

# ḤESED IN THE BIBLE

by

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## List of Abbreviations

- A.S. — *Die Schriften des Alten Testaments in Auswahl übersetzt und für die Gegenwart erklärt.*
- AJSL. — *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literature.*
- B.C. — *Biblischer Commentar über das Alte Testament*, ed. by C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch.
- B.H. — Kittel, R. *Biblia Hebraica.*
- E.H. — *Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zum Alten Testament.*
- H.C. — *Kurzer Hand-Commentar zum Alten Testament*, ed. by K. Marti.
- H.K. — *Handkommentar zum Alten Testament*, ed. by W. Nowack.
- I.C.C. — *International Critical Commentary.*
- K. — *Kommentar zum Alten Testament*, ed. by E. Sellin.
- K.K. — *Kurzgefasster Kommentar zum Alten Testament*, ed. by H. Strack and O. Zöckler.
- S.B.O.T. — *Sacred Books of the Old Testament*, ed. by P. Haupt.
- ZAW. — *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft.*



## Translator's Preface

Professor Nelson Glueck's pioneer study of *hesed* and its meaning in the Bible has long been a basic source for biblical scholarship and theology. When the work first appeared as a published doctoral dissertation in July 1927, titled *Das Wort hesed im alttestamentlichen Sprachgebrauche als menschliche und göttliche gemeinschaftsgemässe Verhaltungsweise*, it was a methodological landmark in the study of the history of ideas of the Bible. The work, republished in Germany in 1961, indicated that its findings were still valuable for contemporary research in biblical thought; therefore, an English translation was deemed appropriate in order to make it available to a wider circle of readers. Translations of biblical texts are from the German to keep the author's innovations and shadings of meaning.

To bring the discussion up to date, Dr. Gerald A. Larue, Professor of Biblical History and Archaeology, University of Southern California, consented to preface the translation with a summary of recent trends in studies on *hesed*.

I remain indebted in the preparation of my translation to Mrs. Helen Lederer of Cincinnati, who made an earlier attempt to render the work into English; to my colleagues, Dr. Hans Hirschberg of Tarzana, and Dr. Michael A. Meyer of the Hebrew Union College, for their valuable suggestions; to Mrs. Fae Cohen, secretary to the faculty of the Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles school, for her careful and painstaking assistance in the typing and preparation of the manuscript. However, final responsibility for editing and translating, as well as for any errors which may still remain, is my own.

Finally, I wish to note my deep gratitude to Professor Glueck for entrusting me with his work and for the many *hasadim* he has shown me.

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*ḤESED* IN THE BIBLE

## CHAPTER I

# *Hesed* as Human Conduct — Its Secular Meaning

### I. A PRELIMINARY CLARIFICATION OF THE CONCEPT — THOSE WHO PRACTICE *HESED*

To clarify the conceptual meaning of the word in its secular sense in the Hebrew Bible, we need first determine the persons to whom the expression refers. Proceeding from the actual usage of the word we shall fix, to the extent possible, its real and implied meaning.

#### A. THE *HESED*-RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELATIVES AND RELATED TRIBES

In Gen. 47:29 (J<sup>1</sup>)<sup>1</sup> Jacob, about to die, asks his son Joseph, to swear to him that he will show him *hesed* וְאָמַת חֶסֶד. Abraham asks his wife, Sarah, to render *hesed* to him, Gen. 20:13 (E<sup>2</sup>). Boaz praises Ruth, Ruth 3:10, for the *hesed* she is showing her husband and his family. Naomi, Ruth 2:20, blesses her kinsman, Boaz, for having shown *hesed* to Ruth.<sup>2</sup> Abraham's servant, Gen 24:49 (J<sup>1</sup>), asks the family of Nahor, Abraham's brother,<sup>3</sup> whether they are willing to show וְאָמַת חֶסֶד to his master. Saul, I Sam. 15:6 (S<sup>b</sup>) recalls the *hesed* which the friendly and related Kenites<sup>4</sup> had demonstrated toward the Israelites when they went up from Egypt.

<sup>1</sup> In the differentiation of sources I mainly followed Steuernagel, *Lehrbuch der Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Tübingen, 1912).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Ch. I, pp. 40 f.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Gen. 24:15, 47, 48.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Judg. 4:11; 1:16; 5:24; Num. 10:29 f.



## B. BETWEEN HOST AND GUEST

The men whom Lot receives as his guests, Gen. 19:19 (J<sup>1</sup>), show him *hesed*. Rahab renders *hesed* to the spies who found refuge in her house, Josh. 2:12, 14 (E<sup>2</sup>), and they swear to do *hesed* to her and her family. Abimelech asks Abraham to vow to show him the same *hesed* which he had displayed to Abraham, Gen. 21:23 (E<sup>2</sup>), in permitting him to sojourn in his land.

## C. BETWEEN ALLIES AND THEIR RELATIVES

David, reminding Jonathan of the Yahweh-covenant between them, I Sam. 20:8 (S<sup>b</sup>), entreats Jonathan to show him *hesed*. Jonathan implores David, I Sam. 20:14, 15 (S<sup>b</sup>), to practice forever toward him and his house the *hesed* which had been sworn to him in the name of Yahweh. In II Sam. 9:1, 3, 7 (Je) David shows *hesed* to Jonathan's son.<sup>5</sup>

## D. BETWEEN FRIENDS

Absalom, II Sam. 16:17 (Je), asks Hushai whether, in his relationship to David, Hushai had shown his friend *hesed*. David wishes to reciprocate to Hanun, the son of his friend Naḥash, II Sam. 10:2 (Je),<sup>6</sup> the same *hesed* that Naḥash had evinced toward him.

## E. BETWEEN RULER AND SUBJECT

Abner, II Sam. 3:8 (S<sup>a</sup>), speaks of the *hesed* he had shown to King Saul and his son Eshbaal. In II Chron. 24:22 we read that King Joash, unmindful of the *hesed* shown to him by his High Priest Jehoiada, caused the latter's son to be slain. Because the officers of Benhadad, defeated by Aḥab, I Kings 20:31 f.,<sup>7</sup> know of the reputation of the kings of Israel as being מלכי חסד, they approach Aḥab with the request to spare their king, whom they call Aḥab's servant.

<sup>5</sup> We may assume that the historian in Je knew of the ברית יהוה between David and Jonathan, cf. Ch. I, pp. 48 ff.

<sup>6</sup> I Chron. 19:2.

<sup>7</sup> Staerk, *Die Entstehung des Alten Testaments*. (Berlin and Leipzig, 1918), p. 166, assigns I Kings 20 to the end of the 9th century. Cf. Steuernagel, pp. 362, 3; Kamphausen in Kautzsch's Bible<sup>3</sup>, et al.

Esther 2:9, 17 speaks of the *hesed* which Esther had obtained from King Ahasuerus.

#### F. *HESED* AS MERITED OBLIGATION

In Judg. 1:24 (J) we read that the spies scouting Bethel promise to show *hesed* to a man whom they saw leaving the city if he would indicate to them a way of entering the city. David commands Solomon to show *hesed* forever to the members of the house of Barzillai, I Kings 2:7 (Je), because the latter had given him aid when he fled from Absalom.<sup>8</sup> David, II Sam. 2:5 (S<sup>a</sup>), blesses the men of Jabesh-gilead for having shown *hesed* to Saul, their deliverer. Judg. 8:35 (Rd) relates that the people of Israel did not show *hesed* to Gideon's family, although Gideon had been a great benefactor to the people of Israel. Joseph implores the chief butler, whose dream he had interpreted propitiously, Gen. 40:14 (E<sup>2</sup>), to remember him and show him *hesed* after his reinstatement to rank and office.

#### *Summary*

From the preceding analysis it becomes clear that *hesed* is received or shown only by those among whom a definite relationship exists. Accordingly, what we call the *hesed*-relationship exists between:

- A. Relatives by blood or marriage, related clans and related tribes
- B. Host and guest
- C. Allies and their relatives
- D. Friends
- E. Ruler and subject
- F. Those who have gained merit by rendering aid, and the parties thereby put under obligation.

The above indicates that *hesed* exists between people who are in some close relationship to one another. Our next concern is to explain what *hesed* is. We must now deal with the extent to which the meaning of the word is influenced by the fact that *hesed* can be practiced only between persons who share an ethically binding relationship. The analysis of the conceptual content of the word *hesed* will be based on a further examination of those passages in which the word occurs in a purely secular sense.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. II Sam. 17:27-29; 19:32-41.

## II. *HESED* AS CONDUCT CORRESPONDING TO A MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP OF RIGHTS AND DUTIES

### A. *HESED* AS THE MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP OF RIGHTS AND DUTIES BETWEEN THE MEMBERS OF A FAMILY OR TRIBE

In ancient Israel, as well as in ancient Arabia,<sup>9</sup> a mutual relationship of rights and duties existed among the members of a family or among those who believed themselves to be of similar tribal ancestry. The family and tribal bonds were of primary importance.<sup>10</sup> The members of a family or a clan were totally dependent upon one another. They lived in a relatively closed circle, the confines of which could be widened only by the undertaking of relationships based on rights and duties assumed on a different basis. We shall treat this point later in greater detail. Such members enjoyed common rights and they had to fulfill mutual obligations. Their whole existence was governed by this concept of reciprocity. In reference to I Sam. 20:8, W. R. Smith<sup>11</sup> says:

In primitive society, where every stranger is an enemy, the whole conception of the duties of humanity is framed within the narrow circle of the family or the tribe; relations of love are either identical with those of kinship or are conceived as resting on a covenant.

In ancient Israel it appears that conduct based on relationships involving rights and duties of a family or a tribal community was called *hesed*. We have noted <sup>12</sup> that only those who stood in a relationship of rights and duties to one another received and practiced *hesed*.

<sup>9</sup> The same is true of present-day Arabia as well. Cf. W. R. Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia* (Cambridge, 1885), pp. 22-26, 35, 56, 57, 160, 161. Pedersen, *Der Eid bei den Semiten* (Strassburg, 1914), pp. 21-23, 28, 31, 222.

<sup>10</sup> Benzinger, *Hebräische Archäologie* (Tübingen, 1907), pp. 102 f. "In no nation is the significance of the family as the foundation of the entire social order as clearly recognizable as in Israel . . . We get to know the Israelites still on the lowest level of political organization, at the time of clans or tribal organization, in which the family is of the utmost importance."

Cf. Nowack, *Lehrbuch der Hebräischen Archäologie* (Freiburg i.B. und Leipzig, 1894), p. 152, et al.

<sup>11</sup> *The Prophets of Israel* (Edinburgh, 1882), p. 161.

<sup>12</sup> *Supra*, p. 37.

This is borne out by the interpretation of *hesed* as mutuality or reciprocal conduct (*gemeinschaftgemässen Verhaltungsweise*).

# I. KINSHIP

## a. *Consanguinity: Father and Son*

Jacob, near death, called his son, Joseph, to ask a great favor of him, Gen. 47:29. He said, "If I have found favor<sup>13</sup> in your sight, put your hand under my thigh,<sup>14</sup> that you will show me *וְאָמַתְּ*; and not bury me in Egypt." Jacob adjured Joseph to show him faithful love even after his death, and to bury him with his fathers in Canaan. Great importance was attached to burial.<sup>15</sup> He saw, however, the great difficulties connected with the fulfillment of his heart's desire and knew that in the natural course of events he would be buried in Egypt. For this reason he found it necessary to make his son take an oath. Joseph took this oath, and when the time came he fulfilled it.<sup>16</sup> Actually, no special oath should have been necessary. Had Joseph not shown faithful love to his father before his death, he would have been an unnatural son. Every son owed his father love commensurate with the demands of loyalty. Such love was based not only on personal affection but also on duty. It was the only possible conduct of a son toward his father, since they are both of the same flesh and blood.

## b. *Relationship by Marriage*

### (1) *Husband and wife*

When Abraham travelled to strange lands with his wife, Sarah, Gen. 20:13, he asked her during the course of their journey to pass him off as her brother, since he was afraid of being murdered because of his attractive wife. Before asking that favor of her, he reminded her of her duties toward him, saying, "This is your *hesed*, which you must show me: wherever we go, say that I am your brother."

<sup>13</sup> *וְאָמַתְּ* means here "If you really care for me" and is actually a term of entreaty and cannot be explained by reference to Joseph's exalted position, as Procksch says in *Die Genesis*<sup>2,3</sup> (Leipzig, 1924). It merely emphasizes the close relationship between father and son. He who has found *hesed* in the eyes of another may also be shown *hesed*. Cf. Gen. 19:19.

<sup>14</sup> Gen. 24:2.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Gen. 23; 50:1-11; II Sam. 2:5.

<sup>16</sup> Gen. 50:1-11.



There were certain fixed rules of conduct for members of a family based on reciprocity, called *ḥesed*, which obligated all members of a family to assist one another. *Ḥesed* characterized the relationship between husband and wife, and both had to comport themselves accordingly. *Ḥesed* was not merely love dependent solely on the subject but was, at the same time, loyalty and duty. Where *ḥesed* is used alone and not in the combination *חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת*, as is frequently the case, one may still picture mentally *אֱמֶת* next to *חֶסֶד*. Abraham, who believed his life to be in danger, could plead with Sarah to remember her *ḥesed* obligation to him and to save him by stating that she was his sister (which, in fact, she was).<sup>17</sup> By doing so, however, she risked the danger of having strangers expropriate her.

## (2) *The redeemer and the widow of his kinsman*

Only in the Book of Ruth is the word *ḥesed* used in a sense similar to that employed in the older sources. In Ruth 3:10 it is clearly shown that *ḥesed* is that mode of conduct which is in accordance with familial obligations. Ruth obeyed her mother-in-law and hid herself close to where Boaz slept. After he had fallen asleep, she nestled at his feet. Boaz awakened at midnight and was startled to find her there. Upon his questioning, Ruth told him who she was and asked him, as a kinsman of her husband, to fulfill his obligation to her as redeemer (*גֹּאֵל*) and to marry her. Boaz declared his willingness to do so, provided that a nearer kinsman of her husband would renounce his duties and rights. He blessed Ruth, who had so loyally shown *ḥesed* to her husband, saying, "May you be blessed by Yahweh, my daughter; you have made this last *ḥesed* greater than the first, in that you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich." The *ḥesed* which Ruth had demonstrated to her husband even after his death, by leaving her native land and father's house and following Naomi,<sup>18</sup> was surpassed by the sense of love and loyalty she subsequently demonstrated. Instead of marrying a younger man, Ruth preferred to turn to the older Boaz, her husband's kinsman, in order, by virtue of this marriage, to have offspring for her husband who had died childless. Here *ḥesed* indicates a development beyond the ordinary use of the term in the older sources, since *ḥesed* in this context refers more to a subjective mode of conduct willed by an individual, and not simply

<sup>17</sup> Vs. 12.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Nowack, *Richter, Ruth and Bücher Samuelis* (Göttingen, 1902); Bertheau, *Das Buch der Richter und Ruth* (Leipzig, 1883).



to an attitude of obligation. Ruth was by no means obliged to go with Naomi. She was as free as Naomi's other daughter-in-law to return to her own people. Yet, in faithful love she followed her mother-in-law. In true religiosity she complied with Jewish custom. Ruth took it upon herself to practice *hesed* in order to fulfill the obligations of a Jewish widow.

The meaning of *hesed* as conduct in accord with familial obligations is confirmed also in Ruth 2:20, if we understand *אשר לאֲעֻב חסדו את־החַיִּים ואת־הַמֵּתִים* to refer to Boaz and not to Yahweh. In II Sam. 2:5 we have almost an exact parallel to Ruth 2:20. David blessed the men of Jabesh-gilead because they had buried Saul, saying: *בְּרוּכִים אַתֶּם לַיהוָה אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם הַחֲסֵד הַזֶּה*. Boaz is blessed by Naomi, Ruth 2:20, for the kindness he had shown Ruth. She says:

בְּרוּךְ הוּאֵי לַיהוָה אֲשֶׁר לֹאֲעֻב חֲסֵדוֹ אֶת־הַחַיִּים וְאֶת־הַמֵּתִים.

If we accept the commonly held view according to which *אשר לאֲעֻב* is in apposition to *ליהוה*, this would be the only place in the Hebrew Bible where the *hesed* of God is mentioned in reference to the dead. The relationship between God and man, very frequently expressed by *hesed*, requires of man the fulfillment of certain conditions. Only those who serve God in faithfulness participate in communion with him and receive *hesed*<sup>20</sup> from him. It is very doubtful whether the dead, who in the Hebrew Bible generally are described as having absolutely no relationship with God,<sup>21</sup> can appear here as receiving *hesed* from God. The passage beginning with *אשר לאֲעֻב* is to be understood as referring to Boaz. It was he who had shown *hesed* to the living and the dead.<sup>22</sup> From his servants, Boaz discovered who Ruth was<sup>23</sup> and then had shown her special kindness. Further, Boaz was in no way perplexed when Ruth asked him to fulfill his obligation as "redeemer" and to marry her. She gave him no other explanation than that he was the "redeemer." Boaz was aware of his relationship to Ruth and also knew who was still a closer kinsman to her than

<sup>19</sup> S reads *יהוה* for *ליהוה*, cf. Kittel, *Biblia Hebraica*. This is not necessary since the above suggested meaning concludes the same.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Deut. 5:10; Exod. 20:6; Deut. 7:9; II Chron. 6:14; I Kings 8:23; Dan. 9:24; Neh. 1:5; Ps. 103:17, 18; 37:28; 96:10; 86:2; I Sam. 2:9; Ps. 147:11; 119:124; 143:12; *passim*.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Isaiah 38:18; Ps. 6:6; 16:10; 88:12.

<sup>22</sup> Ruth 1:8 also mentions conduct toward the living and the dead. Naomi blessed her daughters-in-law, saying: "May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me."

<sup>23</sup> Ruth 2:6, 11.

he. Boaz thereupon declared, without hesitation, his readiness to marry her if the other kinsman would forego his claim.<sup>24</sup> His conduct toward Ruth, therefore, was in accordance with *hesed*. That evening, when Ruth told her mother-in-law that she had met Boaz and told her of his friendliness toward her, Naomi acknowledged him as a relative. In his conduct toward Ruth, she recognized the attitude of a relative conscious of familial obligations. By his kindness to Ruth, Boaz had honored his deceased kinsman and fulfilled his obligations, and for that Naomi blessed him.

## 2. THE TRIBAL COMMUNITY

### a. *The Tribal Community in its More Limited Sense: Related Families*

In returning to the older sources, such as Gen. 24:49, we find that *hesed* means to be in accord with family obligations. Abraham's servant wanted to bring Rebecca to Abraham out of the house of Naḥor, Abraham's brother,<sup>25</sup> so that she might become Isaac's wife. He asked the members of her family if they were ready to show his master steadfast love, i. e., to act in accordance with their obligations as relatives of Abraham. The proof of this would be their consent to the marriage.

### b. *The Tribal Community in a Broader Sense: Related Tribes*

*Hesed*, as a mode of conduct between related and friendly tribes, occurs in I Sam. 15:6. The Kenites, Israel's neighbors and close friends who were related to the Israelites through Moses' marriage,<sup>26</sup> had shown *hesed* to the Israelites in their Exodus from Egypt.<sup>27</sup> They had maintained that relationship toward Israel which ought to exist between relatives and friends. The Kenites, who had conducted themselves as friends<sup>28</sup> and relatives of Israel in time of need by performing *hesed* and fulfilling their mutually obligatory duties in friendly kinship, rendered loyal assistance to Israel. This *hesed* was later reciprocated. Saul spared them in his campaign against the

<sup>24</sup> Ruth 3:9 f.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *supra*, fn. 3.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Judges 1:16; 4:11. Kittel, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel* (Stuttgart, 1923), Vol. 1, pp. 318, 347 bottom; Vol. 2, p. 17; Stade, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel* (Berlin, 1887), I.1, pp. 131 f.; Budde, *Die Religion des Volkes Israel bis zur Verbannung* (Giessen, 1900), pp. 15 f.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Kittel, *loc. cit.*; Stade, *loc. cit.*; cf. *supra*, fn. 4.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Ch. I, pp. 49 f.

Amalekites, in whose midst they lived. The Israelites were obligated to behave toward the Kenites as the latter had conducted themselves toward the Israelites.

## B. *HESED* AS THE MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP OF RIGHTS AND DUTIES BETWEEN HOST AND GUEST

In ancient Israel, as was the case in ancient Arabia (and also in present-day Arabia),<sup>29</sup> the law of hospitality was sacred. The host, if necessary, had to risk his life for his guest.<sup>30</sup> Host and guest stood in a reciprocal protective relationship to one another. Between them there was a relationship of rights and duties<sup>31</sup> comparable to that which existed between blood relatives. Host and guest became "brothers"<sup>32</sup> in every respect. Whoever slept in the tent of another and ate of his bread was accounted as a member of the host's family.<sup>33</sup> In ancient Israel, this mutual relationship of rights and duties between host and guest was called *hesed*.

### I. HOST AND GUEST

From Gen. 19:19 we can see how important the law of hospitality and its duties were to the ancient Israelites. Lot received in his house the three strangers (angels) who had appeared in Sodom. When the men of the city demanded that the strangers be handed over, Lot offered to bring out his chaste daughters in their place to be dealt with as they pleased. He would not, however, surrender his guests under any circumstances. He had taken them in and it was a sacred duty for him, as host, to protect them. Lot told the men of the city,<sup>34</sup> "But these men you may not harm, for they have come under the shelter of my roof." Angered by his refusal, they attacked Lot. He would have fared badly if his guests had not pulled him into the house and barred the door, while they afflicted the people in front with blindness. Thereupon, the strangers announced to Lot the

<sup>29</sup> W. R. Smith, *Kinship*, pp. 14, 41; Doughty, *Wanderings in Arabia* (London, 1908), Vol. I, p. 252; Vol. II, pp. 154, 164, 276, 277, 280.

<sup>30</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 41. "It is a principle alike in old and new Arabia that the guest is inviolable." Cf. Gen. 19.

<sup>31</sup> Pedersen, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>32</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 14. "A man whom one is bound to protect is . . . a brother by virtue of this bond."

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *supra*, fn. 29, 31.

<sup>34</sup> Vs. 8.



destruction of Sodom and urged him to save himself and his family by having them take refuge in the mountains.

