

# The Old Testament Covenant Term אֱהָבָה<sup>1</sup>

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Since the Revised Standard Version has translated the אֱהָבָה of God by “steadfast love,” the question has arisen in our midst whether this translation does justice to the Biblical meaning of our word. The translators of the RSV<sup>2</sup> realized the difficulty of finding an English equivalent for this word. In “An Introduction to the Revised Standard Version of the Old Testament” they confess: “Most difficult and perhaps most important of all such words is the one rendered in KJ by ‘mercy’ and in ASV by ‘loving kindness.’ Recent research has shown that the basic meaning of this Hebrew term is not a general feeling or attitude like mercy, for which there are other Hebrew words, nor such a diffused, indiscriminating, and rather mild quality as the word ‘kindness’ suggests, but fidelity to the requirements of a particular personal relationship, a loyal devotion grounded in love which goes beyond legal obligation and can be depended upon to the utmost. No one English noun can do justice to it. Only by assembling and classifying the contexts in which the term is used can even a moderately satisfactory way of translating it be found, and no one translation fits all the contexts. As the most nearly adequate rendering for the majority of the occurrences, RSV adopted the English words ‘steadfast love.’ Only prolonged trial can determine how satisfactory this and the other renderings will prove, but an earnest effort to find something better than the previous translation was imperative. The use of ‘steadfast love’ carries with it an important theological result: the word ‘love’ now appears far more often in the Old Testament than it did in previous translations, counteracting the erroneous impression of many Christians that the God of the Old Testament was not a God of love.

Needless to say this translation of אֱהָבָה did not originate with the RSV. We find it used by Norman H. Snaith in *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, first published in 1944, a study which is undoubtedly included in the “recent research” which is mentioned above. On page 113 of his book Snaith discusses the meaning of אֱהָבָה in Hosea and says: “All this speaks of Jehovah’s determined, steadfast love for chosen Israel.” More often Snaith renders אֱהָבָה by “sure love” (pp. 100, 106, 111), adding by way of further explanation words such as “steadfastness, strength, firmness” (p. 106), also “steadfast determination” (p. 111), “firm faithfulness” (p. 10-1), “everlasting, determined, unshakable” (p. 102), and other similar expressions. These words, according to this scholar signify the real meaning of אֱהָבָה. Yet he does not reject the meaning of loving kindness, mercy. He was even “sorely tempted,” as he tells us under

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on a series of five lectures delivered at our last year’s Pastors Institute and is being published by request. The outline which was used in the course of the lectures is also being followed in this article. The six main parts are: I. The Translation of אֱהָבָה in Ancient and Modern Versions. II. The Etymology of אֱהָבָה. III. The אֱהָבָה of Men. IV. The אֱהָבָה of God. V. The אֱהָבָה of the אֱהָבָה. VI. אֱהָבָה and *ἀγάπη*. While Part I was only dealt with in an introductory manner at the time, the present introduction is, needless to say, a later addition. Details have also been added to the separate parts, many of them as a result of further study of this most important Old Testament covenant term.

<sup>2</sup> The abbreviations used for the Bible Versions referred to in this article are the following: RSV: Revised Standard Version; ERV: English Revised Version; ASV: American Standard Version; AV: Authorized Version.

Chapter V on page 94, “to use the word Grace in the title of this chapter.” And on page 102 he adds: “We do not desire by any means to deny the meanings loving kindness, mercy, which  $\text{רַחֻּם}$  often has. On the contrary our aim is to insist that these renderings are often far too weak to convey the strength, the firmness, and the persistence of God’s sure love.”

By quoting Snaith at this length, we do not want to be understood as assuming that he is the first one to have discovered this meaning of  $\text{רַחֻּם}$  or that a better one cannot be found. Nelson Glueck in his study, *Das Wort chesed*, published 1927, renders  $\text{רַחֻּם}$  *treue Liebe* (p. 52), signifying by *treue* a *gemeinschaftsgemässe Liebe* (p. 67). In view of this rendering we can understand that Snaith entitles chapter V: “The Covenant-Love Of God.” Before we, however, endeavor to evaluate the one or the other of these modern translations of  $\text{רַחֻּם}$ , we shall do well to let the various translations in ancient and more modern versions pass in review before us. It will benefit us to know at the very outset that in one and the same version  $\text{רַחֻּם}$  has been translated in various ways. And then we want to know whether  $\text{רַחֻּם}$  has ever been rendered in one or the other version by “love.”

## I

The oldest version of the Bible, the Septuagint, has six different renderings for  $\text{רַחֻּם}$ :  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ ,  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\eta\mu\omicron\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu\eta$ ,  $\omicron\iota\kappa\tau\epsilon\iota\rho\eta\mu\alpha$ ,  $\epsilon\lambda\pi\iota\varsigma$ ,  $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu\eta$ <sup>3</sup>,  $\delta\acute{\omicron}\xi\alpha$ . Of these terms  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$  occurs most often, some 172 times, while  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\eta\mu\omicron\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu\eta$  is used only eight times,  $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu\eta$  seven times, and  $\delta\acute{\omicron}\xi\alpha$  only once (Is. 40:6). It is therefore not difficult to ascertain the specific meaning which the Greek translators found in  $\text{רַחֻּם}$ .  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$  has the meaning of mercy, kindness or good will towards the miserable and afflicted, joined with a desire to relieve them (Thayer). Consequently the Greek translators also used the verb  $\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\epsilon\iota\acute{\nu}$  “to have mercy on” for the Hebrew  $\text{רַחֻּם}$  “to be gracious,”  $\text{חַנּוּן}$  “to have mercy,”  $\text{מָלַךְ}$  “to spare,” and  $\text{נָחַם}$  “to console.” They apparently did not differentiate between  $\text{רַחֻּם}$  and those Hebrew words whose basic meaning is a general feeling or

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<sup>3</sup>  $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu\eta$  is one of the most arresting renderings of the six translations of  $\text{רַחֻּם}$  in the Septuagint. It occurs seven times: Genesis 19:19; 20:13; 21:23; 24:27; 32:10; Exodus 15:13; 24:7. The Greek translators have shown a rare insight into the meaning of  $\text{רַחֻּם}$  in translating by  $\delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\sigma\acute{\upsilon}\nu\eta$ . There is a good reason for this translation in that there are four cases of parallelism in the Old Testament, where the parallel of  $\text{רַחֻּם}$  is one of the two righteousness words,  $\text{רַחֻּם}$  and  $\text{צְדָקָה}$  (Is. 57:1; Hos. 10:12; Micah 6:8; Ps. 36:10; cf. Snaith, p. 100). Luther in Micah 7: 9 reversed matters and tendered  $\text{רַחֻּם}$  by *Gnade*. In Kittel’s “Bible Key Words” (p. 3, note 3) we read concerning the meaning of  $\text{רַחֻּם}$ : “*Hesedh* is the natural sense of justice which regulates non-legal relationships, e.g. among members of the same tribe or group. Love is a misleading translation, because it is always a matter of intention, having regard to what is just, and not a spontaneous, personal feeling, like *’ahabh*, etc. Love may, or may not, find expression in *hesedh*, which is always governed by objective considerations. A better translation, though not quite adequate, is ‘loyalty.’ ... It belongs to the covenant circle of ideas: cf. I Sam. XX, 8, etc.”

attitude like mercy, grace, or kindness. And since they chose two other words for **ἔλεος**, which also have the meaning of mercy, *ἐλεημοσύνη* and *οἰκτεῖρημα*, it becomes quite evident how **ἔλεος** was understood by the Greek translators.

The Vulgate consistently followed the Septuagint in using the Latin equivalent for *ἔλεος*, *misericordia*. And when the Septuagint translators preferred to render **ἔλεος** by *ἐλεημοσύνη* and *οἰκτεῖρημα*, the Vulgate nevertheless adhered to *misericordia* as its choice. Even where the Greek translators used *δικαιοσύνη* for **ἔλεος**, the Vulgate retains *misericordia*.

These two equivalents, *ἔλεος* and *misericordia*, also found their way into the German and English Bible. Luther rendered **ἔλεος** by *Barmherzigkeit*, the AV by “mercy.” Neither of the two versions, however, adhered strictly, as the Vulgate had done, to their original translation of **ἔλεος**. While working on a translation of the Psalms, which was published in 1524, Luther, beginning with Psalm 36, changed over to *Güte*. In his Revision of the Psalter, 1531, Luther in fifty of the passages again changed from *Güte* to *Gnade*. While he used *Gnade* in his translation of Isaiah, 1528, in only a few instances (54:8, 10; 55:3), in his translation of the Prophets, 1532, the word *Gnade* occurs more often (Jer. 16:5; Dan. 9:4; Hos. 2:21; Jonah 2:9), and in his complete edition of the Bible further changes show Luther’s growing preference for this word, using it in the end some 50 times.<sup>4</sup>

But Luther’s resources in finding German equivalents for **ἔλεος** were not yet fully spent, although he now had three terms at his disposal: *Barmherzigkeit*, *Güte*, and *Gnade*. A fourth word was added to this list, one of no little importance, the word *Liebe*. The **ἔλεος** which he thus translated is not the **ἔλεος** of God but that of God’s people. The first passage, in which he chose to render **ἔλεος** by *Liebe*, is Genesis 47:29, where Israel requests Joseph to perform **אַהֲבָה וְאֵמֶת** unto him. Our AV has: “Deal kindly and truly with me,” the RSV: “Deal loyally and truly with me,” while Luther’s translation reads: “*Dass du die Liebe und Treue an mir tust.*” Here a father is asking his son for this love, while in all the remaining four passages God our heavenly Father is requiring it of His people. Hosea 4:2, according to Luther’s rendering, God tells His people: “*Denn es ist keine Treue, keine Liebe (ἔλεος), kein Wort Gottes im Lande.*” Hosea 6:6 He admonishes them: “*Ich habe Lust an der Liebe (ἔλεος) and nicht am Opfer*” and in chapter 10 verse 12 a climax is reached in God’s demand on His people: “*Drum säet euch Gerechtigkeit und erntet Liebe (ἔλεος).*” The prophet Micah in the 8th verse of his 6th chapter repeats this requirement: “*Es ist dir gesagt, Mensch, was gut ist, and was der Herr von dir fordert, nämlich Gottes Wort halten, und Liebe (ἔλεος) üben, und demütig sein vor deinem Gott.*” The Septuagint has *ἔλεος* for **ἔλεος** in Hosea 4:2; 6:6; and Micah 6:8. Genesis 47:29 the rendering is *ἐλεημοσύνη* while for Hosea 10:12 the Greek translators must have had a different reading, since they

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Bornkamm, *Luther und das Alte Testament*, p. 196.

translated: καρπὸν ζωῆς, “fruit of life.” The AV has “mercy” for **רַחֲמִים** in all the Hosea passages and also in Micah 6:8. Here the RSV is not consistent in its usage of “steadfast love.” In Hosea 6:6 and 10:12 the translation reads “steadfast love,” in Micah 6:8 “kindness,” while “steadfast love” appears as a footnote. Hosea 4:2 we do not even find “steadfast love” in a footnote, the translators content to render **רַחֲמִים** by “kindness.” Luther alone is consistent for all of the five passages in his choice of *Liebe*.

But does the AV at all employ the word “love” as a translation of **רַחֲמִים**? In the majority of the cases, some 125 times, it is true to form in rendering **רַחֲמִים** by “mercy” and in 38 instances by “kindness.” There are, however, thirty passages in the AV, pertaining exclusively to the **רַחֲמִים** of God, where we find loving kindness as the equivalent of **רַחֲמִים**, which the AV has taken over from Miles Coverdale’s Bible. By adding “loving” to “kindness” both versions are calling attention to a meaning which Luther simply expressed by means of the one word *Liebe*. The RSV reverses things by adding an attribute to “love,” namely “steadfast.” Does the translation “love,” we now ask, bring us nearer to the original meaning of **רַחֲמִים** and is it necessary to add an attribute like “steadfast” or “faithful”?

## II

The first step which we must take in answering this question is to ascertain, if possible, the etymological meaning of our word **רַחֲמִים**. Sad to say there is no unanimity of opinion on the part of Old Testament linguists in regard to the etymology of **רַחֲמִים**. Davies in his *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* tentatively compares **רַחֲמִים** with the Arabic stem, *chadhad*, which means “to bow or bend ... hence perh. to incline oneself, fig. to be gracious, pious.” Consciously or unconsciously we all have at one time or another interpreted the **רַחֲמִים** of God as such an act of condescension on the part of God, perhaps influenced by Luther’s *Gnade*. For *Gnade* has the meaning of *Neigung*, *Herablassung*, as still apparent in *Die Sonne geht zu Gnade*, i. e. the sun sets. Who when reading of God’s mercy or *Gnade* is not reminded of the compassion of the Good Samaritan who “shewed mercy” (ἔλεος), i. e. performed **רַחֲמִים** on the man who fell among thieves, “went to him,” and as we are wont to picture him to ourselves stooped, “and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine” (Luke 10:33ff.)? Who would gainsay that **רַחֲמִים** is this very act of God in Christ who comes to us in His mercy from heaven to bind up our wounds and to pour in the oil and wine of His Grace? Still thereby we have not yet proven linguistically what the etymology of the Hebrew **רַחֲמִים** is. Even Davies’ comparison with the Arabic *chadhad* does not aid us, since the middle radicals of both words, the Hebrew *samek* and the Arabic *dhad*, cannot be equated with one another. Consequently this attempt at finding the etymology of our word has found few followers among Old Testament scholars.

The second etymology suggested by Old Testament linguists has many more supporters, among them Nelson Glueck and the newest Old Testament Lexicon edited by Koehler and

Baumgarten. These scholars proceed from a meaning which is actually embodied in the covenant word **טֶדֶן** as we find it used in the Old Testament. This meaning is defined by Koehler-Baumgarten as “the mutual liability of those who are relatives, friends ... or belonging together in any other way.” Consequently **טֶדֶן** is equated with the Arabic stem *chashada*, which means “to assemble in order to aid someone.” Thus **טֶדֶן** is actually used in the Old Testament, namely as a “kindness” which one family or tribe is duty bound to perform for the other, so that this etymology also has much in its favor. But here again, as Koehler-Baumgarten admit, we are facing the primary difficulty of equating two words, whose middle radicals, *samek* and *shin*, are different from one another and which therefore do not give much promise for an etymological affinity of the two words in question.

The third etymology is one sponsored by Gesenius in his *Thesaurus* and by Norman H. Snaith in *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*. They classify **טֶדֶן** as belonging to a group of root words whose second radicals are dentals or sibilants, as for instance **הצח** and **הדה**, and which have the basic meaning of “sharp” or “cut off.” Gesenius in his *Thesaurus* already found the main meaning (*primaria potestas*) in “ardent zeal” (*acri studio*), which is either carried over into “love” (*transfertur ad amorem*), a zeal for some one, or is carried over into emulation and envy (*ad aemulationem, invidiam*), whence hatred and opprobrium, finally ending up, as we may add in reviling, reproach, shame, or defilement. This is the etymology which has the support not only of the Arabic with its root *chasada* meaning envy, but also of both the Aramaic and the Syriac, where this root has the same two contradictory meanings. And what is more, the Old Testament also has these two contradictory meanings, on the one hand zealous love, on the other hand reproach and shame. For the latter meaning Proverbs 4:34 is the outstanding example: “Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach (**טֶדֶן**) to any people.” In Proverbs 25:10 we find the Piel form of **טֶדֶן**: “Lest he that heareth it put thee to shame.” In Leviticus 20:17, which deals with incest, **טֶדֶן** is translated by the AV “a shameful thing.” In contrast to this meaning **טֶדֶן** in all the other passages of the Old Testament has the very opposite meaning, a zeal for some one, merging in love and kindness for a person.<sup>5</sup> What the nature of this love and

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<sup>5</sup> **טֶדֶן** is not the only word in the Old Testament with two radically different meanings. **אִיֶּזֶר**, an altogether different root, but one that incidentally has much the same meaning as **טֶדֶן**, namely that of ardent or intense motion, also has two opposite connotations: Zeal for and envy against. The AV uses three renderings for this word: zealous, jealous, and envious, while Luther employs *eifern* in most cases and only *off* and *neiden* and *reizen*. Where the AV and the RSV speak of a “jealous God” (Ex. 20:5), Luther’s translation reads “*ein eifriger Gott*.” According to the AV and the RSV (1 Kgs. 19:10) Elijah says: “I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts” but Luther has him say: “*Ich habe geeifert um den Herrn, den Gott Zebaoth*.” In Numbers 11:29 of the AV Moses says to Joshua: “Enviest thou for my sake,” while in Luther’s translation he says, “*Bist du der Eiferer für mich?*” In all of these passages the Septuagint has ζήλος or ζηλόω. This good word “zealous” the AV uses twelve times in the Old Testament as an equivalent of **אִיֶּזֶר**. While “jealous” has the same etymological meaning as “zealous,” still the modern reader only thinks of the negative meaning of this word. A “jealous” God is to him an “envious” God, one who is “apprehensive of being displaced by a rival.” But the God of the Old Testament is more than an “envious” God. As a “jealous” God he is “zealous” for His name (Ezek. 39:25: “*Ich will um meinen heiligen Namen eifern*”),

kindness is, however, only the various contexts of the Old Testament can tell us. The following contexts with their synonyms and circumstances serving as a framework for **רַחֲמֵי** will give the reader an opportunity to judge for himself what the specific meaning of our covenant term is.

