



Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus

BIBLE FOUNDATIONS

Hebrew Words for Love, Mercy, Grace, and Faithfulness

Understanding the Rich Vocabulary Scripture Uses to Describe God's Character

The Short Answer

The Old Testament does not use only one Hebrew word for God's love, mercy, grace, or faithfulness. Instead, Scripture uses a family of related words that overlap while emphasizing different aspects of God's character. Ahav / ahavah speaks of love. Heseb often speaks of steadfast love, kindness, and loyalty. Rachamim emphasizes compassion and mercy. Chen, chanan, and channun describe favor and graciousness. Emet, emunah, and aman communicate truth, reliability, faithfulness, and trust.

These words should not be treated as secret definitions hidden behind English translations. Their meaning comes from the way Scripture actually uses them in context. Together they reveal something profound: The God of Scripture loves, shows compassion, gives undeserved favor, remains faithful, acts righteously, forgives, and can be trusted completely.

Exodus 34:6-7 · Psalm 103:8-14 · Micah 6:8 · Micah 7:18-20

Opening Memory Anchor

God's love is compassionate, gracious, righteous, faithful, and true.



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PART ONE BEGINNER GUIDE

1. WHY DOES HEBREW HAVE SEVERAL WORDS FOR LOVE, MERCY, GRACE, AND FAITHFULNESS?

Because these ideas are related but not identical. English works the same way. Words such as love, affection, compassion, kindness, mercy, favor, loyalty, and faithfulness overlap, but they do not mean exactly the same thing. Hebrew also uses different words to describe different dimensions of God's relationships with people.

That means readers should resist the temptation to ask, “What is the Hebrew word for grace?” as though there must always be one Hebrew word matching one English word. A better question is: “Which Hebrew word is used here, and what does it mean in this context?”

Memory Anchor

Related words may overlap without being interchangeable.

LOVE

2. אָהַב - AHAV

Strong's: H157 **Pronunciation:** ah-HAHV **Basic meaning:** To love **Key Scriptures:** Genesis 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:5; Hosea 3:1

Ahav is one of the major Hebrew verbs for love. It can describe love between family members, husbands and wives, friends, God and His people, and people and God. The word itself does not automatically tell readers what kind of love is being described. Context does. Deuteronomy 6:5 commands Israel to love the LORD with the whole person.

Why it matters: Biblical love involves more than emotion. Love for God is expressed through allegiance, trust, and obedience.

3. אַהַבָּה - AHAVAH

Strong's: H160 **Pronunciation:** ah-hah-VAH **Basic meaning:** Love **Key Scriptures:** 1 Samuel 18:3; Song of Songs 8:6-7

Ahavah is the noun related to *ahav*. It can describe deep human affection and committed love. Song of Songs uses powerful imagery to describe love's strength.

Why it matters: Scripture does not treat love as shallow sentiment. Love can involve deep affection, commitment, loyalty, and action.

STEADFAST LOVE AND LOYAL KINDNESS

4. חֶסֶד - HESED

Strong's: H2617 **Pronunciation:** HEH-sed **Basic meaning:** Steadfast love; faithful love; kindness; loyalty

Key Scriptures: Exodus 34:6-7; Ruth 3:10; Psalm 136; Micah 6:8

Hesed is one of the most important relational words in the Old Testament. English translations may render it as steadfast love, faithful love, lovingkindness, mercy, kindness, or loyal love. No single English word captures every use. *Hesed* frequently describes faithful kindness expressed toward another person within a real relationship. It appears prominently in covenant settings, but “covenant love” should not be treated as its automatic definition in every verse. Ruth uses *hesed* for human kindness and loyalty. Psalm 136 repeatedly celebrates God's enduring *hesed*. Micah 6:8 places love of *hesed* beside doing justice and walking humbly with God.

Why it matters: God's love is not merely emotional warmth. His love acts faithfully.

Memory Anchor

Hesed is love demonstrated through faithful kindness.