Lot counted their aid as well as their rescuing him as *hesed*. He asked their permission to flee instead to a small town nearby. Lot said to one of the angels,<sup>35</sup> "Behold your servant has found favor in your sight since the *hesed* that you have shown me was great in saving my life." Because he remained faithful to his guests, he showed himself worthy to receive *hesed*. Under any circumstances, he had chosen to grant his guests the protection of his house and thereby put them under an obligation to be loyal to him, to render assistance and to show him *hesed*. Since Lot's guests are represented as angels, their *hesed*, their reciprocity of Lot's conduct toward them is called "great"; that is, it is portrayed as grace or mercy. In actuality, however, their *hesed* emanated from the mutual relationship of rights and duties between host and guest. As a true host, Lot was ready to sacrifice everything for his guests. As loyal guests, they came to his assistance. The mutuality of their relationship was determined by *hesed*.

*Hesed* is also to be considered as conduct emanating from the mutual relationship of rights and duties between host and guest in Josh. 2:12, 14. Joshua's spies, who lodged at Rahab's house, were hidden by her when the King of Jericho's messengers demanded their surrender. With her assistance, the spies were able to flee and save themselves. By assisting them and by fulfilling the obligations of hospitality, Rahab showed *hesed* and was true to the code governing the relationship between host and guest. Because of this, she was entitled to make them vow to show *hesed* to her and her family when they would return with the Israelite armies. "Now then, swear to me by Yahweh," she said, "that you also will keep faith with my father's house as I have kept faith with you."<sup>36</sup> The men took the oath and said to her, "Our life for yours;<sup>37</sup> if Yahweh gives us the land we will deal dutifully and loyally with you." And this oath they kept.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Procksch, *loc. cit.* "Thus J in the course of the conversation makes a transition to the singular, as Lot naturally addresses one particular person." Cf. also König, *Die Genesis* (Gütersloh<sup>2</sup>, 1925), *loc. cit.*

<sup>36</sup> With Steuernagel, *Deuteronomium und Josua*<sup>2</sup> (Göttingen, 1923), and Gressmann, *Die Anfänge Israels*<sup>2</sup> (Göttingen, 1922), regarding this passage, ונתתם לי אמת is to be omitted.

<sup>37</sup> In accordance with Steuernagel, *loc. cit.*, and Gressmann, *loc. cit.*, אם לא תגידו, וזה is to be omitted. The spies had no right to impose another condition on Rahab. She had shown them *hesed* and they were obligated to reciprocate with *hesed*. Gressmann omits also נפשינו וחיבתכם למוט.

<sup>38</sup> Josh. 6:22, 23.

## 2. THE GER AND HIS PROTECTOR

Gen. 21:23 also belongs to the category of *ḥesed* as the proper conduct in the relationship between host and guest, for such qualities as reciprocity, obligation and loyalty appear distinctively as characteristics of *ḥesed*. Abraham had been received hospitably in Gerar, as a *ger*. He had put himself under the protection of Abimelech, King of Gerar,<sup>39</sup> thereby creating a mutual relationship of rights and duties corresponding to *ḥesed*. The *ger* had certain obligations to his protector<sup>40</sup> and vice versa. For this reason, Abimelech returned Sarah to Abraham when he learned that she was the latter's wife. A protector could not take away the wife of a *ger* since that would have been a rupture of the mutual relationship existing between them. Because of Abimelech's integrity, the bond between Abraham and Abimelech was strengthened. By doing *ḥesed*, he could, on his part, adjure Abraham to remain loyal and to show *ḥesed* toward him and his house forever.<sup>41</sup> Abimelech said to Abraham: "Now therefore swear unto me here by God that you will not deal falsely with me or with my offspring or with my posterity, but as I have dealt loyally with you, you will deal with me and with the land where you have sojourned as a stranger."<sup>42</sup> Abimelech explicitly referred to Abraham as a *ger*. It is shown here that חסד, which appears as the opposite of שקר, shows חסד as conduct in accordance with the demands of loyalty which contains the concept of אמת or אמונה.<sup>43</sup> Abraham swore the oath,<sup>44</sup> and on the basis of the חסד shown by the one and sworn to by the other, Abraham and Abimelech made a covenant.<sup>45</sup> Here, and as we shall see further in I Sam. 20:8,<sup>46</sup> it is obvious that *ḥesed* represents the real essence of the covenant.<sup>47</sup> By *ḥesed* one must understand in this context the attitude stemming from the mutual relationship of rights and duties between protector and *ger*.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Gunkel (*Die Urgeschichte und die Patriarchen*<sup>2</sup> [Göttingen, 1921]) translates אשר נרתה בה with "where you have sought protection."

<sup>40</sup> Cf. I Sam. 27:12, 28:1 f.; W. R. Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 42 f., points to the mutual relationship of rights and duties between patron and *ger* in Arab countries.

<sup>41</sup> The details in this verse are almost entirely identical with those in Josh. 2:12. There we likewise find hospitality, the granting of *ḥesed*, and the demand for, and taking of, an oath in reciprocation of *ḥesed*.

<sup>42</sup> König, *loc. cit.*, translates *ḥesed* as "loyalty."

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Ps. 89:34, מעמו ולא אשקר באמונתו [L. אסיר] ואסיר לא אפיר.

<sup>44</sup> Vs. 24.

<sup>45</sup> Vs. 32.

<sup>46</sup> Ch. I, pp. 46 ff.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*; Ps. 25:10; 103:17, 18.

<sup>48</sup> Prof. Stärk pointed to the Levites as God's *gerim* in a seminar session in the



### C. *HESED* AS THE MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP OF RIGHTS AND DUTIES BETWEEN ALLIES

In ancient Israel no mutual relationship of rights and duties was considered of greater importance than that between allies.<sup>49</sup> Between the members of an alliance, just as between blood relatives, *hesed* was the only possible mode of conduct. Whoever did not act in accordance with *hesed* was expelled from the alliance as from the family. Whoever did not fulfill his duties in such a community forfeited his right to protection and assistance which, in effect, was virtually a death sentence. Allies had the same rights and obligations as those who were blood relations. Allies, for all practical purposes, were אחים, "brothers." In Amos 1:9, for example, a covenant is mentioned which is called "the brotherly covenant" (ברית אחים), which made brothers of the allies.<sup>50</sup> This passage could almost be translated: "They did not think of their brotherly obligations."<sup>51</sup>

In I Sam. 20:8 *hesed* appears quite clearly as conduct in accordance with the mutual relationship of rights and duties between allies. Between David and Jonathan, who were already united by the bonds of friendship (which, as we shall see, also required the *hesed* relationship), there existed a sacred covenant concluded in the name of Yahweh.<sup>52</sup> Through this covenant their friendship was transformed into brotherhood and *hesed* was the mode of conduct each had to assume toward the other. The *berith* they entered<sup>53</sup> "put both under the solemn obligation to take care of the welfare and safety of his friend. David, therefore, appeals to this obligation when asking for Jonathan's protection. Any breach of this obligation was called נץ and was punishable by death."<sup>54</sup> David implored Jonathan to protect

covenant

summer semester of 1925. *Hesed* also existed between Yahweh as the protector and his *gerim*, the Levites, who had no part in any secular communal life but depended entirely on Yahweh and his service. Cf. Deut. 33:8, 9. אִישׁ חֲסִידְךָ are the "men of your faithful one" (probably Moses, as in König, *Das Deuteronomium* [Leipzig, 1917]; Prof. Stärk in seminar sessions). To the אִישׁ חֲסִידְךָ belongs the man who by loyalty to God wins acceptance into his community.

<sup>49</sup> W. R. Smith, *The Prophets of Israel*, p. 161.

<sup>50</sup> W. R. Smith, *Kinship*, p. 14: "Brotherhood in the semitic tongues is a very loose word; even covenant relations may make men brothers." Cf. Pedersen, *op. cit.*, pp. 33, 222.

<sup>51</sup> Thus in Kraetzschmar, *Die Bundesvorstellung im Alten Testament* (Marburg, 1896), p. 22.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. I Sam. 18:3; II Sam. 21:7.

<sup>53</sup> Doughty, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 244.

<sup>54</sup> Kraetzschmar, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

him against Saul, the latter's father, since he feared for his life. In doing so, he pointed to the covenant between them. He asked for *ḥesed*, conduct in accord with the relationship existing between him and Jonathan. It was Jonathan's duty, required by *ḥesed*, to come to David's assistance and, if necessary, to sacrifice his own life for that of his friend. David said: "You should show your servant brotherliness, for you have brought your servant into a Yahweh-Covenant with you."

It could hardly be stated more explicitly that *ḥesed* is the conduct required in the mutual relationship between allies. The obligations and rights acquired through a covenant are translated into corresponding actions through *ḥesed*. *Ḥesed* is the real essence of *berith*, Covenant and it can almost be said that it is its very content. The possibility of the origin and existence of a covenant was based on the existence of *ḥesed*. Where חסד and ברית occur side by side in the Bible, they are not to be understood as being entirely synonymous but as being mutually contingent upon one another.<sup>55</sup> In those passages where חסד and ברית seem parallel to each other, everyday usage may not have made a sharp distinction. To this extent, Elbogen is probably right in his assumption that חסד has the same meaning as ברית or שבועה.<sup>56</sup>

*Ḥesed* is also used in I Sam. 20:14, 15, to signify the attitude which must exist between allies. The text is mutilated but the meaning is clear.<sup>57</sup> David, who had implored Jonathan to grant him *ḥesed* as he had promised, was in turn entreated by Jonathan never to withhold from him and his house the *ḥesed* of the covenant sworn to him in the name of Yahweh. Jonathan asked David to keep faith with him

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Deut. 7:9, 12; I Kings 8:23; II Chron. 6:14; Dan. 9:4; Neh. 1:5; 19:32; Ps. 89:29; 106:45; 50:5; 25:10; 103:17, 18; Isa. 54:10; 55:3.

<sup>56</sup> Elbogen, "חסד=obligation, promise, confirmation," in "Festschrift für Paul Haupt," 1926. Referring to I Sam. 20:15, the only passage treated by him, where *ḥesed* is used in a secular sense: "Perhaps חסד in I Sam. 20:15 is also to be understood in the sense of a covenant in which case it would be connected with תכרית in a sense opposite to that of כרת as used elsewhere."

<sup>57</sup> H. P. Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Books of Samuel* (Edinburgh, 1904), verse 14 reads:

ולא (אם) עורני חי ולא תעשה  
עמדי חסד  
ולא אמות ולא תכרית את חסרך מעם  
ביחי ער עולם

Cf. Budde, *Die Bücher Samuel* (Tübingen und Leipzig, 1902). Nowack, *loc. cit.*, and Wellhausen, *Der Text der Bücher Samuelis* (Göttingen, 1871).

and never to reject him. Jonathan implored David not to have him and his family slain as a possible threat to the throne, according to Oriental practice, when he was king and no longer had anything to fear from his enemies.<sup>58</sup> In the latter case, he called on Yahweh to demand this of David.<sup>59</sup> The *ḥesed* to which Jonathan appealed was the *ḥesed* sworn to in the name of Yahweh, as in vs. 8; חסד יהוה and the חסד which emanates from a ברית יהוה are identical. In vs. 15 the *ḥesed* which Jonathan asked from David for himself and his house is naturally the same *ḥesed* as in vs. 14. David was obligated to show Jonathan and his family, during Jonathan's lifetime and beyond, the brotherliness he had sworn to him.<sup>60</sup> The concept of duty is very closely related to *ḥesed*, especially as duty was commonly understood in ancient Israel. Duty was but another facet of right.<sup>61</sup> *Ḥesed* was the relationship among people who formed a fellowship which required the fulfillment of mutual responsibilities.

After becoming king, II Sam. 9:1, 3, 7, David intended to show *ḥesed*, for Jonathan's sake, toward Saul's house, which had been almost entirely exterminated. He recalled his relationship to Jonathan and was ready to offer Jonathan's family the *ḥesed* which he owed to him and his house. The loyal love, which David practiced when he learned of Meribaal's existence, by restoring to him his grandfather's possessions and assigning him a seat at his own table, was in reciprocity for the *ḥesed* shown him by Jonathan. Although II Sam. 9:1, 3, 7, belongs to Je, an older source<sup>62</sup> than I Sam. 20:8, 14, 15, which Steuernagel<sup>63</sup> attributed to S<sup>b</sup>, *ḥesed* has certainly the same

<sup>58</sup> Cf. I Sam. 24:22; I Kings 15:29; 16:11; II Kings 10:6; 11:1.

<sup>59</sup> Smith, *loc. cit.*, vss. 15, 16 read:

ולא בהכרית  
יהוה איבי דוד מעל פני האדמה וְיָכַרַח (בית)  
היונתן עם בית שאול ובקש יהוה מיד דוד

Cf. Nowack, *loc. cit.*

<sup>60</sup> Budde, *loc. cit.*, and Driver, *Notes on the Hebrew Text of the Books of Samuel* (Oxford, 1890), want to read חסד אלהים for חסד יהוה as in II Sam. 9:3. If a change is to be made at all, II Sam. 9:3 should be changed to read חסד יהוה. Reuss, *Das Alte Testament* (Braunschweig, 1892), grasped the proper sense in translating חסד יהוה as "the friendship sworn to before Yahweh." Kittel's translation "mercy" (in Yahweh's manner) is not possible (in Kautzsch, *Die Heilige Schrift* [Tübingen, 1922]).

<sup>61</sup> "Concepts like obligation and right are unilateral in our thinking since we start with the individual. The Semite proceeds from the communal. 'Obligation' for him is part of a larger concept which also includes 'right'; and this broader concept is the relationship between persons who belong together." Pedersen, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>62</sup> Steuernagel, *Introduction*, p. 335.

<sup>63</sup> Steuernagel, *ibid.*, p. 319.



meaning in both. Nothing speaks against the assumption that Je also knew of the *ḥesed* ברית יהוה and the *ḥesed* חסד יהוה connected with it. It may be assumed that Je regarded the *ḥesed* which David intended to show to the remnant of Saul's house, as stemming not from friendship alone but also from the sacred covenant in accordance with the obligation incurred by invoking Yahweh's name. This was the view of the narrator in Je,<sup>64</sup> who wrote in II Sam. 21:7: "But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Saul's son Jonathan, because of the Yahweh-Oath which was between David and Jonathan the son of Saul." The *ḥesed* shown by David to Jonathan's house was neither grace nor mercy; it was brotherliness required by covenantal loyalty.

One would like to read in vs. 3, as in I Sam. 20:14, חסד יהוה instead of חסד אלהים, which would better fit the context. H. P. Smith,<sup>65</sup> however, holds that חסד אלהים means the same as חסד יהוה. He says: "It is difficult to suppose the meaning to be 'kindness such as God shows.' More probably it is the kindness imposed by God in obligation of the oath." This interpretation is possible, perhaps, if one considers Gen. 21:23, where Abimelech asks Abraham to swear to him in the name of אלהים, to keep faith with him and show him חסד. If the word אלהים is to be kept here, it can well mean that David was ready to show the same inviolable *ḥesed* as does God to those who are near to him, for the zeal for duty and the inviolability of an oath are characteristic of *ḥesed*.

#### D. ḤESED AS CONDUCT STEMMING FROM THE MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP OF RIGHTS AND DUTIES BETWEEN FRIENDS

Even without a covenant, David and Jonathan would have been bound to show *ḥesed* to one another, since they were friends. *Ḥesed* was the proper conduct of friendship. Each was expected to take heed of the welfare and safety of his friend and to be loyal to him. Friendship also entailed a relationship of mutual rights and duties, as seems to have been the case with any amicable relationship in the ancient Orient. Unwritten laws and binding customs determined every facet of life. Friends were considered brothers, for the concept of brother was a very broad one.<sup>66</sup>

We find *ḥesed*, II Sam. 16:16, 17, as the expected conduct in friendship. When David's friend Hushai seemed to have broken faith

<sup>64</sup> Steuernagel, *ibid.*, p. 326.

<sup>65</sup> Steuernagel, *loc. cit.*

<sup>66</sup> W. R. Smith, *Kinship*, p. 14.

with him and called to Absalom: "Long live the King! Long live the king!" even Absalom was surprised and asked Hushai: "Is this your loyalty to your friend? Why did you not go with your friend?" Absalom expected as a matter of course that a man would keep faith with his friend, showing him *hesed*. In the totality of the concept *hesed*, loyalty plays an important part, so that in this passage *hesed* might simply be translated as "loyalty."<sup>67</sup> Love, friendship, brotherliness, loyalty, are all inherent in the concept of *hesed*. It is possible to do justice to the different shades of meaning only when *hesed* is understood as conduct in accordance with a mutual relationship of rights and duties.

*Hesed* should be understood in this sense in II Sam. 10:2 (I Chron. 19:2). David wanted to deal kindly with Hanun, as Hanun's father had dealt kindly with him. As evidence of his readiness to keep up friendly relations with Hanun, he sent envoys to Hanun after Naḥash's death to express his condolences and to comfort him. The nature of the friendly relations between David and Naḥash are unknown to us. The origin of their friendship may have been that both of them once fought against Saul,<sup>68</sup> and later, perhaps, it was in their desire to secure peace in Transjordan.<sup>69</sup> The friendship between David and Naḥash was similar to an alliance, even though there was no formal covenant between them. As friends and allies, mutual obligations and rights were incumbent upon both, and both were obligated to show *hesed* toward one another; they were not to war against each other and were to be at readiness to lend mutual assistance to one another.

#### E. *HESED* AS THE MUTUAL RELATIONSHIP OF RIGHTS AND DUTIES BETWEEN RULER AND SUBJECTS

In the Hebrew Bible, *hesed* also denoted the relationship between a ruler and his subject. Between them there existed a condition of mutuality; both assumed obligations and had rights. The loyalty that a subject showed his king had to be reciprocated with loyalty.

##### I. THE KING AND HIS SUBJECTS

*Hesed* as conduct in accord with this relationship occurs in II Sam. 3:8. Abner had been in Saul's service and remained on as a general also under Ishbosheth. He was, therefore, obligated to show *hesed*

<sup>67</sup> Gressmann, *loc. cit.*

<sup>68</sup> I Sam. 11:1.

<sup>69</sup> Budde, *loc. cit.*



to his king; however, he committed a despicable, humiliating breach of faith by taking possession of Rizpah, Saul's concubine. For this, Ishbosheth (Ishbaal), as a matter of course, called him to account. In the Orient, it was the custom that the new king took over the harem of his predecessor, announcing thereby to the whole world that he was lord and had assumed all the rights of his predecessor.<sup>70</sup> Abner's action was actually treason. He tried, however, to shrug off the accusation flippantly. He protested his loyalty by addressing Ishbosheth arrogantly, since the latter was totally dependent upon him:

Am I a (Judean) dog's head? To this day I keep showing loyalty to the house of Saul your father, to his brothers, and to his friends, and have not given you into David's hand; and yet today you charge me with a fault concerning a woman.

The matter, however, was not one to be disposed of so easily. Abner had broken faith with Ishbosheth despite his claim to have practiced and kept *ḥesed*.

In II Chron. 24:22 *ḥesed* appears as true loyalty shown by a subject to his king. There we read that the High Priest Jehoiada always had shown his king, Joash, *ḥesed*. Joash, unmindful of this *ḥesed*, had Jehoiada's son, Zecharia, slain. Joash, who was also otherwise obligated to Jehoiada,<sup>71</sup> therefore committed a breach of faith. Jehoiada's loyalty to Joash, the whole relationship between them, obligated Joash to show *ḥesed* to Jehoiada and his house, since *ḥesed* is based upon mutuality.

## 2. THE KING AND THOSE WHO SUBMIT TO HIM

*Ḥesed* is the relationship between the king and one who submits to him, in I Kings 20:31. The Israelite kings had the reputation of being kings who practiced *ḥesed* toward those who had a claim upon it. They were known for their readiness to show *ḥesed* to those who created and fulfilled the basic requirements for establishing such a *ḥesed*-relationship. This reputation, which was in all probability of long standing and had already been proven to be true of David and Solomon,<sup>72</sup> was known to the officers of Benhadad, defeated in battle by Ahab. They relied upon this trait as the only escape from their otherwise desperate situation, and as a means of saving their king's

<sup>70</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 89; Gressmann, *op. cit.*, p. 129. II Sam. 16:22; 12:8; I Kings 2:22.

<sup>71</sup> II Chron. 22:11.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. I Kings 2:7; II Sam. 10:2.

life. They well understood that the mutually obligatory *ḥesed*-relationship of rights and duties extended to the relationship between servant and master. Consequently, they girded their loins with sackcloth and tied ropes about their heads. These were the signs of their unconditional surrender and their willingness to submit to the will of the victor. They then approached Ahab in order to intercede with him for their king, saying: "Your servant Benhadad says, 'Pray, let me live.'"<sup>73</sup> By calling Benhadad a servant of Ahab, a *ḥesed*-relationship was made possible. Benhadad could hope to remain alive. The usual procedure would have been to have Benhadad slain and this was what was expected by the zealots in Ahab's camp. But the king generously granted the plea and with political astuteness declared his readiness to establish a *ḥesed*-relationship by answering them: "Does he still live? He is my *brother*."<sup>74</sup> Humanitarian considerations alone would scarcely have prompted Ahab to save Benhadad from death. Since the latter had submitted himself to him, Ahab was in the position to show him *ḥesed*. He concluded a pact with him<sup>75</sup> and gave him conditional freedom. Because of this, the reputation of the kings of Israel received new confirmation.

Only in later times does *ḥesed* lose the characteristics of obligation and reciprocity and becomes more like grace and mercy, which is arbitrarily given. In Esther 2:9, 17,<sup>76</sup> *ḥesed* is the favor which the king bestows upon those of his preference, his way of giving aid and assistance to those who are in his grace.<sup>77</sup>

#### F. ḤESED AS MUTUAL AID

A mutual relationship also emerged among those who rendered help to one another, even if no other relationship existed between them. He who had been given help was obligated to reciprocate in kind. The helper became his brother; i. e., he had to act toward him as toward a blood relative or ally. On the part of the helper, an act of assistance signified readiness to enter into a mutual relationship, as well as his expectation of being received into such a mutual relationship. He who had been rendered assistance had to recognize the

<sup>73</sup> Vs. 32.

<sup>74</sup> Vs. 32.

<sup>75</sup> Kraetzschmar, *op. cit.*, p. 28. "On the part of Ahab, the *b'rith* comprised the guarantee of his life and safe conduct, on the part of Benhadad, besides the obligations as in vs. 34, the acknowledgement of the suzerainty of Israel."

<sup>76</sup> *נשא חסד* occurs only in these two verses.

<sup>77</sup> *Supra*, fn. 13.

necessity of acknowledging a mutual relationship and had to act accordingly. The conduct in accord with such a relationship was likewise called *hesed*.