### III

Among the various contexts in which **רַחֲמֵי** occurs, we have those that pertain to the dealings of men with one another in their various social and political relationships. In the framework of these relationships they either show or receive **רַחֲמֵי**.

To begin with the members of a family, we hear Abraham telling Sarah of the **רַחֲמֵי** which she shall show unto him at every place whither they shall come and to say of him: “He is my brother” (Gen. 20:13). Again the servant of Abraham asks the members of the family of Nahor whether they will do **רַחֲמֵי רַחֲמֵי** unto his lord, i.e. whether they will let Rebekah be his master’s son’s wife (Gen. 24:49, 51). Finally Jacob on his deathbed requests Joseph to do **רַחֲמֵי רַחֲמֵי** unto him and not to bury him in Egypt, but to carry him out of Egypt and to bury him in the burying place of his fathers (Gen. 47:29, 30).

What is this **רַחֲמֵי** which is being asked for and shown by members of these families? The Septuagint translated the **רַחֲמֵי** of Genesis 20:13 with *δικαιοσύνη* and has Abraham say to Sarah: “This righteousness thou shalt perform to me.” In Genesis 24:49 the Greek translators rendered the phrase **רַחֲמֵי רַחֲמֵי** with *ἔλεος καὶ δικαιοσύνη* so that Abraham’s servant says: “If then ye will deal mercifully and justly with my lord.” Here the term *δικαιοσύνη* again occurs, only in this passage as an equivalent of **רַחֲמֵי**. This same Hebrew phrase, **רַחֲמֵי רַחֲמֵי**, is translated in Genesis 47:29 with *ἐλεημοσύνη καὶ ἀλήθεια*, so that Jacob has this to say to Joseph: “Thou shalt execute mercy and truth toward me.” In short, the Septuagint in these three passages has recourse to three different Greek words for **רַחֲמֵי**: *δικαιοσύνη*, *ἔλεος*, and *ἐλεημοσύνη*. The Vulgate, on the other hand, uses but the one term *misericordia* in all three instances. Luther follows the Vulgate in his translation of Genesis 20:13: “*Die Barmherzigkeit tue an mir,*” while in the other two passages with their **רַחֲמֵי רַחֲמֵי** Luther has *Freundschaft und Treue* and *Liebe und Treue*. Our AV as well as the ERV and the ASV render **רַחֲמֵי** in all three instances alike, either with “kindness” or with “kindly.” The RSV also has Abraham say to Sarah: “This is the kindness you must do me,” but has its own translation for **רַחֲמֵי רַחֲמֵי**: “loyally and truly.” While Abraham’s servant declares: “If you will deal loyally and truly with my master,” Jacob exacts the promise from Joseph “to deal loyally and truly” with him. In all these different versions there are no less than six different translations of **רַחֲמֵי**. They are: *δικαιοσύνη*, *ἔλεος*, *ἐλεημοσύνη*, *Freundschaft*, *Liebe*, and *loyalty*.

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whose very name is **קַנְיָן** Zealous, *ein Eiferer* (Ex. 34:1), “a consuming fire” (Dt. 4:24). It is to be regretted that in the above passages both the AV and the RSV use “jealous” instead of “zealous.”

To which one of these six different translations, each one with its specific meaning, are we to give the preference? Is it the ἔλεος of the Septuagint with its Latin equivalent *misericordia*, its English equivalent “kindness,” and its German equivalent *Barmherzigkeit*? Is it the δικαιοσύνη of the Septuagint, which finds no following in any of the other versions, or is it Luther’s *Liebe*, or that of the RSV *loyalty* or *loyally*? There is enough variation between these different renderings, especially between *kindness* and *loyalty*, to justify a further study of רַחֲמִים.

The question naturally arises whether our threefold context aids us materially in ascertaining the exact meaning of רַחֲמִים. It is of no little import that in all three instances the persons dealing with one another are members of a family. The family circle was of a much greater significance as a social order than a European or American family of our day. The Israelite family was the “foundation” of the clan or tribe, and as such “the main constituent element” of it. And it is within the narrow circle of the family and the tribe as a blood-relationship that רַחֲמִים played such a role. When the servant of Abraham asked the members of the house of Nahor whether they were willing to show רַחֲמִים to his lord, he inquired whether they would show him such a רַחֲמִים which would be in full conformity with their being of one kinship with Abraham. Thus also the Kenites, who were the in-laws of the Israelites (Judg. 1:16; 4:11), showed רַחֲמִים to all the children of Israel when they came up out of Egypt (1 Sam. 15:6), and Israel in turn was duty bound to show רַחֲמִים to the Kenites, when Saul defeated the Amalekites in whose midst the Kenites had their habitat. Consequently רַחֲמִים is more than “kindness” in our sense of the word. It is an obligatory kindness demanded by family and tribal ties. Members of Israelitish families or tribes were duty bound to show רַחֲמִים, not necessarily because of some legal enactment, an oath, a covenant, which were not always wanting, but because of their blood-relationship, of which they were an integral part. An oath could be required of the son by the father, as in the case of Jacob and Joseph, but such an oath was not an absolute requisite. Joseph would have proved himself to be an unnatural son, had he not willingly conformed to his father’s wishes. But to do this was not only a demand of love but also a filial duty. Also the relationship of a wife to her husband in an Israelitish family was not only one of marital love, but also one of marital duty. The RSV is undoubtedly correct in letting Abraham say to Sarah: “This is the kindness you must do me” (Gen. 20:13). Likewise we read in the American Translation (Chicago): “This is the kindness that you must do me.” Moffatt also has it: “You must do me this kindness.” Of course, one can ask whether this “must” is motivated by love, or primarily by a sense of duty. Kautzsch in his translation of the Old Testament seems to prefer the former: “*Das musst du mir zu Liebe tun.*” But this is the German, not the Israelitish way of thinking and speaking. Our AV is much nearer to the Hebrew with its “shalt”: “This is the kindness which thou shalt show unto me,” since “shalt” in this sentence is not an expression of simple futurity, but rather one of subjection to an obligation.

This marital obligation becomes quite apparent in the רַחֲמִים of both Ruth and Boaz. In Ruth 2:20 Boaz is being blessed by Naomi because he had not left off his רַחֲמִים to the living and to the dead. As the daughters-in-law of Naomi had dealt with the dead and with Naomi according

to their **דִּבְרָה** (1:8), thus Boaz also dealt with the living and the dead according to his **דִּבְרָה**. Consequently he is being blessed for it by Naomi even as she had blessed her two daughters-in-law, wishing upon them the **דִּבְרָה** of the Lord. Their **דִּבְרָה** was, however, far surpassed by the **דִּבְרָה** of Ruth when she not only left her fatherland and home behind to follow Naomi, but when she called upon Boaz to spread his shirt over her as her **לֵאָהֳלֵי**, her blood-relative, her near kinsman. It was then that Boaz said to Ruth: “May you be blessed by the Lord, my daughter, you have made this last **דִּבְרָה** greater than the first, in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich” (3:10).

From this highly suggestive context we should be able to glean the specific meaning of **דִּבְרָה**. The **דִּבְרָה** of both Ruth and Boaz is marked by their faithfulness, yea, their loyalty to their family. Ruth showed great loyalty to her deceased husband by appealing to Boaz to function as her **לֵאָהֳלֵי**. Boaz, although he was not her nearest kinsman (3:12), proved loyal to Elimelech’s family by showing **דִּבְרָה** to both Mahlon and Ruth (2:20). Naomi had blessed him as one who was “near of kin” to her, “one of our next kinsmen,” although Boaz was not a brother of Ruth’s deceased husband, Mahlon. Yet he was willing to play “the part of a kinsman,” if a kinsman nearer than he would not function as her **לֵאָהֳלֵי** (3:13). This willingness to play the part of a kinsman is the **דִּבְרָה** which Boaz showed Ruth, a willingness which was not undergirded by a mere passing kindness, but by loyalty to his kinsfolk. Still the question remains to be answered whether the loyalty of both Boaz and Ruth excluded or also included the element of human affection, or love. True, the Levirate played no small role in consummating the marriage of Ruth and Boaz. But was the loyalty which it demanded of the members of an Israelitish family the only factor?

First of all the Book of Ruth itself testifies with so many words to the love of Ruth for her mother-in-law: “For thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee,” the women say to Naomi (4:5). It was this love for her mother-in-law which moved Ruth to leave her father and her mother and the land of her nativity and to become a member of a people strange and foreign to her (2:11). Motivated by this love she took it upon herself to perform the duties of an Israelitish widow and to show **דִּבְרָה**.

Boaz, in whose eyes Ruth had found favor, who had consoled her and spoken kindly to her (2:13), was undoubtedly moved by a strong feeling of esteem and sympathy for Ruth. Both find expression in his answer to her: “It hath fully been showed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother-in-law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knowest not heretofore” (2:11). Thus it becomes quite evident that human affection, love, esteem, sympathy, also finds expression in the **דִּבְרָה** of Boaz and Ruth, so that their **דִּבְרָה** is governed by both objective and subjective considerations. This will undoubtedly always be the case where **דִּבְרָה** is requested and shown by members of a family closely knit together by ties of blood and by bonds



of love. The question naturally arises whether **דָּוָן** as practiced in social relationships outside of the family is just as full of content and meaning.

Mention may first be made of the use of **דָּוָן** in connection with the ancient custom of entertaining strangers. While we have many of the finest examples of sincere hospitality in the Old Testament, we have but few in which we encounter the term **דָּוָן**. Joshua 2:12 is one of two such passage, which relates of two spies whom Joshua had sent and who “lodged” in the house of Rahab. They had come under the shelter of her roof, they were her sacred charge. When the king of Jericho demanded of her to deliver up the two men to him, she brought them up to the roof of her house and hid them. In thus protecting them she was showing them **דָּוָן**. Consequently she could say to them: “Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have showed you **דָּוָן**, that ye will also show **דָּוָן** unto my father’s house” (2:12). In thus requesting **דָּוָן** for her father’s house, she was asking them to fulfill a sacred obligation. The men as her guests and on the strength of their oath which she had made them swear promised that they would perform **דָּוָן וְאָמַת** unto her (2:14). If we keep in mind that host and guest by partaking of the same meal and by living under the same roof were in close communion with one another, knit together by the bond of brotherhood and recognized as members of one family, we shall have no difficulty in ascertaining the meaning of **דָּוָן** in this connection. When Rahab asked the spies for **דָּוָן**, she asked for nothing less than Abraham had asked of Sarah, and Abraham’s servant had requested of the house of Nahor. Again it is an obligatory kindness which was requested and which was shown. It was enough to insure the lives of both host and guest: “And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death” (2:13). “Our life for yours” (2:14) was the oath and promise undergirding true hospitality. Even an arch enemy could find protection and sustenance under it. In such a case there was no human affection involved, every subjective consideration was excluded. But this need not be said of the **דָּוָן** of Rahab, who “received the spies with peace” (Hebr. 11:31), i.e. as friends to be protected. Her hospitality was actually a *φιλοξενία*, a love of strangers.

This was also the hospitality shown by Abraham (Gen. 18) and Lot (Gen. 19). While these two chapters do not employ the term **דָּוָן** when referring to Abraham and Lot as hosts, still chapter 19 speaks to us of the **דָּוָן** which Lot’s guests showed him in saving his life (19:19). Lot had been willing to sacrifice everything for his guests, who had come under the shadow of his roof (19:8). His guests “magnified” their **דָּוָן** by saving his life (19:19). Truly, this **דָּוָן** was the **יְהוָה יִמְלֵת**, the compassion of the Lord (19:16). Yet in the framework of our chapter it is represented as the **דָּוָן** of guests who had enjoyed the **דָּוָן** of their host. And in the following verses 18-20 Lot is no more “bargaining for further consideration” than Rahab had. He is requesting **דָּוָן** from his guests even as Rahab had asked for it from her guests. We must not

overlook that the **חֶסֶד** of the host was reciprocated by the guest and that their relationship to one another was determined by **חֶסֶד**. Since the guests of Lot were angels he could say: “Thou hast magnified thy **חֶסֶד**,” i.e. thou hast shown me grace and mercy. The angels did not simply show a favor for a favor, they went beyond that and showed **חַן** and **חֶסֶד**<sup>6</sup>, grace and mercy. Therefore all versions with the exception of the Septuagint render **חֶסֶד** in verse 19 of chapter 19 by “mercy” or “kindness.” Even the RSV has “great kindness.” The Septuagint with its *δικαιοσύνη* for **חֶסֶד** continues to let **חֶסֶד** be governed by objective considerations. It is well that we are reminded of the fact that **חֶסֶד** in these chapters is governed by both objective and subjective considerations.

This is especially apparent in the **חֶסֶד** of two friends in their relationship to one another. The outstanding example in the Old Testament of such a relationship is that of David and Jonathan. Their **חֶסֶד** is plainly governed by both subjective and objective considerations, by their love and their covenant-relationship. Here for the first time we are encountering **חֶסֶד** as a covenant term. The whole situation in which **חֶסֶד** occurs as such a term is clearly outlined for us in chapters 18 and 20 of 1 Samuel. Jonathan loved David as his own soul, so “that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David” (18:1). Yea, his love to David “was wonderful, passing the love of women” as David himself testifies when mourning the death of his friend (2 Sam. 1:26). Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because Jonathan “loved him as his own soul” (1 Sam. 18:3). The love (**אַהֲבָה**) of David’s friend is given precedence to the covenant which both friends made. It is only when we enter in upon the covenant made by God with His people that we will again find **אַהֲבָה**, in this case love of God, given precedence to the covenant as such.

As to the covenant itself Jonathan tells David what the far-reaching import of it is: “And thou shalt not only while yet I live shew me the **חֶסֶד** of the Lord, that I die not: but also thou shalt not cut off thy **חֶסֶד** from my house forever: no, not when the Lord hath cut off the enemies of David every one from the face of the earth. So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David ... And Jonathan caused David to swear again, because he loved him: for he loved him as he loved his soul” (20:8, 14-17). How could Jonathan speak of this covenant as “a covenant of the Lord” and of the **חֶסֶד** of this covenant as of “the **חֶסֶד** of the Lord”? He could do so because

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<sup>6</sup> Concerning the meaning of **חַן** and **חֶסֶד** Snaith has this to say: “*Chesed* is essentially a covenant word. *Chen* is essentially not a covenant word. Both can stand for kindness, mercy, forbearance, but the first in cases where there is a definite bond between the two parties, and the second in cases where there is not such a bond. There must be some recognized tie when *chesed* is used, and in this respect it is the very opposite of *chen*.” In pointing out another great difference between the words, Snaith continues: “*Chesed* works both ways, but *chen* only one way. *Chen* tends to carry with it, to a greater extent than does *chesed*, the idea of unmerited favor, or of supreme graciousness and condescension on the part of the giver, who is the superior. There is not the slightest obligation on the part of the superior to show this *chen*. It is all of his generosity.” (*The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, p. 128).

this covenant as every other covenant was regarded as being witnessed by Jehovah, and the **דָּוָה** of such a covenant was therefore designated as “the **דָּוָה** of the Lord.” The RSV has rendered this term “the loyal love of the Lord.” In view of the fact that the making of this covenant was motivated by love, we find it very appropriate that the RSV lets Jonathan say to David: “If I am still alive, show me the loyal love (**דָּוָה**) of the Lord, that I may not die; and do not cut off your loyalty (**דָּוָה**) from my house for ever.” We, of course, must always keep in mind that “the loyal love of the Lord” is to be understood as David’s love for Jonathan to which Jehovah has been a witness. This “loyal love” Absalom must also have meant when he asked Hushai, who had seceded from David: “Is this thy **דָּוָה** to thy friend?” “Is this your loyalty to your friend” as the RSV has it. It could again have rendered **דָּוָה** in this connection by “loyal love,” since Hushai is called “David’s friend.” But since this friendship was not comparable with that of David and Jonathan and was not a lasting one, the rendering “loyalty” suffices. In other words **דָּוָה** in the narrow sense of the word can mean “loyalty,” in the wider sense “loyal love.”

In this narrow sense of the word **דָּוָה** was also used for the loyalty of a subject to his king or of the loyalty of one king toward another. Abner, for instance, appealed to his **דָּוָה** which he had shown to the house of Saul by not giving Ishbosheth, the son of Saul, into the hand of David (2 Sam 3:8). Here “kindness” is used by our English versions as a translation of **דָּוָה**, while Luther has recourse to *Barmherzigkeit*. The RSV, however, speaks of “showing loyalty to the house of Saul,” and Menge uses *treu*, the exact equivalent in German: “*Bis heute habe ich dem Hause deines Vaters Saul und seinen Verwandten und Freunden treu gedient.*” Here we certainly have **דָּוָה** in its narrow meaning of loyalty, *Treue*.

