.
EREKH APPAYIM אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם	Slow to Anger	Exodus 34:6	God is patient rather than quick-tempered.
HESED חֶסֶד	Steadfast / Faithful Love	Exodus 34:6	God faithfully acts in love.
EMET אֱמֶת	Truth / Faithfulness	Exodus 34:6	God is completely trustworthy.
NASA נָשָׂא	Bear / Forgive	Exodus 34:7	God forgives guilt rather than ignoring it.
QADOSH קָדוֹשׁ	Holy	Isaiah 6:3	God is utterly unique, pure, and exalted.
TSADDIQ צַדִּיק	Righteous	Deut. 32:4	God always acts rightly.
MISHPAT מִשְׁפָּט	Justice / Judgment	Psalms 89:14	God judges and governs rightly.
QANNA קָנָא	Jealous	Exodus 34:14	God rightly claims worship and covenant faithfulness.
TOV טוֹב	Good	Psalms 119:68	God is good and does good.
AHAVAH אֲהָבָה	Love	Deut. 7:7-9	God's love is not earned by human impressiveness.
SHALOM שְׁלוֹמִים	Peace / Wholeness	Judges 6:23-24	God's purposes move toward restoration.



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HOW TO STUDY A HEBREW WORD RESPONSIBLY

1. START WITH THE PASSAGE. Read the entire paragraph, chapter, or narrative before opening a word-study tool.
2. IDENTIFY THE HEBREW WORD. Use a trustworthy interlinear, concordance, lexicon, or Bible-study tool.
3. COMPARE TRANSLATIONS. Different English renderings may reveal the word's possible range of meaning.
4. LOOK AT OTHER OCCURRENCES. Notice how Scripture uses the same word elsewhere.
5. LET CONTEXT CONTROL THE MEANING. Do not import every dictionary definition into one verse.
6. DISTINGUISH WORD MEANING FROM THEOLOGY. A doctrine may be biblically true without being contained inside the definition of one Hebrew word.
7. BE CAUTIOUS WITH ETYMOLOGY. A word's history does not automatically determine its meaning in a biblical sentence.
8. AVOID SECRET-CODE METHODS. Hebrew letters are not a hidden system for discovering messages beyond what the biblical text communicates.
9. FOLLOW THE BIBLICAL THEME. Ask how the concept develops through Scripture.
10. LOOK TO JESUS WHERE SCRIPTURE LEADS THERE. The New Testament reveals God's character most fully in Christ.

REVIEW AND RETENTION

1. Which Old Testament passage provides one of Scripture's foundational descriptions of God's character? Exodus 34:6-7.
2. What does rahum describe? God as compassionate or merciful.
3. What does hannun mean? Gracious.
4. What does erekh appayim communicate? God is slow to anger or patient.
5. Why is hesed difficult to translate with one English word? Its range can include steadfast love, faithful love, kindness, mercy, and loyalty depending on context.
6. Does hesed literally mean "covenant love" every time? No. It is often connected with covenant faithfulness, but context determines its meaning.
7. What does emet communicate about God? He is true, faithful, reliable, and trustworthy.
8. What does nasa mean in Exodus 34:7? It describes God forgiving or bearing away guilt, although the verb has a broader range that includes lifting and carrying.
9. What does qadosh mean? Holy.
10. What does tsaddiq reveal about God? God is righteous and always acts rightly.
11. What does mishpat describe? Justice, judgment, or a just decision depending on context.
12. Does Exodus 34 teach that children automatically inherit personal guilt for parents' sins? No. Scripture teaches individual moral accountability while recognizing consequences can extend across generations.
13. Why is God's jealousy different from sinful human jealousy? God does not envy what belongs to another. His jealousy reflects His rightful claim to worship and covenant faithfulness.
14. What does tov mean? Good.
15. What does shalom communicate? Peace, wholeness, or well-being depending on context.
16. Does a Hebrew dictionary list every meaning that belongs in every verse? No. A lexicon provides possible meanings; context determines the appropriate meaning.
17. What is the ultimate goal of studying Hebrew character words? To know more clearly the God Scripture reveals.