*Hesed* of this sort appears in Judg. 1:24. The spies, who were reconnoitering Bethel, requested help from a man they saw emerging from the city. They promised to show him *hesed* if he would show them how they could force their way into the city. They assured him that they would reciprocate his aid and, in short, consider him as a member of their group and accord him reciprocal treatment. This they then did. When, under their leadership, the city was later attacked, only that man and his family were spared.<sup>78</sup> "We will deal kindly with you," is the translation of most new commentators. This translation is to be rejected because obligation and reciprocity, which are the constituent qualities of *hesed*, are not given expression.

These essentials are clearly recognizable in I Kings 2:7. David ordered his son, Solomon, to consider the members of Barzillai's family as members of his own house, giving them places at his own table; that is, to show them *hesed*. Barzillai, the Gileadite, had given help to David when he was fleeing from Absalom; he had received him hospitably and furnished his troops with food and clothing.<sup>79</sup> This act obligated David to consider him as a member of his own family. He did not forget his obligation, and as his death approached, he commanded Solomon to act in accordance with *hesed* to Barzillai's family. Modern commentators translate *hesed* as "mercy" or "favor," which is unacceptable. The *hesed* which Solomon was to show to Barzillai's house did not emanate from mercy but from obligation. It did not depend upon the mere will or whim of David or Solomon, but was a requirement.

In II Sam. 2:5, *hesed* appears as the attitude of the recipient of help toward the helper. David blessed the men of Jabesh-gilead for the *hesed* they had shown Saul by giving him and his sons a burial after they were slain in the battle against the Philistines.<sup>80</sup> The city of Jabesh-gilead was under an obligation to Saul because he had rescued the city from the Ammonites.<sup>81</sup> Through this act of assistance, a relationship of mutual obligation between Saul and the men of Gilead was created which they readily recognized in that they viewed Saul as their אֲדֹנָי. The *hesed* they practiced toward Saul was a service

<sup>78</sup> Vs. 25.

<sup>79</sup> II Sam. 17:27-29; 19:32-41.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. I Sam. 31:11-13; I Chron. 10:11-12.

<sup>81</sup> I Sam. 11:1-11.



of love, in reciprocity for what Saul had done. That *ḥesed* here also embraces אמת is made clear from the following vs. 6. David said to them: "May the Lord show חסד ואמת to you." He hoped that Yahweh would evince toward them the same love and loyalty which they had shown to their ruler, Saul. This means that the men of Jabesh-gilead were addressed as brothers and included in the community of God's faithful, for only those who were elected and stood in a mutually reciprocal relationship with Yahweh could receive חסד ואמת from him.<sup>82</sup>

Judg. 8:35 relates that the people of Israel did not show *ḥesed* to the house of Gideon, although he had performed many acts of kindness for Israel. For this service, loyal reciprocity was owed to him. The people of Israel were under the obligation<sup>83</sup> to show Gideon and his house faithfulness, not only because he was their king but also because he was their deliverer.<sup>84</sup>

In Gen. 40:14 *ḥesed* appears as the reciprocity for help already given. Joseph rendered a great service to the chief butler when he interpreted his dream propitiously. He entreated him that, after his reinstatement to office,<sup>85</sup> he help him and speak to the king on his behalf so that he too might regain freedom. He asked him to act in a manner appropriate to one who has received assistance.

### Summary

The previous analysis yields the following conclusions:

- A. *Ḥesed* is conduct corresponding to a mutual relationship of rights and duties.
- B. *Ḥesed*, when understood as such conduct, explains the previously mentioned fact that only those participating in a mutual relationship of rights and duties can receive or show *ḥesed*.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Gen. 24:12, 14, 26, 27; 32:11; Deut. 7:12; Isa. 63:7, 8; Ezra 3:11; Ps. 31:7, 8:89; 148:14; I Kings 8:23; II Chron. 6:14; II Sam. 7:15, 24; I Chron. 17:13, 14; Ps. 18:51; 77:9, 16; 79:2, 13; 106:45, 7; 119:76; 138:2, 8; 143:12; Mic. 7:20. Cf. *supra*, fn. 55.

<sup>83</sup> In Judg. 9:16 Jotham reproaches the Shechemites (which reproach pertains to all of Israel) because they betrayed Gideon, in that they have not dealt with him according to אמת. In Judges 8:35, חסד connotes almost the same meaning as אמת does here and includes אמת. As to Judg. 9:16, cf. Stärk, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

<sup>84</sup> Gressmann, *loc. cit.*, translates *ḥesed* as "loyalty."

<sup>85</sup> Reuss, *loc. cit.*, translates *ḥesed* as "gratitude."



- C. *Hesed* is conduct in accord with a mutual relationship of rights and duties or conduct corresponding to a mutually obligatory relationship.
  - 1. *Hesed* corresponds to the demands of loyalty and includes the concept of *emeth*. The phrase *חסד ואמת* is then to be regarded as a hendiadys in which *אמת* is an explanatory adjective.
  - 2. *Hesed* can be confirmed by an oath.
  - 3. *Hesed* constitutes the essence of a covenant.
- D. The component parts of the general concept *hesed*, in which the interpretation of *hesed* as procedures or performances corresponding to a mutually obligatory relationship, are principally: reciprocity, mutual assistance, sincerity, friendliness, brotherliness, duty, loyalty and love.
- E. In the older sources, the common usage of *hesed* never means an arbitrary demonstration of grace, kindness, favor or love.

Truth  
Faithful  
0521

## CHAPTER II

# *Hesed* as Human Conduct — Its Religious Meaning

### I. *HESED* IN THE PROPHETIC AND COGNATE LITERATURE AS THE RECIPROCAL CONDUCT OF MEN TOWARD ONE ANOTHER AND EXPLICITLY TOWARD GOD

In the prophetic literature the concept of *hesed* was greatly expanded. From the mode of conduct of certain groups standing in a mutual relationship of rights and duties to one another, *hesed* becomes the conduct of all men toward one another. This conduct is pleasing to God and is at the same time regarded as the only proper relationship toward God. The dealings of men are considered from a religious point of view and not on the basis of inter-personal relationships alone. The totality of man's life is not sundered from religion but is most intricately intertwined with it, receiving from religion a deeper significance and value. Therefore, one cannot discuss *hesed* as the conduct of men corresponding to a reciprocal relationship without looking at *hesed* at the same time as the conduct of men toward God.

#### A. IN THE BOOK OF HOSEA

In order to understand *hesed* in the Book of Hosea as a reciprocal relationship among men and as an explicit one toward God, we must briefly analyze the relationship between God and man, and God and Israel, as presented in this book. There is a reciprocal relationship between God and Israel.<sup>1</sup> God provides for His people,<sup>2</sup> grants peace and rest,<sup>3</sup> stands by to help,<sup>4</sup> and is full of benevolence.<sup>5</sup> The people,

<sup>1</sup> Hos. 2:25; 1:9.

<sup>2</sup> Hos. 2:10 f.

<sup>3</sup> Hos. 2:20.

<sup>4</sup> Hos. 12:10.

<sup>5</sup> Hos. 11:3, 4; 3:1.

on the other hand, must obey the divine commandments, heed His demands, and remain faithful in thought and deed. Their duties toward God are the unceasing preservation of the true knowledge of God and continuous adherence to a way of life pleasing to Him. The people must practice *אמת*, *צדקה*, *משפט*, and particularly *חסד*.<sup>6</sup> If the people forsakes its duties, God censures it, and misfortune is the consequence of action in opposition to God's demands.<sup>7</sup> Total obduracy brings with it the risk of rejection.<sup>8</sup>

In Hos. 4:1 we read that God is engaged in litigation with Israel because Israel has not fulfilled the conditions of its relationship to God. The land lacks *אמת*, *חסד*, *דעת אלהים*, loyalty, love and knowledge of God. The words are joined together in ascending significance. *Hesed* comprises *emeth*, and both are contained in *da'ath 'elohim*. The next verse gives the reason why God is angry with His people: there was cursing, lying, theft, adultery, and murder rampant in the land. The reference to the Decalogue is obvious. The people's relationship to God was founded on religious and ethical principles. Ethical conduct was the basis of true religion. Knowledge of God required fidelity and love, both of God and of men toward one another, manifested by the fulfillment of the ethical commandments. A people acting against the demands of *emeth* and *hesed* is also incapable of true knowledge of God.

*emeth* = truth  
faithful  
0591

In Hosea *hesed* is a lofty concept, highly refined in the heart of the prophet. It is no longer conduct corresponding to a reciprocal relationship within a narrow circle, but the proper conduct of all men toward one another. On the one hand, mankind is regarded as one large family, and on the other, as children of one heavenly father. The word *hesed* signifies man's readiness for mutual aid, stemming from a pure love of humanity; it is the realization of "the generally valid divine commandment of humaneness."<sup>9</sup> *Hesed* does not reside in the punctilious offering of sacrifices or in external religiosity, but in ethical and religious behavior and the devoted fulfillment of the divinely ordained ethical commandments. In this respect *hesed* as humane conduct is not different from the *hesed* of men toward God. True religious motivation is discernible from ethical deeds.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Hos. 4:1; 6:4, 6; 10:12; 12:7.

<sup>7</sup> Hos. 4:1-3; 11:8.

<sup>8</sup> Hos. 9:15 f.; 2:4 f.; 4:6; 5:6.

<sup>9</sup> Wellhausen, *Die Kleinen Propheten* (Berlin, 1898), *ad. loc.*

<sup>10</sup> It is impossible to limit *hesed* in chap. 4:1 to a man to man relationship as is done by W. R. Harper (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Amos and Hosea* [Edinburgh, 1910]), *ad. loc.*

It is difficult to translate the word *hesed*. "Love" would be correct if one understands under this rubric what has just been said of *hesed*. However, for "love" Hosea uses אהבה.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps one could best render *hesed* as "religiosity" or "*pietas*."<sup>12</sup>

In Hos. 6:4 God reproaches Israel because its *hesed* is inconstant. The people saw in the life of the cultus the truly religious life and did not know what really pleased God. The people had no notion of how they should act in order to gain God's favor. The divine will, however, is clearly expressed in Hos. 6:6: "I desire *hesed* and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God, not burnt offerings."<sup>13</sup> In his commentary on Ps. 50, Stärk states what would fit well in this context: "Spiritual service of God and a life of ethical purity — this is God's will for His people. Only he who aspires after this can inherit the kingdom of God."<sup>14</sup> *Hesed* and *da'ath elohim* are here made parallel. Without *hesed* there is no knowledge of God, and a knowledge of God presupposes *hesed*. *Hesed*<sup>15</sup> is demanded by God, being both man's task and his hope.<sup>16</sup>

In the same sense *hesed* also appears in Hos. 10:12 and 12:7.<sup>17</sup> In 10:12 we discover the conditions which Israel has to fulfill in order to come to terms with God. "Sow in justice and you will harvest in *hesed*," admonishes the prophet. By practicing justice and charity among themselves, men find the way to God and to their salvation. Only through mutual reciprocity of צדקה and חסד does mankind, in everyday life, manifest the proper attitude and conduct toward God. Only in this way can they find Him and achieve communion with Him.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Hos. 3:1; 9:15; 11:1, 4; 14:5. In Hos. 11:4, Kittel, *B. H.* and Cheyne (*Encyclopaedia Biblica*, p. 2826, fn. 2) want to read חסד for אדם as being a synonym for אהבה. This is unacceptable, for אהבה in Hosea refers to individual love; חסד is reciprocal and obligatory love.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Wildeboer, *Die Sprüche* (Freiburg i.B., 1897), re chap. 3:3; Harper, *loc. cit.*, re Hos. 10:12.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. I Sam. 15:22 f.; Ps. 50:8; 69:31 f.; Isa. 10:1 f.; 40:16; 66:1 f.; Jer. 7:21 f.; Amos 5:21 f.; Stärk, *Die Lyrik*<sup>2</sup> (Göttingen, 1920), p. 136.

<sup>14</sup> Stärk, *op. cit.*, p. 262.

<sup>15</sup> Harper, *loc. cit.*, has recognized here the correct meaning of *hesed*. He says that *hesed* "is not love for God as distinguished from love for one's fellowmen, but both."

<sup>16</sup> Hos. 2:23-25.

<sup>17</sup> Steuernagel, *op. cit.*, p. 608, "vs. 7 can be an admonition of Hosea addressed to Israel." Cf. also Procksch, *Die kleinen prophetischen Schriften vor dem Exil* (Stuttgart, 1910), *ad. loc.*

<sup>18</sup> Gressmann, *Die älteste Geschichtsschreibung und Prophetie Israels* (Göttingen<sup>2</sup>, 1921), *ad. loc.*



In Hos. 12:7 we read: "So you, by the help of your God, return,"<sup>19</sup> keep חסד and משפט, and trust confidently in your God." These words, although addressed to Jacob, may be applied to the whole people of Israel.<sup>20</sup> Its conduct must be in accordance with משפט and חסד before Israel can return to God. Actual ethical action must testify to the inner transformation. *Mishpat* is to be understood in the sense of doing good and hating evil,<sup>21</sup> and *hesed* as the ethical and religious conduct of men among themselves, which proves man's obedience to the divine commandments and makes communion between man and God possible. justice

It is important to point out that in Hosea, too, חסד occurs next to אמת as well as next to צדקה and משפט. *Hesed* in the totality of its meaning corresponds to the demands of loyalty, and as divinely ordained conduct, it corresponds at the same time to the demands of justice and righteousness. While אמת, משפט, and צדקה are by no means synonyms for *hesed*, they are nevertheless all related to the concept. He who acts in accordance with *hesed* will also naturally practice loyalty and righteousness. *Hesed*, however, is more than this; it is humaneness and brotherliness toward all. It is the true expression of genuine religiosity.

#### B. IN OTHER PROPHETIC BOOKS AND COGNATE LITERATURE

If one wants to sound the keynote of the Hebrew Bible, it can be expressed as the never-ending striving of genuinely religious men to achieve unity with the will of God. Despite all obstacles, and in the face of all justification for doubt, and in spite of all inclination toward resignation, the truly God-intoxicated man profoundly and bravely says "Yes" to the world and beats a path to God. Walking in God's ways, he strives to find a humble place in the ranks of God's elect. As long as he follows God, God turns to him.<sup>22</sup> There is *hesed* between God and the righteous man tied to Him by ethical and religious conduct. Such men are received into His communion. In Jer. 2:2-3 we read:

<sup>19</sup> Procksch, *loc. cit.*; Nowack (*Die Kleinen Propheten* [Göttingen, 1922], *ad. loc.*), among others, translates: "You will return to your tents."

<sup>20</sup> Steuernagel, *op. cit.*, p. 608; cf. Procksch, *loc. cit.*; Gressmann, *op. cit.*, p. 395.

<sup>21</sup> Hertzberg, *Die Entwicklung des Begriffes משפט im A. T. Z.A.W.*, Vol. 40, 1922, p. 286.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *supra*, fn. 20.

I remember the devotion of your youth,<sup>23</sup> your love as a bride, how you followed Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holy to Yahweh, the first fruits of His harvest. All who ate of it shall rue it; evil shall come upon them.

With true loyalty Israel followed Yahweh through the inhospitable wilderness. Placed on trial, the people passed the test, became קדוש to Yahweh, ראשית תבואתה, and enjoyed his special protection. They achieved communion with God. Practicing *hesed*, the people received *hesed* from Yahweh. The *hesed* which Israel showed Yahweh was the same *hesed* that the members of a family were obliged to show toward one another.<sup>24</sup> The *hesed* mentioned in our passage is conditioned by אהבת כלולתיך. The *hesed* practiced by Israel toward Yahweh was the mutually obligatory relationship of rights and duties in harmony with the family-like relationship between Yahweh and Israel. In this context *hesed* cannot be rendered as "graciousness," "affection," "kindness," "favor," or "love," as has been done in various modern commentaries.<sup>25</sup> All these are but peripheral aspects of *hesed*, not the core of the concept. Sellin's statements on *hesed*, with regard to Hos. 6:6 and Jer. 2:2, are wrong. He says:

חסד is to Hosea not only as in ancient times the condescension of the superior to an inferior but also courting love, the love of the people for Yahweh who courts them just as in Ruth 3:10, where it speaks of the affection of the young woman for her wooer. Later on, the word was understood in the same sense in Jeremiah 2:2.<sup>26</sup>

Volz<sup>27</sup> and Cheyne<sup>28</sup> come closest to the true meaning of *hesed* when they translate חסד נעורייך as "the loyal affection of thy youth." For *hesed* was the most important quality the Israelite knew, since it corresponded to the reciprocal relationship of rights and duties. True communality was both a necessity for life and an ideal, and *hesed* was the way leading to its fulfillment.<sup>29</sup> This concept was then trans-

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia*, ad. loc.; Torczyner (as per oral communication) reads: "I remembered in your favor. . ."

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Ch. I, pp. 38-43.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Schmidt, *Die grossen Propheten* (Göttingen, 1923), ad. loc.; Reuss, loc. cit.; Orelli, *Der Prophet Jeremia* (München, 1905), ad. loc.; Duhm, *Das Buch Jeremia* (Tübingen, 1901), ad. loc.; Giesebrecht, *Das Buch Jeremia* (Göttingen, 1907), ad. loc.; Rothstein (in Kautzsch<sup>4</sup>), ad. loc.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Sellin, *Das Zwölfprophetenbuch* (Leipzig, 1922), p. 53. Cf. particularly my remarks pp. 51-52, pp. 40-43.

<sup>27</sup> Volz, loc. cit.

<sup>28</sup> Cheyne, loc. cit.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Ch. I, pp. 38 f.

ferred to the relationship with Yahweh with the sure intuitive knowledge that the holy and the profane constitute one inseparable whole. Through *ḥesed*, communion with Yahweh was sought and made possible.

Mic. 6:8<sup>30</sup> furnishes a striking proof for the use of *ḥesed* in the sense of mutually reciprocal conduct of men among themselves and explicitly *vis-à-vis* God. As in Hosea, the people are again unequivocally told that God has no pleasure in burnt-offerings, and that genuine religiosity does not consist of cultic behavior<sup>31</sup> but rather in the love of one's fellow man, which is the same as faithfulness toward God. We read: "It has been told you, O man, what is good; and what Yahweh requires of you, namely, to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God."<sup>32</sup> *מִשְׁפָּט אֱהָבַת חֶסֶד, וְלִמְנוּחַ* and *לִדְרֹת אֱלֹהִים* are required of men, as is the case in Hos. 4:1 with regard to *אֱמֻנָה* and *חֶסֶד* and *דְּרֹת אֱלֹהִים*. Here, as in Hos. 4:1, the words seem to be arranged together in a sequence of ascending significance. Love of humanity<sup>33</sup> includes within it righteous conduct and is already included in an humble attitude toward God. *Ḥesed*, which formerly existed only between those who stood in a fundamentally close relationship toward one another, undergoes considerable expansion in meaning. Every man becomes every other man's brother, *ḥesed* becomes the mutual or reciprocal relationship of all men toward each other and toward God.

In Job 6:14 *ḥesed* is clearly used in the same sense. The text is corrupt and requires emendation: "He who withholds *ḥesed* from his friend forsakes the fear of the Almighty."<sup>34</sup> The *ḥesed* one must practice toward one's friends and fellow men is the basic condition and the first proof of the fear of God. In Prov. 16:1 we read: "By *ḥesed* and

<sup>30</sup> Steuernagel, *op. cit.*, pp. 627-8, thinks that this verse is authentic. Staerk, *Die Entstehung*, p. 98, says: "Micah 6:6-8 is a gospel fragment in the O.T., perhaps a fragment from the seventh century."

<sup>31</sup> Chap. II, fn. 13.

<sup>32</sup> Sellin's translation: "Did men tell you what is good? And what Yahweh requires of you other than . . ." is not acceptable. The verse is not constructed antithetically. If that were the case the whole impact of the command would be lost. As a matter of fact *אֱמֻנָה* actually refers to Israel and through Israel to all of mankind and cannot be understood as the subject. Sellin suggests the emendation *הַיָּסוּד* for *הַיָּסוּד*, but this change is unnecessary. Cf. Sellin, *Das Zwölfprophetenbuch* (Leipzig, 1922), *ad. loc.*

<sup>33</sup> Compare against Orelli, *Die zwölf kleinen Propheten* (München, 1908), *ad. loc.*

<sup>34</sup> Beer, *Der Text des Buches Hiob* (Marburg, 1897), reads *מֵס* for *מֵס*; Merx, *Das Gedicht von Hiob* (Jena, 1871), reads *מֵס מְרַעְיוֹ חֶסֶד*; Hoffmann, *Hiob* (Kiel, 1891), reads *לִמְנוּחַ* for *לִמְנוּחַ*.



ʿemeth iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord evil is avoided." *Ḥesed* and ʿemeth are the distinctive characteristics of the man devoted to the will of God, and make communion with God possible for him. Devotion which is faithful to this communion with God is the essence of fear of the Lord. Whoever has sinned and wishes to achieve atonement with God can, through inner repentance clearly evidenced through deeds of *ḥesed* and ʿemeth, regain a worthy place for himself in the community of his fellow men and in the congregation of the Lord.<sup>35</sup>

In Prov. 3:3-4 the teacher of wisdom admonishes the youth: "Let not *ḥesed* and ʿemeth forsake you; bind them about your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, so that you will find favor and good repute<sup>36</sup> in the sight of God and man." He teaches that a person should never consider himself as independent, standing alone, but rather as a member of a community in whose general welfare he seeks his own. By the practice of faithful love, this community becomes the community of all the members of the kingdom of God. It is possible that the teacher of wisdom knew Jer. 31:33, when he admonished his students and listeners to inscribe חסד ואמת on the tablets of their hearts. They are to keep the covenant written by God upon their hearts and to win Him as their God by proving themselves loyal servants through beneficent actions. Children of God, who love God and who are desirous of winning His love, must first begin by practicing divine love among themselves.

In Zech. 7:9 we read that Yahweh says, through the prophet: "Render true judgments, show brotherliness and mercy (חסד ורחמים)!" *Ḥesed* is more than *mishpat* ʿemeth, and from *ḥesed* to *raḥamim* is but a short step. *Ḥesed*, however, embodies the idea of obligation which is not at all the case with *raḥamim*. *compassion* (חסד)

true justice  
compassions

In Ps. 109 we have the prayer of a pious man who, in moral indignation, asks God not to show *ḥesed* to his oppressor<sup>37</sup> because the latter never showed *ḥesed*.<sup>38</sup> The oppressor attacked him without reason; persecuted the poor and the afflicted, who are the first to whom one must show *ḥesed*; and disregarded the relationship of trust which has to exist among all men. He also had no love for God. Therefore, according to the worshiper's wish, he should be thrust out of the community and the congregation of the Lord.

We have so far analyzed those passages in which *ḥesed* meant the

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Hos. 12:7; 10:12.

