

## The Depth of God's Compassion — marty erwin

For many years, I've spent my mornings sitting outside with a hot cup of coffee while my dog runs the yard. This has become such a welcome routine...one I look forward to. It's always early; the neighborhood is still fast asleep, and like a divinely inspired orchestra, the birds serenade me as they begin to welcome the rising sun...it truly is heavenly.

This has become my time to be still...to reflect...to allow my soul time to breathe before I start my day.

Earlier this week, while sitting in my chair, my mind began to drift. I was taking a trip later that day, to spend time with a man who recently asked me to mentor him, and an excitement arose within me. In his words, he's been praying for a "spiritual father" for quite a while and the Lord saw fit to cross our paths. He's hungry to know and to understand God's Word, and his pursuit of our relationship has been a breath of fresh air...a gift from The Lord, who knows the joy I find in teaching and sharing His Truth to anyone who'll listen...

Like a train slowly building up its steam, a series of thoughts soon followed...reflections of my past, and I found myself so grateful for the incredible people My Father had placed in my life. A handful of men who truly disciplined me and taught me God's ways. Jeff was foremost on my mind, as I am most indebted to him and his faithfulness...

"Buck", as I called him, was the first to take me under his wing. He handed me the Amplified version of the Bible and a Strong's Concordance; then, he taught me how to use them, looking up the meaning of key words in the original languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek. This method of study added so much depth and richness to the scriptures, which greatly enhanced my understanding. More importantly, the Holy Spirit birthed an incredible love for His Word within me.

This past year, that love inspired me to begin learning Hebrew, more specifically, the original, ancient Hebrew, from which the modern-day language was formed. More on this in a minute...

In that moment, I recalled one of my very first word studies from Psalm 103:13:

*"As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him."* P<sub>salm</sub> 103:13

Back in the day, most of the study materials I was taught to use referenced the King James Version (KJV); my preferred translation was and is the New International Version (NIV). I remembered comparing the two translations and was taken aback by the difference in a specific word. Where the NIV used the English "compassion", the KJV used the word "pitieth", and I simply couldn't make the connection between the two, as I understood them.

My training kicked in, and what I learned was nothing short of amazing; however, as I sat there recalling my first discovery, over 30 years ago, the Holy Spirit brought me further revelation.

And in that moment, I realized that my recent ventures into learning the ancient Hebrew kicked in. Not only could I read that word in the original language, but I understood it from a Hebrew mindset! My excitement erupted afresh...and I'd like to share this insight with you and pray that it will enrich your understanding of the incredible God we serve and heighten your love for His Word.

Let me start by giving you some background, which will serve as an important preface to understanding this incredible truth.

Many years ago, I read a book that described God's Word as "four-dimensional." I never fully understood that until I started studying the ancient Hebrew this past year.

The origin of modern Hebrew was an ideographic language. An ideogram is a picture or symbol used in a system of writing to represent a thing or an idea, but not a particular word or phrase for it; especially one that represents not the object pictured, but some thing or idea that the object pictured is supposed to suggest: think Egyptian "hieroglyphics" – pictures carved in rock which tell a story.

That's how the written Hebrew we see today came about. A crude image (picture) evolved into a simpler written stroke of a pen, not unlike the lost art of "shorthand" employed by the secretaries of old. Over time, that shorthand was refined to become the 22 letters of the Hebrew "aleph-beyt" (alphabet) we know today.

As an example, the "aleph", where we get our letter "A" is the very first letter in the Hebrew. In the ancient Hebrew, the picture associated with the "aleph" was a very crude drawing of the head of an ox. To the Hebrew, this ox represented "strength" and was interpreted as "a strong leader."

In addition, the Hebrews assigned a numeric value to each letter (and in some cases multiple values) as there was no number system in place as we understand numbers in our day. These number values also have significant meanings to the Hebrew. In the case of the "aleph", it is assigned the number 1 which gives it an additional meaning of "first." To the Hebrew, the "aleph" is God's letter because He is the **First Strong Leader!** Many of His Hebrew Names begin with "El" which is how the "aleph" is often translated.

So, consider this in the context of a creating a single Hebrew word. Each letter has its own meaning, and when combined, those meanings or pictures tell a story which defines the whole word. Add in the numeric values of each of those letters and you are suddenly provided a more in depth and even prophetic understanding of the singular word. With that in mind, you can begin to see the aforementioned "four-dimensional" aspect of the Hebrew language.

**Now let's dive in to Psalm 103 to see the depths of God's "compassion"!**

### Psalm 103

Praise the Lord, O my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. 2 Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits — 3 who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, 4 who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and **compassion**, 5 who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. 6 The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed. 7 He made known

his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel: 8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. 9 He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; 10 he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. 11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; 12 as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. 13 As a father has **compassion** on his children, so the Lord has **compassion** on those who fear him; 14 for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. 15 As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; 16 the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. 17 But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him, and his righteousness with their children's children — 18 with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.

