

## “I AM”: Lovingkindness

**Be gracious to me, O God,  
according to Your lovingkindness....**

--Psalm 51:1

What is *lovingkindness*?

It sounds sweet, but what does it really mean?

You can separate the compound word into two words, *loving* + *kindness*, and get an idea. However, the full meaning is masked by translation and ancient usage. The English language really does not have a good word to translate the full meaning of the simple Hebrew word: *chesed*. (Sounds like KEH-sed.)

Different translations of the Bible use terms such as kindness, lovingkindness, mercy, steadfast love, enduring love, and others to express the meaning of *chesed*.

Some writers have described *chesed* as *covenant love*. It is true that *chesed* often appears in the context of a covenant. However, one Hebrew scholar has accurately observed that *chesed* is not tied to the covenant, rather, the covenant is tied to *chesed*.

The picture painted by the term *chesed* is that of a deep love that would motivate someone to make a covenant promise to another. Once the promise is made, the covenant promise acts as a reminder of the original love. More specifically, God's *lovingkindness* (*chesed*) moved him to make a covenant promise with man, and it also described his loyalty to that covenant promise. He will never forget a covenant promise he has made. He will not leave it unfulfilled.

After King David had committed adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband killed to cover up his sin, he was confronted by the prophet Nathan. David confessed his sin and prayed to

God for forgiveness by appealing to God's lovingkindness. (Read this in Psalm 51.)

David understood that there was no sacrifice that he could offer to take his sin away. According to the justice of the Law of Moses, there was no forgiveness for adultery and murder. So, he appealed to God's *chesed*. He was not trying to back God into a corner as if to force God's loyalty to His covenant promise. Rather, David was crying out in desperation for God to love him with the same love that moved Him to make the covenant promise in the first place.

David appealed to the very nature of God. He recognized the enduring love of God that had moved Him to make promises to his forefathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to the nation Israel. David appealed to the divine kindness of God that had motivated Him to make a covenant promise with him. David's appeal was that God would continue in His steadfast love toward him because He had already loved him.

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Your lovingkindness [*chesed*]....**

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God does not try to love [*chesed*]. It is not his 'second' nature. He does not analyze and synthesize a situation, wrestle with his will, and then finally decide to love. It is his nature, his identity. It is just who he is.

It is as if God had said to Moses, "I AM who I am...I am *chesed*."

Oh, wait...He did!

**The LORD God...abounding in lovingkindness [*chesed*]....**

--Exodus 24:6