<sup>36</sup> חסד ורחמים cf. Kittel, *B. H.*, *ad. loc.*

<sup>37</sup> Vs. 12.

<sup>38</sup> Vs. 16.



conduct of men toward one another, corresponding to a reciprocal relationship among men, as well as the conduct of men in relation to God. God demanded *hesed* (of men). We now move on to those passages in which *hesed* appears as the reciprocal conduct of people toward one another and only implicitly toward God.

## II. *HESED* IN THE PROPHETIC AND COGNATE LITERATURE AS THE RECIPROCAL CONDUCT OF MEN TOWARD ONE ANOTHER AND IMPLICITLY TOWARD GOD

It is impossible to separate ethics from religion in prophetic and cognate literature.<sup>39</sup> They form a unity and are indissolubly bound together. Hence, in this literature *hesed* has direct reference to God, even in those passages which ostensibly only concern themselves with men. The statement of Prov. 3:4, that he who practices *hesed* is favored by God and man, is true also of the passages with which we shall deal in this category. These passages make it very clear that the fulfillment of ethical and religious obligations of men brings blessing upon them; that he who acts in accordance with *hesed* will be treated in accordance with *hesed*.

### A. *HESED*-DEEDS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

#### I. BY PEOPLE IN GENERAL

In Prov. 11:17 *hesed* is clearly revealed in terms of its social character: "A man who practices *hesed* benefits himself, but a cruel man cuts into his own flesh."<sup>40</sup> A member of the human family who obeys its laws has the joy and the reward of fulfilling the tasks set by God, of achieving nearness to Him. The individual, however, does not do good calculatedly so as not to fare badly at the hands of others, but rather to live up to the ethical and religious obligations imposed upon him by mankind and the religious community. Consequently, *hesed* is shown also to the sick, the poor, and the helpless, who may never be able to reciprocate in kind. According to the beliefs of the ancients, however, a direct relationship between a person's conduct and destiny existed — his righteous conduct would

<sup>39</sup> Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia* (Leipzig, 1922), p. 294.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Volz, *Weisheit*, in "Die Schriften des A. T." (Göttingen, 1921), *ad. loc.*

somehow be reciprocated, since this is God's ordained plan for the world.<sup>41</sup> Subjectively understood, *hesed*, especially that shown to the poor, may appear as mercy or grace. Objectively, however, *hesed* remains the obligatory relationship of men toward one another, and implicitly as well as explicitly toward God. *Hesed*, in regard to a deed and its consequences, appears distinctly in Prov. 19:22: "The gain of a man is his *hesed*."<sup>42</sup> Here the thought is expressed that blessing and salvation are the portion of one who practices *hesed*. *Hesed* entails a subtle kind of reward. Whoever views all men as members of his own family, and keeps the welfare of the whole human family before him, creates his own way leading to the kingdom of God (this is not expressed openly but is implied) and will achieve communion with God.

In Prov. 21:21 we read: "He who follows after צדקה and חסד finds חיים, צדקה and כבוד." Apparently, the text speaks here only concerning men; still, *hesed* must also relate to God. *Hesed*, as the conduct of men toward one another corresponding to a reciprocal relationship, is also the right conduct toward God. The full meaning of the whole sentence is: "He who follows righteousness<sup>43</sup> and brotherliness finds life, justice<sup>44</sup> and honor before God." חסד and צדקה are not synonymous here, for *hesed* is richer in meaning.<sup>45</sup> *Ẓedakah* means right conduct, and in this passage perhaps even more. *Hesed* is conduct corresponding to a reciprocal relationship, brotherliness, and love in general. In its response to the demands of doing right, *hesed* naturally encompasses *ẓedakah*. The difference in meaning between *ẓedakah* and *hesed* gradually diminishes so that *ẓedakah* is absorbed in the meaning of *hesed*.<sup>46</sup> A צדיק and an איש חסד are one and the same,<sup>47</sup> the *ẓadik* practices *hesed*.<sup>48</sup>

*Hesed*, in relation to action and consequence, also occurs in Prov. 14:22: "Indeed, those who devise evil come to error, but those who devise good have *hesed* and עֲמֶת as recompense." Here the thought

<sup>41</sup> Prov. 19:17: "He that helps the poor lends to God; He will repay him his good deed."

<sup>42</sup> Read תבואה for תאוה. Cf. Kittel, *B. H.*, *ad. loc.*, Wildeboer, *loc. cit.*, Frankenberg, *Die Sprüche* (Göttingen, 1898), *ad. loc.*, *passim*.

<sup>43</sup> Kautzsch, *Über die Derivate des Stammes צדק im Alttestamentlichen Sprachgebrauche* (Tübingen, 1881), p. 144.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Ch. II, pp. 58-59; Isa. 16:5; Jer. 9:23; Ps. 33:5; 40:11, 12; 85:11; 89:15; 36:11; 103:17, 18; 145:17.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Dalman, *Die richterliche Gerechtigkeit im A. T.* (Berlin, 1897), p. 7, fn. 6.

<sup>47</sup> Isa. 57:1.

<sup>48</sup> Ps. 141:5; cf. Prov. 27:6.

spirit

faithfulness

remains unexpressed that those who practice goodness may expect like conduct from God. Those who fulfill the obligations of human society and of God's covenantal community shall enjoy their prerogatives and rights. However, those who do wickedly forfeit their rights in human society and will be excluded from God's covenantal community as well. Whoever wishes to experience *ḥesed* and *ʿemeth* must first practice *ḥesed* and *ʿemeth*.

It is the glory of the woman of valor that she acts according to *ḥesed*. In the beautiful thirty-first chapter of Proverbs, v. 26, she is praised with the words: "She opens her mouth with wisdom and the teaching of kindness (חַסֵּד חַסֵּד) is on her tongue." The woman of valor speaks and acts with love. That a lesson taught with loving kindness is valuable and spiritually useful can be discerned from Ps. 141:5: "Out of kindness a good man strikes me and rebukes me."

## 2. BY RULERS

In Prov. 20:28 we read that a king must build his throne on *ḥesed* if it is to endure. For the *ḥesed* which a king practices ensures him the *ḥesed* and the *ʿemeth* of his subjects and, it goes without saying, of his God, to whom he pays homage.<sup>49</sup> The duties of the king, as ruler, are identical with the religious and ethical obligations, the fulfillment of which will make his realm endure.<sup>50</sup> We would like to translate the verse: "Love and loyalty will protect the king if he builds his throne on love."<sup>51</sup> It has been proposed to read with the Septuagint צַדִּיק for the second חַסֵּד in the verse,<sup>52</sup> such as in Isa. 9:6 and Prov. 16:12; this, however, is unnecessary. *Ḥesed* already encompasses צַדִּיק, and there is no need to change the text.

In Isa. 16:5 it is likewise possible to understand *ḥesed* as the ethical and religious conduct of a king;<sup>53</sup> "Then a throne will be established in steadfast love and on it will sit in faithfulness in the tent of David a judge who seeks justice and is quick to do righteousness." In ancient times *ḥesed* was the conduct prescribed by the mutual relationship of rights and duties between king and people. Here, as in Prov. 20:28, *ḥesed* signifies more: it is the conduct of the king, as a servant of the Lord, toward his subjects.

<sup>49</sup> Ps. 61:8.

<sup>50</sup> Prov. 29:14.

<sup>51</sup> Frankenberg, *loc. cit.*; Strack, *Die Sprüche Salomos* (Nördlingen, 1888), *ad. loc.*, suggests the translation "Die Ausübung von *ḥesed* und *ʿemeth* . . ."

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Kittel, *B. H.*, *ad. loc.*; Torczyner (oral communication).

<sup>53</sup> Also Dillmann, *Der Prophet Jesaia* (Leipzig, 1890), *ad. loc.*; Orelli, *Der Prophet Jesaia* (München, 1904), *ad. loc.*

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*Hesed* is also to be understood in this sense in Ps. 101:1: "I will sing of loyalty and of justice, to thee, O Lord, I will sing praises." A king presents "the religious and ethical tenets of his rule,"<sup>54</sup> namely — *hesed* and *mishpat*. *Hesed* is the love which is identical with the demands of law and justice; it unites the members of a group. The love and justice which men practice toward one another give implicit evidence of their proper attitude toward God. It is in this way that verse 1b is to be understood. This is the interpretation of Kessler and Baethgen.<sup>55</sup> Kessler says: "The further content of the psalm shows that *hesed* and *mishpat* refer to a human relationship." On the other hand, according to verse 1b, the poem is in praise of Yahweh. Both are unified if one considers that, through *hesed* and *mishpat*, we have conduct prescribed by God which corresponds to a divine quality and relationship, which may likewise be expressed through *hesed* and *mishpat*.

We saw in this chapter that *hesed* is the conduct of men toward one another, which corresponds to a reciprocal relationship. Explicitly as well as implicitly, it is also the proper relationship of men toward God, which implies that *hesed* is at one and the same time in accord with the demands of morality and of true religion. Before concluding our analysis of *hesed*, as used in this sense, we shall still have to look at those passages in which *hesed* occurs particularly between man and man.

### III. THE *HASID* - 02623 *image of / loving kindness* (*haw-seed*) (*hesed!*)

#### A. AS THE OPPOSITE OF THE SINNER

The *hasid* is the faithful servant of the Lord<sup>56</sup> who gains communion with Him because he has proved himself worthy, through ethical and religious conduct. He relies on God.<sup>57</sup> He practices justice, shows loyalty and love, and orders his daily life according to the divinely ordained ethical commandments. In Ps. 37:28, as in Ps. 97:10 and I Sam. 2:9,<sup>58</sup> the *hasid* is contrasted with the wicked and the godless;<sup>59</sup> he enjoys the love of God, while the sinner faces extinc-

<sup>54</sup> Staerk, *Lyrik*<sup>2</sup>, p. 256.

<sup>55</sup> Kessler, *Die Psalmen* (München, 1899), *ad. loc.*; Baethgen, *Die Psalmen* (Göttingen, 1904), *ad. loc.*

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Ps. 86:2; 79:2; 143:12; 119:124; 31:17; II Chron. 6:41, 42.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Ch. II, fn. 56; Ps. 32:6; 145:10; 30:45; Neh. 13:14.

<sup>58</sup> Ehrlich, *Randglossen zur Hebräischen Bibel* (Leipzig, 1910), Vol. III, *ad. loc.*, reads חסידיו יאיר מענלי חסידיו ישמר for חסידיו ישמר מענלי חסידיו יאיר.

<sup>59</sup> Ps. 52:3.



tion.<sup>60</sup> In Prov. 11:17 the *אִישׁ חָסֵד* is the opposite of the *אֲכֹרִי*, the heartless.

### B. IDENTICAL WITH THE HONEST AND THE JUST

Through Ps. 18:26 and II Sam. 22:26 we see that the *ḥasid* is the same as the *גִּבּוֹר תָּמִים*, the upright man. In Mic. 7:2 *יֵשֶׁר בָּאָדָם*, the just man, is equated with the *ḥasid* as are the *יֵשֶׁרִים* and the *הַלְכֵי חֵם* to the *ḥasidim* in Prov. 2:8. In Isa. 57:1 *צַדִּיק* is parallel to *חָסֵד*.

### C. IDENTICAL WITH THE FAITHFUL

In Prov. 20:6 *אִישׁ חָסֵד* is parallel to *אִישׁ אֱמוּנִים*.<sup>61</sup> To understand *אִישׁ חָסֵד* in this verse, as one who merely makes fair promises but is not a responsible person,<sup>62</sup> totally contradicts *ḥesed*'s essence. Inextricably intertwined with *חָסֵד* are *אֱמֶת* and *אֱמוּנָה*.<sup>63</sup> Consequently, an *אִישׁ חָסֵד* must also be an *אִישׁ אֱמוּנִים*.<sup>64</sup> As Frankenberg correctly notes, he is "not a man who holds out prospects and makes promises leaving the one concerned in a lurch, but who actually performs acts of charity and is loyal, pious, and charitable."<sup>65</sup> This verse points up the vast difference between mere assertion and action; not everyone who has the reputation of being a *ḥasid* necessarily is one.<sup>66</sup> Only he is a *ḥasid* who is an *אִישׁ אֱמוּנִים*, who comports himself with his neighbor and God in loyalty, by showing *ḥesed*. God cares for him, protects him and enables him to participate in His sacred<sup>67</sup> community. With great zeal, He fulfills the promise made to those who are loyal to Him, just as they had been zealous in fulfilling His commandments, through ethical and religious deeds. To the *ḥasid*, He shows Himself as a *ḥasid*.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>60</sup> In Ps. 27:28 read *עֹלִים נִשְׁמְרוּ* for *לְעֹלָם נִשְׁמְרוּ*. Cf. Staerk, *loc. cit.*; Kittel, *B. H.*, *ad. loc.*

<sup>61</sup> In agreement with Luther, Beer in Kittel's *B. H.* and others read *יִקְרָא אִישׁ חָסֵד*. If the text is to remain unchanged, translate with Frankenberg, *loc. cit.*, "Many men boast, each of his *ḥesed*, but who may find one who speaks the truth."

<sup>62</sup> Delitzsch, *Das Salomonische Spruchbuch* (Leipzig, 1873), *ad. loc.*; Strack, *loc. cit.*; Wildeboer, *loc. cit.*

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Frankenberg, *loc. cit.*; Gen. 21:23; 47:29; Josh. 2:14; II Sam. 2:6; Hos. 4:1; Prov. 3:3; 14:22; 16:6.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Ps. 31:24; 12:2. <sup>65</sup> Frankenberg, *loc. cit.*

<sup>66</sup> This reminds one of Ibsen's *Pillars of Society*.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Ps. 97:10; 37:28; I Sam. 2:9; Ps. 85:9; 16:10; 31:24; 43:1; 52:11; 116:15; 132:9, 16; 148:14; 86:2; 149; 89:20.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Ps. 145:17; 18:26; II Sam. 22:26; Jer. 3:12.

The relationship between God and people was one of mutual rights and duties with *hesed* as the norm of conduct. It was a covenant-alliance based on *hesed* and existing because of *hesed* exactly as in the case of a secular alliance.<sup>69</sup> The relationship could be maintained only as long as *hesed* was mutually practiced. *Hesed* was also to be viewed as a task whose completion must always remain a distant goal. The obligations of the members of the alliance never ended; their mutual rights were valid for all times. Only he who practiced *hesed* could receive *hesed* from his ally. We saw that it is only toward the *hasid* that God acts as a *hasid*.<sup>70</sup> Whoever was a *hasid* could remain such only so long as he consistently proved himself a *hasid*. This was the meaning of Prov. 20:6,<sup>71</sup> and this is also the meaning of Ps. 50:5. The close connection between *hesed* and *berith* is clearly in evidence in this verse, for חסיד is parallel with בריתי. However, this does not mean that *hesed* is a synonym for *berith*, as Elbogen maintains.<sup>72</sup> *Hesed* is the premise and effect of a *berith*; it constitutes the very essence of a *berith* but is not yet a *berith*, even though there can be no *berith* without *hesed*.<sup>73</sup> The *hasidim* fulfill their covenantal obligations in that they practice *hesed* and may, for this reason, be designated as כרתי בריתי. In Ps. 50:5 they are the members of the divine covenant<sup>74</sup> who are under obligation to abide by the covenant made with God. There is a clear allusion here to the Sinaitic covenant found in Exod. 24:5 f. The *hasidim* are taken to task and censured for having failed to uphold the ethical and religious conditions of the covenant, and not because they have been lax in offering sacrifices. For the latter, God could not care less.<sup>75</sup> He who is superficially religious but in fact a moral reprobate, neglectful of the ethical Decalogue, ought not dare to enumerate the statutes of the Lord and talk about His covenant.<sup>76</sup> Elbogen correctly remarks<sup>77</sup> that, in view of the rebuke administered to the *hasidim*, the expression "my faithful" (the usual translation for חסיד being "my faithful ones") would have been intended ironically. This, however, does not fit the prophetic tone of the author. If God had recognized the *hasidim* as His faithful, it would have been wrong for Him to reproach them for their lack of true piety. The *hasidim* referred to here, as Kittel pointedly remarks,

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Ch. I, pp. 46 ff.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. *supra*, fn. 68.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. p. 67.

<sup>72</sup> Elbogen, *loc. cit.*

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Elbogen, *loc. cit.*

<sup>75</sup> Vss. 8-13.

<sup>77</sup> Elbogen, *loc. cit.*

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Ch. I, pp. 46 ff.

<sup>76</sup> Vss. 16-20.

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are "the people, not called so for its actual goodness, for that is contested, but for its true relationship to Yahweh."<sup>78</sup> They are God's allies and they can keep up their relationship with Him only by perpetually fulfilling His ethical commandments. They can be, and remain, *ḥasidim* only as long as they comport themselves according to the sacred covenant concluded at Sinai and as long as they practice *ḥesed*.

We have seen that *ḥesed* corresponds to the demands of loyalty, of justice and of righteousness. The *ḥasid*, the *ḥesed*-practicing individual, fulfills the demands of loyalty, of righteousness and of love. His attitude toward men and God is in accord with society and the Lord's covenantal community.

### Summary

From the preceding investigation we conclude the following:

- A. *Ḥesed* is practiced mutually by all men, as co-equal members of human society.
- B. *Ḥesed* is the reciprocal conduct of men toward one another and, at the same time, explicitly and implicitly, the proper relationship toward God. These two aspects of *ḥesed* are inseparable.
- C. As reciprocal ethical and religious conduct, *ḥesed* fulfills the demands of loyalty, justice, righteousness, and honesty. These concepts are embraced in its meaning.
- D. *Ḥesed* is embodied in the concepts "knowledge of God" and "fear of God" and can be used synonymously for them.
- E. The meaning of *ḥesed* can best be translated as religiosity, piety, kindness, and love of mankind.
- F. *Ḥesed* is very closely related to the concept of mercy, but is distinguished from it in that *ḥesed* is obligatory.
- G. Subjectively understood, *ḥesed* can appear as favor, mercy, compassion. Objectively, *ḥesed* remains obligatory, determined by the divinely-based ethical commandments which are the laws of human society.
- H. The *ḥasid*, as one who practices *ḥesed*, is similarly defined.
- I. *Ḥesed*, as human conduct in the ethical and religious sense, occurs only in the prophetic and related literature.

<sup>78</sup> Kittel, *Die Psalmen* (Leipzig, 1922), *ad. loc.*



## CHAPTER III

### *Hesed* as Divine Conduct

#### I. *HESED* AS THE RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP OF GOD TO THE PATRIARCHS

In Gen. 24 we read of the journey which Abraham's steward made to Mesopotamia, where Abraham's relatives lived,<sup>1</sup> in order to choose a wife for Isaac. He stopped in the town where Naḥor,<sup>2</sup> Abraham's brother,<sup>3</sup> dwelt. The steward entreated God to show *hesed* to his master by helping him to fulfill the task set by Abraham. "And he said: 'O Yahweh, the God of my master Abraham, grant me good luck today, and show *hesed* to my master Abraham.' " (Gen. 24:12) He asked Yahweh to let him know whether he would really show *hesed* to Abraham.

So, I will stand by the spring while the daughters of the townsmen come out to draw water. Let it be, that the maiden to whom I will say, "Please, lower your jar, that I may drink," and who says, "Drink, and I will also water your camels," she will be the one that you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that you have shown *hesed* to my master.<sup>4</sup> (Gen. 24:13-14)

Everything happened as he had imagined it. When he learned the name of the gracious girl, he thanked Yahweh for having led Rebecca,<sup>5</sup> Abraham's niece, to him, to be affianced as Isaac's wife.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Procksch, *Die Genesis*, re chap. 24:7; König, *Die Genesis*, p. 454, fn. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The name of the town was Ḥaran. Cf. Gen. 11:31; 12:5; 27:43; 28:10; König, *ibid.*, re chap. 24:10.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Gen. 22:20-23; 24:15, 24, 47-48.

<sup>4</sup> Procksch, *loc. cit.*, assigns vss. 13-14 a b<sup>a</sup> to E and vs. 14 b<sup>β</sup> as well as vs. 12 to H. Gunkel, in *Die Urgeschichte und die Patriarchen*, *ad. loc.*, also distinguishes in chap. 24 two different recensions, J<sup>a</sup> and J<sup>b</sup>, and likewise assigns vss. 13-14 a b<sup>a</sup> to the second one, J<sup>b</sup>, and like Procksch lets vs. 14 b<sup>β</sup> follow upon vs. 12. It is an interruption which leaves vs. 14 b<sup>β</sup>, so to speak, suspended in mid-air. How is the servant to recognize that Yahweh had shown *hesed* to his master if not in the manner suggested by him in vss. 13-14 a b<sup>a</sup>?

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *supra*, fn. 3; Holzinger in Kautzsch, *Die Heilige Schrift*<sup>4</sup>, p. 46, fn. b



And he said, "Blessed be Yahweh, the God of my master Abraham, who has not withheld his *ḥesed* and his faithfulness from my master. For<sup>6</sup> Yahweh has led me on the right road<sup>7</sup> to the house of my master's kinsmen."<sup>8</sup> (Gen. 24:27)

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In these passages *ḥesed* is something which is due to Abraham and which Abraham's servant expects and asks for from Yahweh because of the special relationship between Yahweh and his master. When praying to Yahweh to show Abraham *ḥesed* or in thanking him for it, he addresses Yahweh as "the God of my master Abraham."<sup>9</sup> Gunkel correctly states: "It is customary to include in the prayer of the worshiper certain predicates of God that justify the request of the worshiper."<sup>10</sup> Yahweh was the God of Abraham; Abraham was his servant.<sup>11</sup> Theirs was a very distinct relationship which imposed upon them certain rights and duties — a relationship of mutual reciprocity expressed by *ḥesed*. This relationship was different from a purely secular one, not in its premises or consequences, but by the nature of the two parties involved. By the same right with which Abraham's servant could demand *ḥesed* and *ḥemeth* for his master from his relatives,<sup>12</sup> he could also ask Yahweh to help him, and through him Abraham, by showing the latter *ḥesed*. The basis for the mutuality between Abraham and Rebecca's family was consanguinity. The basis for the relationship between Yahweh and Abraham was God's act of choosing Abraham and his promise to aid Abraham and his offspring.<sup>13</sup> (*Ḥesed* is also mentioned in connection with Yahweh's covenant with the Patriarchs, as will be shown later.)<sup>14</sup> Both alliances put upon the participants the obligation to exercise *ḥesed* mutually. The *ḥesed* of Yahweh is, therefore, not to be understood as "grace," "favor," or "kindness," but as the covenantal relationship between him and Abraham. In verse 27, as in verse 49, *חסד ואמת* are to be re-

faithfulness

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. B. H.; Procksch, *loc. cit.*

<sup>7</sup> Cf. vs. 48, according to which one should perhaps read here *בדרך אמת*; Procksch, *loc. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> Cf. B. H.; Gunkel, *loc. cit.*; Holzinger, *loc. cit.*

<sup>9</sup> Vss. 12, 27, 42, 48.