This was the meaning of the word *also* when two foreign kings covenanted one another. When the king of Ammon died and Hanun his son succeeded him, David said: “I will shew **דָּוָה** to Hanun the son of Nahash, as his father shewed **דָּוָה** unto me.” He then sent Hanun his condolences in his bereavement through his servants (2 Sam. 10:1-2). Since the AV, the ERV, and the ASV agree in having David say: “I will show kindness unto Hanun,” one is led to believe that David’s **דָּוָה** merely consisted in consoling Hanun. But there was undoubtedly more in the sending of the embassy than this. David wanted to establish a relationship with Hanun similar to that which he had had with Hanun’s father. He was seeking to renew a treaty, which he had made with the former king of Ammon; he endeavored to gain Hanun as an ally. In showing **דָּוָה** to Hanun, he told the king’s son that he was true to his word which he had given Hanun’s father. Not merely kindness but loyalty is what David is showing Hanun. The RSV has interpreted this episode correctly by translating: “I will deal loyally with Hanun as his father dealt loyally with me.” The princes of Ammon, who were opposed to the treaty, maligned David’s motives and induced Hanun to break the covenant. As a result the Ammonites became odious to David. They had broken a **בְּרִית אֶחָיִם**, a covenant of brethren, as the covenant between Solomon and Hiram of Tyre (1 Kgs. 5:12) is called by Amos (1:9). The Hebrew language has a word for such

disloyalty, which should not escape our notice. It is the word שָׁקֵר to which also בְּרִית may be added and we have שָׁקֵר בְּבְרִית, which means “to be false or disloyal to a covenant” (Ps. 89:33). Consequently שָׁקֵר is used in contrast to חֶסֶד. Abimelech, made a covenant with Abraham (Gen. 21:32), had him swear that he would not “deal disloyally” (תִּשְׁקֵר)<sup>7</sup> with him, but according to the חֶסֶד “that I have done unto thee, thou shalt do unto me, and to the land wherein thou hast sojourned” (21:23). חֶסֶד is here used in contrast to שָׁקֵר or שָׁקֵר בְּבְרִית, since both men made a covenant (21:31), and can therefore only have the meaning of faithfulness or loyalty.<sup>8</sup> The Hebrew language brings both words, disloyalty and loyalty, together in the expression: שָׁקֵר אֶמְוֶנָה, “to be disloyal to loyalty,” which is parallel to the phrase, “to take חֶסֶד away from someone” (Ps. 89:33).

Here we have an example that shows us how closely חֶסֶד is associated with אֶמְוֶנָה, with *steadfastness, faithfulness, loyalty*. In many of the above passages חֶסֶד was associated with אִמּוּת, meaning firmness, stability, then faithfulness. Such synonyms prove that חֶסֶד must also have the meaning of *steadfastness, faithfulness*, that it is undoubtedly the primary meaning of חֶסֶד. Of course, it cannot be denied that when the Old Testament employs the term בְּרִית אֲחִים, it is implying that חֶסֶד is also being governed by subjective considerations, even in the case of a covenant relationship between foreign rulers. Thus Ahab speaks of Ben-Hadad as a “brother” (1 Kgs. 20:32), while the servant of Ben-Hadad tell their king that the kings of the house of Israel are מְלָכֵי חֶסֶד, assuring him that Ahab will show him every consideration, that he will spare his life and let him live (20:31-32). Most of the versions beginning with the Septuagint and ending up with the RSV have rendered מְלָכֵי חֶסֶד by “merciful kings.”<sup>9</sup> We actually have an example here of חֶסֶד taking on the meaning of “merciful” in the relationship of one king to another.

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<sup>7</sup> This is Luther’s translation of תִּשְׁקֵר: “So schwöre mir nun bei Gott, dass du mir ... keine Untreue erzeigen wollest.” Luther, however, does not follow this up in rendering חֶסֶד by *Treue*. Using *Barmherzigkeit* for חֶסֶד Luther does not bring out the contrast. If the RSV, which translates חֶסֶד with “loyally,” had followed Luther’s lead in his translation of שָׁקֵר, it would have given full expression to the contrast. The Septuagint brings out the contrast in its own way by means of ἀδολογῆσαι for שָׁקֵר and δικαιοσύνη for חֶסֶד so that the sentence reads: “Now therefore swear to me by God that thou wilt not act unrighteously toward me ... but according to the righteousness which I have performed with thee thou shalt deal with me.” While the contrast is hereby set forth clearly, still we prefer the translation which we derive in part from Luther, in part from the RSV: “Now therefore swear to me here by God that you will not deal disloyally with me ... but as I have dealt loyally with you, you will deal with me and with the land where you have sojourned.”

<sup>8</sup> The newest German commentary on the Old Testament, *Das Alte Testament Deutsch*, also used the word *Loyalität* for חֶסֶד. In speaking of Abimelech it says: “Er ist der Loyalität (חֶסֶד) Abrahams ihm gegenüber doch nicht sicher.”

<sup>9</sup> The Vulgate does not have *misericordes* but *clementes*, while Menge’s translation is: *Grossmütige Könige*.

We also have an example in the Scriptures of אָהַבָה having the meaning of “love” where the relationship is that of a priest to his king. Thus 2 Chronicles 25:22 speaks of the אָהַבָה of Jehoiada the high priest which he had done unto Joash, the king of Judah, when the former regained the throne for the latter and when he made a covenant between the king and the people (2 Kings 11:17). Now all our English versions, including the RSV, translate the אָהַבָה of Jehoiada with “kindness” and our sentence reads in the AV: “Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son” (2 Chron. 24:22). Luther has *Barmherzigkeit*. His sentence reads: “*Und der Koenig Joas gedachte nicht an die Barmherzigkeit, die Jojada, sein Vater, an ihm getan hatte.*” All these versions follow the Septuagint with its *ἔλεος* and the Vulgate with its *misericordia*. Menge’s translation is the one exception which offers a different translation for אָהַבָה. His rendering is: “*So wenig gedachte der Koenig Joas der Liebe, die Jojada, der Vater jenes, ihm erwiesen hatte.*” In view of all that Jehoiada, the father of Zechariah, had done for Joash from the day that he saved the life of Joash, then 6 years old, by hiding him in the Temple, till the day when Jehoiada made a covenant between the young king and his people, thereby showing him the love of a father, the translation *Liebe* or “love” for אָהַבָה is truly called for.

In short, the meaning of our word, as far as we have studied it till now, varies between *love* and *mercy* on the one hand, and *faithfulness*, *loyalty* on the other. Therefore, the translation “leal-love,” i.e. loyal love, has been suggested for אָהַבָה. But it also has been realized that such a translation does not suffice for the later and developed stages of the growth of this word, especially when the prophets speak of the determined, steadfast, and persistent love of God. It is only when we now turn to the study of אָהַבָה in contexts pertaining to God that we can gain the full meaning of this covenant term. It is also then that we are able to do full justice to the synonyms with which it is associated.

#### IV THE אָהַבָה OF GOD

Since the אָהַבָה of God is a covenant term, we will naturally look for it in texts which specifically deal with the covenant of God with His people. We therefore turn first of all to those chapters of Genesis which speak to us of God’s covenant with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Prior to these chapters, that is in chapters 1-11, we do not find the term אָהַבָה used at all.<sup>10</sup> The first chapter of the Bible in which this Old Testament covenant term occurs is chapter

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<sup>10</sup> אָהַבָה is used once in these chapters, namely in Gen. 6:8, where our AV following the Vulgate with its *gratia* renders אָהַבָה by grace: “And Noah found grace in the eyes of God.” Luther went back to the *χάριτι* of the Septuagint and consequently used *Gnade* as a translation. While the AV never employs “grace” for אָהַבָה, Luther has recourse to *Gnade* for both אָהַבָה and אָהַבָה. The difference of meaning between the two words has already been pointed out in the footnote on page 257 of vol. 50 (in this version, p. 9, fnote. 6 [ed.]).

19, which makes mention of the **חֶסֶד** shown to Lot by the angels. Even in chapters 12-18, in which the covenant of God with Abraham is mentioned no less than five times, we do not encounter the term **חֶסֶד**, although all the other covenant terms occur in these and the following chapters. Thus we find **בְּרִית**, covenant, in Genesis 15:18 and chapter 17, verses 2, 4, and 7, **נִשְׁבָּעָה**, covenant oath sworn by God to Abraham, in chapter 26:3 (cf. 22:16; 24:7) , and **בְּרָכָה**, covenant blessing, in chapters 12:2 and 28:4. Still no mention is made in these passages of **חֶסֶד** as a part of the Abrahamitic covenant. As such we first meet with it in Deuteronomy 7:12, where it is used synonymously with **בְּרִית**, in that Moses says to God's people: "God shall keep unto thee **חֶסֶד וְהַחֶסֶד וְהַבְּרִית וְהַחֶסֶד**, covenant and mercy, which He swore unto thy fathers." Here for the first time we find **חֶסֶד** closely knit with the **בְּרִית** of God with Abraham, even as the other word for the oath, **אָלָה**, which God swore unto Abraham, is used as a synonym of **בְּרִית** in Deuteronomy 29:12 and 14.

Yet the mere absence of **חֶסֶד** in these covenant passages of Genesis does not justify the conclusion that **חֶסֶד** is not at all used in the narratives pertaining to the patriarchs. We have such chapters in Genesis, one being chapter 24, which contains an episode in the life of Abraham.

#### ***A. The **חֶסֶד** of God's Covenant with Abraham***

Chapter 24 of Genesis is a chapter in which **חֶסֶד** is used in reference to Abraham, not by Abraham himself, not by God speaking to Abraham, but by Abraham's servant. According to this chapter Abraham is sending his servant to get a wife for his son, Isaac. The premise of this mission, however, is nothing less than God's oath and promise to Abraham mentioned in verse 7: "Unto thy seed will I give this land." It is in the name of the Covenant-God that Abraham sends his servant to his kindred, that the servant sets out on his journey to Mesopotamia, and it is in His name that he prays: "O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew **חֶסֶד** unto my master Abraham" (12). The servant wanted to know whether the God of his master Abraham would really show **חֶסֶד** to the latter. Therefore he stationed himself at the well of water and the damsel who would let him drink from her pitcher and would give his camels drink also was to be the appointed wife for God's servant Isaac, "and thereby," as the servant added, "shall I know that thou hast shewed **חֶסֶד** unto my master" (14). When Rebekah came and fulfilled all the requirements, the servant again prayed: "Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, who hath not left destitute my master of his **חֶסֶד** and his **אֱמֶת**" (27).

The **חֶסֶד** in this context pre-supposes a close friendship, i.e. a covenant relationship between God and Abraham. Jehovah is the God of Abraham, "the God of my master Abraham," the servant says. God and Abraham are in a covenant relationship with one another in which

דָּקָה plays the deciding role. דָּקָה and its synonym אֱמֶת are also used in this chapter for the close relationship existing between Abraham, Bethuel, and Laban, so that the servant could say to the latter: “And now if ye will do דָּקָה and אֱמֶת to my master, tell me” (49). Although the same terms are used in this relationship as in God’s covenant relationship with Abraham, nevertheless there is a worldwide difference between the two. The relationship of Abraham with the families of Rebekah was a blood relationship: The relationship between God and Abraham was a spiritual one based on the covenant characterized by דָּקָה. This דָּקָה is twice explained by the synonym אֱמֶת (verses 27 and 49), thus setting forth דָּקָה as an attitude and an act of trustworthiness and faithfulness.<sup>11</sup> In verse 48 of chapter 24 the servant also speaks of his sojourn as a אֱמֶת דְּרָךְ, the way of faithfulness which God had shown him. Our AV, in taking over the *recto itinere* of the Vulgate simply translates “the right way,” which does not do full justice to the covenant relationship implied by אֱמֶת דְּרָךְ, the way of faithfulness or truth.<sup>12</sup>

It cannot be a matter of indifference to us how דָּקָה is to be translated in our chapter. Abraham regarded the marriage of his son as a step forward in the fulfillment of God’s covenant promises. The דָּקָה shown to him by God was a constant fulfillment of God’s promises. We are certainly justified in asking whether the “kindness” of the AV fully conveys the covenant meaning of this chapter to us, whether there is not a more adequate translation to be found. The oldest translation of דָּקָה, the *ἔλεος* of the Septuagint,<sup>13</sup> deserves our every consideration. We

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<sup>11</sup> In 23 instances דָּקָה is associated with אֱמֶת and אֱמוּנָה which we shall meet with later. Both of these words are derived from the stem *'amin*, אֱמֶת being originally *'amint*. אָמֵן according to Koehler-Baumgartner means “steady, firm, trustworthy.” אָמֵן is a solemn formula with which one confirms the validity of an oath or a curse, as for instance in Numbers 5:22 and in Dt. 27:15-26. אֱמֶת means *firmness, stability, then faithfulness, and finally truth.*

אֱמוּנָה signifies *steadiness*, said of the hands of Moses (Ex. 17:12), then *faithfulness*, said of the way which one has chosen (Ps. 119:30), and finally *fidelity, loyalty, faithfulness*, said of God who will betroth His people unto Himself in faithfulness (Hosea 2:20).

<sup>12</sup> It is of no little interest to observe that all Versions, even the modern translations including the RSV, follow the Vulgate. Luther and Menge do likewise and render *den rechten Weg*. Only the Septuagint follows the Hebrew closely with its *ἐν ὁδοῦ ἀληθείας*, which conveys to the reader the original meaning much more readily than the mere “right way” of the AV or “the right road” of *An American Translation*. It should also be noted that Israel’s way in Is. 40:27: My way (דְּרָכִי) is hidden from the Lord, is none other but the אֱמֶת דְּרָךְ of Gen. 24:48, which God leads His people in order to fulfill His covenant promises.

<sup>13</sup> Besides the *ἔλεος* in verses 12 and 19, the Septuagint renders דָּקָה by *δικαιοσύνη* in verse 27. The Vulgate has *misericordia* throughout. Luther follows the Vulgate with *Barmherzigkeit* in all three verses. Our AV has “kindness” in verses 12 and 14 and “mercy” in verse 27. The ERV did not choose to make any changes. The ASV only differs from the former two in verse 27 with its rendering of “lovingkindness,” a step ahead in the search for an English equivalent. *An American Translation* renders דָּקָה in all three verses by “gracious”; Moffat by “kind.” Menge has chosen the word *Gnade* in 12 and 14 and *Güte* in 27. With this translation Menge leans heavily on Luther, although Luther himself did not make use of these words in our chapter. The RSV differs from all others with its choice of “steadfast love.” Its translation of verse 27 reads in full: “Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who

know what a strong influence it had on later versions, on the Vulgate with its *miser cordia*, on Luther’s Bible with its *Barmherzigkeit*, on the AV with the English equivalents “kindness” and “mercy.” Menge, however, has *Gnade* and *Güte*, while the RSV is consistent in using “steadfast love.” Our further study of this covenant term will have to serve the one purpose to get as near as possible to the original meaning of **חֶסֶד**.

### **B. The **חֶסֶד** of God’s Covenant with Jacob**<sup>14</sup>

Jacob according to Genesis 32 is the first patriarch to make use of our covenant term **חֶסֶד**. About to meet his brother Esau from whom he had fled in great fear into a foreign land, he prays: “O God of my father Abraham, and God of my father Isaac, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and to thy kindred, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the **חֶסֶדִים** and of all the **אַמֹּת**, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant” (9f.). In this prayer Jacob has in mind the **חֶסֶדִים** of God’s covenant, for he continues to pray: “And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude” (12). This blessing stood him in good stead when there wrestled a man with him at the ford Jabbok and when Jacob said to him: “I will not let thee go, except thou bless me” (26). Indeed, Jacob as Isaac before him (26:9) also was **בְּרִוּי יְהוָה**, “the blessed of the Lord.” Therefore God appeared unto him again in Bethel and blessed him and said unto him: “I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall be of thee, and kings shall come out of thy loins; and the land which I gave Abraham and Isaac, to thee I will give it, and to thy seed after thee will I give the land” (35:11-12). These blessings were the confirmation of the great blessing which he had received in his flight to Haran in the place which he himself had named Bethel. And between this first and second blessing Jacob speaks of all the **חֶסֶדִים** and of all the **אַמֹּת** which God had showed him.<sup>15</sup>

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has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master.” This, to our mind, expresses most adequately the meaning of **חֶסֶד** as a covenant term in this chapter.

<sup>14</sup> **חֶסֶד** does not occur in any of the Isaac narratives of Genesis, although the establishing of the covenant with Isaac is already promised to Abraham in verses 19 and 21 of chapter 17. In 26:3, 4, and 24 the covenant blessing (**בְּרִכָּה**) is bestowed on Isaac and the covenant oath (**נִשְׁבּוּעָה**) which God had sworn to Abraham his father is repeated. In chapter 26, verse 29, Abimelech, king of the Philistines, calls Isaac **בְּרִוּי יְהוָה**, the blessed of the Lord. In his prayer for Jacob Isaac petitions God Almighty to bless Jacob and to give him “the blessing of Abraham” (28:4). But in none of these passages is there any mention made of **חֶסֶד**.