5. DOES HESED ALWAYS MEAN “COVENANT LOVE”?

No. That description can be helpful because *hesed* frequently appears within covenant relationships. But the Hebrew word itself does not simply mean “covenant.” People can also show *hesed* to other people. Ask: Who is showing *hesed*? To whom? What relationship exists? What faithful action is being described? Is covenant explicitly part of the context? When God shows *hesed*, covenant faithfulness often provides important background. But context determines how strongly covenant ideas should be emphasized.



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COMPASSION AND MERCY

6. רַחֲמִים - RACHAMIM

Strong's: H7356 **Pronunciation:** rah-khah-MEEM **Basic meaning:** Compassion; mercy

Key Scriptures: Psalm 103:13; Isaiah 54:7-8; Lamentations 3:22-23

Rachamim describes deep compassion and mercy. The form is grammatically plural and belongs to the same Hebrew word family as *rechem*, "womb." That relationship may help readers appreciate the tenderness associated with the word family, but the meaning of *rachamim* must still come from its actual biblical usage rather than from etymology alone. It often communicates tender concern for someone who is weak, suffering, vulnerable, or in need.

Why it matters: God's mercy is not cold tolerance. Scripture describes Him as deeply compassionate.

7. רַחוּם - RACHUM

Strong's: H7349 **Pronunciation:** rah-KHOOM **Basic meaning:** Compassionate; merciful **Key Scriptures:** Exodus 34:6; Deuteronomy 4:31; Psalm 103:8

Rachum is an adjective describing someone as compassionate. It appears in one of the Old Testament's most important descriptions of God's character in Exodus 34:6. That description becomes a repeated biblical confession of who God is.

Why it matters: Compassion is not merely something God occasionally does. Scripture describes God Himself as compassionate.

GRACE AND FAVOR

8. חֵן - CHEN

Strong's: H2580 **Pronunciation:** KHEN **Basic meaning:** Favor; grace **Key Scriptures:** Genesis 6:8; Exodus 33:12-17; Proverbs 3:3-4

Chen commonly describes favor or acceptance. A frequent Hebrew expression is "find favor in the eyes of..." Noah finds favor with the LORD. Moses asks for God's favor. The word may also describe attractiveness or graciousness in human settings.

Why it matters: Biblical grace involves favor that is received rather than earned as a debt.

9. חָנָן - CHANAN

Strong's: H2603 **Pronunciation:** khah-NAHN **Basic meaning:** Be gracious; show favor; have mercy

Key Scriptures: Numbers 6:24-26; Psalm 51:1; Isaiah 30:18

Chanan is a verb meaning to show favor, be gracious, or have mercy. The priestly blessing asks God to make His face shine upon His people and be gracious to them. Many Psalms contain appeals for God to be gracious. The person praying is appealing to God's mercy rather than claiming that God owes a blessing.

Why it matters: Grace comes from the generosity of the giver.

10. חַנּוּן - CHANNUN

Strong's: H2587 **Pronunciation:** khah-NOON **Basic meaning:** Gracious **Key Scriptures:** Exodus 34:6; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2

Channun describes someone who is gracious. In the Old Testament, it characteristically describes God. It frequently appears with *rachum*: **compassionate and gracious**. Joel uses God's gracious and compassionate character as the basis for calling people to return to Him. Jonah knows this same truth about God-and becomes angry when God shows mercy to Nineveh.

Why it matters: God's graciousness offers genuine hope to sinners who turn toward Him.



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TRUTH AND FAITHFULNESS

11. אֶמֶת - EMET

Strong's: H571 **Pronunciation:** EH-met **Basic meaning:** Truth; faithfulness; reliability **Key Scriptures:** Exodus 34:6; Psalm 25:10; Psalm 119:160
Emet is commonly translated "truth," but it can also communicate reliability, stability, certainty, or faithfulness. In Exodus 34:6, God's *hesed* and *emet* appear together. Many translations therefore express the phrase as some form of **steadfast love and faithfulness**.
Why it matters: Biblical truth is not merely accurate information. God's character is dependable.