<sup>10</sup> Gunkel, *Genesis* (Göttingen, 1910), p. 253.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Ps. 105:6, 42; Isa. 41:8.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. vs. 49; Ch. I, pp. 11-12.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Gen. 24:7; 12:1-3; 26:24; 32:10-13; 28:13-16; 31:3; Ps. 105:42; Mic. 7:20. Regarding Gen. 24:7, cf. Procksch, *op. cit.*, p. 141. He says: "וְאִשְׁרָא דִּבְרַ לִי and וְאִשְׁרָא נִשְׁבַּע לִי seem to be variants of which the one with נִשְׁבַּע is deuteronomic and stems from R, where the oath of God is emphasized."

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Kraetzschmar, *op. cit.*, pp. 143 f. Gen. 15:18; 17:2 f.; Exod. 6:4; Lev. 26:42; Deut. 4:31; 7:12; Ps. 105:8 f.; Ch. III, pp. 73 ff.

garded as hendiadys, in which *ʔemeth* has the value of an explanatory adjective. Wherever *hesed* appears together with *ʔemeth* or *ʔemunah*, the quality of loyalty inherent in the concept *hesed* is emphasized.<sup>15</sup> The servant praises Yahweh who had faithfully shown *hesed* toward Abraham. In verse 48 he also speaks of the "way of loyalty"<sup>16</sup> by which Yahweh had guided him in the fulfillment of his request. Yahweh's covenant-based loyalty (*gemeinschaftgemässe Treue*) naturally presupposed Abraham's loyalty to him.<sup>17</sup>

In Gen. 32:11 *hesed* occurs also in connection with *ʔemeth*. In his plea to Yahweh for protection from Esau (Gen. 32:10-13), Jacob humbly rendered thanks for the loyal assistance he had already received from Yahweh. He says in verse 11a: "I am not worthy of all the *hasadim*"<sup>18</sup> and of all the loyalty which you have shown to your servant." Just as Abraham's servant first referred to the relationship between Yahweh and Abraham by addressing him as "God of my master Abraham," thereby establishing his claim to the fulfillment of his prayer, so Jacob addressed God in verse 10 as "God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac," and thanked him for the *hesed* shown him in the past when praying to him for deliverance from danger. Implicitly, he uses this as the basis for his hope in Yahweh showing *hesed* and *ʔemeth* in the future.<sup>19</sup> In verse 11 he also refers to the promise<sup>20</sup> upon which the relationship between Yahweh and his fathers is founded and calls himself Yahweh's servant.<sup>21</sup> In everyday life *hesed* was the reciprocal conduct expected in the relationship between master and servant.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, *hesed* characterizes the reciprocal relationship between Yahweh and his servants. Yahweh keeps his promise and consequently shows *hesed* to those who walk

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ch. I, pp. 43, 47, 54; Ch. III, p. 35; Gen. 32:11; 47:29; Exod. 34:6; Deut. 7:9; II Sam. 2:6; 7:15-16; 15:20; Josh. 2:14; Isa. 55:3; Hos. 2:21-22; 4:1; Mic. 7:20; Ps. 25:10; 26:3; 31:24; 36:6; 40:11-12; 57:4, 11; 61:8; 69:14; 77:9; 85:11; 86:15; 88:12; 89:2, 3, 15, 25, 29, 34, 50; 92:3; 98:3; 100:5; 115:1; 117:2; 119:41; 138:2; Prov. 3:3; 14:22; 16:6; 20:6; 20:28; Lam. 3:22-23.

<sup>16</sup> Procksch, *loc. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> Cf. the two narratives, Gen. 22:1-14; 19:15-18.

<sup>18</sup> Like LXX and in agreement with Procksch, *loc. cit.*, it is also possible to read חסד instead of חסדים. He explains the חסדים in ים as a cacography of the חס in the following word ויכל. Cf. also Reuss, *loc. cit.*; Gunkel, *loc. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> Gunkel, *ibid.*, p. 358: "This prayer of thanksgiving also contains a consolation: God who helped so often will not forsake His faithful in this instance either."

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *infra*, fn. 30, p. 73.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. vs. 11; *infra*, fn. 28.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Ch. I, pp. 51-52.

before him.<sup>23</sup> *Ḥasadim* are the reciprocal acts which Yahweh performed, in his faithfulness, to his servant Jacob.

In Mic. 7:20 the hope is expressed that Yahweh will keep the *ḥemeth* and *ḥesed* he swore to Jacob and Abraham. Jacob and Abraham signify all of Israel.<sup>24</sup> *Ḥesed*, in connection with *ḥemeth*, always means an attitude of mutual loyalty. The relationship created by God's oath required the practice of *ḥesed* and *ḥemeth*. They are, as Nowack says, "the essential content of the promise."<sup>25</sup> Thus *ḥesed* can be translated as "loyalty" and also as "love" so as to emphasize that it is Yahweh's *ḥesed*. However, one must remain aware that a very particular kind of "love" is meant, conforming to loyalty and obligation and thereby fulfilling the conditions of the covenant.

Ps. 98:3 speaks of the *ḥesed* and *ḥemunah* of Yahweh toward Jacob<sup>26</sup> and Israel. "He has remembered his avowed loyalty to 'Jacob'; His faithfulness to the house of Israel. The ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God."<sup>27</sup> With full faith in the actualization of Yahweh's promise, the writer describes the expected *ḥesed* and *ḥemunah* due, in accordance with faithful covenantal loyalty, as if the event were already in the past. It is hardly an accident that verse 3b mentions Yahweh's "victory." Further, in verse 2 we read: "Yahweh has made known his victory, he has revealed his vindication in the sight of nations." צדקה and ישועה (meant in the sense of the covenantal relationship of Yahweh toward all the people of Israel)<sup>28</sup> are the acts by which Yahweh shows his *ḥesed* and *ḥemunah* in history.<sup>29</sup>

Deut. 7:12<sup>30</sup> makes mention of the *ḥerith* and the ensuing *ḥesed* sworn by Yahweh to the patriarchs. The covenant<sup>31</sup> concluded between Yahweh and the patriarchs, established through an oath, had *ḥesed* as a consequence. *Ḥesed* was the content of every *ḥerith* as well

<sup>23</sup> *Infra*, fn. 156, p. 89.

<sup>24</sup> Nowack, *Die Kleinen Propheten*, *ad. loc.*, says: "אברהם just like יעקב personifies the nation descended from him."

<sup>25</sup> Nowack, *loc. cit.*

<sup>26</sup> Cf. B. H.; Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms* (Edinburgh, 1916), *ad. loc.*; Staerk, *loc. cit.*

<sup>27</sup> Staerk, *loc. cit.*

<sup>28</sup> Kautzsch, *Über die Derivate des Stammes צדק im Alttestamentlichen Sprachgebrauch*, p. 45.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Ch. II, pp. 59, 61-62, 64-65, 65-66. Ps. 6:5; 13:6; 17:7; 18:51; II Sam. 22:51; Ps. 31:17; 33:5; 40:11-12; 57:4; 69:14; 85:8; 86:2; 119:41; 132:9, 16; II Chron. 6:41; Hos. 2:21; Jer. 9:23; Ps. 33:5; 36:11; 85:11, 15; 103:17-18; 145:17.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Deut. 7:9; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Dan. 9:4; I Kings 8:23; II Chron. 6:14.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. *supra*, fn. 14, p. 71.



as every covenantal relationship.<sup>32</sup> *Ḥesed*, *per se*, could also be the object of an oath.<sup>33</sup> The fundamental relationship among the terms *ברית*, *חסד* and *שבועה* is also attested to in Jewish liturgy, in the *Zichronoth* prayer for the new year.<sup>34</sup> Elbogen alludes to this.<sup>35</sup> In the liturgy we read:

וקיים לנו . . . את הברית ואת החסד ואת השבועה אשר נשבעת לאברהם

*Ḥesed* is contained in *b<sup>e</sup>rith*<sup>36</sup> and, like a *b<sup>e</sup>rith*, it could be established by an oath, as is attested to in this passage.<sup>37</sup> *ברית*, *חסד* and *שבועה* are closely related to one another and, therefore, are synonymous,<sup>38</sup> since they express — and this is the significance of their juxtaposition — Yahweh's acceptance of Abraham and his descendants into the covenant.

<sup>32</sup> The arguments given by Kraetzschmar (*op. cit.*, pp. 145-6) as to why *חסד* was put beside *ברית*, are wrong. He says: "Accordingly, the divine mercy (*חסד*) which depended on Yahweh's will alone was not regarded as a sufficient guarantee for the continuance of his favor. The extremely strong guilt feelings which appeared during the 7th century necessitated a stronger support against God's punishing justice than the concept *hesed* would offer. In addition, the progressive removal of the deity into the heights of a transcendental world which threatened to become inaccessible to men made it necessary to find a firm buttress which made man certain of the enduring nearness of God despite his transcendence. These supports were supplied by the concept of the *b<sup>e</sup>rith* existing between God and Israel. It was something to which one could appeal, in the face of God's wrath as well as in petitions for help." Against this, it may be remarked that *חסד* was put beside *ברית* because it belongs there and constitutes the contents of *ברית*. *Ḥesed*, as well as *b<sup>e</sup>rith*, secures the continuance of the divine favor as long as the people fulfill the obligations of the covenant. Neither *b<sup>e</sup>rith* nor *hesed* can prevail against the punishing justice of God. Cf. Ps. 89:31-38; II Sam. 7:14-15. There is no other expression in the Old Testament which, as our investigation shows, expresses as definitely as *hesed* the closest partnership relation between God and his faithful, and it was precisely to this that the faithful appealed in their prayers for help.

In contrast to Kraetzschmar, Driver (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy* [Edinburgh, 1912], on Deut. 7:9) understood the nature of *hesed* correctly. He says: "*Ḥesed* is a wider and a more comprehensive term than 'mercy'; 'mercy' is properly the quality by which a person renounces, out of motives of benevolence or compassion, his legitimate rights against one, for instance, who has offended or injured him; but *hesed* is a quality exercised mutually among equals; it is the kindliness of feeling, consideration, and courtesy, which adds a grace and softness to the relations subsisting between members of the same society."

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Ch. I, pp. 39, 45, 47-49.

<sup>34</sup> Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Leipzig, 1924), pp. 141 f.

<sup>35</sup> Elbogen, *חסד — Verpflichtung, Verheissung, Bekräftigung*, p. 44.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Ch. I, pp. 46 f.

<sup>37</sup> Deut. 7:8-9.

<sup>38</sup> Elbogen, *loc. cit.*



The phrase at the beginning of the *sh'moneh 'esre*,

וּזְכֹר חֲסִדֵי אֲבוֹת וּמֵבִיא גּוֹאֵל לְבְנֵי בְנֵיהֶם

to which Elbogen makes reference,<sup>39</sup> must be translated: "He (the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) remembers the faithfulness sworn to the fathers in the covenant, and brings the redeemer for their children's children." It could also be translated: "God remembers the covenant<sup>40</sup> with the fathers . . ." Elbogen here renders חֲסִדֵי<sup>41</sup> as "covenant."<sup>42</sup> The preceding words, גּוֹמֵל חֲסִדִּים טוֹבִים,<sup>43</sup> form a close connection with זְכוֹר חֲסִדֵי אֲבוֹת. God remembers the *ḥesed* he swore to the fathers and brings salvation to their descendants' children (the implicit hope is thereby expressed that it shall remain so in the future). He is first called the God who repays the חֲסִדִּים, the deeds resulting from the reciprocal relationship of his faithful,<sup>44</sup> by exercising *ḥesed* toward them.

## II. ḤESED AS THE RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP OF GOD TO DAVID AND HIS HOUSE

Yahweh promises David (II Sam. 7) to show *ḥesed* to his descendants. We read in verses 14-16 (I Chron. 17:13-14):

I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men; but I will not take away my *ḥesed* from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.<sup>45</sup>

The very fact of Yahweh's choosing David,<sup>46</sup> after having rejected Saul, created a relationship entailing *ḥesed*. (In Ps. 132:11-12 mention is made of the oath Yahweh swore to David to maintain his throne

<sup>39</sup> Elbogen, *ibid.*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Ch. III, pp. 77-79.

<sup>41</sup> Elbogen, *loc. cit.*, remarks: חֲסִדֵי אֲבוֹת is *genitivus objectivus* like חֲסִדֵי דָוִד in Isa. 55:3.

<sup>42</sup> Elbogen, *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Elbogen, *ibid.*, p. 46, fn. 1, says: "גּוֹמֵל חֲסִדִּים טוֹבִים is a gloss probably added here for the purpose of using חֲסִדִּים also in another meaning as a stylistic refinement." Cf. Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst*, pp. 27, 43.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Ps. 13:6; Isa. 63:7; Prov. 11:17; 19:17; Ps. 62:13.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Gressmann, *Die älteste Geschichtsschreibung*, *ad. loc.*; Kittel in *H. S.*<sup>4</sup>, *ad. loc.*

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Ch. I, pp. 42 f.

faithfully, if his descendants would keep the divine covenant.) Yahweh explains, and at the same time strengthens, his promise when he says the relationship between him and David's descendants is to be the same as between father and son. The relationship between father and son was, as is known, a mutual relationship of rights and duties,<sup>47</sup> which made necessary the reciprocal practice of *hesed*. As Kittel remarks, David's descendants were to be Yahweh's sons "in an ethical sense." "God is considered father and he as God's son, and this entails ethical obligations."<sup>48</sup> Yahweh's ethical demands could not have been emphasized more strongly, and his own obligations could not have been more emphatically underscored. A father would never withhold his *hesed* from his sons; if he did so, he would not be a father. It is self-evident that the sons had to comport themselves with *hesed* to the father, otherwise they would risk punishment.

In Ps. 89 the contents of II Sam. 7:14-16 are repeated almost verbatim in poetic form.<sup>49</sup> The author, who bases his entire poem on God's *hesed*, stressed every aspect of the relationship between Yahweh and David, which made the practicing of *hesed* both possible and necessary. Yahweh swore by his faithfulness to show David *hesed*,<sup>50</sup> by designating the relationship between himself and David as that which exists between a father and his first-born.<sup>51</sup> He committed himself to the obligation involved in his promise to show *hesed* to David and his descendants, as was called for in the covenantal relationship existing between them. This *hesed* was one with God's faithfulness, as is evident in several places in Ps. 89.<sup>52</sup> In verse 34,<sup>53</sup> Yahweh says that he will not withhold his *hesed* or break his loyalty with David's descendants. In this connection we recall Gen. 21:23 where שָׁקַר is the opposite of חֶסֶד.<sup>54</sup> *Hesed*, in Ps. 89, is parallel not only to *ḥesed*, or *emeth*, but also to *ḥesed* — and herein lies the essential difference between Ps. 89 and II Sam. 7:14-16. We read in Ps. 89:29: "My *hesed* I will keep for him for ever, and my *ḥesed* will remain firm for him." This parallelism can be understood only if it is recognized that *Yahweh's* promise to show David's house *hesed* is identified in Ps. 89 with *ḥesed*. Parallel to נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְדָוִד עַבְדִּי in verse 4b

<sup>47</sup> I Sam. 10-11, 23.

<sup>48</sup> Kittel in *H. S.*, p. 462, fn. "c."

<sup>49</sup> Vss. 25, 27-28, 31-34.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. vss. 50, 25, 34: Ps. 132:11-12.

<sup>51</sup> Vss. 27-28.

<sup>52</sup> Vss. 2, 3, 25, 34, 50, 15.

<sup>53</sup> Vs. 36.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Ch. I, p. 45.

we find in verse 4a כרתי ברית לבחירי. We learn from verse 50 that it was *ḥesed* to which Yahweh had sworn and it was *ḥesed* which was the actual substance of the covenant:

איה חסדיך הראשנים אדני נשבעת לדור באמונתך

Although the parallel in verse 29 between *ḥesed* and *b<sup>r</sup>ith* evidences that the two concepts are related, they are still not identical in meaning. *Ḥesed* is the result of a *b<sup>r</sup>ith* relationship, as of any other relationship, and to that extent distinct from *b<sup>r</sup>ith*. However, since *b<sup>r</sup>ith* and *ḥesed*, above all, express the idea of covenant, the difference in meaning is, for practical purposes, only a formal one and serves only to highlight clearly the concept of *ḥesed*. In this chapter *ḥesed* could be rendered as "covenantal loyalty."

If we read in verse 20 לחסדיך for להסדיך,<sup>55</sup> and, in agreement with Kittel,<sup>56</sup> make it refer to David, it would have to be translated as a "member of your covenanted group."<sup>57</sup> The writer probably alludes to II Sam. 23:1-4.<sup>58</sup> To his elected<sup>59</sup> and anointed Yahweh shows his covenant-based *ḥesed*.<sup>60</sup>

Isa. 55:3,<sup>61</sup> like Ps. 89, goes back to II Sam. 7. In Isa. 55:3 we find almost verbatim the content of Ps. 89:4, 50:

ואכרתה לכם ברית עולם חסדי דוד הנאמנים

Here again we see the relationship between *b<sup>r</sup>ith* and *ḥesed*, as well as the subordination of the latter to the former. 'חסדי ד' הנ' is here a "closer definition of the object"<sup>62</sup> with regard to *b<sup>r</sup>ith*. Budde translates: "the inviolable mercies of David" and explains, "One might also add the ב of the covenant condition before חסדי. In any event, the sentence must be understood in this way. That which David was promised remains binding and shall find its fulfillment in Israel."<sup>63</sup> Duhm translates "the everlasting mercies of

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Kittel, *Die Psalmen*, *loc. cit.*; Gunkel, *Die Psalmen* (Göttingen, 1926), *ad. loc.*; König, *Die Psalmen* (Gütersloh, 1926), *ad. loc.*; Duhm, *Die Psalmen* (Tübingen, 1922), *ad. loc.*

<sup>56</sup> Kittel, *loc. cit.*, "It is a 'vision' of David himself, not as in the main narrative of II Sam. 7 of Nathan."

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Isa. 50:5; Cf. ch. II, p. 68.

<sup>58</sup> Kraetzschmar, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

<sup>59</sup> Ps. 89:4.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Ps. 18:51; II Sam. 22:51; I Sam. 2:10.

<sup>61</sup> II Chron. 6:42.

<sup>62</sup> Delitzsch, Franz, *Biblischer Kommentar über den Propheten Jesaja* (Leipzig, 1879), *ad. loc.*

<sup>63</sup> Budde in *H. S.*<sup>4</sup>, *loc. cit.*



David," which should "more closely characterize the covenant... What once was promised to David and his house shall come to pass."<sup>64</sup> While these explanations render the correct meaning, the translations are erroneous. This is so, not merely because acts of grace refer to the past and promises to the future,<sup>65</sup> but primarily because חסדי, here determined more specifically by הנאמנים, cannot possibly appear as mercy when connected with *b'erith* in its obligatory manifestation. The only possible translation would be to render *hesed* as conduct in accordance with the covenant, or, in this passage, as "covenant" *per se*. We translate, then: "I shall make an alliance with you: the inviolable covenant with David." Translated similarly is זכרה לחסדי in II Chron. 6:42: "Remember the covenant with David your servant," or, "remember the loyalty sworn to your servant David." The covenantal relationship between Yahweh and David, which corresponded to *hesed*, is further emphasized by calling David God's servant.<sup>66</sup>

In I Kings 8:23-25 (II Chron. 6:14-16), in his plea for God's aid, Solomon alludes to the promise concerning David, the *b'erith*, and the corresponding *hesed* which Yahweh preserves for those of his servants who walk wholeheartedly before him.<sup>67</sup>

In I Kings 3:6 Solomon says:

You have shown great *hesed* to your servant David, my father, because he dealt with you in loyalty, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart; and you have kept for him this great *hesed*, and have given him a son who sits on his throne this day.

As a result of this promise,<sup>68</sup> Yahweh had acted toward David in accordance with the covenant, just as David had fulfilled the obligations resulting from this *hesed* relationship with Yahweh by walking before him in loyalty, righteousness and uprightness. Unexpressed in the above passage remains Solomon's wish, which appears in II Chron. 1:8-9, that Yahweh grant him also the promise given to David: "You have shown great *hesed* to my father, and have made me king in his stead. O Yahweh, let your promise to David my father remain unbroken." Solomon refers to Yahweh's *ḥemunah* in praying for the

<sup>64</sup> Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja* (Göttingen, 1923), *ad. loc.* Similar translations and interpretations appear in the commentaries of Dillmann, Delitzsch, Marti, Haller.

<sup>65</sup> Elbogen, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. chap. III, pp. 89-91.

<sup>67</sup> *Infra*, chap. III, fn. 156, p. 89.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. II Sam. 7:14-16; Ps. 89; 119:41, 76; Isa. 55:3.



fulfillment of Yahweh's promise to David. In faithfully fulfilling His promise, God should also act toward him according to the demands of covenantal loyalty. That Solomon calls Yahweh's *hesed* "great"<sup>69</sup> does not change the characteristic of obligatoriness in the concept *hesed*. It is thereby emphasized that it is Yahweh's *hesed*, that which he was committed to enact by virtue of his promise.

### III. *HESED* AS THE RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP OF GOD TO HIS PEOPLE

#### A. GOD AND HIS FAITHFUL PEOPLE

In Ps. 85 *hesed* occurs as God's conduct in accordance with the covenant toward the people who serve Him faithfully. Those who returned from the Exile had not experienced the fortunate times for which they had hoped.<sup>70</sup> For the people, this could only mean that God had not shown favor in the measure it expected, according to the covenant. For this reason verse 8 pleaded: "Show us your *hesed*, O Yahweh, and grant us your salvation." In this verse שַׁעַר is parallel to חֶסֶד. Like *hesed*,<sup>71</sup> the salvation of Yahweh, which is included in it,<sup>72</sup> is also granted only to those who fear him.<sup>73</sup> In the prayer itself, there is the assurance of it being heard and the confident faith that a just God will protect and bless the righteous. In verse 9, we read:

I will hear what God the Lord will speak,<sup>74</sup> God<sup>75</sup> will speak peace<sup>76</sup> to His people, to all the members of His congregation (חֲסִידָיו), to those who turn their hearts to Him.<sup>77</sup>

The blissful future is then described in a beautiful vision, in verse 11: "*Hesed* and *emeth* will unite; *zedek* and *shalom* will kiss each other." *Hesed* has the same meaning here as in verse 8, and together with *emeth* is a hendiadys and forms an indissoluble unity. The meaning

<sup>69</sup> Cf. remarks on Gen. 19:19, chap. I, p. 43.