<sup>15</sup> It is interesting to observe the rendering of the plural of **חֶסֶד** by our ancient and modern versions. The meaning of this plural is of great import to us, since later on we shall again encounter it in the well-known Isaiah passage: “I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the **חֶסֶדִים הַנְּאֻמִּים** the sure mercies of David” (55:3). How do the versions translate **חֶסֶדִים**? Strange to say the Septuagint ignores the plural and simply uses the singular of **חֶסֶד** *δικαιοσύνη*. The Vulgate, which slavishly follows the Septuagint in so many instances, does not do it here but has



### C. The $\text{רַחֵם}$ of God's Covenant with Joseph

Joseph no less than Jacob was an heir of the Abrahamic covenant blessings. Through him God also fulfilled His promise to Abraham: "Thou shalt be a blessing." As the Lord blessed Laban for Jacob's sake (30:27), thus he also blessed Potiphar for Joseph's sake, who had seen that "the Lord was with Joseph" and that "he was a prosperous man" (39:2). "And it came to pass from the time that he had made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; and the  $\text{בְּרַכַּת יְהוָה}$ , the blessing of the Lord, was upon all that he had in the house, and in the field" (39:5). When Joseph, however, was put into prison by Potiphar, the Lord no less was with him. He extended  $\text{רַחֵם}$  unto him (21),<sup>16</sup> even as he had shown  $\text{רַחֵם}$  unto Jacob. God's purpose in extending  $\text{רַחֵם}$  to Joseph was not only to save his life, but "to save much people alive" (50:20). And Joseph did not only save Israel but also Egypt. This saving of Egypt and not only of Israel Vischer rightly calls "a prophetic prelude of the saving of the world through the passion history of Israel, the servant of the Lord,

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*miserationibus tuis*. While Luther uses the singular *Barmherzigkeit*, our AV follows the Vulgate and renders  $\text{רַחֵם}$  by "mercies," the ERV likewise. The ASV independently of the former two translates: "I am not worthy of the least of all the lovingkindnesses and of all the truth." *An American Translation* interprets the plural and speaks of "the acts of kindness and fidelity" that God has shown his servant. The RSV in clinging to its rendering "steadfast love" cannot well use the plural and therefore its translation reads: "I am not worthy of the least of all the steadfast love and all the faithfulness which thou hast shown to thy servant." Menge's rendering *Gnadenerweise* seems to come closest to the Hebrew and its meaning: "*Ich bin zu gering für all die Gnadenerweise and all die Treue, die du deinem Knecht erwiesen hast.*" All the blessings which God had showered on Jacob when with only a staff he passed over the Jordan on his way to Haran and with two companies he returned, were so many  $\text{רַחֵם}$ , *Gnadenerweise*, blessings, fulfillments of God's covenant promises.

<sup>16</sup> This is really the first time that we have such a direct statement by Moses himself, namely that God extended or showed  $\text{רַחֵם}$  to one of the patriarchs. Consequently the statement in this form takes us somewhat by surprise. It may have induced some translators to give this phrase a different meaning, the more so since the verb  $\text{הַשִּׁעַ$ , do, make, ordinarily associated with  $\text{רַחֵם}$ , does not occur in our verse, but the verb  $\text{הִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה}$  having the meaning of "stretching out," "extending." This verb is also used with  $\text{רַחֵם}$  (Ezra 7:28 and 9:9). In all three passages Kautzsch, *Das Alte Testament* and Menge, *Die Heilige Schrift*, find a different meaning from that of our versions. Kautzsch translates Genesis 39:21: "*Aber Jahwe war mit Joseph and machte ihm die Herzen zugeneigt,*" while Menge's translation reads: "*Aber Gott der Herr war mit Joseph und liess ihn die Zuneigung aller gewinnen.*" According to these two translators  $\text{רַחֵם}$  is not the  $\text{רַחֵם}$  of God but of the Egyptians and in Ezra of the Persians. All of our versions, however, understand  $\text{רַחֵם}$  as meaning the  $\text{רַחֵם}$  of God which He extended to Joseph. Also the RSV finds this meaning in it and translates: "But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love." This modern version gives the two Ezra passages 7:28 and 9:9 the same rendering. To aid our readers to decide for themselves, it should be kept in mind that the Hebrew has its own idiom for the phrase: "*Und machte ihm die Herzen zugeneigt*" or "*liess ihn die Zuneigung aller gewinnen.*" It is the expression: "To give someone favor in the sight of someone." We find it in the latter part of our verse 21 applied to Joseph and the prisonkeeper and in Exodus 3:21; 11:3; 12:36, where it is used in reference to Israel and the Egyptians. The favor which God gave Joseph in the sight of the prisonkeeper and Israel in the sight of the Egyptians was contingent upon the  $\text{רַחֵם}$  which He had shown Joseph and Israel.

confirmed and fulfilled by the sacrifice of One who was rejected by all the sons of Israel and sold as their brother for thirty pieces of silver, the Christ Jesus.”<sup>17</sup>

#### ***D. The חֶסֶד of God's Covenant with David***

In 2 Sam. 7 (cf. 1 Chronicles 17) God promises not to withdraw His חֶסֶד from David's seed. We read in verses 12 to 16: “And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But חַסְדִּי, my mercy, shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away, before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.”

David's seed is here being adopted as the Lord's son on the day of the institution of the Davidic covenant. Already Israel as a people was called the firstborn son of God (Exod. 4:22-23), then also David (Ps. 89:27). Now the Davidic line by divine institution, i.e. on the strength of the covenant recognition of sonship, becomes the son in a nation and God is its father. The relationship of father and son was that of a union which entailed promises and duties that found their fulfillment in חֶסֶד. God as the father of David's seed can never withhold the חֶסֶד from His son. The son, of course, must conduct himself over against his father according to the חֶסֶד, if he is not to be chastened. However, God promised David never to take away His חֶסֶד from this His son, as He took it from Saul, whom He put away before him. On the contrary, David's house and kingdom shall be established for ever.

An exposition of this passage in 2 Samuel we find in Psalm 89, a Psalm which sings of the חַסְדֵי יְהוָה and of the אֱמוּנָה of the Lord (verse 1), the mercies and the faithfulness of God. It does not only exalt them in that the Psalmist says that חֶסֶד shall be built up for ever and that God shall establish his אֱמוּנָה in the very heavens (2), but it also designates them as the חֶסֶד and אֱמוּנָה of the covenant which God made with His chosen one, with David his servant (3). And as God's covenant will stand firm for David (28), thus His חֶסֶד shall be with him (24) and God will keep His חֶסֶד for David forevermore (28). David will recognize his Covenant-God as his “father” (26) and God will make him his “firstborn,” higher than the kings of the earth (27). But even when God is forced to chasten David's children, because they forsake His Law (30), nevertheless His חֶסֶד will He not utterly take from them, nor suffer His אֱמוּנָה to fail (33). More than that, His בְּרִית will He not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of His lips (34), namely

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<sup>17</sup> Wilhelm Vischer, *Das Christuszeugnis des Alten Testaments*, p. 194.

His covenant promises. Once and for all He has sworn (נִשְׁבַּע) and will not lie unto David that his seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun and moon before Him (36f.). Yea, the Lord Himself will be “a faithful witness in heaven” (37).<sup>18</sup>

Yet the Psalmist, who resolved to sing of the הִתְקַדֵּי יְהוָה for ever (1), cries out toward the close of this Psalm in an hour of chastisement and visitation: “Lord, where are thy former הִתְקַדֵּי, which thou swarest unto David in thy אֱמוּנָה” (49). This is not a cry of one who has lost faith, but an appeal to the Lord’s love in former days: “Lord, where is thy steadfast love of old, which by thy faithfulness thou didst swear to David?” (RSV). It is the הִתְקַדֵּי and the אֱמוּנָה of God which he had gloried in throughout the Psalm and to which he continues to cling to the end. He says in effect that the Lord God, whose אֱמוּנָה is round about him (8), never once “loosened the girdle of faithfulness to his covenant.” He is the God whose צְדָקָה and מִשְׁפָּט, righteousness and judgment, are the foundation of his throne, whose הַחֶסֶד וְהָאֱמֶת, mercy and truth, go before Him (14). Need it be said that it is God in Christ whom Ethan praises, who has אֱמוּנָה, faithfulness, as the girdle of his reins (Is. 11:5) and who at his second coming again bears the name “Faithful and True” (Rev. 19:11)?<sup>19</sup>

### *E. The הִתְקַדֵּי of God’s Covenant with His People*

When God had led Israel through the Red Sea, and when Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians, then the children of Israel believing the Lord and His servant Moses sang unto Him: “Thou in thy הִתְקַדֵּי hast led forth the people which thou hast redeemed; thou hast guided them in thy עֹז (strength) unto thy holy habitation” (Ex. 15:13). This is the first chapter in the Old Testament where mention is made of God showing הִתְקַדֵּי to Israel as

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<sup>18</sup> This according to the Masoretic text must be the meaning of our verse. The RSV has made use of an emendation proposed in the critical apparatus of the Kittel-Kahle Bible. By means of this emendation a perfect parallelism has been reconstructed and it is this that the translation adopted by the RSV has in its favor. It reads: “Like the moon it shall be established for ever; it shall stand firm while the skies endure.” In a footnote the RSV gives us an exact translation of the Masoretic text: “The witness in the skies is sure.” Delitzsch defends this reading and translation of the text and tells us that “it has to be explained according to Job XVI. 19, where Job says: ‘Behold in heaven is my witness; and my surety in the heights.’ Jahve, the אֱלֹהֵי אֱמֶת (Deut. VII. 9), seals His sworn promise with the words, ‘and the witness in the sky (ethereal heights) is faithful.’ ” The whole verse then reads according to Delitzsch’ translation: “As the moon shall it continue for ever—And the witness in the sky is faithful.”

<sup>19</sup> πιστὸς καὶ ἀληθινός of this New Testament passage are used by the Septuagint for the two Old Testament terms אֱמֶת and אֱמוּנָה, one of which, אֱמֶת, we know as a synonym of הִתְקַדֵּי, the other, אֱמוּנָה, is used in closest connection with בְּרִית, covenant, and is translated by our AV with *steadfast*: “Neither were they steadfast in his covenant” (Ps. 78:37). The noun אֱמוּנָה we also have learned to know as a synonym of הִתְקַדֵּי in Psalm 89:24 (25) and is also found as such in Psalm 98:3, thus presupposing in הִתְקַדֵּי the meaning of *steadfastness, stableness* (Ps. 37:3 AV marg.), *stability* (Is. 33:6 AV).

His people. Till now we only encountered those passages which dealt with the **דִּקְוָה** which God showed to individuals, to the patriarchs, and to David and his children. Now we are about to enter in upon the **דִּקְוָה** relationship of God with His people. It is the **דִּקְוָה** of that God who passed by before Moses and proclaimed: “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in **תְּמִנָּה וְדִקְוָה** ... Keeping **דִּקְוָה** for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty” (Ex. 34:7).<sup>20</sup> In His **דִּקְוָה** God led forth the children of Israel and redeemed them; and in His **זֵעַ** He guided them unto His holy habitation. It is evident from these two passages alone that **דִּקְוָה** is to play a leading role in defining the relationship of God to His people.

The first word used in parallelism with **דִּקְוָה** in this relationship of God to His people is **זֵעַ**, strength. Practically there is no difference in meaning between **דִּקְוָה** and **זֵעַ** in that both are means of God in leading and guiding His people. **דִּקְוָה** is God’s faithfulness or mercy in leading forth His people, **זֵעַ** is His power and strength in guiding them to their holy abode. Both words supplement and complement one another. God’s **דִּקְוָה** is never without the strength and power of God, while God’s **זֵעַ** in as far as His work of salvation is concerned is never without God’s mercy or love. Exodus 15:13, however, is not the only passage where these two words are used in parallelism with one another. The Psalmist sings of both in Psalm 59:16: “I will sing of thy **זֵעַ**; yea, I will sing of thy **דִּקְוָה** in the morning.” Consequently God is both his **זֵעַ** and his **דִּקְוָה** (17). The Psalmist can even use **זֵעַ** in reference to himself as a force with which God strengthens his soul. Having worshipped God and praised His name for His **דִּקְוָה** and His **תְּמִנָּה**, His “lovingkindness” and His “truth” (Ps. 138:2), he continues in verse 3: “In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with **זֵעַ**, with strength in my soul.”

**דִּקְוָה** and **זֵעַ**, mercy and strength, go hand in hand in the Old Testament. **דִּקְוָה** is the mercy and faithfulness of God in saving and strengthening His people by His power and might. Therefore God’s **נִפְלְאוֹת**, miracles, are His **דִּקְוָה** or His **דִּקְוָהִים** and vice versa His **דִּקְוָה** and His **דִּקְוָהִים** are His **נִפְלְאוֹת**, His wondrous works. There are many passages in which the Psalmist on the strength of the Hebrew parallelism brings both into closest union with one another (cf. Ps. 106:7; 107:8, 15, 21, 31; 136:4). He even uses the verb form of **פָּלַא** with **דִּקְוָה** as an object and says: “Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness” or as the RSV has it in retaining the full meaning of the verb **הִפְלִיחַ**: “Wondrously show thy steadfast love” (Ps. 17:7), and again in Psalm 31:21 (22):

<sup>20</sup> According to the translation of the RSV our passage reads: “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty.”

“Blessed be the Lord, for he has wondrously shown (אֱלֹהֵי) his steadfast love to me.” God showed his דָּוָהּ to His people by means of all His תְּאוֹדוֹת, especially at the Red Sea when He did that “great work” and saved Israel out of the hand of the Egyptians (Ex. 14:30, 31). Therefore the Psalmist speaks of God “working salvation in the midst of the earth” (Ps. 74:12).

The question which the study of the תְּאוֹדוֹת in connection with דָּוָהּ raises is whether the New Testament also speaks of God’s תְּאוֹדוֹת, i.e. of His θαυμάσια as the Septuagint renders this word, in connection with the salvation wrought by our Lord and Savior. The term θαυμάσια is used but once in the New Testament in reference to the “wonderful things” that Christ did in the temple of God where He healed the blind and the lame (Matt. 21:15). These wonderful works of Christ, it must be remembered, are works of salvation and reveal His grace and glory, even as the wondrous works at the Red Sea revealed God’s דָּוָהּ. Once the adjective θαυμαστόν is used of the works which God wrought through Moses and the Lamb, sung on the sea of glass in the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb by those that had gotten the victory over the beast: “Great and marvellous (θαυμαστά) are thy works, Lord God Almighty” (Rev. 15:3). This song of Moses brings to mind Exodus 15 with its דָּוָהּ and יָצָא (13) preceded in verse 11 by (אֲלֵפֶּי), the wonders, which God had done for His people. These wonders whereby God worked the salvation of Israel from the Egyptian yoke foreshadowed the salvation wrought through the Lamb. Consequently chapter 15 of Revelation, verses 3 and 15, speaks to us of God’s wonderful works (θαυμαστά τὰ ἔργα) and of His power (τῆς δυνάμεως) as the means whereby God works salvation even as chapter 15 of Exodus verses 11 and 13 dwells on God’s wonders (אֲלֵפֶּי) and might (יָצָא) whereby He redeemed His people.<sup>21</sup>

#### ***F. The דָּוָהּ of God’s Covenant with His Wayward People***

From the very beginning of God’s relationship with His people, He showed them His דָּוָהּ even in the hour of their waywardness and backsliding. Already in Egypt and at the Red Sea, where they gave no heed unto His תְּאוֹדוֹת, His wonders, and remembered not the multitude of His מִדְּוָהּ, His mercies, but rebelled against Him, He saved them for His name’s sake that He might make His mighty power to be known (Ps. 106:7, 8). Although they continued to sin

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<sup>21</sup> It is not only in Revelation that God’s wondrous power is used synonymously with His work of redemption. In Matt. 21:42 we find Psalm 118:22-23 quoted to the effect that when God executed His wonderful plan of salvation by making Jesus the cornerstone of the new covenant, this work was תְּאוֹדוֹת, θαυμαστή, wonderful in our eyes. In Ephesians 1:19 Paul does not use θαυμαστός or θαυμάσια. He, however, does speak of the δύναμις and the ισχύς, i.e. of the strength and might of God, the latter word also being used in Exodus 12:6 and 13. By this “surpassing greatness of His power” and by “the working of the might of His strength” whereby God raised Christ from the dead, we also are “kept through faith unto salvation to be revealed in the last time” (1 Pet. 1:5). The New Testament no less than the Old brings the omnipotence or power of God into a close connection with the salvation which God works for those that believe. By means of His power God raised Christ from the dead (Eph. 1:20) and by means of this His guarding and protective power that faith trusts we are kept unto salvation and retain the incorruptible inheritance (cf. Lenski on Eph. 1:19 and 1 Pet. 1:5).

and to forget God their Savior (21), so that He swore that He would overthrow them in the wilderness (26), nevertheless He remembered His covenant for their sake and repented according to His **דָּרַךְ** (45). Even when God predicted through Moses His people's exile in the land of their enemies, He promised not to cast them away, to destroy them utterly, and to break His covenant with them. On the contrary, He remembered for their sake the covenant with their forefathers, whom He had brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that He might be their God (Lev. 26:44, 45).

This determined, persevering love and mercy of God which nothing could destroy, not all the waywardness and apostasy of a rebellious people, the prophets of Israel were called to preach. Of course, the Lord God who proclaimed to Moses that He is abundant in **דָּרַךְ וְאֵמֶת**, that He keeps **דָּרַךְ** for thousands, also declared that He will by no means clear the guilty." And the prophets had to remind Israel of this solemn truth again and again. Amos tells Israel that God "will not turn away the punishment" of its many sins (2:6), that He "will never forget any of their works" (8:7). They were to know that the day of the Lord is a day of darkness (5:18, 20), that the eyes of the Lord are upon the sinful kingdom which He will destroy from the face of the earth (9:8). Thus the other prophets also spoke and told Israel that God was "weary with repenting" (Jerem. 15:6). Despite these dire judgments with which God actually visited His people, the prophets were nevertheless called to preach that the Lord God would be gracious unto a remnant (Am. 5:15), that a remnant would return (Is. 10:21-22). And it is because of this remnant that they never cease to speak of **דָּרַךְ**.