12. אֱמוּנָה - EMUNAH

Strong's: H530 **Pronunciation:** eh-moo-NAH **Basic meaning:** Faithfulness; firmness; steadfastness **Key Scriptures:** Deuteronomy 32:4; Habakkuk 2:4
Emunah belongs to a Hebrew word family associated with firmness and reliability. Deuteronomy 32 describes God as a God of *emunah*-faithfulness. Habakkuk 2:4 famously uses *emunah* when describing how the righteous person lives. English translations differ between expressions such as faith and faithfulness because the word can carry ideas of firmness, fidelity, steadfastness, and trust.
Why it matters: Biblical faith is not merely agreeing that something is true. Genuine trust rests upon and responds to God's faithfulness.

13. אָמֵן - AMAN

Strong's: H539 **Pronunciation:** ah-MAHN **Basic meaning:** Be firm; believe; trust; be faithful **Key Scriptures:** Genesis 15:6; Exodus 14:31
Aman belongs to the same broad word family as *emunah* and the familiar word **amen**. Genesis 15:6 says Abraham believed the LORD. The point is not belief detached from God's revelation. Abraham places his trust in the God who has spoken and promised.

GRAMMAR NOTE - AMAN CHANGES WITH ITS VERBAL STEM

The Hebrew root '־m-n appears in different verbal stems, and those forms can emphasize different ideas. In the **Niphal**, it commonly carries senses such as being firm, established, reliable, or faithful. In the **Hiphil**, it commonly expresses believing or trusting. Genesis 15:6 uses the Hiphil form when Abraham believes the LORD.

Reader Safeguard: A Hebrew root does not have one fixed meaning independent of grammar. The form of the word and its context both matter.

Why it matters: Faith rests on the faithfulness of God.

Memory Anchor

Biblical faith is trust in the trustworthy God.

FORGIVENESS

14. סָלַח - SALACH

Strong's: H5545 **Pronunciation:** sah-LAKH **Basic meaning:** Forgive; pardon **Key Scriptures:** Exodus 34:9; 1 Kings 8:30; Psalm 25:11
Salach is an important Hebrew verb for forgiveness. In the Old Testament, God is characteristically the One who forgives. Solomon repeatedly asks God to hear from heaven and forgive in his temple prayer in 1 Kings 8.
Why it matters: Mercy is not merely God feeling compassion toward sinners. God also acts to forgive.

RIGHTEOUSNESS AND JUSTICE

15. צְדָקָה / צִדִּיק - TSEDEQ / TSEDAQAH

Strong's: H6664 / H6666 **Pronunciation:** TSEH-dek / tseh-dah-KAH **Basic meaning:** Righteousness; justice; rightness
Key Scriptures: Genesis 15:6; Psalm 89:14; Amos 5:24

These closely related words describe what is right, just, or in accordance with God's righteous standards. They are important companions to the vocabulary of mercy and grace because Scripture never presents God's compassion as indifference toward evil. Psalm 89 places righteousness and justice alongside steadfast love and faithfulness in describing God's rule.

Why it matters: God's mercy is righteous mercy. His justice and compassion belong to the same holy character.



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EXODUS 34:6-7 - WHERE THESE WORDS COME TOGETHER

16. WHY IS EXODUS 34 SO IMPORTANT?

Exodus 34:6-7 is one of the Old Testament's most important descriptions of God's character. The setting matters. Israel has committed the sin of the golden calf. The covenant has been violated. Moses intercedes. God renews the covenant and reveals His character.

רַחוּם - rachum
compassionate

חַנּוּן - channun
gracious

חֶסֶד - hesed
steadfast love / faithful love

אֱמֶת - emet
truth / faithfulness

God also describes Himself as forgiving sin while refusing to treat guilt as morally meaningless. This prevents a distorted picture of mercy. God is compassionate and gracious. God is also holy and just.