<sup>70</sup> Vss. 1-7.

<sup>71</sup> *Infra*, chap. III, fn. 154, p. 89.

<sup>72</sup> *Supra*, chap. I, fn. 29, p. 43.

<sup>73</sup> Vs. 10.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. B. H.; Staerk, *loc. cit.*

<sup>75</sup> Staerk, *ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> Cf. König, *loc. cit.*, Bertholet in H. S.<sup>4</sup>, *ad. loc.*

<sup>77</sup> Cf. B. H.; Baethgen, *loc. cit.*; Duhm, *Die Psalmen*, *loc. cit.*; Staerk, *loc. cit.*; Kittel, *loc. cit.*; Bertholet, *loc. cit.*; Gunkel, *loc. cit.*

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of *hesed* as Yahweh's conduct toward his people, based on the covenant, is emphasized by the parallelism of *zedek* and *shalom*. For *zedek* is here, as Kautzsch maintains, "the covenantal loyalty, God's loving relationship to Israel, by virtue of the promises made by Him."<sup>78</sup> *Shalom*, in verse 10, seems to be identical with the same word in Isa. 54:10<sup>79</sup> and Jer. 16:5<sup>80</sup> and must also be understood here as Yahweh's conduct toward his people, according to the covenant and the reciprocal relationship existing between them.

A community faithful to God could expect its deliverance from dire need by Yahweh because of his *hesed*, his covenant-based conduct through which he renders loyal aid to his people. The prayer in Psalm 44 is to be understood in this sense. The author points to the help once given to the forefathers,<sup>81</sup> by stressing the loyalty that the nation gave toward the covenant.<sup>82</sup> On this he bases his claim to being answered, entreating God in verse 26: "Rise up, come to our help! Deliver us for the sake of thy *hesed*."<sup>83</sup>

In Ps. 77 the poet, in the face of his people's plight, is in danger of losing his faith in God's just rule. In deepest despair he asks (vs. 8): "Has His *hesed* ceased forever? Is His *emeth* at an end for all time?"<sup>84</sup> The *hesed* expected from God on the basis of the covenant, according to which He faithfully assists His people and brings them deliverance, had not materialized. The poet himself supplies the answer concerning his lamentful "why?"<sup>85</sup> God, who had redeemed His people from Egypt and who led them through Moses and Aaron,<sup>86</sup> will certainly intervene once again for His people. God's glory was, so to speak, intertwined with Israel's fate.<sup>87</sup>

Yahweh's *hesed* toward his people is repeatedly mentioned in prayers of petition and of thanksgiving in the formula: הוֹדוּ לַיהוָה כִּי טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם הַסֶּדֶר. Only in Ezra 3:11 is Israel explicitly mentioned in the formula. But all the other passages occur only with reference to Israel.<sup>88</sup> Those who fear God sing the psalm of thanksgiving: "His *hesed* endures forever,"<sup>89</sup> for God grants His *hesed* to those who, by

<sup>78</sup> Kautzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. chap. III, p. 84.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. chap. III, p. 70.

<sup>81</sup> Vss. 2-9.

<sup>82</sup> Vs. 18.

<sup>83</sup> Ps. 115:1.

<sup>84</sup> Read אִמְתּוֹ instead of אִמְרֵי. Cf. B. H.; Briggs, *loc. cit.*; Duhm, *loc. cit.*; Staerk, *loc. cit.*; Gunkel, *loc. cit.*

<sup>85</sup> Vs. 8.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. vss. 15-16, 21; Exod. 15:13; Ps. 106:45.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Ps. 115:1; *supra*, pp. 92 f.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Jer. 33:11; Ps. 100:5; 106:1; 107:1, 8, 15, 21, 31; 118:1-4, 49; 136; 1 Chron. 16:34, 41; II Chron. 5:13; 7:3; 20:21.

<sup>89</sup> Ps. 118:4.

their fear of the Lord, prove their loyalty to the covenant.<sup>90</sup> The formula occurs in Ps. 106:1; and we read in verse 45: "He remembered for their sake His covenant, and relented<sup>91</sup> according to the abundance of His *ḥesed*."<sup>92</sup> *Ḥesed*, which in this context means conduct in accordance with the covenant,<sup>93</sup> is not to be differentiated from the *ḥesed* in verse 1 nor from the *ḥesed* in all of the other verses where the formula is found. God's goodness, which is mentioned in these passages in connection with His *ḥesed*, in no way influences the established meaning of *ḥesed* and does not lead to a meaning of *ḥesed* as favor, as one might expect. For the pious, it was an act of Yahweh's grace that he had entered into a covenant with them and showed them *ḥesed* in accordance with his promise. His *ḥesed*-deeds were miracles to them.<sup>94</sup> While the *ḥesed* relationship between Yahweh and his people was regarded as having originated through his goodness, *ḥesed* itself remained the mutual relationship of rights and duties which Yahweh had obligated himself to show.<sup>95</sup> In this sense only is *ḥesed* to be understood; for example, Ps. 136:10, at the end of the verse. The reason for Yahweh's smiting the first-born of Egypt (vs. 10), Israel's liberation (vs. 11), casting Pharaoh and his hosts in the Sea of Reeds (vs. 15), slaying mighty kings and otherwise demonstrating all his power for the sake of his people throughout the course of history, must not be sought in his favor, grace or goodness. Yahweh's opposition to the enemies of Israel and his own enemies could not be the result of his grace. He stood by the people of his covenant, faithfully executing the *ḥesed* to which they were entitled by virtue of that relationship. By praising Yahweh at the beginning and at the conclusion of the psalm as the King of kings, the creator of heaven and earth, the sustainer of all living beings, the power he demonstrated in his *ḥesed* for Israel was emphasized anew, and his everlasting *ḥesed* was thereby extolled. *Ḥesed* is best translated in these stereotyped passages as "covenantal loyalty"<sup>96</sup> or "faithful assistance according to the covenant."<sup>97</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Cf. chap. III, p. 89.

<sup>91</sup> Instead of *וַיִּחַן* read *וַיִּחַן*. Cf. *B. H.*; Exod. 15:13; Ps. 31:4; 45:3; 77:21; Neh. 9:12.

<sup>92</sup> Read *וַיִּחַן*; Cf. *B. H.*; Staerk, Kittel, Bertholet, Gunkel.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. chap. III, pp. 76 f.

<sup>94</sup> Ps. 138:2, 8; 25:10; 119:41, 76; 103:17-18.

<sup>95</sup> Ps. 106:7; 107:8, 15, 21, 31; 136:4; 4:4; 17:7; 31:22.

<sup>96</sup> Ps. 100:5.

<sup>97</sup> Perhaps this meaning of *ḥesed*, as the mighty covenantal aid of Yahweh, is the cause of the confusion of the probably older meaning of *ḥesed* in Ps. 89:9 with



In Ps. 48 we read that, on the occasion of some festival in Jerusalem, the assembled multitude celebrated Yahweh's saving power by which he rescued his people and his city from the conquerors (vss. 5-7). They probably had in mind the threat against Jerusalem by Sennacherib;<sup>98</sup> with grateful hearts they could say: "We recall on your covenantal loyalty, O God, in the midst of your temple" (vs. 10).

In Exod. 15:13<sup>99</sup> *hesed* must also be understood as Yahweh's covenantal relationship through which he renders steadfast assistance to his people: "You have led in your *hesed* the people whom you have redeemed, you have guided them by your strength to your holy abode." It is significant that here בעֵץ is parallel to בחסד; God's might, exercised for the sake of His people, is virtually identical with His *hesed*. עז and חסד are not synonymous, but the showing of *hesed* can lead to the practice of עז.<sup>100</sup> Here, too, *hesed* can be translated as "covenantal loyalty" or "faithfulness according to the covenant." In different contexts *hesed* can be translated differently as "faithfulness," "assistance," "covenant," or "love." All these are aspects of the total concept. For example, *hesed* is not some kind of arbitrary assistance, but rather that which the members of a covenant are obligated to practice reciprocally. This meaning of *hesed* as the faithful, mutual assistance among people who are bound together by a covenantal relationship mirrors, perhaps, the original meaning of the word. Groups were formed so that through reciprocal assistance common dangers could be combated and overall security established. This distinct kind of aid, as well as the whole relationship in accord with the rights and obligations of the community, was called *hesed*.

#### B. GOD AND HIS PEOPLE — LOYAL AGAIN AFTER ITS DEFECTION

God practiced *hesed* toward His people even after they had turned away from Him through sin, provided that they found Him again through repentance, as evidenced by renewed ethical and religious conviction

the Aramaism חסין. The latter stands out in the Hebrew construction if it is not, as Briggs, *loc. cit.*, thinks, simply a scribal error. Cf. also Staerk, *loc. cit.* Elbogen, *op. cit.*, p. 46, points out that *hesed* in Isa. 40:6 is translated in the Targum by חוקפיה. He then translates *hesed* in this context as "confidence." However, cf. Dan. 2:37 where חקפה is synonymous with חסנה.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Kittel, *loc. cit.*, II Kings 18:17 f.

<sup>99</sup> *Supra*, chap. III, fn. 91.

<sup>100</sup> Concerning the connection between חסד and עז cf. Ps. 59:10-11, 17-18; 62:12-13; 138:2-3.



and conduct. The covenantal relationship between Him and His people could then be reinstated and the people could once again hope to receive His covenant-based *ḥesed*. *Ḥesed* is really the positive element in the pardoning of sins by which God confirms that the union between Him and His people is restored. In this context the translation of *ḥesed* as grace or favor is more justified than elsewhere. To the repentant sinners, even if they have again fulfilled their religious duties with the greatest of zeal and could rightfully hope to receive *ḥesed* from God, His *ḥesed* would still appear to them as grace. In itself, however, *ḥesed* is not grace but faithful love. It is the covenantal loyalty shown by Yahweh even to sinners when they again fulfilled the ordinances of his covenant. In His רחמים and סליחה,<sup>101</sup> God forgives the repentant defectors. In His *ḥesed* He receives them again into His covenant.

# I. THE PEOPLE BOUND TO GOD IN MARRIAGE

Hos. 2 reports how Yahweh desires to be reunited in a new marriage pact with Israel after she repents her sin. She was the wife whom he had cast off for her adultery. Just as a marriage in everyday life was based upon the mutual relationship of rights and duties, namely *ḥesed*,<sup>102</sup> so Yahweh wanted to conclude his betrothal with Israel through *ḥesed*. In Hos. 2:21 he mentions the gifts which he intends to bring into the marriage as a kind of purchase price,<sup>103</sup> and in verse 22 he states what he demands of his bride. "I will betroth you to me forever<sup>104</sup> in *ḥesed* and *raḥamim*. I betroth you to me in faithfulness<sup>105</sup> and you shall 'know' Yahweh."<sup>106</sup> Yahweh's covenantal *ḥesed* and *raḥamim* had to be reciprocated by Israel with covenantal loyalty and the recognition of Yahweh. דעת יהוה, which

<sup>101</sup> Kittel, *op. cit.*, p. 402.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. chap. I, pp. 39 f.; p. 60.

<sup>103</sup> It was customary for the groom to pay a certain sum in acquiring a wife. Cf. Gen. 24:53; 31:5; 34:12; II Sam. 3:14.

<sup>104</sup> Nowack, *loc. cit.*; Harper, *loc. cit.*; Sellin, *loc. cit.*; Gressmann, *loc. cit.*, consider במשפט לי בצדק ובמשפט res. 'בצ' ובמ' as a gloss.

<sup>105</sup> Sellin, *loc. cit.*, and Gressmann, *loc. cit.*, connect vs. 22 with Israel. Gressmann alters vs. 22a to read, "I betroth myself to thee." Perhaps it should be read וארשתי לך, "and I am betrothed to thee." Cf. Exod. 22:15; Deut. 22:28. It is impossible to see a reference to Israel's behavior in vs. 21, as Hertzberg does, *op. cit.*, Vol. 40, p. 286. That *ḥesed* as used by Hosea elsewhere depicts a human attitude is no objection. It is impossible for Israel to practice *raḥamim* toward God.

<sup>106</sup> For וידעת read וברעת. Cf. B. H.; Duhm, *Die Zwölf Propheten* (Tübingen, 1910), *ad. loc.*; Nowack, *loc. cit.*; Sellin, *loc. cit.*; Gressmann, *loc. cit.*

is not to be distinguished from רַעַת אֱלֹהִים, obligates Israel to practice mutual *hesed* and *ḥemeth* among themselves and toward God.<sup>107</sup> The added expression *raḥamim* does not change the meaning of *hesed* as being Yahweh's covenantal relationship toward his people, who are united with him in bonds of matrimony. Yahweh also wants to bring *raḥamim*, which exceeds the bounds of *hesed*, into this marriage. If at some future time the people will stray again, Yahweh will not forsake them. If they repent he will, in his mercy, forgive them and keep them. Yahweh will show *raḥamim* as freely as he does *hesed*. Ps. 103:13 reads: "As a father pities his children,"<sup>108</sup> so Yahweh pities those who fear him." In the same psalm, verses 11, 17, a similar sentiment is expressed in that only those who fear the Lord receive His *hesed*.<sup>109</sup> It is but a short step from *hesed* to *raḥamim*. *Hesed* is covenantal loyalty; *raḥamim* is forgiving love.<sup>110</sup> Yahweh's people had to reciprocate *hesed* and *raḥamim* with *hesed*. The people, however, could not show *raḥamim* toward Yahweh.

In Isa. 54, Yahweh promises Israel, his bride, who had been chastened by expulsion, to take her back into his favor<sup>111</sup> and forever to show her the *hesed* that is entailed in the marriage union. "With everlasting covenantal loyalty I will love you,"<sup>112</sup> says Yahweh, your redeemer" (vs. 8). Yahweh bases his relationship with Israel upon a covenant: "For the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed but my loyalty shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,"<sup>113</sup> says Yahweh, who loves you"<sup>114</sup> (vs. 10). The relatedness of *hesed* and *ḥerith* is again shown here, and *hesed* in verse 8 does not mean "mercy" as the close connection with רַחֲמִים seems to indicate. *Hesed*, related to *ḥerith* and *raḥamim* but not synonymous with either, is the attitude Yahweh shows the members of his covenant. It is to them that he grants his peace.<sup>115</sup>

Jer. 16 states that Yahweh withdraws his peace,<sup>116</sup> which is based upon *hesed* and *raḥamim*, from his people which have forsaken

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Hos. 4:6; 6:6; chap. II, pp. 56-58, 61-62.

<sup>108</sup> Maybe רַחַם should be translated here as "shows himself a kinsman." Cf. Gen. 43:30; I Kings 3:26; Isa. 13:18; 49:15; Jer. 31:20; Amos 1:11.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. chap. III, p. 89.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Deut. 4:30-31; Jer. 31:3; Ps. 51:3; 103:11-12.

<sup>111</sup> Vs. 7.

<sup>112</sup> Lam. 3:32, 22-23.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Num. 25:12; Ezek. 34:25; Hag. 2:9; Ps. 85:9, 11; Jer. 20:10; 38:22.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Deut. 4:30-31, where Yahweh is called אֱלֹהֵינוּ for keeping the covenant sworn to the patriarchs with those who return to him and obey his commandments.

<sup>115</sup> Ps. 85:9.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Jer. 11:9 f.; Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia* to chap. 16:5.

his commandments. Verse 5<sup>117</sup> states: "For so says Yahweh: Do not enter the house of mourning, or go to lament or bemoan them; for I have taken my peace from this people (says Yahweh) my faithfulness and my love."<sup>118</sup> In Jer. 16:5 שלום is the same as ברית שלום in Isa. 54:10, and the phrase אספתי שלום is identical with הפרי בריתי.<sup>119</sup> We concur with Giesebrecht and Volz<sup>120</sup> that את החסד ואת הרחמים is not a gloss. But if the latter should be the case, as has occasionally been presumed,<sup>121</sup> then את החסד ואת הרחמים would still constitute a correct explanation<sup>122</sup> of שלומי. They constitute the components of Yahweh's covenant of peace. The judgment meted out to Israel, by the withdrawal of Yahweh's *ḥesed* and *raḥamim*, was harsh. Whoever was condemned to live outside the community, was both outlawed and virtually condemned to death.<sup>123</sup>

In Jer. 3:12-13 Yahweh is described as *ḥasid*. If Israel will return repentant to him, he will not perpetuate his wrath toward faithless Israel,<sup>124</sup> whom he has divorced; perhaps recognizing its sins it will return to him. Because the relationship between Yahweh and Israel was one of a marital union,<sup>125</sup> it is clear that Yahweh, as *ḥasid*, was prepared to show *ḥesed* to his repentant people in accordance with the conduct expected in a matrimonial relationship. As Kraetzschmar correctly states,<sup>126</sup> "the dismissal with a bill of divorce did not preclude compassionate reunion with Israel, but only a temporary expulsion from the land. In good Hoseanic style, divine *ḥesed* is the mediator." *Ḥesed* includes the element of mercy, insofar as Yahweh does not act according to *lex talionis* but is always ready to grant *ḥesed* to those who obey his commandments, even if they had previously strayed from him. For this reason כי חסיד אני, in Jer. 3:12, can be translated as "for I am merciful" or "kind." Yahweh as חסיד is also צדיק. In steadfast reliability,<sup>127</sup> stemming from covenantal obligation, he assists and secures justice for all those who call upon him in loyalty and who fear him.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>117</sup> Jer. 11:1-5.

<sup>118</sup> Volz, *loc. cit.*

<sup>119</sup> Giesebrecht, *loc. cit.*

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Giesebrecht, *ibid.*, Volz, *loc. cit.* Giesebrecht retains the whole phrase נאם יהוה את החסד ואת הרחמים, while Volz strikes נאם יהוה.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Duhm in *H. S.*<sup>4</sup>, *ad. loc.*; Cornill, *Das Buch Jeremia* (Leipzig, 1905), *ad. loc.*; Schmidt, *loc. cit.*

<sup>122</sup> Schmidt, *loc. cit.*

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Volz, *loc. cit.*; chap. I, p. 46.

<sup>124</sup> Vss. 8, 13.

<sup>125</sup> Also vs. 14.

<sup>126</sup> Kraetzschmar, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-2.

<sup>127</sup> Kautzsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-5.

<sup>128</sup> Ps. 145:17-20.



## 2. THE PEOPLE BOUND TO GOD BY CONSANGUINITY

In Jer. 31<sup>129</sup> the relationship between Yahweh and Israel is made analogous to that between father and son.<sup>130</sup> This relationship also entailed God's *hesed*.<sup>131</sup> When Ephraim remorsefully does penance, Yahweh turns to him in fatherly compassion.<sup>132</sup> Yahweh could show his *hesed* to the people that returned to him. They are like a son to him whom he never ceased to love. "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you"<sup>133</sup> (vs. 3). Yahweh demands of his people, with whom he is making a new covenant,<sup>134</sup> that they know him. Knowledge of God on the part of the people means practicing *hesed* among themselves and through this, simultaneously, toward God.<sup>135</sup>

In Isa. 63:7-8 Yahweh is praised as the God who grants to his people, his faithful sons, *raḥamim* and *hesed* — the mercy which forgives sin and the love which is in accordance with the covenant.<sup>136</sup>

## 3. THE PEOPLE IN GENERAL IN THE COVENANTAL COMMUNITY

In Ps. 130 the author is conscious of man's sinful nature. Because of it, no man could stand before God were it not for God's forgiveness (*סליחה*)<sup>137</sup> which is granted to those who obey His moral law. In reliance upon God's promise to His followers,<sup>138</sup> the author admonishes them in verses 7-8: "O Israel, hope in Yahweh! For with Yahweh there is *hesed*, and with him is plenteous redemption. He will redeem

<sup>129</sup> Regarding the genuineness of Jer. 31, cf. Volz, *loc. cit.*; Sellin, *Einleitung in das Alte Testament* (Leipzig, 1925), pp. 97-8.

<sup>130</sup> Vss. 9 b-20.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. chap. III, pp. 75 f.

<sup>132</sup> Vss. 18-20.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Cornill, *loc. cit.*; "משך חסד" is connected with the person by ל; we have to assume then in משכחך the pron. suff. stands for the dative, which presents no grammatical difficulty." Cf. Ps. 36:11; 109:12; Reuss, *loc. cit.*; Volz, *loc. cit.*

<sup>134</sup> Cf. vss. 33-34; Isa. 54:8, 10.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. *supra*, fn. 107, p. 84.

<sup>136</sup> Delitzsch's (*loc. cit.*) explanation of *hesed* in Isa. 63:7 as "grace descending upon the sinful creature" is wrong.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. vss. 3-4; Kittel, *loc. cit.*, correctly remarks re Ps. 130:4 that forgiveness is obtained "not by God indiscriminately wiping away sin, out of superficial compassion, but by making His forgiveness dependent upon repentance and the mending of one's ways." (Cf. Jer. 31:34; 33:8.)

<sup>138</sup> Cf. vs. 5; Ps. 119.



Israel from all his iniquities."<sup>139</sup> To those who wait for him,<sup>140</sup> Yahweh grants his covenant and the *hesed* corresponding to it. This involves his forgiveness for the sins of the repentant.

In Ps. 90 we have the people's prayer for God's *hesed*. Preceding this was the admission of sinfulness (vs. 10) and the desire to achieve an understanding heart (vs. 12). In the hope of obtaining God's forgiveness (vs. 13) the people prayed (vs. 14): "Satisfy us in the morning with your *hesed*, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." They longed for God's *hesed* and for communion with Him.

Yahweh is entreated in Num. 14:19: "Pardon the iniquity of this people, according to the greatness of your *hesed*." According to the *greatness*<sup>141</sup> of his *hesed*, Yahweh could forgive sin. Since the plea for forgiveness was already a sign of repentance and change, it gave to a God, who was in the deepest sense of the covenant a loving God, the possibility of making forgiveness real by granting *hesed* to those who had renewed their covenant with Him and whose sins He had forgiven.

The attitude of *hesed*, stemming from covenantal obligation following God's forgiveness, closely approaches His favor. Still *hesed* is not identical with God's favor. However, since the relationship between God and His people was established by the grace of its election, *hesed* is based upon the grace of God. *Hesed* characterizes the manner of these relationships which were determined by God, according to the covenant. It could be held that the origin of the God-people (man) relationship stems from God's favor; and that the structuring of these relationships emanates from His ethical will, by which He demands ethical action not only of His elect but, so to speak, of Himself as well. This grace finds its expression in *hesed*, His covenant-based conduct. ☆

The *hesed*, which occurs in connection with God's grace and the forgiveness of sin, is still different from grace because it is identical with the loyalty characteristic of a group. This is attested to by the fuller expression of the formula in Num. 14:18<sup>142</sup> and in Exod. 34:6 (Ps. 86:15), where the related *emeth* is combined with *hesed*.

