

Exod 04-10-17b

We pick up our study now in Exodus chapter 34. We are looking at what God says about Himself. What are His most prominent attributes? When He declares His own name, what does He say? And we have seen these beautiful Hebrew words.

He says, Yahweh, Yahweh, El Rachum V'Chanun. The Lord, the Lord. The God, merciful and gracious.

Erek, E-R-E-K. And that is the word that means enduring. Something that has length.

It has the idea of perspective. You look down a distance. It's real hard to transmit into English.

But I think the use of the word in Ecclesiastes is helpful. It is better to be long in spirit than to be tall in spirit. The next word we have here is Apayim.

A-P-A-Y-I-M. And this is from the word Af, A-P-H. And you can tell that it is a dual form.

It has the Ayim like Shemayim or Mayim or Elohim. The I-M ending indicates a plurality. Technically it is a dual.

It means that there are two of something. But it comes to mean a plenitude. This is sort of like the plural of majesty.

Something that is so big and important that you can't just contain it in a singular. That's why it is used of the sea and the sky and God. Those are large, almost an infinitude.

Especially to the ancient mind. The sky is infinite. The sea is infinite.

God is infinite. So when you have Af here, we have right after Erek, which is long. Then you have Af as a word for emphasis.

It can mean even or... Again, this is a particle that is somewhat difficult to render into English. I mean you can say also or even, but it doesn't really carry the weight. Especially when it is in the dual.

This is a magnifying term. It is an emphatic word. So the Lord, the Lord, the God, merciful and gracious, enduring or long-suffering, and then Apayim.

It is the last word in that line in the Hebrew text. So you might say, and even more long-suffering. He is merciful and gracious and evermore or even more.

Or those two characteristics of mercy and grace are enduring, even more. The lengthening word here is magnified. It is almost impossible to bring over.

That is why I am giving you the Hebrew. So if you have Yahweh, Yahweh on one line. And then

you have El, Rachum V'chanun.

Then we have Erek, Apayim. Enduring, even so, even more. Also, also enduring.

It is not just that he is merciful. We have fair weather friends. They are merciful and gracious today.

And tomorrow they don't even give you a second look. Mercy and grace are valuable in their enduring form, in their lasting nature. We have the term fair weather friend in our language.

None more so than in politics where you have fair weather supporters and fair weather friends. And they will support you and encourage you and endorse you until it is no longer politically expedient. Or until you find some fault or some flaw.

Then someone turns against you and who used to be a friend is now a bitter enemy. So this Apayim is no small thing. This came from the mouth of God.

Merciful and gracious and also enduring. These characteristics last. That is our first little complex of attributes.

God's mercy and God's grace and God's long suffering are in view. The reason we know there is a break is we now have another use of the conjunction waw, which is the single letter waw or vav. It is just a stroke.

It looks like a shepherd's cane or a shepherd's staff. It's got a little wide spot at the top and then it's a straight vertical stroke. And it says vav hesed vaemet.

Vav, this is and. Vav is the word that means many or multiplied. It has the idea of numerical magnitude.

It was used from its derivation in the old Semitic languages. It came down. You remember there's the Rav Shaka who comes down and is attacking the northern kingdom there.

The Rav Shaka. Well, Rav is the first part of his name and it means the mighty or the numerous, the great one. It's not unlike calling God the Lord of hosts, the Lord of many, the Lord of multitudes.

Rav, multiplied, great, many. And then it has hesed vaemet. Hesed you should be familiar with.

This is probably best described in English as loyal love, loyalty, showing mercy. But it's a particular kind of loyal love because we are to have loyal love to God, right? Love the Lord your God with all your heart. Be loyal to him.

Don't be a fickle follower today and an abandoner tomorrow. But it is seldom, if ever, that you find humans expressing hesed toward God. Because it has a direction from those with an advantage to those with a disadvantage.

Those who have to those who have not. Those who are doing okay to those who are in some sort of need. You fill a need with hesed.

