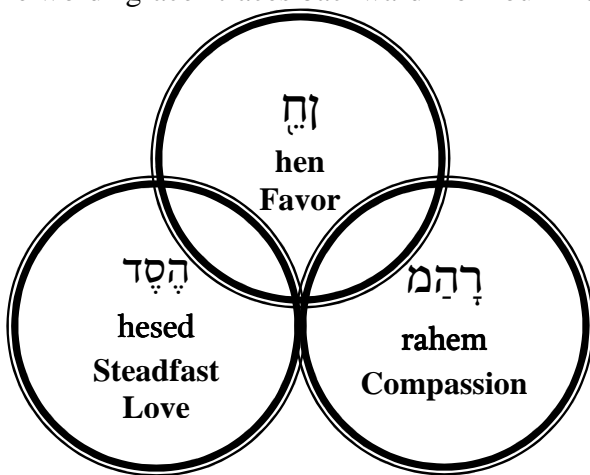


Week 1 – Embracing Grace: Grace in the OT (Handout)

Grace is a fundamental concept of our faith. As we begin our exploration of the concept of grace we must begin by allowing grace to roam free from the chains of Christian faith which link it solely to forgiveness and salvation in Christ. We will begin our study of grace by first looking at the concept in the Old Testament.

Words

The word “grace” traces backward from our Bible to a variety of words in the original Hebrew and Greek.



The intersection of three synonyms in the Old Testament form the understanding of grace. The three words are “favor,” “steadfast love,” and “compassion.” These three words are interchanged form the backdrop for mercy and grace.

Synonyms of OT – Grace, Mercy, Love

THE Bible is pre-eminently occupied in setting forth the gracious feelings with which God regards the children of men; it depicts them not in the abstract, but as manifested in action. It also teaches that those who have tasted of God’s grace and love and mercy are bound to exercise the same dispositions towards their fellow-men. They thus become in reality children of God, and are conformed to the nature of Him from whom their new life is drawn.¹

Hen → Favor / Grace / Mercy

Meaning: “positive disposition of the one acting graciously and granting favor, a disposition which is manifested in the bright, happy countenance of the one granting favor.” (Anchor Bible Dictionary) **ADD** – “that results in actions coming to the aid of the other.”

- Num 6:25 – “May Yahweh make his face to shine on you and be gracious to you.”
- Ps 4:6 – “Many are asking, ‘Who can show us any good? Let the light of your face shine upon us, O Lord.’”
- Gen 39:21 – “The Lord was with him; he showed him kindness and granted him favor in the eyes of the prison warden.”
- Ps 103

¹Girdlestone, R. B. (1998). *Synonyms of the Old Testament : Their bearing on Christian doctrine.* (107). Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.
S. Shaffer

Raham → Compassion / Pity / Mercy ... almost always linked with hen or hesed

Meaning: “A deep and tender feeling, such as is aroused by the sight of weakness of suffering in those that are dear to us or need our help.

- Gen. 43:14 – “And may God Almighty grant you mercy before the man so that he will let your other brother and Benjamin come back with you.”
- Exod. 33:19 - “...I will have mercy (hen) on whom I will have mercy (hen), and I will have compassion (raham) on whom I will have compassion (raham).”
- Isa 30:18 – “...Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; he rises to show you compassion.”
- 2 Sam. 24:14 – “David said to Gad, ‘I am in deep distress. Let us fall into the hands of the Lord, for his mercy is great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men.’”

(Exod. 34:6, Deut. 4:31).

Hesed → Steadfast love / Favor / Mercy / Kindness / Holy → merciful in LXX

- Ps 89:1-2 – “I will sing of the Lord’s great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you established your faithfulness in heaven itself.”
- Is 63:7 – “I will tell of the kindnesses (hesed) of the Lord, the deeds for which he is to be praised, according to all the Lord has done for us – yes the many good things he has done for the house of Israel, according to his compassion and many kindnesses (hesed).”
- Ps 145:17 – the lord is holy in all his works
- Hos 6:4-6 – your goodness is as a morning dew.....i desire mercy and not sacrifice

Some distinctive features of hesed: (based on study of Sakenfeld 1978)

- (1) it is an action rather not just an attitude or feeling
- (2) the action occurs because of a relationship that already exists
- (3) the action is requested or expected from someone circumstantially superior to someone who lacks the necessary resources or power
- (4) the action cannot be compelled, the actor is free
- (5) the act fulfills an essential need that cannot be met via an alternative source

Key point → The difference between human hesed and Divine hesed is that God still loves...even when the relationship is broken

- Hosea 2:1-14 – story of Israel breaking the relationship with God and God pursuing her in a restored relationship

Exodus 34:6 – the essential nature of God

“...The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate (raham) and gracious (hen) God, slow to anger, abounding in love (hesed) and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet...”

God’s Compassion, Favor, and Love expressed to us in his kind actions....are properly acknowledged when we do the same for others.

- Hos 6:4-6 – your goodness is as a morning dew.....i desire mercy and not sacrifice
- Micah 6:8f → 7:18 - Being shown mercy...should result in mercy being shown