אל רחום וחנן ארך אפים ורב חסד ואמת.

The phrase in Exod. 34:7, נצר חסד לאלפים, is probably an allusion to the phrase in Exod. 20:6:<sup>143</sup> ועשה חסד לאלפים לאוהבי ולשומרי מצותי

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Bertholet in *H. S.*<sup>4</sup>; König, *loc. cit.*; Staerk, *loc. cit.*

<sup>140</sup> Cf. *infra*, fn. 156, p. 89.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Ps. 57:11; 86:13; 108:5; 145:8; Gen. 19:19; I Kings 3:6 (II Chron. 1:8).

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Joel 2:18; Jonah 4:2; Ps. 103:8; 145:8; Neh. 9:17.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. Baentsch, *Exodus* (Göttingen, 1903), re Exod. 34:6.

where the conditions revealing the obligatory character of God's *hesed* also are clearly shown.<sup>144</sup> As אֵל רַחוּם וְחַנוּן אֲרַךְ אַפַּיִם, God forgives the repentant sinner; as אֵל . . . רַב חֶסֶד וְאֱמֶת, He receives into His covenant those who have been forgiven and who again love Him and obey His statutes. His attitude to them corresponds to the demand of loyalty — namely, *hesed*. *Hesed* may here be translated as "faithful love." In these, as well as other passages, where God's *hesed* occurs in connection with His grace, *hesed* has a more spiritual meaning. This sublimation consists in the breakthrough of a more or less developed idea, which always occurs in connection with God's *hesed* and now appears clearly — namely, that God's *hesed*, although understood as being in accordance with the covenant, is viewed not as a right but as a gift. This idea is clarified in Ps. 103 where the psalmist praises God, Who forgives his sins and Who crowns him with *hesed* and *rahmim*, reciprocal love, and forgiving grace.<sup>145</sup>

#### IV. *HESED* AS THE RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP OF YAHWEH TO HIS COMMUNITY

##### A. GOD AND HIS FAITHFUL

##### I. GOD AND THOSE WHO KNOW HIM

Yahweh demands of those who wish to obtain his *hesed* that they acknowledge him, as is expressed in Jer. 9:23. This means practicing *hesed*, *mishpat*, and *zedakah*, for Yahweh delights in these.<sup>146</sup> The acceptance of Yahweh is to be understood here in a two-fold sense: one acknowledges Yahweh in his being and actions, and recognizes that the acceptance of Yahweh compels the exercise of *hesed*, *mishpat*, and *zedakah* by people toward one another and toward God.<sup>147</sup> In Jeremiah, as well as in Hosea, to know Yahweh means to comport oneself in accordance with his ethical commandments.<sup>148</sup> As Cornill

<sup>144</sup> Cf. *infra*, fn. 156, p. 89.

<sup>145</sup> Vs. 4.

<sup>146</sup> In Jer. 9:23 בָּאֵלֶּה refers to the previously mentioned objects. Cf. Keil, *Biblischer Kommentar über den Propheten Jeremia* (Leipzig, 1872), *ad. loc.*; Hos. 6:6; Mic. 7:18; Ps. 37:28.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Keil, *loc. cit.*; Orelli, vs., *Jeremia*, *ad. loc.*; Giesebrecht, *loc. cit.*; Cornill, *loc. cit.*, to Jer. 31:34.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. Jer. 22:15-16; 24:7; 31:34; 2:8; 4:22; 9:2, 5; Hos. 2:22; 4:1; 6:6; 5:4; Ps. 103:6.

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rightly remarks,<sup>149</sup> it is in essence identical with what is called ידע אה in משפט יהוה in Jer. 8:7, and ידע דרך יהוה in Jer. 5:4-5. Knowledge of Yahweh, and action in accordance with the ethical command written by him on the human heart,<sup>150</sup> made communion with him possible. Accordingly, Yahweh was obligated to show his loyal love to those who knew him. The divine *hesed*, as the human *hesed*, had also to accord with the demands for justice and righteousness.<sup>151</sup> Yahweh loved *zedakah* and *mishpat*;<sup>152</sup> his *hesed* filled the earth, as Ps. 33:5 stated.<sup>153</sup>

Those who knew God could pray with confidence for His *hesed*, as we read in Ps. 36:10: "Continue your *hesed* to those who know You, and Your *zedakah* to the upright of heart!" *Zedakah* is here again parallel to *hesed*. In Psalms 119, 149 *mishpat* is parallel to *hesed*. *Zedakah* and *mishpat* are not synonymous but are contained in *hesed* as Yahweh's conduct toward his faithful, in accordance with the covenant.

## 2. GOD AND THOSE WHO FEAR HIM

While there are a variety of conditions that must be fulfilled by those who wish to be received in God's covenantal community and have a part in His *hesed*, they all have the same significance. Those who seek God must prove themselves worthy in order to find Him and be received into His covenant. The fear of God makes the granting of His *hesed* possible.<sup>154</sup> As Staerk comments on Ps. 5:8:<sup>155</sup> He who fears God "has recognized Him in His true essence and serves Him strengthened by this blissful knowledge."

Other passages also state that those who love God, serve Him faithfully, keep His commandments and His covenant, and who pray to Him and trust wholly in Him, can confidently expect His *hesed*.<sup>156</sup>

<sup>149</sup> Cornill, *loc. cit.*

<sup>150</sup> Jer. 31:33.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Isa. 16:5; Hos. 12:7; Mic. 6:8; Zech. 7:9; Ps. 101:1; cf. chap. II, pp. 58-59, 61-62. *Supra*, fn. 29, p. 73.

<sup>152</sup> Keil, *loc. cit.*, "*Hesed* is the foundation of right and justice."

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Ps. 37:28; 99:4; 103:6; Keil, *ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Ps. 5:8; 33:18; 147:11; 103:11, 17; Prov. 16:16; Job 6:14; Ps. 25:10, 14; 31:20; 86:11; 61:6, 8; 85:8 f.; 115:1, 11; 145:17 f.

<sup>155</sup> Staerk, *loc. cit.*

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Exod. 20:6; Deut. 5:10; 7:9; Dan. 9:4; Neh. 1:5; 9:32; Ps. 25:10; 103:17-18; 26:3; 119:159; I Kings 8:23; II Chron. 6:14; Ps. 4:4; 86:5; 145:17-20; Ps. 13:6; 21:8; 32:10; 52:10; 143:8; 17:7; 33:18, 22; 144:2; 147:11.



## 3. GOD AND HIS SERVANTS

Just as in everyday life *ḥesed* was entailed in the relationship between master and servant,<sup>157</sup> so it characterized the relationship between Yahweh and his servants. If we understand *ḥesed* in this sense, a new light is shed upon the much criticized and unjustly deprecated passage in Ps. 143:12: *ובחסדך תצמית איבי והאברת כל צררי*. נפשי כי אני עבדך. The usual translation is: "And in your mercy cut off my enemies, and destroy all them that harass my soul, for I am your servant." However much it is recognized that Ps. 143 "is a testimony of great piety and intense desire for salvation,"<sup>158</sup> still the ethical content of the psalm is decried and condemned because of verse 12. This is done most devastatingly and sharply by Duhm, who says:<sup>159</sup>

By his *mercy* Yahweh is to destroy the enemies of the psalmist! One might almost think that the word originally read *בחמתך*, "in thy wrath," since mercy in such a context is repulsive. Unfortunately, however, one may expect much of this of the author.

In fact, entreating God's mercy in such a context would appear strange, even if we could put ourselves in the frame of mind of such a fervently naïve worshiper. Several changes have been suggested here for the word *ḥesed* which translated as "mercy" conflicts with the entire ethical and religious content of the preceding verse of this psalm. Gunkel,<sup>160</sup> agreeing with Duhm, suggests *בחמתך*; Ehrlich (following Gunkel), *בחרון*; Perles<sup>161</sup> wants to translate *ḥesed* here as "strength." With great ingenuity, he also suggests the possibility of a metathesis<sup>162</sup> in verses 11–12, so that the original text would read:

*בחסדך תוציא מצרה נפשי  
ובצדקתך תצמית איבי*

★

All these changes are superfluous if we understand *ḥesed* as conduct corresponding to the covenant by which God helps His faithful.

The worshiper states his relationship to God by calling himself a servant of the Lord, thereby establishing his claim to the fulfillment of his prayer for help against his enemies.<sup>163</sup> The relationship called

<sup>157</sup> Cf. I Sam. 20:8; I Kings 20:31; cf. chap. I, pp. 46; 51–52.

<sup>158</sup> Staerk, *loc. cit.*

<sup>159</sup> Duhm, *loc. cit.*

<sup>160</sup> Gunkel, *loc. cit.*

<sup>161</sup> Perles, *loc. cit.*

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 114–15.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Ps. 69:17–18; 86:13, 16; 116:16; 136:22.



forth God's *hesed*.<sup>164</sup> Just as God here is to destroy the enemies of His servant because of His *hesed*, so He is entreated in Ps. 54:7 to destroy the enemies of His faithful servant in His *emeth*. Reference has already been made to the close relationship between *hesed* and *emeth*.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, *hesed* in Ps. 143, verse 12, is parallel to *z'dakah* in verse 11:<sup>166</sup> "... in your righteousness deliver my soul from trouble" — the righteousness by which God does justice to His faithful.<sup>167</sup> God is entreated to destroy His enemies, not because of His mercy but in His *hesed*, in accordance with the demands of loyalty and justice — the attitude based on the relationship between Him and His servant. The *hesed* might be appropriately translated as "loyalty" or as "loyally given help."

In Ps. 119 an obedient servant of Yahweh,<sup>168</sup> loyal and devoted to him in every respect,<sup>169</sup> entreats for *hesed* corresponding to the covenant promised by Yahweh to those members of his community who live in accordance with his will.<sup>170</sup> He clings to God's promise to aid his followers,<sup>171</sup> crying out to God not to let him sink before his enemies, but in His *hesed* to keep him alive in accordance with the covenantal agreement.<sup>172</sup> With remarkable confidence in the fulfillment of God's promise of *hesed*, he says in verse 160:<sup>173</sup> "When I reckon, the sum of your word is truth; and every one of your righteous ordinances endures for ever."<sup>174</sup> *Hesed* is parallel to חסד in verse 41; in verse 149 it is parallel to כחשך. Verse 40 reads חסד חסד instead of כחשך חסד. *Hesed* is to be understood here only as conduct in accordance with the covenant promised by Yahweh in his faithfulness, whereby in his justice and righteousness he grants aid to his faithful servants. Their concern was not merely to be kept alive through God's *hesed*, but to give their lives meaning and purpose through the *hesed* rooted in the covenantal relationship. This is also the meaning of *hesed* in Ps. 31:17: "Let your face shine on your servant; save me by your loyal covenantal love."

<sup>164</sup> Cf. *supra*, chap. III, fn. 157.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. Ps. 57:4; *supra*, chap. III, fn. 15, p. 72.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. vs. 1; Ps. 5:9.

<sup>167</sup> Kautzsch, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. vss. 76, 124, 122, 125, 140.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. vss. 8, 34-35, 42-63, 94 f.

<sup>170</sup> Cf. vss. 41, 76; Ps. 138:2.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. vss. 25, 28, 38, 42, 49, 58, 65, 74, 81-82, 107, 114, 116, 123, 133, 140, 148, 154, 169-170.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. vss. 88, 149, 159, 40; in vs. 149 כחשך and כחשך are probably to be exchanged. Cf. B. H.

<sup>173</sup> Vs. 89.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. Delitzsch, *loc. cit.*; Staerk, *loc. cit.*

## 4. GOD'S FAITHFUL IN A GENERAL SENSE

a. *The prayer for the granting of God's hesed*

The longing for God's *hesed* by the pious is not to be explained by their understandable wish to be delivered out of their straits but, foremost, because deliverance through *hesed* would give them assurance of being in a covenantal relationship with God. They believed in His *hesed* even when their actual fate sometimes brought them close to despair. For them, the most precious thing in life, and an end in itself, was the covenantal relationship to God which was manifested by *hesed*. With the profound intuition of the truly pious, they felt and knew that God was willing to accept into a covenantal relationship those who returned to Him. By their favorable conduct before God they bore witness to His ethical and religious plan. Even more than they were seeking Him did God wish that they would find Him so that He could show them His covenantal *hesed*.<sup>175</sup> When they were conscious of their real worthiness and prayed to God for deliverance from their troubles and the preservation of their lives, they were already basically convinced that God would take their part and show them *hesed* for the sake of His covenant with them, of which *hesed* was the primary expression. John Hempel writes:

Israel shares the oriental horror of death. However, it liberates itself from this not by myth but by the individual's hard-won belief in Yahweh's power and the deep conviction that it is not only the creature that desires communion with the creator, but that the creator also desires communion with his creature.<sup>176</sup>

In Ps. 6:5 a pious man, under attack by evildoers and enemies, prays:<sup>177</sup> "Turn to me Yahweh, save my life; deliver me for the sake of your *hesed*."<sup>178</sup> The appeal to Yahweh to deliver his faithful for the sake of his *hesed*<sup>179</sup> is almost a test for him. It is impossible for Yahweh to permit his faithful to succumb to their enemies, who are likewise his enemies; his cause is bound up with that of his

<sup>175</sup> Cf. Mic. 7:18; Jer. 9:23.

<sup>176</sup> Joh. Hempel in his review of Quell, *Die Auffassung des Todes in Israel* (Leipzig, 1925), in *Theol. Literaturzeitung*, 1926, No. 6, p. 125.

<sup>177</sup> Vss. 8-11.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. Briggs, *loc. cit.*; Duhm, *Die Psalmen*, *ad. loc.*; König, *loc. cit.*; Bertholet *loc. cit.*

<sup>179</sup> Cf. Ps. 44:27; 115:1; cf. chap. III, p. 79.

faithful. Therefore, the worshiper emphasizes in verse 6: "For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who praises you?" Similarly in Ps. 88 a true servant of the Lord, hopelessly ill with leprosy from which he has suffered from his youth, believing himself near death,<sup>180</sup> feels that God has rejected him.<sup>181</sup> Verses 12-13 read: "Is your *hesed* declared in the grave, or your *ḥemunah* in *ʿAvaddon*? Are your wonders known in the darkness, or your righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" Underlying the "why" of the psalm is, as Staerk remarks, "the faith that will not and cannot give up God."<sup>182</sup> Also in Ps. 6 the worshiper is sure of divine aid, the evildoers will be disgraced and the covenant with God will thus be confirmed.<sup>183</sup>

The pious thought of death as horror,<sup>184</sup> since they believed that all relationships between men and God ceased in Sheol. They could no longer enjoy the *hesed* God granted them according to the covenant. Without *hesed* life was without meaning to them. "Your *hesed* is indeed better than life!" exclaims the psalmist (Ps. 63:3).<sup>185</sup> Here חסד can indeed be translated as "communion with you." Their ideal was to receive חיים and חסד from God, as expressed in Job 10:12: "You gave me life and have dealt loyally with me; your care has preserved my breath."<sup>186</sup>

God's faithful, who by a just and moral life had an ethical relationship with Him, could expect salvation through *hesed* from a true and just God, for the sake of His *hesed*. In Ps. 109:26 (cf. vs. 21) the prayer is uttered: "Help me, Yahweh my God! Save me according to your loyal love!" The worshiper knew himself to be a just man, one who practiced *hesed* toward his fellow men and, therefore, also toward God.<sup>187</sup> This was in contrast to his oppressor who had not even shown *hesed* to the poor.<sup>188</sup> For this reason he could pray so fervently to God not to grant *hesed* to his adversary<sup>189</sup> but, in accordance with the covenant, to grant it to himself.

In Ps. 43:1 God is entreated by a pious man to protect him from

<sup>180</sup> Cf. vss. 15, 16; Staerk, *loc. cit.*; Kittel, *loc. cit.*, *passim*.

<sup>181</sup> Vs. 15.

<sup>182</sup> Staerk, *loc. cit.*

<sup>183</sup> Vss. 9-11.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. Ps. 13:4-6; Job 13:14; *supra*, fn. 21, p. 41; cf. Ps. 39, 49, 73, 90.

<sup>185</sup> Cf. Staerk, *loc. cit.*; Ps. 73:25; 36:8 f.; 94:16 f.; cf. chap. III, pp. 95 ff.

<sup>186</sup> After חיים read with Budde (*Das Buch Hiob* [Göttingen, 1913], *ad. loc.*) s.v.

<sup>187</sup> נחמ לי; cf. Prov. 21:21; Ps. 119:88, 149, 159.

<sup>188</sup> Vss. 4-5.

<sup>189</sup> Vs. 12.

<sup>190</sup> Vs. 16; cf. chap. II, p. 62.



his oppressors and grant him justice; otherwise<sup>190</sup> he would feel himself expelled from God's communion. "Vindicate me, Yahweh, and defend my cause against those who do not belong to your community (מְנוֹי לֹא חֲסִיד), from deceitful and unjust men deliver me!" Verse 1b explains the phrase מְנוֹי לֹא חֲסִיד in full and explains why those who are so designated could not be members of God's covenantal community. In Ps. 43, which is the continuation of Ps. 42,<sup>191</sup> the pious man, whose sole desire is to be allowed to dwell in the presence of the Lord,<sup>192</sup> prays to God to deliver him from his plight. It seems to him that his enemies are justified if they mock him with the question, "Where is your God who should have helped you?"<sup>193</sup> So he entreats God in verse 9 to grant him His *hesed*.<sup>194</sup> He longs for the exercise of God's covenantal loyalty, whereby God brings help to His faithful — not only for the sake of the assistance but, above all, in order to attain the certainty of participation in God's covenant. His prayer expresses his assurance of God's salvation.<sup>195</sup> The phrase יֵצוּה יְהוָה חֲסִידוֹ becomes intelligible on the basis of the recognition that *hesed* is personified in the religious symbolism of the worshiper. God's *hesed* is like a messenger sent to assist His faithful. *Hesed* and *emeth* are as angels which God sends from heaven to carry out His divine will on earth together with the members of His covenant.<sup>196</sup> Made analogous to people, *hesed* and *emeth* meet, *zedek* and *shalom* kiss each other.<sup>197</sup> The pious conceived of *hesed* which they considered the highest good, in still another way. God's *hesed* was viewed as being not only mighty and great<sup>198</sup> but as filling the whole world,<sup>199</sup> reaching to the very heavens.<sup>200</sup> Is there any better proof for the importance of the concept of *hesed* in biblical thought than that in mystical contemplation it becomes personified?

Conscious of having done religious works for the city of God and the worship of God, Nehemiah asks that God be gracious to him in accordance with the fullness of His *hesed*, as Nehemiah had done

<sup>190</sup> Vs. 2.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. Staerk, Kittel, Gunkel, König, *et al.*

<sup>192</sup> Vss. 2-3.

<sup>193</sup> Cf. vss. 4, 10-12.

<sup>194</sup> Vs. 9 is mixed up. With Kittel, *loc. cit.*; Bertholet, *loc. cit.*, יֵצוּה is to be considered as a jussive.

<sup>195</sup> Cf. vss. 6, 12, 43:5.

<sup>196</sup> Cf. Ps. 57:4; 40:12; 61:8; Prov. 20:28; Ps. 23:6; 89:15; 59:11; 85:11-14; 43:3; Briggs, *op. cit.*, re Ps. 57:4; Kessler, *op. cit.*, re Ps. 23:6.

<sup>197</sup> Ps. 85:11.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Ps. 86:13; 145:8; Num. 14:19; Briggs, *op. cit.*, re Ps. 86:13.

<sup>199</sup> Cf. Ps. 33:5; 119:64.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. Ps. 57:11; 108:5; 36:6; 103:11.



(Neh. 13:22). In vs. 14 he applies the term חסדי<sup>201</sup> to his pious deeds, which have proved his devotion to God. Reverentially he asks for God's loyalty, which God shows to the members of His covenant. The formulation of his prayer, וחוסה עלי כרב חסדך, expresses not only the deep religiosity and reverence of Nehemiah toward God, but also the understanding that the covenant, and the corresponding *hesed* which God grants to His faithful, emanates ultimately from his mercy.

b. *The confident faith in God's granting of hesed*

In Ps. 23:6 we read: "Surely טוב וחסד shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall 'abide' in the house of the Lord for ever."<sup>202</sup> In the certainty of covenantal relationship with God, the pious person is not afraid of life. God is his guide and host. He may abide in His house, and there he is sheltered. Just as a guest may expect *hesed*, loyalty, from his host,<sup>203</sup> so he whose soul is in intimate communion with God is certain of receiving *hesed* in God's household.<sup>204</sup> To him, for whom communion with God is the greatest good, God's *hesed*, His love for His followers, is comparable to God's טוב, His goodness.<sup>205</sup>

To this quiet confidence is added the trust in God's *hesed*, obtained through the most difficult inner struggles and caused by the direst trouble, as depicted in Ps. 13:5: "But I have trusted in your steadfast love,<sup>206</sup> my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.<sup>207</sup> I will sing to the

<sup>201</sup> Cf. II Chron. 32:32; 35:26. It is noteworthy that what is called נבורה in II Kings 20:20 (cf. I Kings 16:27; 22:46; II Kings 10:34; 13:8, 12; 14:15) is called חסדיו in II Chron. 32:32 (35:26). It appears that the Chronicler made the change not only to get an edifying effect but because נבורה in a sense is actually identical with חסד. Just as in a secular group the members had to come to each other's assistance and sometimes had to fight for one another with all their power and strength, so the faithful in their acts of *hesed* had to employ all their might for God's cause. Perhaps the original meaning was such an act of loyal assistance and its meaning as behavior in accordance with the mutually-obligatory relationship among allies stemmed from that origin. The Chronicler did not choose "the ambiguous word in order to hint that the 'strength' of the two kings lay in their piety," as Perles says (*op. cit.*, p. 89). He called the mighty and powerful deeds of Hezekiah and Josiah *hesed*-deeds because they served, in his opinion, to strengthen God's covenant community. In a similar sense the deeds of Nehemiah were *hesed*-deeds.

<sup>202</sup> Read וישבתי instead of ושבתי. Cf. B. H.; Staerk, Gunkel, Duhm, König, Kittel.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. chap. I, pp. 43 f.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Ps. 5:8; 48:10; 52:10.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. Ps. 31:20; טוב וחסד are nowhere else paired, as Delitzsch remarks, *Die Psalmen* (Leipzig, 1894), *ad. loc.*

<sup>206</sup> König, *loc. cit.*, translates חסד as "loyalty."