19 The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all. 20 Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. 21 Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. 22 Praise the Lord, all his works everywhere in his dominion.” NIV

Our English word **compassion** in these verses is translated from the following Hebrew root words:

- **רַחַם** **racham** (raw-kham'); a primitive root; to fondle; by implication, to love, especially to be compassionate:
- **רַחֲמִים** **racham** (rakh'-am); compassion (in the plural); by extension, the womb (as cherishing the fetus); by implication, a maiden.

**Notes:**




**These words look identical, but there is a difference in vowel sounds assigned to specific letters (the lines and dots you see with each letter) and therefore, they are pronounced differently and carry a slightly different meaning.**

**The word translated as “compassionate” in verse 8 is an entirely different Hebrew word, which is more in keeping with our concepts of “grace” and “mercy” in the English.**

Bear in mind the first set of letters you see below are the modern Hebrew letters. The drawings you see within the described meanings are depictions of the original ideogramic symbols. Hopefully, these meanings will help to paint the picture portrayed in these words. Here is “racham”:

**Modern Hebrew Letters (from right to left)**

**רַחַם**

- **Resh:** symbol/picture is a prince  and means head person, authority.
- **Chet:** the symbol/picture is a gate  and means inner room, place of protection or sanctuary, private, to separate.
- **Mem:** the symbol/picture is water  and means liquid, massive, chaos (think of raging seas) or the opposite “still waters”.

- The letter “**Mem**” is also associated with the woman to the Hebrew, because water represents life and the woman is the “life-giver”; she brings forth life through birthing children and provides life-giving sustenance through the milk of her breasts.

Combining these three pictures, we see a mother who protects her prince (baby) by surrounding him with life-giving water (think amniotic fluid) in her inner sanctuary (womb).

So, the Hebrew understand this word “rachem” to mean, “**the tender love and mercy that a woman has for the fetus in her womb.**”

**Crazy... right?!** You just can’t make this stuff up...The Word of God is so awesome!! Oh, but it gets even better!

Not only do these ideograms define the basic word for compassion, but they also display a prophetic picture of how God demonstrates His compassion.





There are two variations of these root words in this passage. In verse 4, the word is “w-rach-amiyim”; in verse 13, the word is “K-racheem”; I have also included the numeric values for these letters, so we can see the deeper “prophetic” meaning of these specific words.



In modern Hebrew, the word translated “compassion” in verse 4 looks like this:

**רַחֲמִים:**

Notice three letters (in **red** above) have been added to the root word (described above) to form this variation:

#### Modern Hebrew Letters (from right to left)



- **Vav:** symbol/picture is a wooden peg or iron nail  and means to fasten or to secure two things that are separated from one another; the number is 6 which reveals man’s enmity toward God.
- **Resh:** symbol/picture is a prince  and means head person, authority; number is 200, which represents the Sufficiency of God and the insufficiency of man.
- **Chet:** the symbol/picture is a gate  and means inner room, place of protection or sanctuary, private, to separate; the number is 8 which represents new birth, new life, new beginning and eternity.
- **Mem (open):** the symbol/picture is water  and means liquid, massive, chaos (think of raging seas) or the opposite “still waters”; the number is 40 which represents trials, probation, testing, chastisement but no judgment; also (5 x 8) = action of grace revival; (4 x 10) = renewal or extended rule or dominion.

- **Yood:** the symbol/picture is a hand  and means work, a deed (divine), to make; the number is 10 which represents ordinal perfection, perfection of divine order, completeness of order, testimony, law and responsibility.
- **Mem (closed):** the symbol/picture is water  and means liquid, massive, chaos (think of raging seas) or the opposite “still waters”; the number is 40 which represents trials, probation, testing, chastisement but no judgment; also (5 x 8) = action of grace revival; (4 x 10) = renewal or extended rule or dominion.

### Of importance:

The letter “**Vav**” when used in a Hebrew word is often silent as it “connects” to Hebrew concepts/ideas symbolized within the other letters of the word.

The letter “**Mem**” as previously discussed, is associated with the woman, who is the life-giver or the one who brings forth life. In addition, Mem is one of five modern Hebrew letters that has two forms when written:

- It looks like this when used in the middle of a word –  (this is the open form)
- It looks like this when used at the end of a word -  (this is the closed form)

These two forms are significant when interpreting the ideogramic meaning of the word. In addition to the traditional meaning, the Jewish mystics say the open form represents “**the revealed truth of God**” (as revealed by Moses) and the closed form represents “**the concealed truth of God**” (as demonstrated by Messiah, the Revealer of All Mysteries); to be clear, the closed Mem is seen as a representation of Messiah by the Jewish mystics.