Why it matters: God's mercy does not require God to stop being righteous.

17. DOES GOD'S MERCY CANCEL HIS JUSTICE?

No. Exodus 34 holds both truths together. God forgives. God also takes evil seriously. Psalm 89:14 similarly places righteousness and justice alongside steadfast love and faithfulness. Micah 6:8 brings justice, *hesed*, and humble walking with God together in the life of God's people.

Throughout Scripture, mercy and justice are not enemies. If God simply ignored evil, victims would have no final justice. If God showed no mercy, sinners would have no hope. The biblical story moves toward a solution in which God's righteousness and mercy meet rather than compete.

Memory Anchor

God does not become less just in order to be merciful.

18. ARE LOVE, MERCY, GRACE, FAITHFULNESS, AND JUSTICE THE SAME THING?

No. They overlap and interact, but each emphasizes something different.

Hebrew	Main idea	Helpful distinction
Ahav / Ahavah	Love	Affection and committed love
Hesed	Steadfast love / kindness	Faithful kindness expressed in relationship
Rachamim / Rachum	Compassion / compassionate	Tender mercy toward those in need
Chen	Favor / grace	Favor received
Chanan / Channun	Be gracious / gracious	Favor freely shown
Emet	Truth / faithfulness	Reliability and trustworthiness
Emunah	Faithfulness / steadfastness	Firmness and dependable fidelity
Aman	Believe / trust	Reliance upon what is trustworthy
Salach	Forgive	Pardoning wrongdoing
Tsedeq / Tsedaqah	Righteousness / justice	What is right according to God's character

QUICK REFERENCE

Love: God genuinely loves. **Hesed:** God's love acts faithfully. **Compassion:** God cares deeply for those in need. **Grace:** God freely shows favor. **Faithfulness:** God can be depended upon. **Forgiveness:** God pardons. **Righteousness:** God's mercy never requires Him to call evil good.

PART TWO

WANT TO GO DEEPER? INTERMEDIATE



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19. DOES THE OLD TESTAMENT REALLY TEACH GRACE?

Yes. Sometimes readers hear a simplified contrast: **Old Testament = law / New Testament = grace**. That is not the biblical storyline.

Grace is present throughout the Old Testament. Noah finds *chen* with God. God graciously chooses Abraham. God rescues Israel from Egypt before giving the Sinai covenant commands. God forgives Israel repeatedly. The Psalms continually appeal to God's mercy and steadfast love. The prophets call sinners to return because God is compassionate and gracious.

The New Testament reveals grace climactically in Jesus, but grace did not begin in Matthew. **The biblical story depends throughout upon God's undeserved goodness toward sinners.**

20. DOES CHEN MEAN EXACTLY THE SAME THING AS NEW TESTAMENT CHARIS?

Not automatically. The Greek word **charis** is commonly translated "grace" in the New Testament. The Hebrew word **chen** can also be translated "grace" or "favor." That makes comparison useful. But Hebrew and Greek words should not be treated as mathematical equivalents.

The Septuagint-the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament-helps readers observe how Hebrew ideas were expressed in Greek, but translators did not always use one fixed Greek word for one Hebrew word.

READER SAFEGUARD

One English word does not guarantee one Hebrew word, and one Hebrew word does not guarantee one Greek word. Meaning still comes from context.

21. WHAT DOES HESED REALLY MEAN-AND WHY DO SCHOLARS DISAGREE?

Hesed has generated extensive discussion because its biblical uses include ideas associated with kindness, loyalty, faithfulness, mercy, steadfast love, and relational commitment.

Earlier influential scholarship often emphasized the word's connection with covenant obligation and loyalty. **Nelson Glueck** became especially influential in emphasizing *hesed* within covenant and relational obligation. Later, **Katharine Doob Sakenfeld** emphasized faithful action and kindness that can go beyond what strict obligation requires. More recent scholarship continues to caution against reducing *hesed* to one permanent formula.

