



Rachum v'Chanun -

Mercy and Grace Restores the Broken

רַחֻם וְחַנּוּן יְהוָה אֲרֵךְ אַפַּיִם וְרַב-חַסֵּד

*The LORD is merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
– Psalm 103:8*

WHILE MOSES RECEIVED the tablets of the covenant on the summit of Sinai, the Israelites committed *chet ha'egel* - the grievous sin with the golden calf. The Lord threatened to immediately destroy the people, but Moses appealed to *zechut avot* (the merit of the patriarchs) in order to turn away God’s fierce anger from them. Moses then descended the mountain, shattered the tablets, and (along with the Levites) executed the instigators of the rebellion (Ex. 32).



After this tragedy, Moses despaired that the Jews would never be able to find favor in God’s eyes again. In the tent of meeting outside the camp, he sought reassurance from the Lord. Poignantly he said to God: “If I have found favor (grace) in your eyes, let me know your ways, that I may know you and continue in your favor.” God comforted Moses by assuring him that His Presence would be with him and that he would enter His rest. He then instructed him to carve a new set of tablets and to meet him again on the top of Sinai, where He would show him His glory and declare His Name.

In this verse (as well as Psalm 86:15), David quotes from this second revelation from Sinai, when the Lord descended again in the cloud to declare His Name (Ex. 34:6-7). This passage of Scripture is so important that the Jewish sages have called it *Shelosh Esreh Middot*, or the Thirteen Attributes of *rachamim* (mercy).

What are these attributes? Notice first that the LORD calls himself *rachum v'chanun*, often translated “merciful and gracious.” The noun *rechem* means “womb” in Hebrew, indicating that God’s compassion is like a mother’s deep love for her child. The word *chanun* (from *chen*, grace or favor) indicates that God is a graceful giver who is favorably disposed to help those in need. God is compassionate and favorable to those who call upon Him.



The curious phrase *erekh apayim* literally means “long of nose,” an idiom used to describe someone who is patient and slow to anger (Prov. 14:29). Finally, the word *chesed*, often translated as “lovingkindness” or “steadfast love,” implies devotion and fidelity. The *chesed* of God is His unfailing love based on His faithful word of promise.



It is fascinating to see that this revelation prefigures the New Covenant that was given to Israel. Just as the first set of tablets, based as they were on the justice and holiness of God, were indeed broken, so a second set was given based on the attributes of God’s mercy and grace.

Yeshua was broken on behalf of the law but was raised again so that all who trust in Him can truly understand that God is *rachum v’chanun, erekh apayim v’rav-chased*...

God is faithful. Moses indeed entered the land of promise and once again stood with Lord in the cloud on the mountain (Matt 17:1-5). Based on the finished work of Jesus, now we can all find favor in God’s eyes once again.

Blessed be His Name forever.



Transliteration:

וְרַב־	אֵימָר	אֶרֶךְ	יְהוָה	וְחַנּוּן	רַחֲמוֹ
(4) (3) (2) (1)	(3) (2) (1)	(2) (1)	(1)	(3) (2) (1)	(2) (1)
ve-rav- cha -sed	a- pa -yim	e-rekh	Adonai	ve-chan-nun	ra-chum
in love and abundant	nose	long (of)	the LORD	and gracious	merciful

rachum v’chanun Adonai erekh apayim v’rav-chased