Someone has got a problem and you are able to help them and fix it. This is the kind of loyal love that hesed represents. So this phrase we might say and abounding in as they do in the New King James.

Abounding in goodness and truth. But when you look at your New King James it says goodness. You might think well this is some form of tov.

But it's not, it's hesed. I want to talk just a little bit about hesed. Because this is going to occur again in verse 7. There are a couple of different ideas about hesed.

In the newer Hebrew and Aramaic lexicon of the Old Testament, the first definition is expressing a joint obligation between friends and relatives. Hesed is sort of your obligatory familial love. Your well he's not heavy, he's my brother kind of thing.

There is this solidarity or loyalty or closeness that is derived from your family or your close friend relationship. And that is what comes in hesed. You find this idea at least supported by passages like Genesis 24.

Remember this is the servant of Abraham who goes up to find a wife for Isaac. Goes up to the household of Laban. And blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham, he says, this servant says, who has not forsaken his mercy and his truth toward my master.

As for me, being on the way, the Lord led me to the house of my master's brethren. Remember he comes across Rebekah at the well and the whole thing takes place. Blessed be the Lord God of my master Abraham who has not forsaken his, and then we have these two things, his hesed and his emeth.

Remember this is hundreds of years before Moses and before the declaration on Sinai by God about himself. And yet the servant uses the very same terms. God has not forsaken his hesed and his emeth toward my master.

You find that same idea repeated 22 verses later in 24 49. Now if you will deal kindly and truly with my master, tell me. And if not, tell me that I may turn to the right hand or to the left.

So the servant is talking once again to the household of Rebekah. And he says, now if you will deal in hesed and in truth with my master, why can they deal kindly and truly with Abraham? They are in the advantaged position. They are the ones who have control over Rebekah and can make the decision whether or not to allow her to marry Isaac.

And so God has not forsaken his loving kindness and his truth toward Abraham. And so now the servant appeals to the Laban and Bethuel crowd. You deal kindly with him also because you are also in the position to provide and to grant something to him.

So that's the idea there. Psalm 89 25 God says in verse 20 of Psalm 89, I have found my servant David with my holy oil, I have anointed him. We have been found by God.

We have been anointed with God the Holy Spirit. With whom my hand shall be established, also my arm shall strengthen him. We face challenges.

Where do we get our strength? I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness, God says. My arm shall strengthen him, Psalm 89 21. The enemy shall not outwit him.

Have you ever been outwitted? I have. Sometimes I think in the battle of wits I show up as an unarmed man. I get there and I just reach for the scabbard and there is no sword there.

The enemy shall not outwit him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him. Now this is a great thing to not be outmaneuvered and not be afflicted by people who are operating in wickedness. God says I will beat down his foes before his face and plague those who hate him.

Well, without trying to encourage any sort of vindictive, vengeful type of satisfaction, it is a comfort to know that God will deal with our enemies. I will beat down his foes before his face and plague those who hate him. But, verse 24, my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him and in my name his horn shall be exalted.

My faithfulness, emunah, and my mercy, kesed, loyal love, shall be with him. And in my name, what is God crying out before Moses? His name. God says in my name his horn shall be exalted.

What does the horn represent? The horns of an ox, the horns of the altar. These are symbols of strength. These are immovable objects with which you have to contend.

It symbolizes strength. His strength shall be exalted in my name. I will set his hand over the sea, his right hand over the rivers.

He shall cry to me, you are my father, my God, and the rock of my salvation. Also I will make him my firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. And, of course, this is foreshadowing the coming of the Lord Jesus himself.

Who has their hand set over the sea? Who can control the troubled sea whose waters cannot rest and casts up mire and dirt? Only God. Who is going to calm the troubled sea while the disciples are out there in the boat? What manner of man is this that even the wind and the sea obey him? Jesus says, all that you have seen me do you will do and more. Greater things than these through faith.

We have the troubled sea. We have the storms of life. And we do not have the wherewithal.

We are not smart enough. We don't have the wit. We don't have the strategy.

We don't have the master plan. We don't have the secret key to unlock the solution to a lot of

things that come our way. But God will beat down our foes.