Why is there disagreement? Because Hebrew words receive their meaning from usage, and *hesed* appears in many different relationships and settings. Sometimes covenant is central. Sometimes family loyalty is central. Sometimes generosity or mercy is especially prominent. Sometimes several ideas overlap.

CAREFUL CONCLUSION

Hesed does not have one English equivalent. Relationship, loyalty, kindness, and faithful action frequently overlap in its usage, and the surrounding context determines which aspect is most prominent. This is why "steadfast love" is a useful translation but not a complete dictionary formula for every verse.

22. WHY IS CONTEXT SO IMPORTANT IN HEBREW WORD STUDIES?

Biblical words do not carry every possible dictionary meaning into every verse. This principle was emphasized strongly in modern biblical-language scholarship, especially through **James Barr's** influential critique of careless word-study methods. Barr warned against treating a word's root, history, or collection of possible meanings as though all of them were present whenever the word appears.

A shared Hebrew root may show that words are related; etymology may illuminate how a word developed; a lexicon may list several possible meanings; grammar may narrow the possibilities. But the biblical sentence and surrounding passage determine what the word means in that particular context.

Memory Anchor

A word has a range of possible meanings. Context identifies the meaning being used.



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23. WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMET, EMUNAH, AND AMAN?

These words belong to the same broad Hebrew word family and share ideas associated with firmness, reliability, and trustworthiness.

אָמֵן - AMAN

Depending upon its grammatical stem and context, it can involve being established, being reliable, believing, or trusting.

אֱמוּנָה - EMUNAH

Often describes faithfulness, firmness, steadfastness, or fidelity.

אֱמֶת - EMET

Often communicates truth, reliability, certainty, or faithfulness.

Recognizing the relationship is useful. But related words are not interchangeable. A word family provides background. **Grammar and context determine how a particular word is functioning.**

24. DOES “FAITH” IN THE OLD TESTAMENT JUST MEAN FAITHFULNESS?

No. That would overcorrect another common mistake. Biblical trust includes believing God and relying upon Him. But Scripture also connects genuine trust with perseverance and faithfulness.

Genesis 15:6 emphasizes Abraham believing God. Habakkuk 2:4 uses *emunah* in a context of persevering while waiting for God's promised action. The New Testament later cites Habakkuk within discussions of faith.

The safest conclusion is not **faith = merely intellectual belief** or **faith = merely faithful behavior**. Rather: **Biblical faith trusts the faithful God-and genuine trust shapes how a person lives.**

25. DOES HESED MEAN “UNCONDITIONAL LOVE”?

Not exactly. The phrase “unconditional love” can communicate something true about God's grace, but it is not a dictionary definition of *hesed*. *Hesed* frequently occurs within real relationships involving promises, loyalty, covenant commitments, obligations, and response.

God's *hesed* is astonishing precisely because He remains faithful despite repeated human failure. But Scripture also contains discipline, covenant consequences, warnings, and judgment. Calling *hesed* “unconditional love” can therefore become misleading if it implies that God never cares how people respond to Him.

A better summary is: **God's hesed is His faithful, steadfast, active love and kindness.**

26. DOES RACHAMIM COME FROM THE HEBREW WORD FOR “WOMB”?

The words belong to the same Hebrew word family. *Rachamim* is also grammatically plural. These observations may help readers appreciate the tenderness often associated with Hebrew compassion vocabulary.

But caution is important. It is not safe to reason **plural form = more intense compassion** or **womb-related root = every occurrence must mean mother-like compassion** unless the context supports such conclusions. The meaning of *rachamim* should come first from the way Scripture actually uses it.

WORD-STUDY SAFEGUARD

Grammar and etymology can illuminate a word. They should not overpower context.

27. WHY DO DIFFERENT BIBLES TRANSLATE THESE WORDS DIFFERENTLY?

Because their meaning ranges overlap. Consider *hesed*: one translation may say **steadfast love**, another **faithful love**, another **lovingkindness**, and another **mercy**. Similarly, *chen* may become favor or grace; *rachamim* may become compassion or mercy; *emet* may become truth or faithfulness.