It is Hosea who next to Isaiah uses **דָּרַךְ** with such telling effect in preaching to a wayward people. Hosea's own domestic experience was to exemplify and demonstrate Jehovah's **דָּרַךְ** to His people: "Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress according to the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods" (3:1). Hosea's love for his unfaithful wife was to be so strong and sure that all her adulteries could not kill it, since it was to demonstrate God's love for His idolatrous people, a "sure love" and a "love unswerving."<sup>22</sup>

But Hosea did not only exemplify this sure love of God by means of His own marriage with a wanton woman, but also had recourse to betrothal and marriage as figures of speech by which he spoke to Israel of God's **דָּרַךְ**.

One of the outstanding passages of this nature in Hosea is to be found in chapter 2:14-20. Already in verse 7 Israel is pictured by Hosea as running after her paramours, the *Baalim*, in the hope that they will give her gifts, bread and water, wool and flax, oil and drink. Israel had forgotten that it was the Lord who had given her these gifts (10). As a result of her unfaithfulness God threatened to strip her naked (5) and to uncover her shame in the sight of her lovers, i.e., to make the land barren and depopulated and to lead the people into exile. And yet the Lord will allure her, rather will persuade her with endearing words, will speak tenderly unto her, literally,

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<sup>22</sup> "This phrase occurs most happily in Robert Bridge's translation of Johann Heermann's hymn, *Herr Liebster Jesu, was hast du verbrochen*, in Methodist Hymn-Book, No. 177, verse 5," Snaith in *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament* informs us on page 111. On page 100 in a footnote he also calls our attention to this expression in John Wesley's translation of von Zinzendorf's hymn *Du ewiger Abgrund der seligen Liebe*, To thy sure love, thy tender care (Methodist Hymn-Book, No. 63, verse 4).

will speak upon her heart (16), i.e., will make love to her again as He did in former times and will lead her into Canaan through the valley of Achor, which will not be a valley of troubling as at the first entrance into Canaan (Josh. 7:26), but a door of hope (Hosea 2:17). And Israel will respond to the proof of God's love as in the days when she came out of the land of Egypt. Then she will not call the Lord בַּעַלִי, my Baal, my master, any longer in order to describe her marital relationship with her God, since this designation had an unholy association with idolatrous worship, but will call her Lord אִישִׁי, my husband (18). In that day God will betroth Israel unto Himself forever "in righteousness, and in judgment, and in חֶסֶד, and in mercies" (19).

It is here that God displays the array of bridal gifts with which He will endow His bride. In the case of a betrothal it was customary to bedeck the bride with precious jewels, as Abraham's servant brought forth jewels of silver and jewels of gold and gave them to Rebekah (Gen. 24:53). Thus God also presented a ring, to use Luther's comparison, to His bride, the Christian Church, a ring studded with the jewels of צֶדֶק and מִשְׁפָּט, of חֶסֶד and רַחֲמִים as a bridal gift.<sup>23</sup> And even if Israel will again become wayward, He will not cast her off, will not divorce her, but will forgive her according to His tender mercies, His forgiving love. For with everlasting חֶסֶד will He have mercy on her, Isaiah tells us (54:8).

But let us return to Hosea who together with Isaiah speaks of the persistence and insistence of God's sure love with incomparable words: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt" (11:1). It was God who taught Ephraim to walk, it was He who took him up in His arms<sup>24</sup> who led him with cords of חֶסֶד,<sup>25</sup> with bands of love (3-4). But when Israel became wayward and was bent on backsliding (7), then the Lord did not love His people less, rather more, for: "How can I give you up, Ephraim? how can I hand you over, Israel

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<sup>23</sup> All four terms are covenant terms, however their original meaning may differ from one another. The first two terms have a forensic meaning. God as the originator of the covenant is called מַצְלִידִיק by Isaiah (50:8), the one who makes and pronounces someone righteous over against an adversary. As such He is an אֵל-צִדִיק (Is. 45:21), a just God, in whom alone is צְדָקוֹת and עֹז (45:24), righteousness and strength, and in whom Israel is justified and in possession of salvation (25). מִשְׁפָּט as a juridical term does not only include the pronouncement of sentence, but also its execution, be it vindication or condemnation. The essence of the idea in מִשְׁפָּט is that of setting right what is wrong, restoring the rights of those who have been wronged, or punishing the wrongdoers, in short establishing justice. For the covenant people of God the מִשְׁפָּטֵי-יְהוָה, the judgments of God, spelled deliverance and salvation.

<sup>24</sup> It is to be regretted that our AV and also Luther failed to translate this clause correctly. According to the Masoretic text it reads: "He took them in His arms." Delitzsch points to Dt. 1:31 as a parallel: "In the wilderness ... the Lord thy God bare thee; as a man doth bear his son." Most modern translations including the RSV follow the Greek, Syriac, and Latin versions and render: "I took them up in my arms."

<sup>25</sup> Whether the textual criticism which changes אָדָם into חֶסֶד and reads "cords of compassion" (RSV) instead of "cords of a man" (AV) is at all justified, the fact remains that Jeremiah 31:3 speaks of God "drawing" His people with חֶסֶד. If this is what Hosea tells us with the expression of "cords of a man" and Delitzsch and Weiser look upon it as a figurative representation of the "humane," i.e. compassionate guidance of Israel then we have a perfect parallelism: "I drew them with cords of compassion, with the bands of love."

... My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender” (8).<sup>26</sup> This is the cry of God’s yearning love for His people despite all their waywardness. God had drawn Ephraim with bands of love; Ephraim, however, was determined to turn away from God. Still God loved His people, would not give them up. This persistent and unswerving love is the **דֶּסֶד** in which God had betrothed Israel unto Himself (2:19), a covenant love because of which God could never give up the remnant of His people.

Still this covenant love is not the last jewel in the ring which God put on Israel’s finger. **דֶּסֶד** is the final gift with which God espouses and endows His bride. The Septuagint has translated **דֶּסֶד** literally only once in Proverbs 12:10, namely, with *σπλάγχνα*, bowels, viscera, as the seat of the more violent passions, such as anger and love. Luke has a perfect translation of **דֶּסֶד**: *σπλάγχνα ἐλέους* (Luke 1:78), which our AV has translated with “tender mercy,” the RV with “heart of mercy.” Hosea in 11:8 actually speaks of the heart of God deeply affected by His compassion, a compassion which grew warmer and more tender as Israel’s sin increased. For “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom. 5:20).

We now have to ask the question whether there is a progress of thought here in the use of **דֶּסֶד** and **דֶּסֶד**. On the basis of Isaiah 54:8 we can speak of **דֶּסֶד** as the outcome of God’s **דֶּסֶד**: “With everlasting **דֶּסֶד** will I have **דֶּסֶד** on thee.” While **דֶּסֶד** is the steadfast mercy or love whereby God draws His bride unto Himself (Hos. 11:4; Jerem. 31:3), **דֶּסֶד** is the mercy wherewith God blots out all her transgressions (Ps. 51:3), so that Luke simply speaks of “the remission of sins on account of the bowels of mercy of our God” (1 77f.).<sup>27</sup>

Isaiah calls **דֶּסֶד** a **דֶּסֶד עוֹלָם** (54:8), an “everlasting kindness” (AV), an “everlasting love” (RSV). Again it is Isaiah who sets forth the stability and steadfastness of God’s **דֶּסֶד** in comparing it with the mountains and hills and arguing *a minori ad maius*: “For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my **דֶּסֶד** shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee” (54:10).

In view of the foregoing it is not at all surprising that we hear Isaiah speak of the **דֶּסֶד הַנְּאֻמִּים**, the sure mercies of David (55:3). **דֶּסֶד** always has the meaning of sureness and stability in Isaiah, even where he does not use **דֶּסֶד** as a covenant term. In the well-known

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<sup>26</sup> We prefer the translation of the RSV to that of the AV in this instance. The word “deliver” in our AV can be understood to mean “set free,” “release,” which meaning our dictionaries actually list as the first meaning of this word. The second meaning “to deliver or hand over,” “to give up,” i.e. to surrender to the enemy is undoubtedly the meaning of our word and of the original. “My repentings” for **נְחֻמִּים** will hardly convey the exact meaning of the original. **נְחֻמִּים** occurs only three times in the Old Testament: Is. 57:18 and Zech. 1:13 meaning “consolations”; in our Hosea passage it cannot well have this meaning. Lexicographers translate it with “compassions,” *Mitleid*, in accord with Gen. 43:30 and 1 Kgs. 3:26, where, however, **דֶּסֶד** instead of **נְחֻמִּים** is used. Luther has an incomparable translation: “*Aber mein Herz ist anderen Sinnes, meine Barmherzigkeit ist zu bruenstig.*”

<sup>27</sup> Delete the comma after “sins” in the AV.



passage, where he speaks of all flesh and says: All its **דִּקְוָה** is as the flower of the field (40:6), he compares the strength of mankind with the frailty of the wild flowers, here today and gone tomorrow. In contrast to the frailty of all flesh, the Word of the Lord stands forever. As Isaiah speaks of the eternal Word (40:8) and of the “everlasting covenant” (55:3), he also speaks of the “everlasting **דִּקְוָה** (54:8) in comparison with the strength and steadfastness of mankind which is as frail as the flower of the field, and over against the permanence of hills and mountains which may be removed. But God’s **דִּקְוָה** is forever.

### ***G. The **דִּקְוָה** of God's Covenant with His Captive People***

When Israel was led into captivity and exile, it had to pass through the greatest crisis of its existence, in which it had to answer the question whether God’s **דִּקְוָה** was clean gone forever (Ps. 77:8), whether God would still show **דִּקְוָה** to His people (85:7). It is true that Israel had been told again and again by the prophets that “when they be in the land of their enemies,” He would not break His covenant with them (Lev. 26:44), that His **דִּקְוָה** would not depart from them (Is. 54:10). Still in the hour of trial and infirmity—and how many such hours did it not experience during its captivity—it asked again and again: “Will the Lord cast off forever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his **דִּקְוָה** clean gone forever? doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be **חַנּוּן** (gracious)? Hath he in anger shut up his **רַחֲמִים** (tender mercies)?” (Ps. 77:7-9). According to Isaiah Israel had an answer to these many questions. While it had often confessed that “all the paths of the Lord are **דִּקְוָה וְאֵמֶת** unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies” (Ps. 25:10), yet it also had to confess that it had not kept God’s covenant and therefore took for granted that its **דִּרְדָּר**, its **דִּקְוָה** way, was hid from the Lord, and its **מִשְׁפָּט**, its judgment, its **דִּקְוָה** right, its *Gnadenrecht*,<sup>28</sup> had passed over from its God (Is. 30:27). But what answer did God give to His troubled people?

It is true that God had said to His people through His prophet Jeremiah: “I have taken away my peace from this people, saith the Lord, even the **דִּקְוָה** and the **רַחֲמִים**, the lovingkindness and the mercies” (16:5). According to this word God did tell His people that He

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<sup>28</sup> As Prof. Pieper in his *Jesaias II* speaks of a *Gnadenrecht* he could have also spoken of a *Gnadenweg* as the German equivalent for **דִּרְדָּר**. Certainly, **דִּרְדָּר** is, as Prof. Pieper points out in referring us to Job 3:23 and Ps. 7:5, the *Lebensweg*, but Israel’s *Lebensweg* was its *Gnadenweg*. Even when we with Prof. Pieper resort to *Schicksal*, *Los*, or with Kissane to “case,” it always remains the *Gnadenlos* or the **דִּקְוָה** case. Consequently **דִּרְדָּר** cannot simply stand for Israel’s “thorny life-way” (Delitzsch) nor for the exile (*Gemeint ist das Exil* Prof. Pieper briefly explains). If such were the case, then the parallelism of our verse would have an expression with a very negative meaning over against **מִשְׁפָּט**, right, with its very positive meaning. No, Israel by appealing to its **דִּרְדָּר** is laying claim to something quite positive, something that it had long before the exile, throughout the whole exile, and long after the exile, namely its **דִּקְוָה** way its *Gnadenweg* together with its *Gnadenrecht*.

would shut up and restrain his חֶסֶד and His רַחֲמִים, even as Jeremiah is not to go to the houses of mourning to comfort the relatives of the dead. He is not to take a wife, neither is he to have sons and daughters as a sign to the people that the country will be in ruins very shortly, that parents and children shall die grievous deaths without being lamented and buried. And as they are not the object of the pity of others, thus they will also not be the object of God's compassions. God, according to Isaiah, had actually "forsaken" His people "for a small moment," had actually hid His face "in a little wrath for a moment" (54:7, 8). Israel had to face this reality in its captivity.

But the Lord who had taken away חֶסֶד and רַחֲמִים was also to restore them. He who had forsaken His people, gathered them with great רַחֲמִים, He who had hid His face from them, had mercy on them with everlasting חֶסֶד. Thus Isaiah speaks to those in exile (54:7, 8). And while Jeremiah is picturing the captivity to His people, he is also presenting to them the Lord who exercises, rather creates (עֲשָׂה) חֶסֶד, מִשְׁפָּט, and צְדָקָה in the earth (9:24 [23]). This Lord speaks to Jeremiah concerning His people: "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with חֶסֶד have I drawn thee" (31:3), i.e., drawn thee into the former relationship, which was interrupted by the captivity. And now follows a detailed description of the restoration of Israel, more wonderful than their deliverance out of Egypt. In the midst of it we have Jeremiah's prayer: "Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee: Thou shewest חֶסֶד unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of hosts, is his name" (32:18). This prayer was answered by God: "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?" (27). No, not even the return of Israel's captivity. Therefore Jeremiah prior to the actual captivity could already speak of the voice of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the Lord, that shall say: "Praise the Lord of hosts: for the Lord is good; for his חֶסֶד endureth for ever" (33:11).

This voice was actually heard when the builders laid the foundation of the new temple and the priests and Levites sang responsively praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; "because he is good, for his חֶסֶד endureth for ever toward Israel" (Ezra 3:11). Again this voice was heard when Levites at another gathering of the people in Jerusalem cried with a loud voice unto the Lord their God: "Thou art a gracious and merciful God. Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest חֶסֶד וְהַבְּרִית הַבְּרִית, covenant and mercy,<sup>29</sup> let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us" (Nehem. 9:31, 32).

Thus the restored Israel, the Israel whose captivity God had caused to turn, gives the one and only answer to the question whether God will still show חֶסֶד. Indeed, God keeps בְּרִית and

<sup>29</sup> This translation of our AV and for that matter also Luther's *Bund und Barmherzigkeit* are inadequate, since the two words חֶסֶד וְהַבְּרִית הַבְּרִית by means of the conjunction וְ form a compound. The best translation is that of Kautzsch and Menge: *Gnadenbund*. Moffatt has "compact of kindness," while *An American Translation* prefers "loving faith."

הִשְׁתָּחֵוּ. Still it is answering this question in the midst of new troubles and trials. In other words, this question never grew old and the answer to it had ever to be gained anew. Psalm 85 testifies to this fact.

According to this Psalm<sup>30</sup> God has been favorable to His land and has brought back the captivity of Jacob (1). He has forgiven the iniquity of their sin (2) and has even taken away all His wrath (3). Now the Psalmist prays: “Restore us, O God of our salvation ... Wilt thou prolong thine anger throughout the ages? Wilt thou not revive us again that thy people may rejoice in thee?” (4-6). This prayer implies that the congregation which returned from exile had not yet experienced the bliss and the blessing to which it had looked forward. Therefore it prayed:

“Show us thy הִשְׁתָּחֵוּ, O Lord, and grant us thy שׁוּעָה” (salvation).” The congregation is certain that the Lord will answer her prayer and therefore says: “I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people and to his הִסְדִּינֵהוּ,” i.e., to those who are members of His הִשְׁתָּחֵוּ covenant, to His faithful ones, His saints (8). Surely His salvation is nigh, the congregation continues to pray (9), and then suddenly finds itself in a most blessed state, where הִשְׁתָּחֵוּ and אֱמֶת are met together, where צְדָקָה and שְׁלוֹמִים have kissed each other (10). אֱמֶת shall spring out of the earth and צְדָקָה shall look down from heaven (11). Yea, “צְדָקָה shall go before Him,” the congregation concludes her prayer, “and attend unto the way of His steps.”<sup>31</sup>

Here we find many covenant terms grouped round about הִשְׁתָּחֵוּ. It is the הִשְׁתָּחֵוּ for which the congregation had prayed in verse 7: “Shew us thy הִשְׁתָּחֵוּ, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation.”

