

## God is Love “Covenant Love”

©2022 Mike Whyte

**Copyright Notice:** this document may be used freely for personal study, preaching, and teaching. No part of it may be used under any circumstances for commercial purposes or to attain personal gain or advantage.

**God is love:** To become the “Father of the Faithful”, Abraham had to learn to have God’s character attribute of “covenant love”.

**God’s love for human beings is expressed by his grace.** God’s grace is defined by the “Covenants of Grace” he has given to human beings. The Covenants of Grace are predicated on God’s hesed, “covenant love”.

(1 John 4:8, Deuteronomy 7:6,8-9, 11-13, 1 Corinthians 13:1-13)

hesed: There is no single word in English which adequately translates hesed: most often, ESV uses “steadfast love” – the traditional translation of “mercy” is NOT even close. We are interested in **the most important meaning of the word** – an attribute of God’s character, **a descriptor of the Nature of God**. The common word for “love” in Hebrew is אָהָב - ‘ahav’, – it has the same range of meaning as English word “love”. (Exodus 20:4-6 // Deuteronomy 5:8-10)

**The Prophet Hosea:** identifies hesed as a **key attribute of the nature of God** (Hosea 2:19-20). He demonstrates that hesed is desired by God in true worshippers. Israel pretended to seek God, but because Israel broke the *b<sup>e</sup>rith*, they demonstrated lack of hesed (Hosea 6:3-7). YHWH pleads with Israel through Hosea to repent, to change, to truly seek God’s way. **To “seek YHWH” implies “conversion”** – becoming a True Worshipper. To “sow righteousness” implies living by God’s way, the *torah*, as stipulated in the *b<sup>e</sup>rith*. This Israel did not do – YHWH implores them to try it, do something new, “**break up your fallow ground**”. This will result in **acquiring hesed as a character attribute, to “reap” hesed**. (Hosea 10:12, 12:6)

**The Prophet Micah:** states that the character attribute, hesed, is to be greatly desired, to be loved. It can only be attained by walking “humbly with your God”, living God’s way, living by his *torah*, as stipulated in the *b<sup>e</sup>rith*. **This is required by God**. (Micah 6:6-8, 7:18-20)

**In the Words of David:** attributes of God’s character: mercy, goodness, good and upright, faithfulness. All of this is subsumed to hesed – which is “from of old”, it has always been fundamental to the Nature of God. By hesed David, appeals to God to remember him, not for his own sake but **for the sake of God’s goodness in calling him – God’s grace**. **“All the paths”, everything about the way of God, is representative of hesed**. This is faithfully stipulated by *b<sup>e</sup>rith*, the covenants by which God has made his grace to humanity manifest – this is the gift from God to those who “keep his covenant”. (Psalm 25:4-10)

**The Nature of God:** When the Israelites first approached Canaan and the spies returned a negative report so that the people refused to proceed with the invasion, YHWH threatened to invoke the punishment for covenant violation and **Moses appealed to God’s nature, hesed, as it had been revealed to him in his personal theophany at Sinai** (Exodus 15:11,13, Numbers 14:17-19). David recognized that **salvation and the “promise of descent” are purely from YHWH’s hesed** (2 Samuel 22:50-51 // Psalm 18:49-50). **Solomon acknowledged that his position as king of Israel was an act of hesed** on YHWH’s part due to the promise made to David (1 Kings 3:5-6 // 2 Chronicles 1:7-8).

hesed – Required of Christians: **David learned the meaning of hesed as Abraham had done** (2 Chronicles 6:42, Isaiah 55:1-3, John 7:37-39). All True Worshipers of God, all truly converted Christians, must learn the character attribute of hesed (Proverbs 3:3, 19:22, 21:21). **Christian Living Depends on hesed** (Psalms 5:7, 17:6-7, 26:2-3, 32:10, 36:9,10, 90:12,14). **Salvation depends on hesed** (Psalms 13:5, 85:4,7,9-10, 89:24,26-28, 119:41,123-124)

hesed – Between People: When hesed is expressed from one human being to another, there is always **a close relationship between the individuals** – a reciprocal relationship. **“Commitment”** is implied by hesed; for example, **when Rahab had protected the spies** in Jericho, she appealed to the hesed she had shown them, and requested a commitment of hesed when the Israelites conquered Jericho (Joshua 2:12-14). The **Book of Ruth** also contains **an object lesson in hesed – Naomi invokes the hesed of YHWH** on her two daughters-in-law (Ruth 1:8). **Ruth recognizes** the “favour” (*hen*), YHWH is granting to her in the eyes of Boaz as resulting from the hesed of YHWH (Ruth 2:10-12,20). Finally, **Boaz acknowledges** that **Ruth is demonstrating hesed** by pursuing the correct course of action in seeking him, the legal redeemer, rather than one of the “young men” (Ruth 3:10)

**God’s covenants are a perfect and complete expression of God’s love for human beings:** God’s love is most clearly expressed by the grace he holds out to each and every human being (John 3:16). **The Plan of God is inexorable** – the Covenant of Promise will see its ultimate fulfillment – this is assured because the covenants of God, *b<sup>e</sup>rith*, are guaranteed by his unfailing hesed. **God’s whole interaction with the human race is a function of his grace** – we are all sinners and have incurred the death penalty. But God loves every last human being and desires that none should perish. God wants each and every human being to enter into an inviolable covenant with him to accept the sacrifice of Jesus Christ to pay the penalty for sin and to live by the way of God. Then, **God in his mercy, if he sees in each of us a reflection of his Nature, will extend the gift of eternal life at the resurrection**.

This material is based on the paper: “Covenants of Grace” located at [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca)  
The presentation is available at: [www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/presentations](http://www.mikewhytebiblicalresearch.ca/presentations)