God will plague those who are operating in hate. In his name our horn will be exalted. We partake of those things that belong to Christ.

God gives them to us through Christ. And that's one of the promises. Well, that is hesed.

It is faithfulness to someone who is at a disadvantage. It is the ability to do good to someone who needs it. In Joshua chapter 2 you have the story of Rahab caring for the spies.

Now therefore I beg you, swear to me by the Lord since I have shown you kindness, that you also will show kindness to my father's house and give me a true token and spare my father, my mother, my brothers, my sisters and all that they have and deliver our lives from death. This is Rahab. She has shown hesed to the spies.

They needed help and she met that need. They needed protection and she gave it. They needed concealment and she provided it.

She says, I beg you, swear to me by Yahweh. She knows his name. She knows the personal name of God and she is a Canaanite woman living in Jericho.

She says, swear to me by Yahweh. Since I have shown you hesed, that you also will show hesed to my father's house. And you get the idea that there is hesed to be distributed on the basis of one to many.

Isn't that an interesting concept? Because of Rahab's kindness to the spies, her whole household gets blessing by association. Spare my father, mother, brothers, sisters, all that they have. Deliver our lives from death.

The man answered her, our lives for yours. If none of you tell this business of ours. And it shall be when the Lord has given us the land that we will deal kindly and truly with you.

Kindly and truly. Kindly. Hesed v'emeth.

Reflecting the character of God in their dealings with this Canaanite, non-Israelite woman. Very same phrase. Hesed v'emeth.

Mercy and truth. Loving kindness and truth. Well, many other passages we could go to.

Let me give you just one other. Also in connection with spies. In Judges chapter 1, the house of Joseph in verse 22 went up against Bethel.

And the Lord was with them. So the house of Joseph sent men to spy out Bethel. This is the Bethel of Jacob's Ladder fame.

Formerly called Luz. When the spies saw a man coming out of the city, they said to him, Please show us the entrance to the city, and we will show you Hesed. So he showed them the entrance

to the city, and they struck the city with the edge of the sword.

But they let the man and all his family go. And the man went to the land of the Hittites, built a city, and called its name Luz. Which is its name to this day.

It's kind of like, you know, how many cities do we have in the eastern seaboard particularly that are New London, New Hampshire. You know, new all of the things that were old and original in England. New Bedford.

New Brunswick. I mean, on and on and on. Somebody says, Well, I had to leave that one.

I'm going to build me a new one over here. And that's what this man does. But the reason he is able to do that and start new and start fresh and build a better Luz is because he was shown Hesed.

So, Ruth chapter 1. I'm using some of these from the early times of Israel because this is closest to the usage that God gives Moses at this time. Naomi says to her two daughters-in-law in Ruth 1.8, Go return each to her mother's house. The Lord deal in Hesed with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

You have been a benefit. You have been merciful and kind and have loyally expressed love. So may the Lord do the same for you.

That's how you have dealt with me and with my dead sons. And you get the idea that the sons, as I said, Hesed, as it were, flows downhill. I don't mean that in a bad sense.

But someone who has an advantage helps someone at a disadvantage. And this tells you something about the sons of Naomi. They were weak men, evidently, because their wives had to deal with them in Hesed.

And that's an unusual... You would expect the reverse. The husband would be the beneficiary and the... I mean, would be the one providing the benefits to the wives. And yet, Naomi acknowledges and says, You were the ones who were merciful and gracious to my sons, the dead.

And you can understand perhaps why they left the land in time of famine and why God took their lives. At any rate, that's Hesed. So back to our passage now.

This is God proclaiming Himself. This is God defining Himself. Why is He doing it now? Because this is the signature line on a new copy of the covenant.

When you enter into a big contractual arrangement, you get into a mortgage or you enter into a sales contract or you deal with a bank, you have to identify yourself. I went in the other day to do some kind of big transaction. And I said, Yeah, I want to get a cashier's check for this big amount.

They said, Okay, well, sign this card. And I signed it. And then they went in and they said, Well, you can't do this.