With אֱמֶת it forms a hendiadys, אֱמֶת, of course, qualifying הִשְׁתָּחֵוּ (10). But God’s faithfulness as a covenant God is further strengthened by the covenant terms צְדָקָה and שְׁלוֹמִים. צְדָקָה, the right which the Lord has vindicated, may be applied to many circumstances and conditions, so that it has various meanings in the Old Testament, from the general meaning of prosperity to that of salvation. Here in our Psalm צְדָקָה also involves the blessing of a general prosperity, since the congregation prays in verse 12: “Yea, the Lord shall give that which is good, and our land shall yield her increase.” צְדָקָה in other contexts has the meaning of the blessings of a bountiful harvest (Joel 2:23) or that of wealth and riches as in Proverbs 8:18. We could, therefore, translate: Prosperity and peace have kissed each other, prosperity shall look down from heaven (11), prosperity shall walk before Him as His herald and follow Him inseparably (13). This prosperity is, of course, the prosperity that Israel will enjoy when the Lord will bring again the captivity of

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<sup>30</sup> Whether this Psalm is postexilic (Delitzsch) or preexilic (Weiser) may never be answered with absolute certainty. For our purposes it suffices that it is written in view of the fact that God “has brought back the captivity of Jacob,” whether this refers to a restoration prior to or after the Babylonian captivity (cf. Ps. 14:7), and that the Jews adapted it shortly after the return from Babylon in celebration of that event. Luther’s insertion of *vormals* into the first three verses is in full accord with this use of the Psalm. Paul Gerhardt took over Luther’s *vormals* into his hymn: “*Herr, der du vormals hast das Land mit Gnaden angeblicket.*”

<sup>31</sup> The rendering of our AV: “And shall set us in the way of his steps” presupposes an object of the verb which is not in the original and also destroys the parallelism. The translation by Delitzsch: “And attend unto the way of His steps” seems to do most justice to the Hebrew. Luther’s translation is free but forthright: “*Dass Gerechtigkeit fuerder vor ihm bleibe und im Schwange gehe.*”

His people Israel, the prosperity of which Amos speaks that “the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed” (Am. 9:13). This prosperity finds its perfect expression in שְׁלוֹם, which always implies a state of perfection branching out into welfare, peace, and prosperity. Prosperity finally results in the כְּבוֹד, glory, that will dwell in the land (9). All these gifts, חֶסֶד, יְשׁוּעָה, שְׁלוֹם, אֱמֶת, צְדָקָה, form one grand cluster of salvation gifts summed up in כְּבוֹד, glory (9). Whether the Psalmist speaks of mercy or salvation or truth, they all are rays of that one glory, which the Old Testament designates as כְּבוֹד יְהוָה, the glory of the Lord.

Thus the prayer of the congregation, whose captivity God has returned, reaches great heights and culminates in the glory which Moses saw and without which he would and could not lead God’s people into the promised land (Ex. 33), which continued to dwell in the land of promise until it shone forth in Him, of whom His disciples said: “We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

## V

### THE חֶסֶד OF THE חֲסִידִים

The God who betrothed His elect in חֶסֶד and רַחֲמִים, in faithfulness and mercy, wanted them to be recipients and doers of His חֶסֶד and רַחֲמִים. As He Himself delighted in חֶסֶד (Mic. 7:18), thus He desired חֶסֶד of His people, wanted them to love (Mic. 6:8), to show (Zech. 7:9), and to keep חֶסֶד (Hos. 12:6). What was more natural than that those who were thus endowed with חֶסֶד were called חֲסִידִים? No less than thirty times does this term occur in the Old Testament. As a characteristic and outstanding term it is lost to the readers of our English Bible, since our Authorized Version renders this word with no less than six different terms. The חֲסִיד or the חֲסִידִים are either designated as the “holy ones” or as the “saints,” then again as the “merciful,” and finally as the “godly” and the “good.” And if we want to use a marginal rendering, they are also the ones whom God “favours” (Psalm 86:2). The term חֲסִיד is still more lost to the reader of the Authorized Version when the prophet characterizes God’s people as not being חֲסִיד. According to the Authorized Version such a people is simply an “ungodly nation.” The marginal reading for Psalm 43:1 endeavors to help things along by rendering “unmerciful.” But this lack of uniformity hinders the reader from growing conscious of our term. A basic and uniform rendering must be found that will serve best to convey the characteristic meaning of חֲסִיד to the reader. Before endeavoring to find this meaning on the basis of the pertinent Scripture passages, we want to acquaint ourselves with the various renderings of ancient and modern versions.

As the Septuagint translation of **דָּוָה** had a great influence on all subsequent translations, thus its translation of **דָּוָה** likewise had such an influence. With but few exceptions the Septuagint translates **דָּוָה** with *ἅγιος*, holy, thus influencing translators to confound **דָּוָה** and **קָדוֹשׁ**, the Hebrew word for “holy.” The Vulgate took over the *ἅγιος* of the Septuagint as a translation and rendered **דָּוָה** by *sanctus*. Luther followed the Vulgate throughout with *heilig* or *der Heilige*, with but two exceptions (Jerem. 3:12 and Mic. 7:2).<sup>32</sup> The AV uses “holy” or “holy one” but five times, while “saints” occurs no less than nineteen times. Both “merciful” and “godly” are met with five times. The RSV does not make use of “holy” in translating **דָּוָה**. Still it does have recourse to “saints” no less than thirteen times, to “godly” or “godly ones” eight times, while “faithful” or “faithful ones” are used six times, and “loyal” twice. In employing “faithful” and “loyal” for **דָּוָה** the RSV has blazed a new trail. *An American Translation* has “faithful” only once, but Menge already used this translation in the form of *Getreuen*, also *Gesetzestreuen*, at least four times. In short, **דָּוָה** is an Old Testament word which deserves our every attention, and we therefore want to study it in its various and not unimportant contexts.

In ascertaining the meaning of our word we are aided by the fact that it is not only used of man but also of God. The several passages where it is used of God will serve us well to gauge the basic meaning of our term. In Jeremiah 3:12 God invites His backsliding people to return by telling them that. He is **דָּוָה**. In view of the **דָּוָה** of God a reader can hardly be in doubt as to the meaning of **דָּוָה** in this context. It is the covenant God who has betrothed His people in **דָּוָה** and **אֱמִינָה** who is calling to them to return. All versions beginning with the Septuagint, which has *ἐλεήμων*, find the meaning of “merciful” in **דָּוָה**. Even the RSV uses this word. The Vulgate influenced by the usual *ἅγιος* of the Septuagint is the one version which here remains consistent and renders **דָּוָה** with *sanctus*, “holy.”

This rendering all versions with one exception have chosen in translating the well-known passage in Psalm 18:26 and 2 Sam. 22:26, which reads in the original: “With the **דָּוָה** thou wilt show thyself **דָּוָה**.” The AV translates: “With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful,” while Luther following the Septuagint and the Vulgate has: “*Bei den Heiligen bist du heilig.*” The Psalmist is here speaking as Jeremiah had done of God’s covenant faithfulness, His *Bundestreue* (Weiser), which is not dependent on man’s attitude. He does not want to say that with God there is variableness and shadow of turning. No, “God is righteous in all his ways and **דָּוָה** in all his works” (Ps. 145:17). And according to an additional reading of one Hebrew

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<sup>32</sup> In its translation of the Jeremiah passage even the Septuagint prefers *ἐλεήμων* to *ἅγιος* and is followed by Luther with *barmherzig*. Luther’s rendering of **דָּוָה** in Micah 7:2 by *die frommen Leute* is, apart from the plural form, a translation of the *εὐσεβής* of the Septuagint.

manuscript and of the Septuagint in its translation of verse 13 of Psalm 145 “the Lord is **יְהוָה**, faithful, in his words, and **יְהוָה** in all his works.” All of God’s words and deeds are a living expression of His truth and grace, the proof of His righteousness. Consequently there is an unflinching rule in God’s dealings with men. As a result of this unflinching rule God’s “conduct to man is the reflection of the relation in which man has placed himself to God” (Delitzsch). Thus God shows Himself **יְהוָה** toward the **יְהוָה**, even as He shows Himself “upright” toward the “upright,” “pure” toward the “pure,” or “froward” toward the “froward” (cf. Ps. 18:25, 26). Weiser in *Das Alte Testament Deutsch*<sup>33</sup> speaks of “the secret order of God’s covenant faithfulness, which the Psalmist was privileged to experience on himself as the general truth: ‘Even as man is, thus is his God.’ ” Luther undoubtedly based his answer to the question in *The Large Catechism*: “What does it mean to have a god?” or, “what is God?” on our Psalm passage. It reads: “A god means that from which we are to expect all good and to which we are to take refuge in all distress, so that to have a God is nothing else than to trust and believe Him from the whole heart; as I have often said that the confidence and faith of the heart alone make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust be right, then is your god also true; and, on the other hand, if your trust be false and wrong, then you have not the true God; for these two belong together, faith and God” (*Trigl.*, p. 581).

Another passage which will aid us considerably in determining the meaning of **יְהוָה** is Psalm 16:10. It is the well-known passage concerning God’s **יְהוָה**, God’s “Holy One” whom He will not suffer to see corruption. As a Messianic passage it especially merits our study.

The translation of our Authorized Version, “neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption,” goes back word for word to the Septuagint with its οὐδὲ δώσεις τὸν ὅσιόν σου ἰδεῖν διαφθοράν. This rendering is quoted verbatim by the Apostle Paul in his address to the Jews at Antioch (Acts 13:35). The Apostle in this his “word of exhortation” does not only speak of the Messiah as τὸν ὅσιόν σου but also, quoting from the Greek translation of Isaiah 55:3, of τὰ ὅσια Δαυεὶδ τὰ πιστά, of the holy things (of God) promised to David, that can be relied on. In combining these two Messianic passages the Apostle declares the Messiah to be τὸν ὅσιον mediating τὰ ὅσια and then adds: “Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins” (verse 38). According to Romans 11:27, however, forgiveness of sins is the covenant, and vice versa. The **יְהוָה** of Psalm 16:10 is on the strength of His resurrection the mediator of **יְהוָה**

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<sup>33</sup> *In der Gestalt eines hymnischen Bekenntnisses, in dem das Vertrauen des Königs zu Gott and zugleich seine Autorität in der Gottesgemeinde zu Worte kommt, stellt er noch einmal die geheime Ordnung von Gottes Bundestreue, die er an sich selbst erfahren durfte, als allgemeine Wahrheit heraus: Wie der Mensch, so sein Gott! Nicht als ob Gottes Wesen und Gesinnung veränderlich und jeweils von der Haltung des Menschen abhängig wäre. Gott bleibt seinem Wesen treu, aber diese Treue wirkt sich verschieden aus, je nach der Art, wie sich der Mensch zu ihr stellt: Nur in der Liebe zu Gott (dieser Sinn liegt dem Stamme des Wortes für “Fromm” in der Ursprache zugrunde; beachte die Beziehung zu V. 2 u. 51) wird der Fromme der Liebe Gottes zu ihm gewiss; nur in der restlosen Treue der Vollkommenheit der Treue Gottes, and nur der Reine hat Zugang zu Gottes lauterem Wesen; an den “Frommen” erfüllen sich die Verheissungen Gottes. Wer aber verkehrt ist, die Bundesordnungen durchbricht, dem erscheint auch Gott “verkehrt”, eben gerade darin, dass er seine Ordnung gegen den Ungehorsam durchsetzt and sein Gericht vollzieht, dadurch dass er den Sünder der Verkehrtheit seines Wesens überlässt (vgl. Jes. 31, 3; Hi. 5, 13; Röm. 1, 18ff.). (p. 121f.)*

הַנְּאֻמָּנִים (Is. 55:3) or the divine channel through whom remission of sins is conveyed. What better translation of חֲסִיד could be offered than the one which we already have found in the חֲסִיד of Psalm 18:26, the one who is faithful to the covenant, i.e., in case of the Messiah, the Faithful One, who mediates “the favours promised faithfully to David” (Moffatt).

While חֲסִיד applied to man can never have the far-reaching meaning it had in these two foregoing passages, Psalm 18:26 and 16:10, still the question which will constantly be uppermost in our minds is whether or not the translation “faithful” must not be used throughout, even when only applied to man. We must at least agree with Girdlestone that “it is a serious evil that the primary meaning of the Hebrew word should almost have disappeared from the face of modern translations. The practical nature of godliness is thereby to some extent obscured, and the moral demand made upon man by his having become the object of Divine lovingkindness is thrown into the background” (*Synonyms of the Old Testament*, p. 114).

There will hardly be any doubt in our minds as to the appropriateness of “faithful” as a rendering for the חֲסִיד of Psalm 31:23 (24). Here the plural חֲסִידִים is accompanied by the synonym אֱמוּנִים, which has no other meaning than “faithful.” Moffat seems to be the only modern translator who has retained the idea of faithful in both parts of the parallelism of verse 23: “Ah, love the Eternal, all ye faithful; the Eternal will keep faith with you.” In reference to Psalm 12:2, where both words are again used as synonyms, Menge in his translation endeavors to retain the meaning of “faithful” or *treu* in both cases: “*Hilf doch, o Herr! denn dahin sind die Frommen (d. h. Gesetzestreuen) and die Treuen ausgestorben inmitten der Menschheit!*” Only these or similar translations actually retain and set forth the primary meaning of חֲסִיד as applied to man and alone serve to do justice to the other passages containing our word חֲסִיד.

Blessing the tribe of Levi, Moses says: “Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy חֲסִיד, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah (Dt. 33:8). Here Moses is praying for Aaron and the rest of the priests and Levites in conjunction with him that God may continue to make them “faithful.” They were proved and tried by God and stood in the trial, i.e., they approved themselves “faithful” by observing God’s Word and by keeping His covenant (verse 9!) and thus brought Levi into special grace and favor with God, thus made him God’s חֲסִיד. Indeed, the *Patrick Lowth Commentary on the Scriptures* is right in saying “it is not קָדוֹשׁ, but חֲסִיד.” Were it קָדוֹשׁ, the Septuagint with its translation would be correct, as also the Authorized Version with “the Holy One.” But חֲסִיד is used and explained by Moses as the One who was “faithful” to the Word and the Covenant of God. Here as elsewhere חֲסִיד is to be understood as a covenant term and Girdlestone correctly comments on this passage: “The lesson we learn with regard to the word חֲסִיד is that it does not betoken the weak ‘good-nature’ which some call ‘mercy,’ but rather that devotion to God which produces the exercise of true lovingkindness towards man, and which sometimes involves the taking extreme and apparently harsh measures so as to prevent the spread of evil. In this respect man’s mercy is to be like God’s (*ibid.*, p. 114). Where this is the case, there God shows Himself חֲסִיד

toward the **חֲסִיד**, faithful toward the faithful, merciful toward the merciful (Ps. 18:25, 26). It is evident from this Psalm passage that man as the **חֲסִיד** is both the recipient as well as the doer of God's **חֶסֶד**.

In most passages of the Old Testament **חֲסִיד** is used in the passive sense as the recipient of God's **חֶסֶד**. All these passages bear testimony to the manner in which God shows Himself **חֲסִיד** to the **חֲסִיד**. First of all the **חֲסִידִים** are spoken of as God's **חֲסִידִים**. They are His very own, His faithful ones, or to quote from our Authorized Version they are "his saints." Surely, they would not be designated as such, if God had not made them His very own by means of His **חֶסֶד**. In addition to this God preserves the souls of his **חֲסִידִים** (Ps. 97:10) and sets apart him that is **חֲסִיד** for Himself (Ps. 4:3). He gives His special protection to His **חֲסִידִים** (1 Sam. 2:9) and does not forsake them (Ps. 37:28). Yea, precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His **חֲסִידִים** (116:15). They are even summoned as witnesses of God's righteous judgment (50:5, 6). In this latter connection they again are being characterized as such who are in covenant relationship with their God, a covenant relationship which has been consecrated and ratified by a covenant sacrifice. In short, the **חֲסִידִים** are the recipients of the covenant blessings summed up in the **חֶסֶד** of God. They go to make up the true Israel. And when God exalts the horn of His people, then it is to the praise of all His **חֲסִידִים**, of a people near unto Him (148:14). Whether we call them God's "faithful ones" or God's "merciful ones" they are and remain the ones who have received all the blessings of His covenant faithfulness and of His mercy, who have fully experienced the truth that God shows Himself **חֲסִיד** to the **חֲסִיד**. They are, however, also the ones who are doers of His mercy and faithfulness. **חֲסִיד** is also used in the active sense not only when it is applied to God but also when applied to man.

Nowhere in the Old Testament is it stated with so many words that the **חֲסִיד** or the **חֲסִידִים** practiced **חֶסֶד** or that God demanded **חֶסֶד** of them. God desired **חֶסֶד** of all of His people. The **חֲסִידִים**—their name warrants it—were the only ones to fulfil this desire of their God. The very fact that God shows Himself **חֲסִיד** to the **חֲסִיד** (Ps. 18:25) presupposes the practice of **חֶסֶד** on the part of the **חֲסִידִים**.

Still there are passages in the old Testament which tell us precisely what God wants the **חֲסִידִים** to do. The first of these passages will even aid us in ascertaining the meaning of the **חֶסֶד** which God desired of all of His people. "O love the Lord, all ye his **חֲסִידִים**" we read in Psalm 31:23 (24). The **חֲסִידִים** were the ones who could be called upon to "love" the Lord, because the Lord had wondrously shown His **חֶסֶד**, His "steadfast love" to them (verse 21 [22]).