Different English translations can therefore become useful study tools. Instead of immediately asking, “Which translation got it wrong?” first ask: “What aspect of the Hebrew word is each translation emphasizing in this context?”

28. CAN A HEBREW DICTIONARY SETTLE THE MEANING OF A VERSE?

Not by itself. A lexicon gives possible meanings based on actual language usage. It does not eliminate the need to interpret the passage. For example, seeing several possible definitions for *hesed* does not mean every possible meaning should be inserted into one verse.

A careful word study moves in this direction: **word → sentence → paragraph → book → biblical storyline, not dictionary → favorite definition → verse.**

Memory Anchor

A lexicon gives possibilities. Context gives direction.



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WHERE CAN THESE WORD-STUDY CLAIMS BE CHECKED?

29. WHAT TOOLS CAN HELP A READER STUDY FURTHER?

Several resources serve different purposes.

STRONG'S CONCORDANCE

Strong's numbers are indexing numbers assigned to Hebrew and Greek dictionary entries. They are especially useful for beginners using concordances, interlinears, or Bible-study websites. For example: **H2617** = **hesed**. A Strong's number helps identify and locate the word. **It does not interpret the verse.**

BDB - BROWN-DRIVER-BRIGGS HEBREW AND ENGLISH LEXICON

BDB is a classic scholarly lexicon of Biblical Hebrew. It provides definitions, grammatical information, and examples of biblical usage. Its organization can initially look technical, but it is valuable for readers beginning to move beyond simplified dictionaries.

HALOT - HEBREW AND ARAMAIC LEXICON OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

HALOT is a more modern and highly technical scholarly lexicon. It contains extensive lexical and linguistic information and is commonly used in serious academic study. A beginner does not need HALOT to understand the Bible. Its value is that readers can see how scholars evaluate the range and usage of Hebrew vocabulary.

READER SAFEGUARD

A lexicon is a research tool, not an inspired commentary. Scripture remains the authority.

30. WHERE CAN THE HESED AND WORD-STUDY DISCUSSIONS BE EXPLORED FURTHER?

Nelson Glueck - *Hesed in the Bible*

An influential early study emphasizing the relational and covenant dimensions of *hesed*.

Katharine Doob Sakenfeld - *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible*

A major study exploring *hesed* as faithful action and loyalty within relationships.

James Barr - *The Semantics of Biblical Language*

An influential critique of common word-study errors, especially arguments that place too much weight on roots, etymology, or collections of possible meanings.

BDB and HALOT

Consult the relevant lexical entries for the individual Hebrew words in this study.

RESOURCE SAFEGUARD

Listing a resource does not mean 3Nails endorses every theological position, linguistic conclusion, or interpretive method it contains. Compare sources and continually return to Scripture.

31. WHAT SHOULD A READER REMEMBER ABOUT STRONG'S NUMBERS?

Strong's numbers are extremely useful-but easy to misuse. A number such as **H2617** identifies a lexical entry. It does not prove that every occurrence has the same English meaning; the root contains a secret theological message; every dictionary definition belongs in every verse; one English translation is automatically superior; or knowing the number settles an interpretive question.

Use Strong's numbers to **find the word**. Then use grammar and context to **understand the word**.

HEBREW TO GREEK TO THE NEW TESTAMENT

32. HOW DO THESE IDEAS CONTINUE INTO THE NEW TESTAMENT?

The New Testament is written in Greek, not Hebrew. That means the vocabulary changes. But the character of God does not. The New Testament continues the Old Testament's great themes of love, mercy, grace, truth, faithfulness, righteousness, and forgiveness.

Jesus' ministry does not introduce a kinder God than the God of the Old Testament. Jesus reveals the same God whose compassion, grace, steadfast love, righteousness, and faithfulness fill Israel's Scriptures. John's description of Jesus as full of grace and truth strongly resonates with the larger Old Testament revelation of God's gracious and faithful character. The connection should be understood within the biblical storyline rather than by insisting upon a one-to-one Hebrew-to-Greek word equation.