<sup>207</sup> Cf. *supra*, fn. 29, p. 73.

Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me." Consequently, the psalmist himself provides an answer to his plaintive "why" when oppressed by the godless. God will grant him *hesed* and, in mutual loyalty according to the covenant, will stand by him and render him aid.

Ps. 21:8 states that the king who trusts in Yahweh can be sure that, because of God's *hesed*, he will not waver. Here, confidence is expressed that he who fulfills the conditions of the divine covenant, who trusts in God alone and puts his hope in Him, will receive God's *hesed* and may expect His help.<sup>208</sup>

The faithful one, in life's darkest moments, derives encouragement from the confidence that he will not be deprived of God's *hesed*. Thus it states in Ps. 94:17-18: "If Yahweh had not been my help, my soul would soon have dwelt in the land of silence."<sup>209</sup> When I thought, My foot slips, your *hesed*,<sup>210</sup> Yahweh, held me up."<sup>211</sup> As in Ps. 21:8, *hesed* is not grace but a condition of mutuality, according to which Yahweh reciprocally renders his loyal aid to his faithful. This is how the relationship of חסד in vs. 18 to עזרתה in vs. 17<sup>212</sup> is to be understood, as well as the fact that God, who saves by His *hesed*, is called the fortress of the pious, the rock of his refuge (vs. 22). In this context *hesed* could be rendered correctly as "covenantal loyalty" or "loyal aid reciprocated."

In Ps. 59, in the midst of great distress, a religious man proclaims his confidence that he will receive *hesed* from God. We read in verses 9-10: "O my strength, I will sing praises to you; for God is my fortress. My God — His *hesed* will meet me, God will let me look in triumph on my enemies."<sup>213</sup> Verses 17-18 are almost identical:

But I will sing of your might; I will rejoice in your *hesed* every morning for you are a fortress to me and a refuge in the day of my distress.

O my strength, I will sing to you, for you, God, are my fortress, my God — his *hesed* greets me. God will let me look in triumph over my enemies.<sup>214</sup>

Perles<sup>215</sup> sees in these verses the meaning of "strength" in *hesed* and points to the close connection between חסד and משגב to support his

<sup>208</sup> Prov. 10:30.

<sup>209</sup> Cf. chap. III, pp. 92 f.

<sup>210</sup> Cf. Ps. 3:6; 18:36; 38:17; Briggs, *loc. cit.*

<sup>211</sup> Cf. Staerk, *loc. cit.*, Bertholet in *H. S.<sup>4</sup>, ad. loc.*

<sup>212</sup> Cf. Ps. 44:27; 109:26.

<sup>213</sup> Cf. *B. H.*; Duhm, Staerk, Kittel, König, Gunkel, Bertholet.

<sup>214</sup> Cf. *B. H.*; Staerk, Kittel.

<sup>215</sup> Perles, *op. cit.*, p. 89.

contention. With the same justification he might have pointed to the parallel  $\text{עַז}$ . The fact that  $\text{חֶסֶד}$  is used parallel to or beside  $\text{מִשְׁנֵב}$  or  $\text{עַז}$  or some similar term does not prove that it means "strength." Perles' suggestion is justified only insofar as the meaning "strength" is contained in the overall concept of *ḥesed*. It is through his *ḥesed*, through his conduct based on the covenant, that Yahweh exercises his strength and saving power ( $\text{עַז}$ )<sup>216</sup> for his faithful and becomes for them a fortress and a refuge. Here, as in Ps. 144:2, where Perles again proposes "strength" as the translation of *ḥesed*, *ḥesed* can only be understood as Yahweh's conduct toward his faithful, based on the covenant. The correct translation, therefore, is "faithfulness, loyalty according to the covenant" or "help, loyally given as promised in the covenant." All suggested changes are therefore superfluous.<sup>217</sup>

This also throws some light on the much disputed passage, Jonah 2:8: "Those<sup>218</sup> who honor vain idols forsake their *ḥesed*." As Sellin<sup>219</sup> says, *ḥesed* is here a metonym for God. Those who do not serve God alone, with all their hearts, deprive themselves of the source of their only true salvation. They are bound to lose that covenantal relationship with God, according to which He loyally aids His followers by showing them reciprocal *ḥesed*. In this context *ḥesed* may well be rendered as "their covenant with God" or perhaps "their loyal assistance." It is absolutely unnecessary to read  $\text{מַחֲסִיָּהִם}$  for  $\text{חֶסֶדָם}$ .<sup>220</sup> That this interpretation of *ḥesed* is correct is proven by the reverse picture in Ps. 31:7-8. He who hates the worthless idols and trusts in God alone enjoys God's loyal *ḥesed*, corresponding to the covenant, and finds deliverance from all distress.

The word  $\text{חֶסֶד}$  in Isa. 40:6 could perhaps also be rendered as "aid" or "support" or "might." However, it is probable that we read  $\text{חֶסֶד}$  instead of  $\text{חֶסֶד}$ , as does Marti.<sup>221</sup>

In Job 37:13  $\text{חֶסֶד}$  is the opposite of  $\text{שִׁבְט}$ , "scourge," and must be understood as Yahweh's loyal love for his faithful, or, more precisely, as "loyal aid rendered according to the covenant." The

<sup>216</sup> Cf. Isa. 26:1; 49:5; Jer. 16:19; Ps. 28:7; *passim*.

<sup>217</sup> It has been suggested to read  $\text{חֶסֶד}$  . . .  $\text{חֶסֶד}$ . Cf. B. H., Gunkel, Bertholet, Duhm, Staerk, Ehrlich (after Gunkel) *et al.*

<sup>218</sup> For  $\text{מַחֲסִיָּהִם}$  read  $\text{חֶסֶדָם}$ ; cf. B. H.; Nowack, *Die Kleinen Propheten*, *ad. loc.*; Marti, *Das Dodekapropheton* (Tübingen, 1904), *ad. loc.*; Sellin, *Das Zwölfprophetenbuch*, *ad. loc.*; Ps. 31:7.

<sup>219</sup> Sellin, *loc. cit.*

<sup>220</sup> Cf. Marti, *loc. cit.*; B. H.

<sup>221</sup> Cf. Marti, *Das Buch Jesaia* (Tübingen, 1900), *ad. loc.*; Perles, *op. cit.*, thinks that here, too, *ḥesed* has the meaning of "strength."



same contrast between שבט and חסד is found in Ps. 89:33-34 and in II Sam. 7:14-15.

In Ps. 62 a religious man's conviction is expressed — that God, the just ruler, will deal with His faithful according to *hesed*. He says in verses 12-13:<sup>222</sup> "God has spoken once, twofold have I heard it: that power belongs to God; and that to you, O Lord, belongs *hesed*. For you requite a man according to his doing." *Hesed* is here not parallel to,<sup>223</sup> but in contrast with, נָקָם, for נָקָם represents God's punishing powers.<sup>224</sup> The religious man had learned two great truths:<sup>225</sup> God makes His adversaries feel His punishing power; but He accepts into His communion those who, conscious of the vanity of all human life and worldly wealth,<sup>226</sup> trust in Him alone, and accordingly grants them *hesed*. God is for them a safe refuge and a firm support.<sup>227</sup> Concerning verses 11-12, Delitzsch<sup>228</sup> remarks:

Everybody is repaid according to his actions, which express his relationship to God. He who rises against God's will and order feels God's נָקָם, His crushing punishing power, and he who is desirous of salvation submits to God's will, receives *hesed* from God. *Hesed* is the promised reward of faithfulness out of God's great abundance — his submission brings him life, and his confidence becomes surety.

The pious clung to God with unshakable confidence; and they praised Him with thankful hearts for *hesed*, either already granted or in certainty expected.<sup>229</sup> Through *hesed*, the most valuable good of all was characterized, namely — the covenantal relationship with God.

#### B. GOD AND THOSE WHO BECOME LOYAL TO HIM AGAIN AFTER THEIR DEFECTION

"Have mercy on me, O God, according to your *hesed*; according to your abundant *rahimim* blot out my transgressions." This is how the supplicant in Ps. 51:1 approaches God in the knowledge that God demands of His faithful the sacrifices of righteousness, of the contrite

<sup>222</sup> Ps. 89:36.

<sup>223</sup> *Supra*, chap. III, fn. 100, p. 82.

<sup>224</sup> Ps. 89:11.

<sup>225</sup> Cf. Delitzsch, *loc. cit.*

<sup>226</sup> Vss. 10-11.

<sup>227</sup> Cf. vss. 2-3, 8-9.

<sup>228</sup> Cf. Delitzsch, *loc. cit.*; Duhm, *loc. cit.*

<sup>229</sup> Cf. also Ps. 31:8, 22; 66:20; 4:4; 57:4, 11; 86:13; Isa. 63:7; Ps. 107:43; Hos. 14:10; Ps. 37:25, 28; I Sam. 2:4-10; Ps. 146:6 f.; 106:7; 36:6, 8; 92:2-3.



heart and humble spirit.<sup>230</sup> In His forgiving grace, God could blot out his sins and show him loving *hesed*, according to the covenant.

In Mic. 7:18 it is expressed that God pardons sins, does not keep His wrath forever and willingly shows *hesed*, but only to those who (this is not spelled out here), in Mic. 6:8, do justice, are merciful and humble before God.<sup>231</sup> In Ps. 86:5 this is explicitly stated: "For you, O Lord, are good, forgiving, and loving to all who call on you." That *hesed* in Mic. 7:18 does not objectively signify "favor" or "grace" is confirmed also in Mic. 7:20, where *hesed* is parallel to *ḥemeth*.<sup>232</sup>

In Lam. 3:31-32 we read: "For the Lord will not cast off for ever, but, though He cause grief, He will have compassion according to the abundance of His *hesed*." From those who have forsaken Him, He demands true repentance and renewed loyalty.<sup>233</sup> Then they will again be worthy of His everlasting *raḥamim* and *hesed*, which He loyally shows His faithful.<sup>234</sup>

In Ps. 25 a man of faith prays for God's *hesed* in the knowledge that God grants His *hesed* and *ḥemeth* only to those who keep His covenant and His testimonies.<sup>235</sup> He openly admits his past transgressions but knows himself to be a true servant of God.<sup>236</sup> In verses 6-7 he prays: "Be mindful of your mercy, O Jahweh, and of your *hesed*-deeds, for they have been from eternity. The sins of my youth, remember not; according to your *hesed* remember mine."<sup>237</sup> He asks God in His mercy to forgive him for the sins of his youth; and in admitting him again into His covenant, to deal with him accordingly. In verses 6-7 through verse 25 *hesed* is distinctly defined in this manner. Yahweh, in his loyalty, acts accordingly with those who keep his covenant.

Ps. 40:10-11 indicates clearly that *hesed*, though related to *raḥamim*, is not quite synonymous with it and ought not be understood as mercy. Here, *hesed* is again connected with the explanatory *ḥemeth*, which is not characteristic of *raḥamim*. Trusting that Yahweh will receive his faithful back<sup>238</sup> into his communion even if they have sinned against him,<sup>239</sup> the worshiper prays for his *raḥamim*, *hesed* and *ḥemeth*.

<sup>230</sup> Vss. 18-21.

<sup>231</sup> Cf. chap. II, pp. 71, 73.

<sup>232</sup> Cf. chap. III, p. 73 f.

<sup>233</sup> Vss. 40-42.

<sup>234</sup> Vss. 22-23.

<sup>235</sup> Vs. 25.

<sup>236</sup> Vss. 2-6.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. Staerk, *loc. cit.*; Kittel, *loc. cit.*

<sup>238</sup> Vss. 8-10.

<sup>239</sup> Vs. 13.

Your righteousness<sup>240</sup> I have sealed in my heart. I have spoken of your faithfulness and salvation; your *hesed* and *emeth* I have not concealed from the great assembly. Similarly may you O Yahweh not seal off your *rahamim* from me, may your *hesed* and *emeth* protect me.<sup>241</sup>

Even if verse 10 is not completely in order,<sup>242</sup> it is still significant that *zedakah*, *emunah* and *teshuah*, occur before *hesed* and *emeth*. They are contained in *hesed* and *emeth*,<sup>243</sup> which, Delitzsch<sup>244</sup> remarks, "are the alpha and omega of the qualities through which God manifests himself and which lead to salvation." As is true in general, in this psalm also the devout have learned that even when God deals according to the covenant with his *hasidim*,<sup>245</sup> the divine intention in itself is still an act of grace, especially if those who seek God are those who have once forsaken him. Thus the religious man prays for proof of *rahamim* and then for God's *hesed* and *emeth*.

In Ps. 69 a man of faith asks for deliverance from his distress.<sup>246</sup> He confesses that he is a transgressor,<sup>247</sup> but one who now puts his hope in God alone. Taking God's part had brought him trouble.<sup>248</sup> Having devoted himself entirely to God,<sup>249</sup> he may expect that God will deal with him according to the covenant. In his deep piety he prays: "In the abundance of your covenantal love, Yahweh, answer me with your loyal help."<sup>250</sup> He adds in verse 16: "Answer me, Yahweh, after the goodness<sup>251</sup> of your love, according to your abundant mercy, turn to me." In verse 17, as in verse 14, *hesed* must be regarded as conditioned by *emeth*. For the pious, all that God did was full of love and grace.

<sup>240</sup> Ps. 5:9.

<sup>241</sup> Cf. König, *loc. cit.*; Kittel, *loc. cit.*

<sup>242</sup> Cf. Duhm, Staerk, Gunkel; however, Delitzsch, Kittel, Bertholet, König leave the text unaltered.

<sup>243</sup> *Supra*, chap. III, fn. 29, p. 73.

<sup>244</sup> Delitzsch, *loc. cit.*

<sup>245</sup> Cf. chap. II, p. 67.

<sup>246</sup> Vs. 5.

<sup>247</sup> Vs. 6.

<sup>248</sup> Vss. 7-8.

<sup>249</sup> Vs. 9; Deut. 33:9.

<sup>250</sup> Staerk, *loc. cit.*, *passim*.

<sup>251</sup> Read קָטוֹב instead of כִּי-טוֹב. Cf. B. H.; Briggs, Gunkel, *et al.*

# V. HESED AS THE RECIPROCAL RELATIONSHIP OF GOD AND MANKIND TO HIS COMMUNITY

The passages treated so far show *hesed* as Yahweh's direct action toward his faithful. Now we have to consider several passages in which God's *hesed* consists of divinely ordered conduct of others toward His faithful.

Gen. 39:21 reads: "Yahweh was with Joseph and showed him *hesed*<sup>252</sup> in that he gave him favor in the sight of the prison keeper." The special relationships between Yahweh and Joseph are characterized by the words ויהי יְהוָה אִתּוֹ יוֹסֵף. Because Yahweh was with Joseph, Joseph succeeded in everything he did.<sup>253</sup> Yahweh's covenant-based conduct corresponded to this relationship insofar as he gained the warden's favor for Joseph. Several commentators suggest וַיֵּט חֶסֶד instead of וַיֵּט אֵלָיו חֶסֶד, making reference to Ezra 7:28, 9:9, meaning "he let him gain *hesed*." This is possible and it would then signify that Yahweh acted toward Joseph in accordance with *hesed* in making the prison keeper treat Joseph according to *hesed*, to wit — treat Joseph as if there were a covenantal relationship between them.<sup>254</sup> However, as Ball<sup>255</sup> pointed out, if one looks at Isa. 66:12, וַיֵּט could be correct.<sup>256</sup>

Ezra 7:28 and 9:9 mention the *hesed* which the Jews had received from the Persians during Ezra's time. They had been permitted to return to Jerusalem and had even been granted public funds for the restoration of the Temple. The Jews, then, had been treated in a manner appropriate for loyal subjects, namely — with *hesed*, as had been done in former times by a king of Israel.<sup>257</sup> But Ezra and the rest of the Jews clearly understood that His *hesed* was not voluntarily shown them by the Persians. It was induced by God. Ezra 7:27-28 reads:

Blessed be Yahweh, the God of our fathers, who put such a thing as this into the heart of the king, to beautify Yahweh's

<sup>252</sup> Cf. Reuss, *loc. cit.*; Procksch, *loc. cit.*

<sup>253</sup> Cf. vss. 2-3, 23.

<sup>254</sup> Cf. *supra*, chap. I, fn. 13, p. 39.

<sup>255</sup> Ball, *The Book of Genesis* (Leipzig, 1896), *ad. loc.*

<sup>256</sup> Ehrlich, *op. cit.*, Vol. I (Leipzig, 1896): "As an object to וַיֵּט, if this is the correct text, rather than read וַיֵּט חֶסֶד, can only be understood as referring to JHVH himself and would mean: and he was gracious towards him; for to let somebody win the favor of another is חֶסֶד רַחֲמֵי."

<sup>257</sup> Cf. I Kings 20:31; cf. chap. I, p. 41.

house in Jerusalem and to me he extended the *hesed* of the king and his counselors, and all the king's mighty officers. I took courage, for the hand of Yahweh was upon me, and I gathered leading men from Israel to go up with me.

Yahweh, "the God of our fathers" as Ezra calls him, in order to emphasize the close relationship between Yahweh and the Jews, has shown them the *hesed* which is in accordance with this relationship, by inducing the Persians to deal with them in the spirit of covenantal loyalty.

Similarly, *hesed* is to be understood in this manner in Dan. 1:9: "And God gave Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the lord high chamberlain."

### Summary

We may now draw the following conclusions:

- A. God's *hesed* can only be understood as Yahweh's covenantal relationship toward his followers.
- B. If God's *hesed* is comprehended in this manner, then it is certain that only those who stand in an ethical and religious relationship to Him may receive and expect His *hesed*.
- C. God's *hesed* corresponds to the demands of loyalty, justice and righteousness and already contains these concepts. God's *hesed* and *emeth* are to be considered a hendiadys, in which *emeth* has the value of a descriptive adjective.
- D. In His *hesed* God manifests His strength and power in behalf of His faithful and brings them aid and salvation.
- E. God's *hesed* is the result of His covenant, or His promise or oath.
- F. The *hesed* of God is very closely related to His *rahamim* but distinguished from it by its more positive character. The characteristic of loyalty which belongs to the concept of *hesed* is alien to the concept of *rahamim*.
- G. The *hesed* of God, while it is not to be identified with His grace, is still based upon the latter, insofar as the relationship between God and people, structured by Him as a covenantal relationship, was effected by electing Israel through an act of grace.
- H. The significance of *hesed* can be rendered by "loyalty," "mutual aid" or "reciprocal love."



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## Appendix

### COMPARISON BETWEEN *HESED* AND حֶסֶד.

★ In the first chapter it was established that *hesed* is conduct based upon a mutual relationship of rights and duties. For example, the members of a clan or of an alliance were obligated to aid one another. The relative or allied individual, or to whomever else one owed an obligation, had to be protected at the price of one's possessions and even one's life. In *hesed* we recognized the kind of conduct entailing this mutual readiness to help.

In the second chapter we saw that *hesed* is the conduct corresponding to a reciprocal relationship of all men. *Hesed* represents the religious and ethical obligation of all men to practice humaneness and to render assistance. Although in that chapter *hesed* could have been translated generally as "religiosity," the basic significance of the concept of mutual aid is retained even in this broadened meaning.

In Chapter III it was shown that God's *hesed* is His conduct stemming from the covenant between Him and His faithful, in accordance with which He renders them assistance.

It is in Arabic that we find a striking confirmation of this fundamental characteristic of *hesed* — the readiness of covenanted parties for mutual aid and assistance. Among others, Schulthess points to this connection between חֶסֶד and حֶסֶد. He says: "If we accept the writing of ח as a persistent cacography with ح, we could well compare the word with the Arabic حֶסֶد, 'to band together in order to render someone assistance.'"<sup>1</sup> Brugsch<sup>2</sup> translates حֶסֶد with "assembling

<sup>1</sup> Schulthess, *Homonyme Wurzeln im Syrischen* (Berlin, 1900), p. 32; cf. Landau, *Die gegensinnigen Wörter im Alt- und Neuhebräischen* (Berlin, 1896), p. 45; Smith, *Prophets*, p. 406, note 9; however, against this, Nöldeke, *Neue Beiträge zur Semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* (Strassburg, 1910), p. 93.

Nöldeke compares the Aramaic *hesed* חֶסֶד with the Hebrew חֶסֶד. He says: "It is more likely that we have here the development of two different meanings out of one root; there are various possibilities as to how the transitions came about, but nothing can be stated with certainty." Cf. Haupt, *AJSL*, Vol. 26, p. 241. Against this, Schulthess, *loc. cit.*: "The Aramaic *hesed* חֶסֶד seems also to have a different

in a hurry in order to rush to someone's aid." Lane<sup>3</sup> translates حشد: "They collected themselves together and came round about aiding one another"; حشدوا عليه, "they collected themselves together, aiding one another against him"; احتشد as "he exerted himself for the entertainment of guests." We have shown in the first chapter that *hesed* is the expected mode of behavior between host and guest.<sup>4</sup> Brugsch translates various forms of حشد by "to assemble for mutual aid," "to make common cause against an enemy." احتشد, he renders with "to be ready (to help)"; حشد "ready to help"; حشودة, "assistance."

The concept of mutual aid which proved to be the basic meaning of the biblical expression is then characteristic also of the Arabic word.

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root from the Hebrew word. Of the same opinion are Landau, *loc. cit.*, Smith, *loc. cit.*

*Hesed* as "shame," "disgrace" (cf. Lev. 20:17; Prov. 14:34; 25:10) would then be the opposite of *hesed* in the meaning determined. Under this would be understood behavior which offends against the mutual relationship of rights and duties within the community. Such an action would be the forbidden sexual intercourse between brother and sister, which in Lev. 20:17 is branded חסר. Such an action was punished by expulsion from the community and death. Dr. H. Torczyner called my attention to the possibility of this meaning.

Ryssel, *Die Synonyma des Wahren und Guten in den Semitischen Sprachen* (Leipzig, 1872), p. 49, derives חסר from حسن *stringere*. That derivation is not very convincing.

<sup>2</sup> Brugsch, *Arabisch-Deutsches Handwörterbuch* (Hannover, 1924) f.

<sup>3</sup> Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (London, 1865).

<sup>4</sup> Smith, *loc. cit.*, compares חסר with the Arabic root "HSHD, in which the idea of friendly combination appears to lie, in correspondence with the fact that in Hebrew חסר is the virtue that knits together society. It is noteworthy that *hashada* has a special application, in the phrase *hashadû lahu*, to the joint exercise of hospitality to a guest."