



Word Study -

Grace – Part 2

by Tim Kelley

I want to continue on with our discussion of *grace* from last week. Last week's discussion garnered a lot of questions, questions that couldn't be directly answered in the first teaching due to a lack of time. I hope this week to add enough information to help us see how the main aspect of the ancient Hebrew concept of grace is carried over in many of the teachings of Yeshua and the apostles.

Before we get started, let's review a few things that were brought out before –

- The word *grace* in the Tnakh is, for the most part, translated from the Hebrew word *chen* (כֶּן) (pronounced "khane") and is Strong's number 2580.
- The Hebrew word picture is that of a *fence or wall surrounding life*, thus it is the protection of life.
- *Chen* is closely related to the Hebrew word *chanah* (with the addition of a *hey*), and *chanah* is most often translated *tent* or *encampment*, both of which convey the thought of protection.
- The first place *chen* is used in the Bible is where God instructed Noah to build an ark in order to protect him and his family from the flood that was to destroy all mankind.
- The thought of *grace* being equal to *favor* is understandable and correct in that a person protects those he favors.

In addition to what we saw last week, I want to add a few more aspects of grace found in the Hebrew scriptures. For instance, by observing the Hebraic style of writing called *parallelism*, we find the Hebrew word *chen* and the closely related word *chanan* have meanings that, though not readily apparent, are associated with the concept of *protection*. Jeff Benner is the founder of the Ancient Hebrew Research Center¹. Jeff has become an authority on the etymology of the Hebrew language. His ministry is devoted to helping us find the true meaning of the Hebrew scriptures by bringing us back the concrete meanings of the Hebrew language. In his monthly newsletter, he makes these comparisons in regards to the word *grace* –

*Hear, O LORD, and have mercy (chanan) upon me: LORD, be thou my **helper**.* (KJV, Psalm 30:10)

In this verse, *chanan* is likened to a *helper*.

*Be merciful (chanan) unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make **my refuge**, until these calamities be overpast.* (KJV, Psalm 57:1)

Here we see *chanan* likened to a *refuge*. For another understanding of the meaning, let's look at this verse.

A gift is as a precious (chen) stone in the eyes of him that hath it... (KJV, Proverbs 17:8)

¹ <http://www.ancient-hebrew.org>

All these concepts are related to protecting life, a helper is someone you can turn to when in peril, a refuge is a place to go when things are going bad, and the camp is a precious sight when you're being chased by your enemies.

Another point I want to add to the mix is as a result of being enlightened to the fact that Strong's has a new and improved dictionary. Though I failed to find this dictionary, I did find that Strong's does have a Hebrew dictionary. In that dictionary, we find this definition for the Hebrew word *chanan* -

2603 chanan khaw-nan' - a primitive root (compare 2583); properly, **to bend or stoop - in kindness to an inferior**; to favor, bestow; causatively to implore (i.e. move to favor by petition):--beseech, X fair,²

This definition fits well into the understanding of grace in the New Testament, especially as we rehearse one of the fundamental teachings of the Tnakh – the fact that YHVH had called the nation of Israel, the descendants of Jacob, for a purpose, and that YHVH will see to it that Israel fulfills that purpose.

Let's go back to a teaching I gave a number of months back where I showed that YHVH's covenant with Israel followed the pattern of an ancient Hittite suzerainty covenant³. In this type of covenant, a weaker nation requests protection from its enemies by being allied to the much stronger nation. In return, the weaker nation subjects itself to the laws of, and pays tribute to the king of the stronger nation. By treaty, as long as the weaker nation lives within the confines of the law (or makes restitution when a law is broken) the treaty or covenant is in effect and the stronger nation is obligated to protect the weaker nation.

YHVH has (at least) two covenants that pertain to Israel. One is the covenant He made with Abraham, whereby He promised to make his descendants as numerous as the stars in the heavens, and to give those same descendants the land of Canaan. The other is that He promised to be Israel's God and they His people. If they were to ever stray from His law, His Torah, He would drive them out of the land, but he would never forsake them – he would always take care of them – and at the end of days, would restore them to their place of preeminence among the nations.

So when we look at the Strong's definition, it fits perfectly. YHVH is the strong one, and He's stooping down to help his little nation Israel survive so they might fulfill the calling for which they became a nation. God's desire to protect Israel is based on the promise He made to the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is because of them that of all the nations on the earth, God favored Israel. Not because of anything Israel did, but simply because Israel came from the fathers.

In order to see how *grace* is applied in the New Testament, it's important to keep in mind Israel's unique relationship with YHVH. This relationship can be summarized into these three points –

- Israel is a holy people simply because of God's covenant with Abraham
- They are set apart for a purpose
- God will not break covenant with Israel – they will perform His purpose.

By keeping these points in mind, we can better understand what the apostles are saying in regards to grace. Let's look at a few scriptures that illustrate Israel's unique relationship with God.

² <http://www.heraldmag.org/olb/contents/dictionaries/SHebrew.pdf>

³ <http://amiyisrael.org/articles/SalvationCycles%20-%20P3%20-%20Covenant%20-%201.htm>

- Israel became God's set apart (holy) people because of God's covenant with Abraham, not because of anything they had done –

Deuteronomy 7:6-8 ⁶ "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. ⁷ It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the LORD set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, ⁸ but it is because the LORD loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers . . .

- Israel was given a Torah that would cause other nations to want to be like Israel -

Deuteronomy 4:5-8 ⁵ Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. ⁶ Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. ⁷ For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? ⁸ And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

- Israel has a permanent and everlasting relationship with God. In spite of what Israel might do, God will maintain His covenant with them –

Jeremiah 31:35-37 ³⁵ Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—the LORD of hosts is his name: ³⁶ "If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the LORD, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever." ³⁷ Thus says the LORD: "If the heavens above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth below can be explored, then I will cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have done, declares the LORD."

As was said at the end of the last teaching, the Jewish priests who wrote the Septuagint (LXX) used the Greek word *charis* (Strong's 5485) to translate the Hebrew word *chen* (grace). What's more, they did not use *charis* to translate *chanan* (gracious), choosing instead to use words that more often mean *mercy* and *compassion*. In addition, the Greek word *charis* is not a complete translation of the Hebrew word *chen*, but has abstract meanings and uses that go beyond the concrete meaning of the word *chen*. Thus, it is important to read each word in context to see if *chen* could and should be the correct understanding.

With this background, we can go on to understand some of the New Testament verses pertaining to *grace* and *favor*. In each case we'll only use verses where *grace* or *favor* is translated from the Greek word *charis*.

Luke 1:30-31 And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.

Think about what's happening. A betrothed woman has been told she's pregnant, and not by her fiancé. In the Jewish culture, she had humiliated her future husband. She could be stoned! "But I'm innocent, she thought." Thankfully, YHVH in his graciousness had already protected her by giving her a righteous husband who would be merciful to her in that his first reaction was to *put her away privately* instead of taking the action permissible in the Torah.

Luke 2:40 ⁴⁰ And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

Yeshua was a descendant of Jacob and thus had a role to play in bringing the knowledge of Torah and the right understanding of God's law to the world. But even more, He was the very son of God, the whose sacrifice, would be able to redeem all Israel back to YHVH paving the way for them to fulfill the role for which they were called. A premature death or debilitating accident could have altered, if not destroyed, God's plan. Thus it was imperative Yeshua avoid the attacks of HaSatan, both mentally and physically. Therefore, YHVH *graced* Him with divine protection.

David speaks of this special protection that Yeshu would receive -

Psalm 91:9-12 ⁹ Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place- the Most High, who is my refuge- ¹⁰ no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent. ¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways. ¹² On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.

We know this passage pertains to our Messiah because HaSatan himself used this passage in his attempt to tempt Yeshua⁴.

^{ESV} Romans 1:7 To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the salutation of all Paul's epistles, and in both of Peter's letters to the scattered believers in Asia, they conclude by saying "grace and peace to you". The concept of grace and peace going together is a common theme in their writings. Unlike many of the nations under Roman domination, the Jews enjoyed relative peace. They were able to worship freely (within the confines of Judaism) and travel freely within the Roman empire. Paul is a testimony to that fact. God had provided this unique relationship between the Jews and Rome by moving the Jewish leaders, some three centuries prior, to invite Rome in to protect them from the Greeks. Thus the Jewish people were graced by YHVH with Rome's protection and were able to enjoy relative shalom.

In many cases these letters were written to Jewish or Israelite people who would have had the understanding that their *shalom* was in many ways due to the protection (*grace*) YHVH had promised them.

These next verses I want to bunch together because they have somewhat the same theme. These, I believe, are some of the most misunderstood verses in the New Testament. As we have learned in the past, Hebrew thought is cyclical – what has happened before will happen again . . . there is no new thing under the sun⁵.

God gave us a pattern that we can follow to see what He's doing, that pattern being the Exodus from Egypt. As we've seen in past studies and through our yearly Torah readings, YHVH *saved* (*yasha*) Israel by parting the Red Sea, bringing Israel through it, but destroying Pharaoh and his armies in it.⁶ As we saw earlier, YHVH delivered Israel because of the covenant with Abraham. Israel was given God's protection, His saving grace, before they came to Mount Sinai where they were given the Torah. Thus Israel was saved by grace, not by law. They did nothing to earn their salvation.

Now let's look at some of these scriptures –

⁴ Matthew 4:6

⁵ Ecclesiastes. 1:9-10

⁶ Exodus 14:28-30

Acts 15:10-11 ¹⁰ Now, therefore, why are you putting God to the test by placing a yoke on the neck of the disciples that neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹ But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

2 Timothy 1:8-9 ⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God, ⁹ who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began . . .

If what is happening in the first century is a partial fulfillment of the prophecies pertaining to the return of the exiled tribes of Israel, then what the New Testament writers are saying is that "you Israelites, whose fathers turned from God, are being called back because of God's commitment to the covenant. You are being called back to my tent of protection, the *kahal* – the assembly of YHVH, where you will once again have the opportunity to show my ways to the world."

With this understanding we can understand what Paul was saying to the Ephesians –

^{ESV} Ephesians 2:1 . . . you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience- ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ- by grace you have been saved- ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

Paul is showing these people that they have a purpose. They are a called out people who YHVH is bringing back to His camp so they can do the things they've been called to do. This is the *mystery* that the world is unable to see – that God has set apart and preserved a people for His name.

As was said at the beginning of this study last week, *grace is protection*. God has protected the Israelite people during the time of the exile so that, in His time, they can become the people of YHVH, a people within whom He can dwell.

The word *grace* is a broad word with a number of abstract meanings, but for the people of God, grace is what has brought us back into His presence so we can do the job he's called us to do.

Shalom Alechem