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HOW DO THESE WORDS POINT TOWARD JESUS?

33. JESUS REVEALS GOD'S LOVE

The New Testament places God's love at the center of the Gospel. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection become the decisive demonstration of divine love toward sinners. Read John 3:16; Romans 5:6-8; 1 John 4:9-10.

34. JESUS REVEALS GOD'S COMPASSION

The Gospels repeatedly describe Jesus responding compassionately to the sick, the hungry, grieving families, spiritually lost crowds, and social outsiders. Jesus' compassion is not disconnected from the Old Testament. It reflects the character of the God already revealed as **rachum**-compassionate.

35. JESUS BRINGS GRACE TO SINNERS

Jesus receives people who cannot establish a claim upon God's favor through personal merit. The New Testament repeatedly describes salvation as grace. Grace does not mean sin does not matter. It means sinners receive what they could never earn because God acts generously through Christ.

36. JESUS REVEALS GOD'S FAITHFULNESS

God's promises do not collapse when human beings fail. The coming of Jesus demonstrates God's faithfulness to His redemptive purposes. Promises connected with Abraham, Israel, David, and the prophets move toward fulfillment in Christ. Read Luke 1:68-75; Romans 15:8-9; 2 Corinthians 1:20.

37. THE CROSS BRINGS MERCY AND JUSTICE TOGETHER

The cross should not be reduced to a Hebrew vocabulary exercise. But the Old Testament vocabulary of mercy, forgiveness, faithfulness, covenant, sacrifice, righteousness, and justice prepares readers to understand why the Gospel is such good news. At the cross, God's mercy does not pretend sin is harmless. God acts decisively to save sinners through Jesus.

Memory Anchor

Jesus does not reveal a different God. He reveals the gracious, righteous, and faithful God Scripture has been showing all along.

A BIBLICAL STORYLINE OF LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS





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QUICK REFERENCE - KEY HEBREW WORDS

אהב - AHAV - H157
To love

אהבה - AHAVAH - H160
Love

חסד - HESED - H2617
Steadfast love; faithful kindness; loyalty

רחמים - RACHAMIM - H7356
Compassion; mercy

רחום - RACHUM - H7349
Compassionate

חן - CHEN - H2580
Favor; grace

חן - CHANAN - H2603
Show favor; be gracious

חנן - CHANNUN - H2587
Gracious

אמת - EMET - H571
Truth; reliability; faithfulness

אמונה - EMUNAH - H530
Faithfulness; steadfastness

אמן - AMAN - H539
Be firm; believe; trust; be faithful

סלח - SALACH - H5545
Forgive; pardon

צדק - TSEDEQ - H6664
Righteousness; justice; rightness

צדקה - TSEDAQAH - H6666
Righteousness; justice; righteous action

REVIEW AND RETENTION

1. Which word commonly describes steadfast love or faithful kindness? Hesed.
2. Does hesed always mean “covenant love”? No. Covenant is often important context, but each occurrence must be interpreted within its passage.
3. Which word family emphasizes compassion? Rachamim / rachum.
4. What is chen? Favor or grace.
5. What does chanan describe? Showing favor or being gracious.
6. What does emet communicate? Truth, reliability, or faithfulness.
7. What does emunah communicate? Faithfulness, firmness, steadfastness, and in some contexts faith or trust.

8. Why can aman have different senses? Its grammatical stem and context affect how the Hebrew root functions.
9. What does salach mean? Forgive or pardon.
10. What do tsedeq and tsedaqah emphasize? Righteousness, justice, and what is right.
11. What passage brings compassion, grace, hesed, faithfulness, forgiveness, and justice together? Exodus 34:6-7.
12. What is the central word-study rule? Grammar and context determine meaning.