Your wife's going to have to do it. I said, Why? And they said, Well, we can't verify you from your signature because it was so long ago that that same account has gone through two or three different banks. Yet now it's Bank of America.

Before that, it was Nations Bank. Before that, it was something else. Well, I guess my signature card just turned yellow and crumbled to dust because they don't have it anymore.

And I don't write the checks. I don't even carry a checkbook. Patty writes all the checks.

And so the only signature that they had on file that they could confirm had a right to extract that level of money out of the account was Patty. They could not confirm my identity. And I showed them my driver's license and the card from their bank with my smiling face on it, my check card.

They take your picture now and put it on there. But that's not good enough. Those can be fake.

Those can be forged. You write your name. Well, we have no exemplar.

We can't tell if this is you or not. So, you know, step aside. Let your wife come up and do this.

It's kind of... It reminds me I need to go down there and sign a card so that they'll let me have my own money in the future. I don't know what will happen if I ever write a big check. It will probably be held and they'll say, Did you write this? But you have to establish your identity.

You have to say who you are when you do a transaction. You have to know you're dealing with the person. Same thing in an estate.

Ran into the same issue not long ago where someone has some material goods and they die and that stuff is supposed to go to their heirs and assigns. Well, you have to prove who you are. There are con artists that make a business out of impersonating heirs and relatives and going in and snaking away stocks and bonds and certificates and bank accounts and this, that, and the other.

That's why banks and other institutions are so careful. I'm not faulting the bank at all. I'd rather them be too careful than not careful enough.

But you have to establish your identity. Who are you when you make these statements and these promises and you claim that you're going to do thus and so and hold up your end of this mutual bargain. That's what God is doing.

Now, that's great for Israel, but what about for us? God has given us many great and precious promises, hasn't He? God has promised that He would supply our needs. God has promised that He would be with us unto the end of the age. God has promised that He will lead us into all

truth.

God has promised that He will uphold us with the right hand of His righteousness. There are tremendous promises for provision, protection, that God's plan will work together for good if we love Him and if we're called according to His purpose. Well, how much stock can I put in those promises? It all depends on who makes them, right? Many people say, till death do us part and three months later, they've parted and they're not dead.

How did that happen? I said, I'll be with you until I die. I'm not with you and I'm not dead. So what does that say about me? To have and hold, to cleave to you only, eschewing all others, or however the verbiage goes, forsaking all others.

You don't have to eschew them, just forsake them. You can look at somebody and just say, eschew you. Forsaking all others and cleaving to this single person.

The two become one flesh. It's a promise that you make, right? Well, how good is the promise? It's only as good as the person making it. God is proclaiming His name before Moses because He is about to renew the broken covenant.

That's why He told Moses, make another set of blank tablets so we can start this thing over and I will sign it again. This is God's signature. Did you ever wonder what it would be like? Everybody when they're in junior high or something, you work on your signature, figure out how you want it to please most people.

I've seen lots of pieces of paper in the trash. I found some in books of people from days and years gone by did nothing but practicing writing their name on both sides of the sheet. Most people do that.

You want to write with a flourish, have it be a little distinctive. This is God's signature. We can't see the tablets, but this is what God's signature is.

He says, He writes His name twice. The Lord, the Lord. I am the God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, abounding in mercy and truth.

In long-suffering, in faithfulness, all of these things are a part of His signature. That's His mark. Now, verse 7. Keeping mercy for thousands.

You know this word that is translated keeping, and you're going to be surprised all the same. What town is Jesus from? How did Jesus introduce Himself to Paul on the Damascus Road? Do you remember the third time He tells the story? He's telling the people in Jerusalem. He says, I saw a great light, and Saul saw, why are you persecuting me? Who are you, Lord? I am Jesus of Nazareth.

I am Jesus of Nazareth. We've talked about that from early on in the Gospels. It says this was to fulfill what was said in the prophets.

He will be called a Nazarene. And we've looked at the Old Testament, and have not found a prophecy that says He will be called a Nazarene. It does say that He will be a root shoot from the stump of Jesse.