Again in Psalm 97, verse 10 the **יְסִידִים** are spoken of as those “that love the Lord” and that “hate evil.”

Twice the clear statement is made in both of these Psalms that the **יְסִידִים** “love the Lord.” It is the love with which Israel in its youth loved the Lord as His bride. Jeremiah had to remind Jerusalem of this her bridal love by saying: “Thus saith the Lord: I remember for thee the **דֶּסֶד** of thy youth, the **אַהֲבָה** of thy bridal state.” Here **דֶּסֶד** is not only used in parallelism with **אַהֲבָה**, the very word for bridal love (Canticles 2:4, 7), but is being employed by Jeremiah as a term expressive of the pristine love of Israel, the love of its espousals, when as a bride she followed her Lord into the wilderness. Here it becomes quite evident that **דֶּסֶד** must denote both God’s love for Israel and Israel’s love for God, only that in our passage all emphasis is laid on Israel’s love for her God. The **יְסִידִים** are the ones who did not cease to exercise this love for their Lord after He had wondrously shown them His **דֶּסֶד**, His love.

The **יְסִידִים**, however, did not only love their Lord but also their neighbors. According to Psalm 97, verse 10, they showed their love to the Lord by “hating evil,” by having nothing to do with evil dealings against their neighbors, in other words they loved their fellow-men and one another for no other reason than that God had shown **דֶּסֶד**, love and mercy to them. In these two Psalms we have **דֶּסֶד** as the main characteristic of God’s dealings with man and we have **דֶּסֶד** in the express form of “love” as the distinguishing mark of every child of God. It is here that we have the Old Testament wording for the commandment of our Lord given to His disciples: “This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you” (John 15:12). The **יְסִידִים** loved their Lord and loved **דֶּסֶד** (Micah 6:8), i.e. “they loved mercy translated into deeds” and the performance of personal acts of lovingkindness, not only to the poor and needy, but to all their fellow-men.

It is not surprising to hear that this love was often sadly wanting in Israel. When the **יְסִידִים** was perished out of the earth (Micah 7:2) and when the upright among men was no more, then indeed **דֶּסֶד** as an act of lovingkindness was also absent. And all the passages which demand **דֶּסֶד** of God’s people presuppose just such a situation. Not only that they presuppose it but Hosea describes it with so many words: “There is no **אֱמֶת**, nor **דֶּסֶד**, nor **דַּעַת** of God in the land” (4:1). Our Authorized Version has this translation: “There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land.” If we think of truth as fidelity and steadfastness, this translation is adequate. Then we have Luther’s *Treue* and the “faithfulness” of the Revised Standard Version, terms which leave no doubt as to the meaning of the Hebrew word **אֱמֶת**. Mercy for **דֶּסֶד** is a translation which we do not like to lose, if for no other reason than that of its occurrence in Hosea 6:6: “For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice” and its recurrence according to the Septuagint in the New Testament, Matthew 9:13 and 12:7. Luther’s translation of our Hosea

passage, as we have pointed out in a former issue,<sup>34</sup> reads: “*Ich habe Lust an der Liebe and nicht am Opfer,*” while his translation of Matthew adheres to the Greek: “*Ich habe Wohlgefallen an Barmherzigkeit and nicht am Opfer.*” If we had to choose between *Liebe* and *Barmherzigkeit*, between “love” and “mercy” as the equivalents for **דָּוָה**, we would prefer the former, *Liebe* or “love,” since the Hebrew **דָּוָה** in our passages denotes something more active than the German word *Barmherzigkeit* and the English word “mercy.” It means, as has already been stated, “mercy translated into deeds.”<sup>35</sup> Zechariah makes this quite clear when he speaks of “doing” **דָּוָה** and **רַחֲמִים**, love and mercy, or as Menge has it: “*Erweist einer dem andern Liebe und Barmherzigkeit*” (7:9). Certainly, we must differentiate between **דָּוָה** and **רַחֲמִים**, and it cannot be done by translating with the Authorized Version: “Shew mercies and compassions,” or with more modern translations including the Revised Standard Version: “Show kindness and mercy,” but by rendering **דָּוָה** as Kautzsch, Menge, and Ellinger in his commentary on Zechariah, *Das Alte Testament Deutsch*, have done with *Liebe*, “love” and **רַחֲמִים** with *Barmherzigkeit*, *Erbarmen*, “mercy.” Zechariah 7:9 then reads: “Render true judgment, and practice love and mercy each toward his brother.”<sup>36</sup>

In the Old Testament we do not only find mention made of the **דָּוָה** of God’s people, but also of the **מִסְדֵּי** of certain men of God. The **מִסְדֵּי** of God we learned to know as the manifold blessings of His mercy and lovingkindness.<sup>37</sup> The **מִסְדֵּי** of God’s **מִסְדֵּי** are the deeds of loyalty and faithfulness which these men performed for their God. Thus Nehemiah prays that God may not wipe out his **מִסְדֵּי**, his “good deeds” that he had done for the house of his God and for the offices thereof, i.e. for its ministers and worship. Likewise 2 Chronicles 32:32 and 35:26 make special mention of the acts of both Hezekiah and of Josiah and of their **מִסְדֵּי**. These “good deeds” were the great works of reform that these two kings had instituted for the house of their God, for the reorganizing of its religious service and the suppressing of idolatrous worship.

But all work of repairing and adorning the Temple was no guarantee of a God-pleasing worship. In the last analysis God’s praises were nowhere else to be found, even in the Old Testament Dispensation, save in the congregation of the **מִסְדֵּי** (Ps. 149:1). They were the ones who were joyful in glory (verse 5) and in whose mouth the high praises of God were to be found (verse 6). They were called upon to sing unto the Lord (Ps. 30:4), for they professed to have had

<sup>34</sup> *Quartalschrift*, July 1953, p. 184f.

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in *The Twelve Prophets* by The Rev. Dr. A. Cohen, The Soncino Press, 1948, p. 181. Here the above distinction is also drawn by the author between **דָּוָה** and “mercy.”

<sup>36</sup> It is disappointing that Luther in this case translates **דָּוָה** with *Güte* and not with *Liebe* as he had done in four preceding parallel passages, Micah 6:8 and Hosea 10:2; 6:6; 4:2. Still we must not overlook the fact that in a fifth parallel passage, Hosea 12:7, Luther also did not use *Liebe* as a rendering of **דָּוָה**, but retained the translation

*Barmherzigkeit*, which was his first rendering of **דָּוָה**.

<sup>37</sup> *Quartalschrift*, January 1954, p. 45, cf. Footnote 6.

the wonderful experience of God having brought their soul from the grave, of having kept them alive (verse 3), of having forgiven the iniquity of their sin (Ps. 32:5). Concerning them the Psalmist can give his people the assurance that “they will shout for joy” (Ps. 132:9), yea, that “they shall shout aloud for joy” (verse 16). And as God exalts His people to the praise of His יְהוָה, thus His יְהוָה shall bless or praise their God (Ps. 145:10). They will do this not only in the congregation gathered in the Temple, not only in the dance with the timbrell and harp (Ps. 149:3), but also “upon their beds” (verse 5), where they had poured forth their complaints as the “afflicted ones.” But when God had adorned them with salvation (verse 4), then their tears turned into shouts of joy, then they kept their promise that they would give their God thanks forever, that they would show forth His praise to all generations” (Ps. 79:13).

Truly to evaluate these praises of the יְהוָה it must be called to mind that when the heathen had defiled God’s holy temple, the יְהוָה were the ones whose flesh was given to be meat unto the beasts of the earth and the fowls of the heaven (Ps. 79:2). But when God had delivered His people and restored the temple worship, then these very יְהוָה were not only to have the high praise of God in their mouth, but also a two-edged sword in their hand to execute “vengeance” and the “written judgment” upon the heathen (Ps. 149:6, 9). It was a glorious work, a splendid thing that their God had given them to do in this victory that they were celebrating,<sup>38</sup> and as the reverse of God’s deliverance of His people, it did not only serve to the honor and glory of their God, but this execution of His judgment was a signal honor which God bestowed upon His יְהוָה. Therefore the last Psalm but one of the Psalter closes, with a reference to this honor and glory of the יְהוָה: “To execute the judgment written is glory for all His יְהוָה.”

#### IV

#### דָּקָה AND χάρις

In the course of our study of the Old Testament term דָּקָה, we were often confronted with the question: What use does the New Testament make of דָּקָה, of דָּקָה as a term and as a concept? Does it quote Old Testament passages in which דָּקָה plays a leading role? Has דָּקָה as a covenant term been taken over into the New Testament by means of some Greek equivalent? Finally, does the meaning of faithfulness, steadfastness, which we have found in דָּקָה, especially in reference to God, find expression in the New Testament?

##### A. דָּקָה in the New Testament

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *The International Critical Commentary, Psalms II*, by Briggs, p. 543.

In looking for the references in which **רַחֲמִים** plays a leading role, we may presuppose that the New Testament has taken over one or more of the seven renderings which the Septuagint has chosen as equivalents for **רַחֲמִים**.<sup>39</sup> Again we may assume that *ἔλεος*, which is used 135 times by the Septuagint, will be found most often in the New Testament references. The same, even in a lesser degree, can be said of *ἐλεημοσύνη*. *Οἰκτεῖρημα* does not occur at all in the vocabulary of the New Testament.<sup>40</sup> *Ἐλπίς* used ordinarily by the Septuagint for **אֱמוּנָה**, “trust,” has apparently so little in common with **רַחֲמִים** that we do not look for it at all in the New Testament as an equivalent of our Hebrew term. The passages in which the Septuagint has rendered **רַחֲמִים** by *δικαιοσύνη* are not quoted in the New Testament. *Δόξα* is only used once by the Septuagint for **רַחֲמִים** in the well-known passage Isaiah 40:6, and is quoted by Peter in verse 24 of his first Epistle. There still remains *χάρις* as the seventh rendering, used only three times by the Septuagint as a translation of **רַחֲמִים** in passages which are not quoted by the New Testament.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, *χάρις* was to play such a commanding role in the New Testament that we can truly say that it has taken the place of **רַחֲמִים**. Yet *ἔλεος* and *ἐλεημοσύνη* are the two words which we shall meet with in the New Testament references as Greek equivalents of **רַחֲמִים**, and these we first of all want to study in their respective contexts.

We will naturally want to begin with those references which in their original setting proclaim the **רַחֲמִים** of God, as we have learned to know it in so many Old Testament contexts. It will not be difficult for us to designate the New Testament chapter in which we have these references. It is in the first chapter of Luke with its Magnificat and with Zechariah’s hymn of praise, in which the Lord’s **רַחֲמִים**, His *ἔλεος*, “mercy,” is being magnified. Psalm 103 is the first Psalm to be quoted in the Magnificat, in which the Psalmist tells us how “great (**גָּבַר**) God’s **רַחֲמִים** is toward them that fear Him” (11) and that “the **רַחֲמִים** of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him” (17). These are the words that Mary quoted when she said: “And his mercy (*τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ*) is on them that fear him from generation to generation” (Luke 1:50). They are followed by a quotation from Psalm 98:3, in which the Psalmist sings of the marvellous things that God has done, that “He has remembered His **רַחֲמִים** and **חַסְדֵּי** toward the house of Israel.” In verse 54 of the Magnificat these words read: “He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy (*μνησθῆναι ἐλέους*).” Zecharias likewise magnifies the mercy of God in his hymn of praise in that he sings of the mercy which the Lord was to “perform”

<sup>39</sup> These with the exception of *χάρις* are listed on page 183 of the July 1953 issue of the *Quartalschrift*.

<sup>40</sup> The New Testament uses *οἰκτιρμός*, the Septuagint rendering of **רַחֲמִים**, compassion, instead.

<sup>41</sup> All three passages are found in the second chapter of Esther, verses 9, 15, and 17, and inform the reader that Esther found favor, **רַחֲמִים**, *χάρις* in the sight of king Artaxerxes.

(ποιῆσαι ἔλεος) to the fathers (72). This is the well-known Hebrew phrase **הַשִּׁיב רַחֲמֶיךָ** (Ps. 18:51), which the Septuagint already had translated with *ποιῶν ἔλεος* (50). Luke, however, does not only use this phrase but also the one for “magnifying the mercy” of God. In verse 58 he speaks of God “magnifying His mercy” toward Elizabeth, which is the expression used by Lot when he said to the Angel of the Lord: “Behold now, thy servant hath found grace in thy sight, and thou hast magnified thy mercy (**הִתְרַחֵם לְיָגִי**), which thou hast shewed unto me in saving my life” (Gen. 19:19). The Septuagint has translated this phrase with *καὶ ἐμεγάλυνας τὴν δικαιοσύνην σου*, while Luke has *ἐμεγάλυνε κύριος τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ*.

We can truly say that Luke has made ample use of the **רַחֲמֶיךָ** of God in the first chapter of his Gospel, reaching a climax in verse 78, where he speaks of *σπλάγχνα ἐλέους θεοῦ ἡμῶν*, and where he combines **מִמְּנֵהוּ**, bowels, fig. compassion, and **רַחֲמֶיךָ** with one another. This is not a direct quotation from the Septuagint, still less from the Old Testament, although the former associates the two words with one another, in a negative manner by referring in Proverbs 12:10 to *τὰ σπλάγχνα τῶν ἀσεβῶν*, “the bowels of the ungodly,” as being “unmerciful” (*ἀνελεήμονα*), and in a positive manner by saying of him that he has compassion (*ἐπισπλαγχνιζόμενος*), that he shall find mercy (*ἐλεηθήσεται*). Our Authorized Version, as we already have pointed out, seconded by Moffatt and the Revised Standard Version, renders *σπλάγχνα ἐλέους* with “tender mercy;” An American Translation with “the heart of our God is merciful.”

Next in importance are those Old Testament passages in the New Testament in which God demands **רַחֲמֶיךָ** of His people. The best known of these is the one in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7 with its *ἔλεος θέλω*, I will have mercy, taken over from Hosea 6:6 with its **יִתְצַפֵּן רַחֲמֶיךָ**, I desired mercy. This is the mercy that the Samaritan showed on him who fell among thieves (Luke 10:37). When the lawyer answered the Lord’s question which of the three was his neighbor by saying: “He that shewed mercy on him,” he made use of a very common Hebrew phrase which the Septuagint rendered (Gen. 24:12; Judg. 1:24) as spoken by the lawyer: *ὁ ποιήσας τὸ ἔλεος μετ’ αὐτοῦ*. James in verse 13 of the second chapter of his Epistle employs this phrase in a shortened negative form, in saying: “For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy (*μὴ ποιήσαντι ἔλεος*).”

Both groups of New Testament quotations, those that employ the **רַחֲמֶיךָ** of God and those that speak of the **רַחֲמֶיךָ** of men, can be subsumed under the Word of our Lord: “Be ye therefore

merciful, as your Father also is merciful” (Luke 6:36),<sup>42</sup> and again: “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Mt. 5:7).<sup>43</sup>

There is a third group of Old Testament quotations in the New Testament which revolve round about **רַחֲמִים** as the *ἐλεημοσύνη* of the Septuagint. Here again we have in the original the simple Hebrew phrase **הַשִּׁעַר רַחֲמִים** (Gen. 47:29), translated by the Septuagint with *ποιεῖν ἐλεημοσύνην* and really meaning to practice the virtue of mercy, as Jacob, for instance, requested it of his son Joseph (*ibid.*). Our Authorized Version as also the Revised Standard Version translate this phrase with “do alms,” since mercy was exhibited in the giving of alms (Thayer). Both Matthew (6:1, 2, 3, 4) and Luke (Acts 10:2; 24:17) give it this meaning, since Luke does not only use the plural form *ἐλεημοσύναι*, alms, *Almosen*, (Acts 10:2; 24:17), but also speaks of “giving,” “asking,” and “receiving” alms (Lk. 11:41; Acts 3:2, 3). Still the term *ἐλεημοσύνη* should always remind the reader that the doing and giving of alms is nothing less than an act of mercy, is mercy itself. When Proverbs (3:3), therefore, admonishes not to let **רַחֲמִים** and **תְּמִנָּה** forsake one, the Septuagint renders **רַחֲמִים** by *ἐλεημοσύναι* mercy. And when Solomon then continues to say that one who binds mercy and truth about his neck shall receive favor, then we are again reminded of the Word of our Lord: “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Mt. 5:7).

The fact that *ἔλεος* plays such a leading role in the New Testament references to Old Testament passages with **רַחֲמִים** as their main member tempts one to conclude that *ἔλεος* will be the Greek term to take the place of **רַחֲמִים** in the New Testament. This, however, is not the case. *Ἐλεος* is, of course, used by New Testament writers, even when they are not quoting directly from the Old Testament. The Apostle Paul employs it 12 times in his Epistles, including Hebrews 4:16. Once he even mentions *ἔλεος* as the cause of praise on the part of the Gentiles: “That the Gentiles’ might glorify God for *his* mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name” (Ps. 18:49). The reason for David’s praise among the Gentiles was that God had shown Himself merciful to him (**רַחֲמֵיךָ**, verse 25 [26]) and that He was showing mercy (**רַחֲמִים**) to him and to his seed forevermore (50 [51]). In that David praised God’s **רַחֲמִים** among the Gentiles, the heathen were to be converted and also were to glorify God for His **רַחֲמִים** (Rom. 15:9).<sup>44</sup> According to the Apostle this was to be accomplished

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<sup>42</sup> It is here that we find *οἰκτίρμων*, used by the Septuagint for **רַחֲמִים**, compassionate. Thayer tells us in his Greek-English Lexicon that *οἰκτίρμων* “denotes the inward feeling of compassion which abides in the heart” (p. 203).