FIVE TRUTHS TO REMEMBER

1. God's love is active and faithful.
2. God's mercy and grace flow from His character rather than human merit.
3. God's righteousness and compassion are not competitors.
4. Faith rests upon the God who is faithful.
5. Hebrew vocabulary serves Scripture; it does not replace Scripture.

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

1. Read one of its key passages.
2. Read the surrounding paragraph.
3. Use the Strong's number to identify other occurrences.
4. Compare two or three trustworthy English translations.
5. Notice how the word is translated in different contexts.
6. Consult a concordance or lexicon.
7. Ask what meanings the resource says are possible.
8. Notice whether grammar or verbal form affects the meaning.
9. Return to the biblical passage.
10. Ask which meaning best fits that context.
11. Ask what the passage reveals about God's character.
12. Write one sentence explaining what Scripture-not merely the dictionary-has taught.

A SCRIPTURE PATH FOR CONTINUED STUDY

Exodus 34:6-7 - Compassion, grace, steadfast love, faithfulness, forgiveness, and justice

Numbers 6:24-26 - God's gracious favor in the priestly blessing

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 - Loving God wholeheartedly

Deuteronomy 7:7-9 - Covenant faithfulness and steadfast love

Ruth 1-4 - Hesed expressed through human loyalty and kindness

Psalms 25 - Steadfast love, faithfulness, mercy, and forgiveness

Psalms 86 - God as compassionate, gracious, and abundant in steadfast love

Psalms 89:14 - Righteousness, justice, steadfast love, and faithfulness together

Psalms 103 - Compassion, forgiveness, steadfast love, and fatherly mercy

Psalms 136 - Repeated celebration of God's enduring hesed

Isaiah 54:7-10 - Compassion and enduring covenant love

Lamentations 3:21-26 - Mercy and faithfulness in suffering

Joel 2:12-13 - God's gracious character as the basis for repentance

Jonah 4:1-2 - Jonah's struggle with God's mercy toward enemies

Micah 6:8 - Justice, hesed, and humble walking with God

Micah 7:18-20 - Forgiveness, compassion, and covenant faithfulness

Luke 1:68-75 - God's faithfulness to His promises in His saving work

John 1:14-18 - Grace and truth revealed in Jesus

Romans 5:6-8 - God's love demonstrated toward sinners

Ephesians 2:1-10 - Salvation by grace

1 John 4:7-10 - God's love revealed through Christ

FINAL MEMORY ANCHORS

- Related words may overlap without being interchangeable.
- Hesed is love demonstrated through faithful kindness.
- Biblical faith is trust in the trustworthy God.
- God does not become less just in order to be merciful.
- A lexicon gives possibilities. Grammar and context give direction.
- Jesus reveals the gracious, righteous, and faithful God Scripture has been showing all along.

FINAL TAKEAWAY

The Old Testament's Hebrew vocabulary gives readers several windows into the character of God. **Ahavah** shows love. **Hesed** shows steadfast, faithful kindness. **Rachamim** shows deep compassion. **Chen** shows favor. **Chanan** and **channun** show graciousness. **Emet** shows that God is true and reliable. **Emunah** shows steadfast faithfulness. **Aman** helps explain what it means to trust the One who is trustworthy-and reminds readers that Hebrew grammar matters when interpreting a word. **Salach** reminds readers that God forgives. **Tsedeq** and **tsedaqah** remind readers that His mercy is never separated from righteousness and justice. No single Hebrew word contains the whole doctrine of God's love or grace. Even *hesed*, one of Scripture's richest relational words, cannot responsibly be reduced to one permanent English definition. Roots, grammar, lexicons, and scholarly research can all help. But none replaces the biblical context. The words work together within the larger testimony of Scripture. And that testimony reaches its climax in Jesus. The purpose of studying these Hebrew words is not to search behind Scripture for hidden meanings. It is to pay closer attention to Scripture itself-and through Scripture to know more clearly the God who is compassionate, gracious, loving, forgiving, righteous, faithful, and true.

Rooted in Scripture - Pointing to Jesus