### Interpretation (what the pictures tell us)

When attempting to see the prophetic interpretation, which is a combination of the various symbols and Hebrew assigned numeric values, keep in mind the context of this specific verse of scripture – “...who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and **compassion.**”

We also must respect the purpose of the “Vav” (connecting two concepts within this single word), while also incorporating its meaning (represents man’s enmity (hatred, hostility) toward God).

So how does God demonstrate His tender love and mercy to a people who have enmity toward Him?

- He uses a Prince named Moses to lead them out of slavery and into a safe place and new beginning. The name “Moses” literally means “drawn out of the water”!
- Then, through Moses, He reveals Himself and His Holiness in The Law (His Sufficiency).

- He allowed them to undergo trials and tribulations (realizing their insufficiency), without judgment, to strengthen their faith and deepen their dependence on Him.
- Even during times of rebellion, He continued to extend His dominion (rule over them) until He would one day reveal the Mystery...a truth established before time began; man would never be enough and would need a Savior.
- So, in His perfect time, through the divine work of His hand, He would bring forth Messiah, the Prince from Heaven whose sole purpose was to reconcile man to God, once and for all, providing us with a new life...new birth and a new beginning.
- How did Y'shua (Jesus) enter the world? The Holy Spirit impregnated the closed womb of the virgin Mary (a closed "Mem") ...as the scriptures say, He would be a baby not born of water, but one born of the Spirit.
- And how would this Son of Man finally reconcile (connect) man's inability to fulfill The Law with God's Sufficiency? With an iron nail...as depicted in the very first letter of this word! **Let that sink in...**

Before we move on, let's take one more look at the verbiage in verse 4. When we are fully reconciled to Jesus Christ the Messiah, how will we be treated? **Like Royalty**, as the Father will "**crown us with His Love and Compassion!**"





A wise man once said...there is no Hebrew word for "coincidence" in the Bible! Now let's move on to this final expression for the word compassion in verse 13.

In Hebrew, the word in verse 13 looks like this:

כִּרְחֵם

In this instance, there is only one letter added to the root word(s) to form this variation:

#### Modern Hebrew Letters (from right to left)

- **Kaf:** symbol/picture is the palm of an open hand or wing  and means to cover, to open, to allow; number is 20, which represents salvation and/or atonement.
- **Resh:** symbol/picture is a prince  and means head person, authority; number is 200, which represents the Sufficiency of God and the insufficiency of man.
- **Chet:** the symbol/picture is a gate  and means inner room, place of protection or sanctuary, private, to separate; the number is 8 which represents new birth, new life, new beginning and eternity.
- **Mem:** the symbol/picture is water  and means liquid, massive, chaos (think of raging seas) or the opposite "still waters"; the number is 40 which represents trials, probation, testing, chastisement but no judgment; also (5 x 8) = action of grace revival; (4 x 10) = renewal or extended rule or dominion.

Here is the word in context, verses 13 through 18:

“As a father has **compassion** (K-racheem) on his children, so the Lord has **compassion** (racham - root word) on those who fear him; 14 for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust. 15 As for man, his days are like grass, he flourishes like a flower of the field; 16 the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more. 17 **But from everlasting to everlasting the Lord's love is with those who fear him,** and his righteousness with their children's children — 18 with those who keep his covenant and remember to obey his precepts.”

Once we have been reconciled by receiving and accepting Christ's finished work on the cross, as seen in the first expression of compassion (verse 4), our sins are atoned for and we receive the gift of salvation - God our Father, opens His Hand to us and covers us in His Wings (“Kaf”) from everlasting to everlasting!

As it so beautifully states in Psalm 36:5-10, “Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, your faithfulness to the skies. Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the great deep. O Lord, you preserve both man and beast. How priceless is your unfailing love! **Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings.** They feast on the abundance of your house; you give them drink from your river of delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light. Continue your love to those who know you, your righteousness to the upright in heart.” NIV

### **One Final Thought on the Depth of God's Compassion**

It is my hope and prayer that you take some time to consider this incredible imagery of God's compassion toward us - like “the tender love and mercy a woman has for the fetus in her womb.”

Obviously, I have never been pregnant, but I have played my part in the pregnancy and birth of all four of my children. I've had the privilege of watching their mother's excitement when the pregnancies were revealed; the love and care displayed through months of growth and development; the awe and wonder of the miracle of new life hidden, yet fully known, inside the sanctuary of her womb...

And that's just a very small glimpse into the compassion God has for us. It's said that real compassion is love in action, and I for one can't think of any greater act of love than what is so beautifully portrayed in the words of this passage...a God who knows we are helpless and hopeless...a God who “does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.” But rather chooses to take our rebellion and enmity and place them upon the shoulders of His One and Only Son, who chooses to pay the ultimate price for the wrath we deserve...nailing our sin to His blood-stained cross...just so He can crown us with a love we can't earn...

Now that's real compassion...