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

FINAL MEMORY ANCHORS

- God has revealed what He is like.
- Hebrew can deepen Bible study. Context still determines meaning.
- God is compassionate and gracious.
- God is slow to anger.
- God's steadfast love acts.
- God's faithfulness makes Him completely trustworthy.
- God forgives without pretending sin is unimportant.
- God's holiness and love never compete.
- God's mercy never requires Him to abandon justice.
- Sin can leave consequences across generations, but personal guilt belongs to the person who sins.
- God's jealousy is righteous, not insecure.
- God is good and does good.
- God's redemptive purpose moves toward peace and restoration.
- The God who revealed His character to Moses reveals Himself most fully in Jesus.

SCRIPTURE READING PATH

Exodus 32:34 - The setting of God's self-revelation
 Exodus 34:5-7 - God proclaims His character
 Numbers 14:11-20 - Moses appeals to God's revealed character
 Deuteronomy 4:23-31 - God's jealousy and compassion
 Deuteronomy 7:6-9 - God's love and faithfulness
 Deuteronomy 24:16 - Individual accountability
 Deuteronomy 32:1-4 - God's righteousness and justice
 Psalm 25:4-10 - Steadfast love and faithfulness
 Psalm 34:1-10 - The goodness of God
 Psalm 86:5-15 - Compassion, grace, steadfast love, and faithfulness
 Psalm 89:14 - Righteousness, justice, steadfast love, and faithfulness
 Psalm 103:8-14 - Compassion and patience
 Psalm 119:68 - God is good and does good
 Psalm 136 - God's steadfast love endures forever

Psalms 145:8-17 - Grace, compassion, goodness, and righteousness
 Isaiah 6:1-7 - God's holiness
 Ezekiel 18:19-20 - Individual responsibility for sin
 Hosea 11:1-9 - God's love toward rebellious Israel
 Joel 2:12-13 - Return to the gracious and compassionate God
 Jonah 4:1-11 - God's compassion challenged by Jonah
 Micah 7:18-20 - God delights in steadfast love and forgives iniquity
 Job 1-2; 38-42 - God's goodness amid unexplained suffering
 Habakkuk 1-3 - Trusting God amid violence and judgment
 Lamentations 3:19-33 - Hope in God's steadfast love amid grief
 John 1:14-18 - Grace and truth revealed in Jesus Christ
 Romans 3:21-26 - God's righteousness, justice, and saving grace
 Romans 5:1-8 - Peace with God and demonstrated love
 Revelation 21:1-5 - God's final restoration

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

Helpful tools include a Bible with cross-references and translation notes; a reliable Hebrew-English lexicon; a Bible concordance; an interlinear Bible used alongside - not instead of - a normal Bible translation; STEP Bible and Blue Letter Bible for accessible word searches and occurrence studies; and BibleProject resources on God's character and Exodus 34. Original-language resources are most valuable when they send readers back into Scripture itself.

Resource Safeguard

Listing a resource does not mean 3Nails endorses every theological position, methodology, statistic, strategy, publication, or conclusion it produces. Compare sources and continually return to Scripture.

FINAL THOUGHT

What is God like? Scripture does not leave that question unanswered. When Moses stood before God after Israel's terrible rebellion, God proclaimed His own character: compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, abounding in faithfulness, forgiving, and just.

The Psalms celebrate these truths. The prophets appeal to them. Israel's history demonstrates them. And the Gospel reveals their breathtaking fullness. Jesus shows that God's compassion is not distant sympathy: God came near. God's steadfast love is not merely an emotion: God acted to save. God's faithfulness is not merely a promise: God kept His word. God's justice does not ignore sin: the cross takes sin with complete seriousness. God's grace does not wait for sinners to become worthy: Christ died for sinners. God's forgiveness does not mean guilt was imaginary: sin was borne. And God's purpose does not end with forgiveness alone: He is making all things new.

Hebrew words can help readers see these truths more clearly, but the words themselves are not the destination. The goal is not simply to know that *hesed* means steadfast love, that *emet* can describe faithfulness, or that *nasa* can describe forgiveness. The goal is to know the God who is steadfast in love, completely faithful, righteous in judgment, rich in mercy, and willing to forgive. And Scripture reveals that God most clearly in Jesus Christ.

Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus