

Hesed

No, O people, the Lord has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8

Often, in ancient myth, the traveler is confronted by a closed gate or locked door that can only be open by means of a mysterious, undefinable word. When that word is spoken a path becomes clear that was not visible before.

"Hesed" is a Hebrew word that describes the indescribable, that defines the undefinable. Put simply, hesed is the defining characteristic of God in the Old Testament. It is a key to opening the mysterious door to understanding who God really is.

Lament happens when we experience suffering that seems inconsistent with God's hesed, when the door to His Presence seems locked and barred from the inside. Such moments are often signaled by the word "why."

Why am I sick?
Why does my enemy triumph over me?
Why did my loved one die?
God, if indeed You are defined by hesed, then why...

At the heart of understanding hesed lies the notion that it is unmerited, undeserved, un-earnable. This facet of hesed is what the New Testament calls "grace."

Jesus spent so many of his parables trying to define hesed for us. The emotional power of the parable of the prodigal son comes from the unexpected forgiveness of the father. (Lk 15:11-32) The twist of the parable of the good Samaritan is that the person who was not obliged to give anything, gave it all! (Lk. 10:30-37) "Unmerited." "Impossible to earn." God will not wash His hands of us because of His surprising hesed.

Hesed teaches us that a supremely untranslatable word can only be understood when it becomes "enfleshed," translated into a living person. Through the Incarnation of Jesus, hesed was at last perfectly defined. But the call of God for you and me is to continue that incarnating in our own lives. Within the two simple syllables of this indefinable word lay all the richness of the grace and mercy of God. When circumstances cause us to question His hesed, we invariably reach out through lament. And somehow, through the mystery of lament, we find it again... Which is to say we find Him again.

Michael Card

Hesed

The word 'covenant' is not found very often in Scripture. It is the word 'hesed' that it usually the word of the covenant. At it's heart it describes the mutual responsibilities that each party to a covenant has to the other, and the rights that each enjoys in the covenant relationship. **Hesed is the covenant in action. God's lovingkindness (hesed) is His doing and showing and keeping the covenant when every word that has been sworn to is put to the test.**

Hesed has three ideas that must be present: strength, steadfastness, and love. Faithfulness is also often linked with hesed.

Read Psalm 36:5, Psalm 92:1-2, Psalm 40:10-11

God is Hesed

When humans make a covenant oath, it is in order to create the bond of lovingkindness and to hold it in place. When God makes a covenant it is not create lovingkindness, but in order that we might see that His heart is lovingkindness from eternity.

Read Exodus 34:6, Nehemiah 9:17, Psalm 103:8, Jonah 4:2, Deuteronomy 7:9

Our very existence arises from His hesed. **Read Psalm 136:5-9**

The entire history of Israel in their relationship with God is summed up in this word.
Read Isaiah 54:8-10.

The Goal of Hesed

Hesed is the goal of salvation covenant history, in that Jesus is the ultimate lovingkindness and He is the keeping, doing, and showing of His covenant oath.

Jesus is the hesed of God, the steadfast, unchangeable, and strong love of God in flesh.

Read Luke 1:54-55, Luke 1:72-79, and 2 Corinthians 1:20