He will be a branch. He will spring forth. He will be the netzer.

N-E-T-S-E-R That's the first word in verse 7 in Hebrew, is netzer. It's not the noun form, however. It is a verbal form.

And I told you many times, you all could probably do well in a first semester Hebrew class by now, but when you see the O-E infix, O-E, that's like, it's an I-N-G word. So this is notzer, instead of notzar. Netzer, N-E-T-S-E-R, is the noun form.

Put A's in there, and you have the verb form, notzar. And notzer is like putting I-N-G on it. So what does notzar as a verb mean? Well, interestingly, you would think, well, it must mean springing forth or branching out or some such thing, which is indeed what the noun netzer means.

But notzar has the idea of guarding, protecting, preserving. It is used this way throughout the Scriptures. Psalm 32, verse 7 is a good example.

You are my hiding place. You shall notzar me from trouble. You shall surround me with songs of deliverance.

A noun form of this is used to talk about guardhouses, little towers. And you can see a commingling of the two meanings of something that springs up or stands up, that branches out of the ground because a watchtower sticks up out of the ground. And yet it is used to preserve and to guard.

You have many, many examples of this. You find over in the Prophets where it says God is going to devastate Judah and the whole southern kingdom, and Zion, Jerusalem, the daughter of Zion, is going to stand like a watchtower in the middle of a vineyard or a watchtower in the middle of a field of cucumbers. Well, a watchtower is great for seeing approaching enemies, but if somebody is stealing your cucumbers and running off with your grapes, the watchtower does not do you much good.

I mean, you are there and you are prominent, but you cannot do anything from the tower to protect. You need perimeter security, not central security. If you want to protect your vineyard and your cucumbers, you get a fence, you get a perimeter, you get some defense out there.

You do not put a tower in the middle. You cannot defend anything from the middle unless you have a machine gun, which, of course, they did not. But, it has the idea of watching over, of preserving and guarding from a high and lofty place.

That is the main idea of Nazar. So, in verse 7 it says, Notzer, so we get the idea of keeping,

guarding, preserving, holding fast, something. This is used, by the way, in Psalm 119 and many other Psalms, of people keeping God's word, Psalm 78, 7. That they may set their hope in God and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments.

Notzer His commandments. Guard, preserve, maintain. The pastor of First Baptist this morning had a very powerful sermon about the responsibility of Christians in our country to speak up and be heard.

This country was founded on Christian principles. He quoted the first Supreme Court Justice in our history, John Jay, appointed by George Washington, who said, We are a Christian nation. We have to operate on Christian principles.

Virtually all of the early founding fathers were Christians and pointed out that our government would unravel and our country would fall apart if we ever abandoned righteousness as our standard and Christianity as our foundation. And yet, that has been obliterated from our history books. It has been obliterated from our culture.

It is not spoken of. People love to defend the Constitution, but they won't talk about the spirit of the Constitution or the thinking of the men who wrote it. And we have been somewhat browbeaten and cowed into a kind of silence as Christians in our culture and in our society because it's politically incorrect to espouse one religion over another and because there is freedom of religion, that means everybody else is free except Christians.

And it's sort of the kind of reverse discrimination that took place in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement. Well, you can be any color but white and have an advantage. And we will prefer minorities to try to overcompensate for some real or perceived crimes of the past.

Well, the same thing is happening in the religious world. And now, you can meet, you can have a racially based organization as long as it's not white. Have you ever seen the National Association for the Advancement of White People? I don't think you're likely to either.

Or if you do, it's going to be some sort of perversity. You have your clan guys and your skinheads and so on. But my point here is, I'm not even sure how I drifted that far away from my point.

Keeping his commandments, preserving, guarding. There are principles on which our country was founded that are moral principles. They are founded in Christianity, but they are right.

And they are righteous. They are intrinsically right. Regardless of your faith, protecting freedom, privacy, and property is moral.