<sup>43</sup> Matthew has *ἐλεεῖν* in both instances, which the Septuagint employed most frequently for **רַחֲמֵיךָ**, to be gracious, also for **רַחֲמֵיךָ**, to have mercy; several times for **לִמְנוּחָיִךָ**, to spare, and **לְנַחֵם**, to console (*ibid.*).

<sup>44</sup> Nowhere in the Old Testament are we told with so many words that the heathen are to glorify God for His **רַחֲמִים** or to praise God’s **רַחֲמִים**. Apart from Psalm 18:49 the Apostle quotes Dt. 32:43, where the nations are exhorted to

by Jesus Christ as “a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers” (15:8). The praising of God’s **ἔλεος** on the part of the Gentiles was, the Apostle wants to convince his readers, the confirmation of the promises made unto the fathers. Luke in Zechariah’s hymn of praise spoke of the Lord God of Israel redeeming His people “to perform the mercy promised to our fathers” (1:72). The *Βεβαιῶσαι τὰς ἐπαγγελίας τῶν πατέρων* of Romans 15:8 and the *ποιῆσαι ἔλεος μετὰ τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν* of Luke 1:72 have one and the same meaning. The promises made unto the fathers are the mercy promised to the fathers. Thus both inspired New Testament writers magnify **ἔλεος** in like measure in that they speak of the God in Christ who has fulfilled His promises and has magnified His mercy. The Apostle Paul lays special emphasis on the fact that God has done this toward Jew and Greek alike. For the *σκεύη ἐλέους* mentioned in Romans 9:23, the vessels of mercy, which God has prepared unto glory, He has called not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles (9:24), both being the recipients of God’s *ἔλεος* (11:30-32). Therefore both Jews and Greeks have every reason to praise the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is rich in mercy, *πλούσιος ὢν ἐν ἐλέει* (Eph. 2:4), who according to his mercy, *κατὰ τὸ αὐτοῦ ἔλεος*, has saved us (Tit. 3:5) and according to his abundant mercy, *κατὰ τὸ πολὺ αὐτοῦ ἔλεος*, has begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead (1 Pet. 1:3). As such new-born children of God we are looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, *τὸ ἔλεος τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*, unto eternal life (Jude 21). Can it take us by surprise that the *ἔλεος*, which is thus being magnified by inspired writers of the New Testament, is not wanting in the Apostolic blessing (1 and 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4), and even heads the list of blessings as worded by Jude: *ἔλεος ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη καὶ ἀγάπη* (2)? In view of this “mercy” the Apostle Paul sings his great hymn of praise to the glory of God (Rom. 11:33-36); who concluded both Jew and Gentile in unbelief *ἵνα τοὺς πάντα ἐλέησῃ*, that he might have mercy upon all (v. 32).

### ***B. χάρις in the New Testament***

Although **ἔλεος** has found entrance into the New Testament by way of the *ἔλεος* of the Septuagint in both direct and indirect quotations, still it did not become the prevailing expression of the New Testament for God’s great love for His people. *Χάρις*, which is regularly used by the Septuagint as a rendering for **יְהוָה** and not for **ἔλεος**, has superseded it. This does not imply that *χάρις* has no associations whatsoever with **ἔλεος**. The fact that the Seventy in their translation of the Old Testament used it but three times (Esther 2:9, 15, 17) as a rendering, not of the **ἔλεος** of God, but only of the **ἔλεος** of a king, does not give much occasion to gain a proper insight into the

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rejoice with God’s people (Rom. 15:10) and Psalm 117:1 where they are encouraged to “praise the Lord” (Rom. 15:11). That they are to praise God for His **ἔλεος** is stated in Romans only and therefore deserves our every attention.

associations which link **ἔλεος** and **χάρις** together. The use, however, which the Seventy made of **χάρις** in the apocryphal book of Jesus Sirach gives one a better opportunity of gaining such an insight. There it is where **χάρις** is not only used as a “favor” or “kindness” rendered by man to man (3:31; 7:33; 40:17), but as a “favor” which he who is “godfearing” (1:13) and who practices “humility” (3:18) finds with his God. In this case **χάρις** is used as a synonym of **εὖ εἶναι**, “well-being” (1:13), and even of **δόξα**, “glory” (4:21). Still it must be said that in the majority of the cases Jesus Sirach gives **ἔλεος** the preference when speaking of God’s relationship to His people. It is then that he glories in the mercy (**ἔλεος**) according to which God deals with His people (50:22) and with which God makes His people glad (35:19). He also glories in the greatness of God’s mercy whereby he himself was delivered from his numerous troubles (51:3). But in none of these instances does he use **χάρις**, not even together with **ἔλεος**. It is Symmachus, who in his Greek Version, as C. H. Dodd in “the Bible and the Greeks” informs us, uses **χάρις** as the preferred rendering of **ἔλεος**. “We may infer,” our authority tells us on page 61, “that the rendering **χάρις** was growing in popularity. In the New Testament period **χάρις** would be felt to have a close relation with **ἔλεος**, and it is evident that the associations of that word have had influence in moulding the characteristic New Testament use of **χάρις** which is different from any ordinary Greek use, and not quite identical with the Septuagintal **χάρις ἰσ**.” This being the case we are justified in seeing in **χάρις** something of the influence, if not of the meaning of **ἔλεος**. Since the Seventy, however, ordinarily used **χάρις** for **ἰσ**, we must inquire into the Septuagintal meaning of our word.

**ἰσ**, derived from the stem **ἰσν**, has its own very definite meaning over against **ἔλεος**, as has already been pointed out.<sup>45</sup> While **ἔλεος** is essentially a covenant word, **ἰσ** is essentially not a covenant word. Both can stand for kindness, mercy, forbearance, but the first in cases where there is a definite bond between the two parties, and the second in cases where there is not such a bond. Our Authorized Version has distinguished between both words by translating **ἔλεος** with “mercy” and **ἰσ** with “grace” or “favor.” Luther has likewise rendered **ἰσ** in the majority of cases by means of *Gnade*, although he also used *Gnade* for **ἔλεος** no less than fifty times. Girdlestone in his *Synonyms of the Old Testament* has given us a very good definition of “grace” as the English equivalent of **χάρις** or **ἰσ**. We are therefore quoting him here at length: “Grace is the free bestowal of kindness on one who has neither claim upon our bounty, nor adequate compensation to make for it. ... The adjectival form, *channun* (**ἰσν**), gracious, is used only of God, and denotes the action which springs from His free and unmerited love to His creatures. ... The Greek **χάρις** and the English ‘grace’ or ‘favour,’ well represent the word, only we have to be

<sup>45</sup> *Quartalschrift*, October 1953, p. 257.



on our guard against the supposition that *grace* is an abstract quality; it is an active personal principle, showing itself in our dealings with those by whom we are surrounded. ... An act done with any expectation of a return from the object on which it is wrought, or one which is meted out as a matter of justice, recompense, or reward, is not an act of grace. ... In the great proportion of passages in which the word grace is found in the N. T., it signifies the unmerited operation of God in the heart of man, effected through the agency of the Holy Spirit. We have gradually come to speak of grace as an inherent quality in man, just as we talk of gifts; whereas it is in reality the communication of Divine goodness by the inworking of the Spirit, and through the medium of Him who is 'full of grace and truth' " (p. 107f.).

Why, we may now ask, was such a preference shown for *χάρις* in comparison with *ἔλεος* by the inspired New Testament writers? While the final answer can never be given, since it behoved the Holy Spirit according to his infinite wisdom to move the sacred writers to give this preference to *χάρις*, still certain reasons for the preponderance of *χάρις* can be discerned.

We must constantly keep in mind that the *ἔλεος* of the Old Testament was God's *ἔλεος* for Israel and that throughout the whole Old Testament it was confined to the people of His choice, to the historic Israel. *ἔλεος* was never used in the Old Testament, as we already have observed,<sup>46</sup> in reference to the heathen. It simply was a covenant term and as such it was applied to God's covenant people only. In the New Testament period, however, the historic Israel was no longer God's covenant people. The Jewish nation representing historic Israel had forfeited its inheritance of the blessings promised to Abraham. There were Jewish objectors at the time of the Apostles and there are such objectors today, even in Christian churches, who hold that God is bound by His promise to Abraham to save Israel as a corporate whole, whatever the attitude and behavior of individual Israelites might be. We know, however, what the answer of the Scriptures is, especially in Romans 9 to 11. Israel does not mean everyone who belongs to Israel; they are not all children of Abraham because they are descendants from Abraham. It is in Isaac that the word of promise was fulfilled. And although the sons of Isaac, Jacob and Esau, were twins, yet one was rejected, the other chosen. "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" to confirm the divine purpose in election, which depends on the mercy of God, not on anything a man does. To Moses God said: I will have mercy (*ἐλεήσω*) on whom I will have mercy (*ἐλεῶ*), and will have compassion (*οἰκτερήσω*) on whom I will have compassion (*οἰκτείρω*), Romans 9:15. —No, God has not cast away His people (11:1). Already the Psalmist had said: "The Lord will not cast off His people, neither will He forsake His inheritance" (Ps. 94:14), and the Apostle reaffirms this with the words of the Greek Version: *οὐκ ἀπόσατο ὁ θεὸς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ὃν προέγνω*, God has not cast away His people, which he foreknew (Rom. 11:2). For even at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace (*ἐκλογὴν χάριτος*), and if by grace then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no grace, (*ἐπεὶ ἡ χάρις οὐκέτι γίνεται χάρις*). It is here where the Apostle uses *χάρις* and *χάρις* only. It is the Septuagint equivalent for the Hebrew *then*, the free gift of God's favor and love, depending only upon God's Will and His Election-Love.

We can only say that *χάρις* is a very fitting word for this election-love of God, since the Hebrew *יָדָה*, for which it stands in the Old Testament, is always the attitude of a superior to an

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<sup>46</sup> *Quartalschrift*, July 1954, p. 171.

inferior. There is not the slightest obligation on the part of the superior to show this  $\text{יְהוָה}$ . It is all of his generosity. Of course, in the realm of God's love the two words  $\text{רַחֲמֵי$  and  $\text{יְהוָה}$  approach each other. When the Lord passed by before Moses He proclaimed: "The Lord, the Lord God  $\text{יְהוָה}$   $\text{יְהוָה}$ , merciful and gracious,  $\text{יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ}$ , longsuffering,  $\text{יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ}$ , and abundant in goodness and truth (Ex. 34:6).<sup>47</sup> However, where the Lord says to Moses: "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy" (33:19), we only find  $\text{יְהוָה}$  and  $\text{יְהוָה}$  used, not  $\text{רַחֲמֵי}$ . In view of this how readily will not the Septuagintal equivalent  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$  have suggested itself to the Apostle, when he spoke of the election-love of God for the remnant. And since  $\text{יְהוָה}$  is so often coupled with  $\text{יְהוָה}$ , it is not at all surprising that the Apostle couples  $\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$  with  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$ . Thus for instance in Hebrews 4:16: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace ( $\tau\acute{\omega}$  θρόνῳ τῆς χάριτος), that we may obtain mercy ( $\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\omicron\nu$ ) and find grace ( $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\nu$ ) to help in time of need.  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$ , of course, always precedes  $\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ , even as  $\text{יְהוָה}$  precedes  $\text{יְהוָה}$ , or for that matter  $\text{רַחֲמֵי}$  precedes  $\text{יְהוָה}$ . The former,  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$ , is the deep-seated sentiment of God toward the ill-deserving, while the latter,  $\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ , is  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$  in operation. Therefore both are fittingly used together in the Apostolic blessing:  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$ ,  $\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ ,  $\epsilon\iota\rho\eta\eta\eta$ ,  $\acute{\alpha}\pi\omicron$  θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν (2 Tim. 1:2). Yet when the Apostle speaks of the election-love of God alone, he then only uses  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$ .

But here mention has to be made of the other word which the Apostle uses interchangeably with  $\chi\acute{\alpha}\rho\iota\varsigma$ , namely of  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\acute{\alpha}\pi\eta$ . We do not have only the Old Testament term  $\text{יְהוָה}$  for God's unconditioned love, but also<sup>48</sup>  $\text{יְהוָה}$ . And this word is really the Old Testament term for God's election-love.<sup>49</sup> It is the  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\acute{\alpha}\pi\eta$  of the Septuagint<sup>50</sup> and the  $\acute{\alpha}\gamma\acute{\alpha}\pi\eta$  of the New

<sup>47</sup> "Goodness and truth" is a weak rendering compared with the "steadfast love and faithfulness" of the Revised Standard Version. The whole passage in the Revised Standard Version reads: "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness."

<sup>48</sup>  $\text{יְהוָה}$  as a noun is applied only twice to God's people as a whole, once in Exodus 33:16, where Moses speaks of himself and of God's people as having found grace in His sight, and then in Jeremiah 31:2, where God speaks of His people who "were left of the sword" as having "found grace in the wilderness." In Ezra 9:8  $\text{יְהוָה}$  also derived from  $\text{יְהוָה}$  and likewise having the meaning of "grace," is expressly used for the election-love of God, whereby He has left His people "a remnant to escape."  $\text{יְהוָה}$  as a noun is used eight times of God's love for His people, while the verb, as Snaith has it, is used thirty-two times of God's love.

<sup>49</sup> "Even in non-religious contexts," Snaith tells us, "the root 'h-b is used in the sense of 'choose'." In the passage quoted above: "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated," both verbs are to be understood in view of God's election, the root  $\text{יְהוָה}$  used in the sense of "chose," while  $\text{יְהוָה}$ , hate, is used in the sense of "not preferred." The former meaning "is the sense," Snaith remarks, "in which the origin of the Covenant is due to Jehovah's 'ahabah (election-love). He loved Israel—that is, He preferred her before all other peoples. She is His elected people" (p. 134).

Testament, occurring frequently in the writings of the Apostles. It always involves predestination, Paul quoting the Old Testament passages Malachi 1:2, 3 and Hosea 2:23 concerning God's unconditioned sovereignty in loving and hating, choosing and rejecting, (Rom. 9:13, 25) and using ἀγαπητοί and κλητοί, ἐκλεκτοί and ἡγαπημένοι in formal parallelism (Rom. 1:7; Col. 3:12). These ἀγαπητοί and κλητοί stand in unspeakable fellowship with the God of love and peace. Nothing can separate us from this love (Rom. 8:35), the love of Christ, on the contrary "the God of love and peace shall be with you" (2 Cor. 13:11). Thus God by this His love in action has created a people for Himself which He has promised since Abraham's days, a people free from the curse of the Law and set free for the highest form of activity, an activity in love, in a love that never faileth (1 Cor. 13:8).

Because God thus abides by His promises, He is called "faithful" in both the Old and the New Testament. We but have to remind ourselves that God in the Old Testament told His people that He is **יְהוָה** (Jerem. 3:13), that He will show Himself **יְהוָה** (Ps. 18:26), and that His Messiah is **יְהוָה** (Ps. 16:10). In the New Testament God and Christ are designated as πιστός. "But God is πιστός" the Apostle says 2 Cor. 1:18. Again in 1 Cor. 1:9 we hear him say: "God is πιστός, by whom we are called into the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." Again in 1 Thess. 5:24 we read: "πιστός is he that calleth you, who also will do it." The Lord Jesus Christ is also spoken of as πιστός: "But the Lord is πιστός, who shall stablish you, and keep you from evil" (2 Thess. 3:3). And finally it is the Lord who shall appear at the last day as one who is πιστός and ἀληθινός, "Faithful and True" (Rev. 19:11). Indeed, both **יְהוָה** and πιστός have one and the same meaning, "faithful." In the Old Testament God is called **יְהוָה**, faithful, because of His **דְּבָרָה**, which is His faithful and steadfast love. In the New Testament God is called πιστός because He is "faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9), which is the new covenant love as already prophesied by Jeremiah (31:34). Both the Old and the New Testament testify to one and the same love of God, whether the one speaks of "the love of the Lord toward the children of Israel" (Hos. 3:1), or the other of the "great love wherewith he loved us" (Eph. 2:4). It is always the love of that God who is "faithful" and who is "steadfast for ever" (Dan. 6:26). No less does His love show itself in faithfulness and steadfastness, a faithfulness and steadfastness "that never faileth." And this is, as we have endeavored to show, the characteristic significance of the Old Testament covenant term **דְּבָרָה**, the influence of which extends into the New Testament, where it is given back as an echo in χάρις and πιστός.

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<sup>50</sup> According to Snaith it is Moulton who has pointed out that ἀγάπη "is not found before Septuagint, though *agapao* and its derivations are common enough in Greek of all periods" (p. 173). It is surprising enough to find the Concordance of the Septuagint list ἀγάπη but sixteen times, while **הַבְּרִיָּה** occurs thirty-seven times. Seven times, however, it is represented, as Snaith informs us, by the classical ἀγάπησις and once by the verb ἀγαπάω (p. 174).