The equality with which all men are created is a moral view. And very few religions are as interested in protecting and preserving those biblical principles as Christianity. You do not find freedom of thought espoused and promoted and encouraged as a part of the foundation of Islam.

Look at what Islam does to women. Makes them walk around in their sleeping bags. Makes them unable to get educated, unable to vote.

Well, they zip them up. They zip them up in a bag. You can't see anything.

They walk around in a bag. That is not freedom. That is not privacy.

That's not property. That is oppression. Their evangelism is not one motivated by love and by a desire for someone to gain a benefit.

It is motivated by the desire. It's the same type of motivation that communism had. Exterminate and dominate.

Now, that is not moral. It is not right. And it is espoused by these other religions.

And if we do not stand up and make our voices heard, we will be unable to speak. So, to keep Psalm 78, verse 7. Psalm 119, verse 115. Depart from me, you evildoers, for I will not sire the commandments of my God.

That ought to be our attitude. Not just keep in the sense of observing and obeying, but keep in the sense of guarding and preserving for other generations. Preserving them as principles.

As moral doctrines. Well, a lot we could say about Nazar. But this is in the active sense.

It is an ongoing process. These other things are absolute. God is absolutely Rahum.

He is absolutely Kanun. He is absolutely enduring. He is absolutely abounding in Chesed and truth.

But this is the first I-N-G word that we have in God's self-declaration. Preserving Chesed. L'olafayim.

Or, you can hear in the middle of that. L'olafayim. Olaf.

Elif. Elif is our word for thousand. In our first Samuel study we talked about Elif and how it doesn't necessarily mean a specific one thousand.

It means a large group. It basically means a battalion sized group. Three companies worth.

Those might be smaller, might be larger. But it means multitudes. In the same way that a centurion or a legionnaire in the Roman army might have a varying number of troops.

It is a status. It is a certain amount. Preserving, guarding, Chesed.

Two or four. This has L' at the beginning. Olafayim.

Thousands. Multitudes. Niseh.

Awain. Avayin. Actually here.

Preserving, mercy for thousands. Forgiving. This is Noseh.

This is another I-N-G word. And then we have this Awain. A-W-E-N.

And it's got the evil I-N starting it. This is the iniquity and Peshah. P-E-S-H-A.

It ends in an evil I-N. That letter is not always evil, but I find it in a lot of words associated with evil. Noseh.

Forgiving. Iniquity and transgression. And sin.

Next time we're going to look at the distinction between these three words. Three different kinds of problem. Awain, Peshah, and Chataah.

C-H-A-T-A-A-H. Chataah. Translated here, iniquity and transgression and sin.

If I gave you a little sheet of paper right now and said, define the difference between those three, could you do it? Of course not. But we will next week. And by the end of next time, we will know the difference between iniquity, transgression, and sin.

But the point here is, look at the positive attributes of God. They are all stacked at the beginning. He is one, merciful.

Two, gracious. Three, long-suffering. Four, abounding in goodness.

Five, abounding in truth. Six, keeping mercy for thousands. Seven, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.

The first seven characteristics of God are all positive. Are all demonstrative of mercy, grace, enduring, compassion. Seven-fold.

These ought to be the first seven characteristics in our essence box. We'll have to make a new one. Instead of sovereignty, righteousness, justice, love, eternal life, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, immutability, and veracity, we will make a new list.

And we'll complete it next time. But, what is the bottom line? We belong to God. He is our Heavenly Father.

We are enclosed by His grace. We are secured by the presence of His Spirit. We are empowered by His Word.

Who is it that has done this? How motivated should we be to love Him? How can we love Him if we don't know Him? To know Him is to love Him. And these are the things to know about Him. This is what we need to know.

Sometimes we hesitate to go to God. Sometimes we wonder about His judgment in our case. Is He fully in charge? Is He fully aware of what's going on in my life? Yes, He is.

And like Job, sometimes we have to not fully understand and yet trust. Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him? Why? This is why. He is a good, good God.

Father, thank You for the privilege of studying Your Word. May God the Holy Spirit impress these truths in our hearts. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen.