

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE DERAKIM

"If I have found favor in your eyes, let me know Your ways." (Exodus 33:13)



In the early 1990s I was in Chicago, finishing up my studies at the Moody Bible Institute. I was preparing for a life of ministry, but the truth is that I had issues. Okay, full disclosure. I was hanging on by a thread. It was pretty intense. There were times it seemed like I was one small step away from climbing aboard the crazy train. The word “excruciating” covers it pretty well. I recall one occasion, when I was sitting alone in the massive sanctuary of the historic Moody Memorial Church after some grand religious gathering. I decided to paint a mental picture that captured the anguish I was in. *I’ve got it*, I thought. *I feel like a man tied to the bumper of a speeding truck, screaming as the*

asphalt tears the flesh from his body. (I warned you that it was intense.)

The low point was the summer between my freshman and sophomore years. I almost had to drop out of Bible college due to a physical breakdown. My body crashed, my physiology was going haywire, and I lost twenty pounds in two weeks. Doctors couldn't figure out what the problem was. They admitted me to the hospital and tested me for HIV, Lyme Disease, Hodgkin's Lymphoma, etc. Something was clearly wrong with me, but it couldn't be diagnosed by a medical doctor. Somehow, I made it past that nightmare and soldiered on. (Back then I didn't know that this sort of suffering often gives birth to spiritual breakthrough. There will be a lot more on this theme as we go.)

Was the problem that I didn't understand the gospel, that I wasn't truly "**born again**" (John 3:3)? No. I knew that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, that He died for my sins and rose again on the third day, and that we are "**saved by grace through faith**" (Ephesians 2:8; see also 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; John 3:16; Romans 10:9).¹ I had accepted it, I could preach it, and I had even led others to salvation ... yet my mind still raged.

I also knew what I was supposed to be experiencing as a Christian— "**the peace that passes comprehension**" (Philippians 4:7), "**life abundant**" (John 10:10), and "**joy unspeakable and full of glory**" (1 Peter 1:8). Then why was I continually battling against this inner darkness? The simple answer is that although I was saved and full of big ideas about God (theology), like so many of God's children I just didn't

know Him very well. In biblical terms, I didn't know His "ways"—in Hebrew, His "*derakim*."

1.2 *THE DERAKIM CHASING ME DOWN*

After graduation I was living in Estes Park, Colorado, preparing for a mission to the former Soviet Union.² The Iron Curtain had just come crashing down after seventy years of atheistic communism. It was as if half the world had suddenly opened up to the gospel. I was invited to be part of a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity—a massive alliance of ministries called The CoMission.³ We were going to bring the good news to millions who had never heard that "**God so loved the world**" (John 3:16). While sitting in a little mountain church (Father's Day 1992, to be exact), God gently tried to let me know that my theology, my perfectly orthodox theology, needed a radical overhaul.

To this day I can't remember what that Father's Day sermon was about, but I do remember one question the pastor asked us all. It pierced me to the heart. "If you could hear God the Father say anything to you, what would it be?" My mind immediately shot to Psalm 103, one of the most rapturous, wonderful descriptions of God in the entire Bible. It reads like ocean waves, one after another, of seemingly exaggerated statements about God's kindness, patience, and tenderness. Sitting in that pew, my heart yearned for the Person described there, but it all seemed too good to be true. I wouldn't have admitted it at the time, but the God in my head was cold, distant, demanding, and impossible to please. He was all about power and control. I was taught that my duty as a good Christian was to just submit to whatever came

down the pike and say, "If it be Thy will." And this is where the story gets a bit strange.

Right then and there, sitting in that pew, I decided to open up my Bible and read over those "too-good-to-be-true" verses in Psalm 103 again. I didn't believe they actually, literally described God, but I thought, *Wouldn't it be wonderful if ...?* My Bible was sitting next to me, so I picked it up and set it on my lap. That's when something weird and wonderful happened. Without any coaxing or effort on my part, my Bible fell open to ... you guessed it, Psalm 103.

This may not seem like a big deal, but when was the last time your Bible, all 1000-plus pages of it, magically fell open to a specific passage you were mulling over in your mind? This is something that has never happened before or since. (I've tried to reproduce the event.) The feeling of awe I had at the time is what theologians refer to as the numinous⁴—the distinct sense that something from another realm is trying to break in. With my heart beating a little faster, I read,

He forgives all your sins, He heals all your diseases, He redeems your life from the pit, He crowns you with lovingkindness and compassion, He fills your years with good things so that your youth is made new like the eagle. The LORD performs righteous deeds and judgments for all the oppressed. He made known His ways (*derakim*) to Moses, His acts to the Israelites. The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and great in lovingkindness.

Today I understand what was happening. (You could say that back in 1992, I was a little slow on the uptake.) God was attempting to break into my troubled existence and say, “Tad, this is exactly how I want you to know Me, but you are missing it.” Why couldn’t I hear the simple, liberating message? I was suffering from a malady that millions of miserable Christians share—I assumed that I already had God pretty well figured out. I had all my theological ducks in a row, so to speak. After all, I had just finished my course in theology at the historic Moody Bible Institute and was going to represent God Himself overseas as a missionary. How could I be wrong?

I had a long journey ahead of me, and a lot more life to live before I could embrace what God was trying to say. Thankfully, He is patient and persistent and the message eventually got through to me. (More accurately, it ran me over like a glory train.) What is the message? It’s found in a very particular description of God repeated over and over again in the Bible, *The Derakim*.⁵ Here it is—“**compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and great in lovingkindness and faithfulness.**”⁶ This little theological formula, just seven words in Hebrew, transformed my understanding of ... well, almost everything. *The Derakim* brought about a Copernican revolution in my theology, and brought peace and rest to my very troubled soul.

1.3 THE COPERNICAN CENTER⁷

Do you remember the name Nicholas Copernicus (1473-1543) from your high school science class? He was the astronomer who figured out that the Earth is not the center

of our solar system. The belief in a geocentric (Earth-centered) universe came from the ancient Greeks, and virtually every educated person in Copernicus's day believed it. As you can imagine, this left serious stargazers scratching their heads as they tried to figure out why the heavenly bodies moved like they did. They didn't travel in nice, predictable orbits. Everything seemed catawampus, spinning this way and that way simultaneously.

After a long hard look at the data, Copernicus made his controversial proposal. He suggested that the planets were not revolving around the Earth at all. Rather, the planets, including Earth, revolved around the Sun. He argued that if people would simply shift their center of reference (and make a few other minor adjustments), the mechanics of the entire solar system would snap into place. It took some time for prevailing scientific orthodoxy to yield, but when the dust cleared, honest intellectuals had to admit that Copernicus's heliocentric (Sun-centered) view seemed to make the most sense. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Why am I talking about a sixteenth-century astronomer here? Because I fear that countless truly "born again" Christians are never going to experience real freedom and joy until they have a Copernicus-like shift in their thinking about God. Being as blunt as I can be—they are saved, but their theological center is off. They are like the astronomers before Copernicus, who came up with elaborate, ingenious systems for explaining everything ... but their systems were elaborately, ingeniously off-center.

The Derakim is unquestionably the Copernican center in the minds of the biblical authors. Anyone willing to look

objectively at the data simply cannot deny this.⁸ After I got turned on to it, I discovered that it's like a biblical Rosetta Stone or a decoder ring for understanding and interpreting the rest of Scripture. Psalm 103, for example (that Psalm that so awed me back in 1992), is just one of several biblical songs celebrating *The Derakim*. Quotations and allusions to it seem to be everywhere.⁹ Learn a little bit of Hebrew and Greek, and the references seem to multiply exponentially. *The Derakim* explains to us who God is, it clarifies His will for us as His image-bearers, and it is what makes Jesus Christ so recognizable as God in the New Testament. But we are getting way ahead of ourselves.

Tragically, millions of God's people are missing the glorious self-description He gave to Moses in Exodus 34:6. The theological, psychological, and existential implications of this oversight cannot be overstated. When our beliefs about God are off, it twists and distorts our entire worldview. When a child of God is suffering from this malady, their situation can be desperate. Usually something drastic needs to be done to get them on track ... or they just might crack.

1.4 I'M TALKING ABOUT YOU!

Since the beginning of human history, Satan's number one strategy for messing up our lives has been to corrupt our vision of God. He works this ploy on saved people and lost people alike (that means he is trying to work it on you and me right now). He began this assault in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-13) and he hasn't let up since (2 Corinthians 4:4). How does Satan do this? Establishing "strongholds" in

our minds. These are wrong-headed ideas about God that keep us from seeing the truth of who He really is.

The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but are divinely powerful for the taking down of strongholds. We are tearing down speculations and every lofty opinion that has been raised up against the knowledge of God. (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)

What this means in practical terms is that the world is filled with people who believe in God, but their image of Him has been sabotaged. Like who? Pretty much everyone, even super religious people who are zealous for God. Who was it that most violently opposed Jesus? The most religious, biblically knowledgeable people of the day—the Pharisees and Sadducees. They could quote the Bible backwards and forwards, but didn't recognize God when He was standing right in front of them (John 5:39-40). Before the apostle Paul got his theological head on straight, he was a religious leader, a world-class theologian, and a biblical scholar. God quite literally had to knock him off his high horse to show him how spiritually blind he was (Acts 9:3-4).

According to the New Testament, even after someone is truly saved, they are not impervious to “strongholds.” The person is doubly deceived who says, “I’m a real Christian. I’m born again. Surely that whole stronghold thing can’t happen to me.” Wrong. The Bible couldn’t be much clearer on the issue. It’s chock full of warnings to real Christians.

But I fear that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:3)

But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceptive spirits and doctrines of demons. (1 Timothy 4:1)

See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to human tradition, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. (Colossians 2:8)

Most people have never considered the possibility that what they think about God might be sabotaged, especially if they are born again. We all assume that the false beliefs and deception that the Bible talks about must belong to “the other guy” or “the other group.” I like to tell people, “The deceptive thing about deception is that it deceives you!” The hosts of hell are working overtime trying to corrupt everyone’s theology, including yours. If you are born again, Satan may not be able to have your soul, but your mind (and

your life) may still be a mess if you don't get your vision of God straight.

Something I didn't know back in 1992 was that the mayhem in my mind—the confusion, condemnation, anxiety, and lack of peace—was like a siren blaring, “YOUR THEOLOGY HAS BEEN SABOTAGED BY SATAN!” My beliefs about God were all twisted up, and this is precisely why I was all twisted up. The greatest breakthrough I ever had in my Christian journey began on the day I embraced the idea that maybe, just maybe, I—the born-again, Bible college grad—was “the other guy.” Perhaps I was that person the Bible says is bound by strongholds. So I gave God an invitation to overhaul my theology ... and He did. What exactly was it that God used to get my attention? Affliction!

1.5 THE FIERY FURNACE

Some folks seem to think that if you're a real Christian, truly born again, you should never struggle like I did back in my college days. To blow up that naïve, unbiblical idea, all we have to do is consult the biographies of the most influential Christians down through the ages. What great man or woman of God didn't experience seasons of excruciating fire? Virtually all of my heroes did. Like who?

Consider Oswald Chambers (1874-1917), who penned one of the most beloved devotional books of all time. He once said of his early Christian life, “Nothing but the overruling grace of God and the kindness of friends kept me out of an insane asylum.”¹⁰ Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896) is one of the most influential Christians in American history. After

writing her magnum opus, a personal disaster shook her faith to its very foundation.¹¹ John Bunyan (1628-88) wrote one of the greatest Christian works of all time, *Pilgrim's Progress*, yet for years he went through excruciating inner testing.¹² George Whitefield (1714-70) was one of the greatest gospel preachers since the days of the apostles, yet he too had times of soul-rending inner battle.¹³ We could go on and on. Real servants of God go through real internal conflict.

We see this exact same thing in the Bible if we study it honestly and don't sanitize all the human grittiness out of it. God's most devoted servants often seem one small step away from psychological breakdown. Listen to Jeremiah's depressed rant in the book of Lamentations. **"My soul can't find any peace; I have forgotten what happiness is. I say, 'My strength is all gone, and I have lost hope in the Lord'"** (Lamentations 3:17-18). One of the most famous prophets in Israel's history, Elijah, was so depressed that he asked God to take his life (1 Kings 19:4). The prophet Jonah was so full of frustration that he asked a bunch of strangers to throw him over the side of a boat (Jonah 1:12). What do we call that in the real world? He was suicidal. It sounds like the apostle Paul made it through "by the skin of his teeth" on more than one occasion. Among other things, there were times he **"despaired for (his) life"** (see 2 Corinthians 1:8, 4:7-18).

Read the story of Job from start to finish sometime. God says that Job is the most outstanding man on planet Earth (Job 1:8), then his whole world blows to smithereens. The poor guy is hanging by a thread. Sure, he holds up for a little while, but then comes completely unglued. **"Afterward Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth"** (Job

3:1). It only gets worse from there. For the better part of forty-two chapters, Job is in a rage. Among other things, he accuses God of cruelty and the perversion of justice. **“He (God) mocks the despair of the innocent. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked. He covers up the faces of its judges. If it is not God, then who is it?”** (Job 9:23-24).

Consider the book of Psalms. In a huge percentage of these songs of Israel, the author sounds precariously close to a mental meltdown. **“How long, LORD, will You forget about me forever?”** (Psalm 13:1). **“Why are you in despair, O my soul, and why have you become disturbed within me?”** (Psalm 42:5). **“The snares of death encompassed me, the terrors of the netherworld overwhelmed me, I found distress and sorrow”** (Psalm 116:3). **“I have become a man without strength, forsaken among the dead, like those slain lying in the grave, like those You have forgotten, like those cut off from Your hand”** (Psalm 88:4-5). There are dozens and dozens of such passages in the Bible, but hopefully the point has been made—God’s people go through fire.

1.6 “LORD, WHY?!”

Clearly, the question we should be asking is not, “Do real, authentic followers of God go through the furnace of affliction?” They do. The real question is, “Why does God allow this?” Is He uncaring and cruel (like the devil wants us to think), or could there be some brilliant reason, a reason motivated by God’s unfathomable love? Let’s get right to the point here. God lets His precious children, you and me, go through pain and suffering for two reasons: 1. So that we

come to know Him deeply, and 2. So that we might become like Him.

Study the lives of anyone in Scripture (or history) who really knew God—Job, Moses, David, Jeremiah, Peter, or Paul. Trials, pain, and inner turmoil drove them into the glorious mystery. It was in the fire that they came to know their God, and it was in the fire that He stamped His image on them. God doesn't want us to know Him only as a creed, or a system of theology. He wants us to know Him intimately, as a Person.

This is what the LORD says, “Don't let a wise man boast about his wisdom, and don't let a strong man boast about his strength, and don't let a rich man boast about his riches; but let the one who boasts boast about this—that he understands and knows Me. (Jeremiah 9:23-24)

Those who don't come to know God deeply miss the whole reason they were put on this earth. If a little bit of fire is what it takes to get us there, then it's all worth it. The authors of the New Testament are crystal clear on how all this works. The apostle Paul says, **“The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us”** (Romans 8:18). Peter puts it this way, **“After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace ... will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you”** (1 Peter 5:10).

We all need to understand God's purpose for allowing fire into our lives. Ignorance on this point puts us in real danger. History is full of stories of those whose faith was dashed on the rocks in the aftermath of trauma, death, disease, betrayal, persecution, etc. (It's popular today to call this process "deconstruction.") Of course, God doesn't want us to crash on the rocks. His desire is that when this cruel world shakes us, we press in and discover the mind-blowing depths of who He is. He wants us to come to know **"the breadth and length and height and depth, and know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge"** (Ephesians 3:18-19). When we discover this, we are on track to fulfill our created purpose and destiny.

1.7 CREATED TO BE LIKE HIM

Many wise men and women down through history have noted that people become like the God they worship. "We tend by a secret law of the soul to move toward our mental image of God."¹⁴ The religious leaders in Jesus's day nailed Him to a cross because of their twisted-up vision of God. Islamic terrorists fly planes into buildings and strap bombs to themselves because of their twisted-up vision of God. This exact same malady also explains why so many of God's real born-again kids seem so lost right now. Their theology is off, just like mine was. Fiery trials can be "just what the doctor ordered" to bring about the cure. Trials can open up our eyes to see God, so we can become like Him. **"Put on the new self, who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him"** (Colossians 3:10).

Fulfilling our created destiny hinges upon us seeing God clearly. This is why the biblical authors are so adamant that believers get this right. **“We have not stopped praying for you and asking that you would be filled with the knowledge of His will ... increasing in the knowledge of God”** (Colossians 1:9-10).

The mature Christian knows exactly what they should do when the betrayal, the rejection, the disease, or the untimely death hits. This isn't the time to become bitter, or wallow in self-pity, hurl accusations at God, or deconstruct. It's time to go to school and really learn about God and His ways. This is why the Bible says things like, **“Consider it all joy when you encounter various kinds of trials”** (James 1:2), **“We exult in our tribulations”** (Romans 5:3), and **“All discipline seems ... sorrowful, but to those who have been trained by it, it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness”** (Hebrews 12:11). This being the case, it should come as no surprise that *The Derakim*, the most foundational description of God in the Bible, was first given to a man of God caught in the furnace of affliction.

1.8 EXODUS 34:6

Is there a more important human figure in the Old Testament than Moses? He delivered God's people from Egypt, parted the Red Sea, received the Ten Commandments, wrote the first five books of our Bible, etc. In Exodus 32 we find this great man in an existential crisis of the first order. The people he loves, the nation of Israel, are standing on the brink of total annihilation. Why?

Right after Israel enters into a solemn covenant with God, Moses goes away for a few weeks and all hell breaks loose. The foolish people make a pagan idol—the golden calf—and then have a debauched orgy in its honor (Exodus 32:6). In theological terms, what they have done can be compared to a bride who commits adultery on her wedding night. According to the agreement Israel made with God, He has every right to turn that rebellious nation into a smoking crater ... and He almost does.

**The LORD said ... "I have seen this people,
and behold, they are a very stubborn people.
So leave Me alone now, that My anger may
burn against them and I may destroy them."
(Exodus 32:9-10)**

Moses is at his wit's end. We could say that his life circumstances and his perfectly orthodox theology are colliding like two freight trains. (Have you ever been there?) God is completely within His rights to destroy the people. It's all there in the contract. **"He who sacrifices to any god, other than to the Lord alone, shall be utterly destroyed"** (Exodus 22:20). Does Moses have any recourse? He is so desperate that he throws his own life on the bargaining table. **"But now, I beg You, forgive their sin—and if you won't, please blot me out from Your book which You have written!"** (Exodus 32:32). The next two chapters record a spiritual wrestling match between Moses and God. Moses seems to be following the pattern of that great wrestling patriarch Jacob, who laid hold of God and said, **"I will not let You go unless You bless me"** (Genesis 32:26).

The New Testament says that “**whatever was written in former times was written for our encouragement**” (Romans 15:4). This means that there are lessons, patterns, and paradigms that New Testament believers are supposed to dig out of the Old Testament. What Moses ultimately does on this occasion serves as an example for any believer being rocked by an excruciating trial. Moses doesn’t just ask God to fix things, what he asks for is a deeper revelation of God’s Person. Moses is aware that his theological understanding is not adequate for his present life crisis. In the depths of his being he knows that he needs something more, so he cries out, “**Let me know Your ways (*derakim*), so that I may know You**” (Exodus 33:13). Here again we see the time-tested pattern—in the furnace of affliction, great revelation is given. Moses’s monumental, to-the-point prayer leads to one of the greatest moments in human history—the subject of this book—the revelation of *The Derakim*.

Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and great in lovingkindness and faithfulness. (Exodus 34:6)

Study your Bible carefully. From this point on, *The Derakim* serves as the theological gold standard for the biblical authors. It is the most quoted and alluded to description of God in Scripture (Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:17-19; Nehemiah 9:17; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Psalm 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; et al.). Just how significant are these words? A closer look at the conversation between God and Moses here makes

it all pretty clear. To sum it all up, if you grasp what God is saying in *The Derakim*, you know Him. If you miss the message (even if you have a degree in theology), you will be stumbling around in darkness.

1.9 THERE'S NOTHING LIKE IT

The Derakim makes its debut in one of the most theologically loaded moments in the Old Testament. The first vital detail to note is this—the words originally come from the very mouth of God. Just think about that for a moment. In Exodus 34:6 we have a detailed description of God, a very specific personality profile, a string of divine attributes, *spoken by God Himself*. Where else does this happen in the Bible? Answer: Nowhere.

Here is another jaw dropper (that has already been noted above). Who was *The Derakim* first spoken to? Answer: Moses. In terms of influence, impact, and intimacy with God, is there any figure in the Old Testament of greater theological importance? In Jesus's time, a person could refer to the entire religious system of the Old Testament by simply mentioning Moses's name. The words of *The Derakim* were delivered straight from the Almighty's mouth into Moses's ear. Listen to what God says about the one-and-only Moses:

Listen now to My words: If there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, will make Myself known to him in a vision. I will speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses. He is faithful in all my house. With him I

**Speak person to person, openly, and not in
obscure sayings, and he beholds the form of
the LORD. (Numbers 12:6-8)**

There are many other significant details worth mentioning here, as well. This description of God is directly linked to His “glory” (Exodus 33:18), His “name” (33:19) and, of course, His “ways” (33:13). The last term “ways” (*derakim*) tells us that we are basically talking about God’s modus operandi. The term “glory” (*kavod*) tells us that we are talking about the thing that gives God weight, or makes Him awesome. The term “name” (*shem*)¹⁵ lets us know that these words touch the very center of God’s identity, His Person. Time and space prevent us from a detailed discussion of all these weighty subjects here. Suffice it to say that these details tell us in no uncertain terms that *The Derakim* has massive theological importance. This is something the rest of the biblical authors didn’t miss. These words, first spoken by God Himself, were passed down like a treasure from Moses to all the prophets, apostles, and holy men who came after him. They are repeated over and over and over again like a mantra. The most obvious references are easy to spot, but these are merely the tip of the iceberg. If a person knows just a little bit of Hebrew and Greek, they can find references and allusions to *The Derakim* everywhere in Scripture.¹⁶

Back in 1992, I knew virtually nothing about *The Derakim*. The more I studied the matter, however, the evidence was overwhelming. (*The Derakim* later became the obsession of my PhD studies.) This is the definitive description of God in the Bible. It is the Copernican center. God used the words of *The Derakim* like a wrecking ball to completely renovate

the distorted vision of Him that I had cobbled together over the years. I came to see that He is really, literally, actually the Person described in that beautiful song, Psalm 103. It all may seem “too good to be true,” but it is true. So what does it mean?

1.10 “LOVINGKINDNESS” (*HESED*)

The crown jewel of *The Derakim* is, without question, the fourth attribute. In Hebrew the word is *hesed*. “**Compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness (*hesed*) and faithfulness.**” Actually, this is the most important theological term in the entire Old Testament (so if you are going to get familiar with just one Hebrew word, *hesed* should be it). The devil knows how important this word is, so he works overtime to keep scholars and saints muddled up about its meaning. Thankfully, God spoke *The Derakim* so that you and I could know exactly what His *hesed* is all about. All the other attributes are like jewels surrounding this glorious center stone, illumining its beauty, and clarifying its meaning. This being the case, we will first introduce God’s *hesed*, and then briefly touch on how the rest of the words of *The Derakim* shed light on it.

Before we continue our discussion, however, we should do a little bit of lexical ground work. First, as a rule, words don’t have a single, static meaning. A word’s meaning shifts depending upon its context—where, when, and to whom it is applied. Scholars refer to this as a word’s semantic domain.¹⁷ So for starters, we are not simply interested in multiple meanings and nuances of the Hebrew word *hesed*. What we

are interested in is what the word means when it is used to describe God.

To begin to make sense of *hesed*, it helps to know that it covers a lot of the same ground as the English word “kindness.” *Hesed* is found frequently in the Bible (about 250 times), and it often simply refers to human kindness. This means that regular people, like you and I, can show a certain level of *hesed* to each other. If I buy a homeless guy a hamburger today, that would be *hesed*. Like the English word “kindness,” human *hesed* can flex and stretch. It can be pretty massive (like sparing someone’s life), or not so massive (buying them a hamburger). There are some strange examples in the Bible that make this point. When Abraham asks his wife Sarah to tell a lie for him, he calls this *hesed* (Genesis 20:13). When a lovely young lass by the name of Ruth is open to the marriage proposal of an older gentleman named Boaz, that is also called *hesed* (Ruth 3:10). Just about any time one person shows kindness to another person, it can be called *hesed*. But now let’s talk about what happens when this term is applied to God. Buckle up!

When *hesed* is used as a “God word” in the Bible, we need to shift our minds into a completely different gear. God’s *hesed* is not just your everyday, run-of-the-mill “kindness.” As you study it out, it becomes clear that God’s *hesed* is something categorically different than human kindness. It’s so massive, so overwhelming, that biblical authors describe it in astronomical terms, like “**higher than the heavens**” (Psalm 36:5), or “**great to the heavens**” (Psalm 57:10; 103:11; 108:4). Because of this, many English Bible translators have chosen to give God’s *hesed* its very own English word—the superlative “lovingkindness.” Personally, I don’t think anyone has ever

come up with a better English rendering of God's *hesed*,¹⁸ so that is what we will stick with.

According to the psalmists and prophets, God's lovingkindness (*hesed*) is something to get excited about. (No, I mean really, really excited!) In fact, one biblical author argues that God's "lovingkindness is better than life itself" (Psalm 63:3). There is nothing Israel's poets and minstrels loved to sing about more. God's lovingkindness is the source of every good thing in life—peace, joy, provision, protection, victory, healing, forgiveness, etc.

How precious is Your lovingkindness (*hesed*), God. The children of men take refuge in the shadow of Your wings. They drink their fill of the abundance of Your house; You give them to drink from the river of Your delights. For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light. Continue Your lovingkindness (*hesed*) to those who know You. (Psalm 36:7-10)

Lovingkindness is at the very heart of who God is. "All the LORD's ways are lovingkindness and faithfulness" (Psalm 25:10). Throughout the Old Testament, it becomes clear that to know God's lovingkindness is to know Him, and to miss it is to miss Him (Jeremiah 9:23-24; Hosea 6:6).¹⁹ God's lovingkindness is so fundamental to ancient Israel's conception of God that the phrase "His lovingkindness is everlasting" came to serve as something like a national mot-

to. Whole songs were devoted to this phrase (e.g., Psalm 106:1; 107:1; 118:1; 136:1).²⁰

The long and the short of it all is this. If you really want to walk in intimacy with God, it's absolutely vital that you get this one idea straight—God's lovingkindness. On the flip side, if Satan wants to keep a person in darkness, there is no better way than to keep them from knowing the lovingkindness of God. So let's look to *The Derakim* to see what else God has to say about His lovingkindness.

1.11 THE OTHER WORDS

First of all, God lets Moses (and us) know that His lovingkindness should be understood in light of the adjective "compassionate" (*raham*). Why was this particular word placed at the very front of *The Derakim*? Because if you really want to know someone, you need to know what is going on at the heart level. What's driving them? What are their deepest motives? We human beings do (seemingly) kind things for each other all the time with less than pure motives. We flatter, we defer, we give compliments, and we attempt to win people's favor ... often for selfish or devious purposes. So why does God do all the things that He does? Once again, buckle up and get ready to be amazed. The word "compassionate" (*raham*) may not be the biggest theological term in the Bible, but I must confess that it's my favorite. This word gives us a peek into the very heart of God, and once you start to understand it, it can knock the breath right out of you.

This first attribute of *The Derakim*, "compassionate" (*raham*), basically tells us that God's heart is a raging fire of affection, sympathy, and parental longing for us all. There is a spontaneous eruption that goes off inside Him when He sees suffering or need, and it makes Him want to run to the rescue. This word is loaded with emotional freight.

The adjective *raham* is directly related to the noun *rehem*, which literally means a mother's womb.²¹ It is not at all a stretch to say that God's compassion is comparable to the primal, physiological connection between a mother and her newborn. In fact, the Bible makes it clear that God's compassion is something even greater than a mother's. In the book of Isaiah, for instance, God says that a human mother's compassion can fail, but not God's (Isaiah 49:15). This is how God feels about you and me, His little image-bearers, and this is why He wants to do good things for us.²² He has an irrepressible fire in His heart for all people—not just those who love and serve Him, but for all people.²³ This amazing attribute undergirds God's entire program on earth. As the psalmist tells us, "**His compassions are over all His works**" (Psalm 145:9). So we can all rest easy. Right out of the gate, God basically lets us know that we already have Him by the heart strings. This one truth is enough to lay you on the floor, but we are just getting started.

Next, God says that He is "gracious." This is the Hebrew word *hanun*. In *The Derakim*, the first two attributes together make a fun-to-say figure of speech, *raham ve-hanun*—"compassionate and gracious." (It flows a lot better in the Hebrew.) Throughout the Bible, this word combination is reserved for God. What does it mean? Think about it this way. The first word, *raham* ("compassionate"), points to how

God feels toward us. The second word, *hanun* ("gracious"), points to what God does for us. Put them together and it tells us that since God's heart is a raging fire of affection for us, like a mother for her child, He loves nothing more than to meet all our needs. Like a good parent, He gets outrageous joy whenever He gets to forgive, heal, defend, guide, provide, etc. (just like Psalm 103 says).

Contrary to popular opinion, God is not coldly sitting up in heaven with His arms folded, impervious to your pain. Nor is He demanding impossible feats of religious devotion from you and me before He comes to our rescue. Like a good mother or father, He aches and yearns to do good things for us. Again, we already have Him by the heartstrings. All we have to do is put ourselves in the position to receive. This is why the saints in Scripture can pray with such outrageous confidence, because He is "gracious" (*hanun*). In fact, the verbal form of this Hebrew word is one of the most common ways to ask God for help—"be gracious to me" (Psalm 4:1; 6:2; 9:13; 25:16; 26:11; 27:7; et al.).²⁴

Following "compassionate and gracious" comes "slow to anger" (*erek appayim*). This attribute doesn't so much tell us what God is—it tells us what He isn't. Simply put, this lets us know that God doesn't like to punish people. He has an aversion to wrath. Let me try to be as clear as I can be here. You don't like the smell of rancid garbage, smoke in your eyes, or bamboo shoots under your fingernails. Well, God doesn't like to punish people. So many of us are completely upside down and backwards here, as if God is some sort of sadist, an angry-eyed Zeus figure with lightning bolts shooting out of His fingers. No, no, a thousand times no. He doesn't want to send fire from heaven, swallow people into

the bowels of the earth, or send anyone to hell. The words came from His own mouth. He is “slow to anger.”

The Derakim lets us know that He is impossibly patient and He would always, in absolutely every situation, rather see a sinner come home and be forgiven. This idea is so hard for many of us to wrap our minds around. It may not be what you or I were taught about God, but again, He is the one who said it. Just as He told the prophet Ezekiel, **“I don’t take delight in the death of the wicked, I would rather that the wicked turn from his way and live”** (Ezekiel 33:11).

What a relief all this must have been for Moses to hear. When God first spoke *The Derakim*, the nation of Israel had just collectively spit in God’s face. As we said earlier, there should have been a smoking crater where the wicked, idolatrous nation was camped (see Exodus 32:9-10). This is what they deserved, but the God of *The Derakim* prefers mercy and kindness over wrath every time. If “compassionate and gracious” don’t knock a person off their feet, the fact that God is “slow to anger” surely will. But as glorious as these first three attributes of *The Derakim* are, they are just the lead in. Those jewels are all there to illumine the center stone—God’s lovingkindness. Unfortunately, we have to leave further discussion of that attribute for the coming chapters. Before moving on, however, there is just one more word to touch on.

The fifth and final attribute of *The Derakim* is “faithfulness” (*emet*). Biblical authors often make quick reference back to *The Derakim* by simply mentioning the last two attributes together, “lovingkindness and faithfulness.”²⁵ This became one of the great declarations of faith in the prayers

and songs of Israel. Technically speaking, this last word *emet* is grammatically attached to *hesed* (in a construction called a hendiadys). This means that we are supposed to think of these two words together, as if they are sort of tangled up into one idea. This may be a little confusing, but it says that God's lovingkindness will always remain the same, unchanging throughout endless ages. It's more consistent than a drumbeat, day in and day out, no ups, no downs, no alterations, always the same—"faithful." God is exactly who He said He was in Exodus 34:6, and He will never, ever, ever change. He loves you more than your mother ever could, He wants to crash in and save the day, He doesn't want to punish you ... and this is what He will forever be! The above gives you some insight as to why Moses hit the dirt after hearing *The Derakim*. **"Moses quickly fell to the ground and worshipped"** (Exodus 34:8).

1.12 *THE DERAKIM IN THE FLESH*

It was said earlier that after I discovered *The Derakim* for myself, I quickly realized that it is an interpretive key for the rest of the Bible, sort of like a decoder ring. *The Derakim* reveals God's modus operandi, the "how" and "why" behind what He does on the pages of Scripture. The most jaw-dropping truth I found was this—the words God spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, *The Derakim*, were very specifically fleshed out before the eyes of the world in the Person of Jesus Christ. This means that once you put all the pieces together, it's undeniable that Jesus Christ is the God of Moses, the God of Israel, with skin on.

This is precisely the point John’s Gospel is making when it states, **“We saw His glory, glory of the one and only from the Father, full of grace and truth”** (John 1:14). For years, I had no idea that this Scripture was saying that Jesus was *The Derakim* clothed in human flesh and blood. I had seen that verse hundreds of times, and actually memorized the whole chapter years prior. Once my eyes were opened, the connection to Exodus 34:6 was undeniable.²⁶ And John is not the only New Testament author to make this point. Matthew, Mark, and Luke do, as well. They just use different Greek words to highlight this divine *modus operandi*. They prove Jesus is the God of *The Derakim* by using special words like *splanchnizomai* (“I am moved with compassion”), and *eleos*, a very common Greek stand-in for the Hebrew word *hesed*. (This is all a bit technical, so we will hold off for now.)

The upshot of it all is that careful study reveals that there have been exactly two—TWO—occasions in human history when God told us with crystal clarity who He is. The first time was when He described Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai in Exodus 34:6, and the second was when **“The Word (Jesus Christ) became flesh and dwelt among us”** (John 1:14). These two great revelatory moments fit together perfectly, and they both tell us the exact same thing about God. Yahweh in the Old Testament is identical in His nature and ways to Jesus Christ in the New Testament. This means that everyone who really knows the God of Moses will instantly recognize Him in the man Jesus Christ. **“He (Jesus) is the radiance of His glory, and the exact representation of His nature”** (Hebrews 1:3).

1.13 ANOTHER STUNNING CONNECTION

Something else I discovered about *The Derakim* that amazed me was that this description of God not only sheds light on the idea of Jesus revealing the Father, it also reveals my created purpose and destiny. The Bible says again and again that we were created to bear the image of God.²⁷ *The Derakim* explains what this ultimately means. Of course, we will never be infinite, all-powerful, all-knowing, or rule our own universe, but that is not what God meant when He said we were created to bear His image. The words of Exodus 34:6—“compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and great in lovingkindness and faithfulness”—describe how God wants us to reflect Him. God saves us through the death and resurrection of Jesus, so that we might shine forth His glory—the glory of *The Derakim*. His modus operandi is supposed to be our modus operandi. (Chapter 6 goes into this in much greater detail.)

There are countless other insights I gained by studying *The Derakim*, but the long and the short of it all is that it changed almost everything for me. It drove away the dark clouds of doubt, fear, and depression that were perpetually looming over me. It caused the Bible to explode into multi-dimensional technicolor, it lit my prayer life and my ministry on fire. When I first discovered it for myself, *The Derakim* quite literally floored me. Now, over a quarter-century later, it can still lay me out on the ground.

I am absolutely convinced that intimately knowing the God described by *The Derakim* is, quite simply, the great objective of our human existence. The reason so many Christians are not experiencing the fulness of life that Jesus promised is

that some other vision of God is serving as their Copernican center. But the God of *The Derakim* is pursuing them too, just like He was pursuing me in that little mountain church.

1.14 TROUBLE IN PARADISE

When I teach *The Derakim* in the U.S. and abroad, I see some amazing reactions—people completely overwhelmed, tears of joy, inability to stand up (seriously). While the teaching is going on, I also see heads nodding all over the room, as if the message is resonating with something deep in people's souls. Just like me back in that little mountain church, the Holy Spirit is trying to get their attention. The problem is that we are all in a spiritual battle, and the devil is fighting tooth and claw to keep us from knowing who God really is. God's ancient enemy knows that if and when we finally "get it," we will be free, full of joy, and a real menace to Satan's kingdom.

So how does the devil keep us in bondage? Getting us to spend years spinning our wheels, attempting to figure everything out from the wrong theological centerpoint. But God's Spirit is greater, and He will keep speaking to us until we get it. We too, like Moses, will probably have to pass through some fire. We will also have to be open to the possibility that we have fallen for some lies. And of course, this means we must be willing to lay aside supposed "truths" we hold dear (things we may have picked up in church, Bible college, or seminary). But it will all be worth it when we can say like Job, "Now my eye sees You" (Job 42:6).

My soul thirsts for You, my flesh yearns for You, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. Surely I have seen You in the sanctuary, I have seen Your power and Your glory. Because Your lovingkindness (*hesed*) is better than life, My lips will praise You. (Psalm 63:1-3)

I like to say that the message of *The Derakim* is like a song that the Holy Spirit begins singing deep in our souls on the day we are born again. It's a song we all yearn to know, a song about a God who seems too good to be true. Unfortunately, for many of us this song is faint indeed. It is drowned out by a lot of other voices telling us who and what God is—God the perplexing mystery, God the cold and distant, God the great controller, God the angry judge, God the web of abstruse philosophical attributes. This can all get pretty confusing. How can we know for sure that we are getting it right? There is one foolproof way to cut through the chaos.

1.15 THE JESUS TEST

We need to understand that Jesus Christ isn't merely the "bridge" to the Father, the way to salvation (although this is of monumental significance). Jesus Christ is also the final word on what we are supposed to believe about God, and how we walk and talk with Him. As the apostle Paul says, the glory of God is revealed "**in the face of Christ**" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

A strange and tragic thing happened among some very religious people in Jesus's day. They were convinced to the bone

that they knew the God of Scripture, but their rejection of the man Jesus Christ proved that they were missing everything.

Don't think that I will accuse you before the Father. The one who accuses you is Moses, the one you have put your hope in. Because if you believed Moses, you would believe Me, because he wrote about Me. But if you don't believe his writings, how will you believe My words? (John 5:45-47)

A similar sort of theological deception is happening today in God's church. The fact is that for countless Christians, the Person of Jesus Christ is completely irrelevant to their understanding of God the Father. I know this sounds extreme, but it's true. This is precisely why so many Christians are not experiencing the fulness of life with God that they could be enjoying.

Jesus shows us exactly how the Father wants us to know Him. The day we really begin to believe this is the day our yoke becomes easy and our burden becomes light. Ultimately, this is the message of *The Derakim*. For those who only hear the song faintly (and for those who have never heard it at all), hopefully the coming pages will make this abundantly clear.

Have I been with you for so long, and you still have not come to know Me ...? He who sees

Me sees the Father; how can you say, “Show us the Father”? (John 14:9)

1.16 BUT FIRST ... LET'S K.I.S.S.

The Derakim only makes sense if you can look at it with the eyes of a child (or a Bronze Age shepherder, like Moses).²⁸ One of the main reasons Christian thinkers down through the ages have blown right past it is because of the very nature of Christian theology. The cold hard fact is that Christian theologians just refuse to K.I.S.S. (“keep it simple, stupid”). Their whole approach is too complicated and philosophical. Christian theology has always been a subject for the intellectual elite, the specialist, or in Jesus’s words, “the wise and intelligent.”

Moses, the very first man to hear *The Derakim*, didn’t have a degree in systematic theology or philosophy, and neither did the former slaves he was preaching to. God didn’t speak the words of *The Derakim*, which have a perfectly clear meaning, and then ask Moses to use tortured logic to reconcile them with complex ideas borrowed from philosophy (like immutability, impassability, and atemporality).

The Derakim says what it means and means what it says. End of discussion. The biblical authors were able to keep all this pretty straightforward in their presentation of God (even if theologians can’t). As Jesus said, we can only understand the message if we can K.I.S.S., like a child.²⁹ So how exactly do we do this? That question will be tackled in the next chapter, where we will sort through the theological/philosophical morass that is keeping so many people in a

muddle. Once we get past this hurdle, we can then go up the mountain and meet God face to face.

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1. For a discussion of salvation in the New Testament and how to make sure you have it, see the first chapter of *There Must Be More: Lost Keys to the Christian Life* (www.lostkeysproject.com).
 2. At this point someone might ask, "Why would a Christian mission agency send someone with such inner struggles?" This goes beyond the scope of this book, but unfortunately this happens all the time.
 3. *The CoMission* was a historic cooperative involving dozens of major Christian organizations. This alliance was formed following an invitation to Western Christians by the Russian Ministry of Education. See, *The CoMission: The amazing story of eighty ministry groups working together to take the message of Christ's love to the Russian people* (Chicago: Moody, 2004). Some of the very first volunteers, myself included, were "called" at The Moody Bible Institute Founder's Week Conference in 1992.

4. See, C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1943). Lewis borrowed this idea from German theologian Rudolph Otto (see *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. J. W. Harvey [New York: OUP, 1923; 2nd ed., 1950; reprint, New York, 1970]). Otto derived it from philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) and his distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal realms of knowledge. See, Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781/1787).
5. The reason this study refers to Exodus 34:6—"compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and great in lovingkindness and faithfulness"—as *The Derakim* is because the words were given in direct answer to Moses's prayer in Exodus 33:13, "Let me know Your ways (*derakim*)." The Hebrew word "*derakim*" basically covers the same semantic ground as the English word "ways." It can refer to roads, paths, etc., but can also refer to habits, manners, or a person's way of doing things—i.e., a person's *modus operandi*.
6. This description of God is first found in Exodus 34:6. Scholars often study Exodus 34:6 and 7 together, but in the coming pages only verse 6 will be emphasized. This follows biblical precedent, where verse 6 is regularly isolated from 7 (see, e.g., Psalm 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Neh 9:17; Jonah 4:2; Joel 2:13). In the biblical narrative, Exodus 34:6 is the new revelation to Moses. The bulk of Exodus 34:7 is (almost verbatim) a restatement of a warning seen first in Exodus 20:5-6, which corresponds to the revelation of the divine name, "Yahweh the jealous God." (See also, Exod 34:14; Deut 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; also see Ezek 39:25; Joel 2:18; Zech 1:14.)

7. This brief analogy to Copernicus, and even much of the specific wording, can be found in another book of mine, *There Must be More: Lost Keys to the Christian Life* (2022). The reason for putting it here is, to be honest, because my wife insisted. She said it is the best analogy for making this particular point. So I repeat it here almost verbatim because, as they say, “If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.”
8. For a discussion of biblical scholars and theologians across the theological spectrum who have acknowledged this obvious fact, see Chapter 10.
9. Obvious references are easier to spot (Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:17-19; Psalm 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Nehemiah 9:17), but more subtle allusions are prevalent—e.g., when you find two or more of the words of the formula ("compassionate," "gracious," "lovingkindness," etc.) in close proximity. See note 16.
10. Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (1927). Over 13 million copies of this book have been printed worldwide.
11. These are Stowe's words: "If ever I was conscious of an attack of the Devil trying to separate me from the love of Christ, it was for some days after the terrible news came. I was in a state of great physical weakness, most agonizing, and unable to control my thoughts." *Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe Compiled from Her Letters and Journals* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1889), 321.

12. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) is one of the best-selling books in history and has been translated into more than two hundred languages. For a look into Bunyan's extreme mental duress, see his book *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666).
13. George Whitefield is one of the key figures in The First Great Awakening (the other key figure is John Wesley). Throngs of up to 50,000 would gather in open fields to listen to him. Early in his spiritual journey he recounts, "Whenever I knelt down ... I felt great pressure both on soul and body; and have often prayed under the weight of them till the sweat came through me. God only knows how many nights I have lain upon my bed, groaning under what I felt." John Gillies, *Memoirs of Rev. George Whitefield* (Hartford: Edwin Bunt, 1845), 17.
14. A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: HarperCollins, 1961), 1.
15. God tells Moses, "**I Myself will make all My goodness pass before you, and will proclaim the name (*shem*) of the LORD before you**" (Exodus 33:19). Then follows the combination of the name Yahweh with the descriptive phrase in Exodus 34:6. This phenomenon happens often in the Bible—Yahweh plus a descriptive word or phrase. See, for example, Exodus 3:15: "**Yahweh, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ... this is My name forever, and this is My memorial name to all generations.**"

16. For instance, when the Old Testament authors combine the words “**lovingkindness and truth**” (*hesed ve-emet*), they are often pointing directly to *The Derakim*. See Psalm 25:10; 40:11; 57:3; 61:7; 85:10; 89:14; et al. This coupling of the last two attributes of *The Derakim* also occurs in the New Testament, and is what John is doing in the prologue of his Gospel. He states that Jesus revealed God's glory, full of “**grace and truth**” (*charis kai aletheia*). This is his Greek rendering of the last two attributes of *The Derakim*.
17. For example, here is a particularly flexible English word—“hot.” Literally, it can refer to temperature. “It’s so hot outside.” But it can also flex and stretch. “It’s not hot outside. The surface of the sun is hot.” “Hot” also has a wild array of figurative meanings. Something stolen is “hot” (“a hot gun”), an angry person is “hot” (“He is a hot head”), an attractive person is hot (“She was so hot”), a bad dose of drugs is “hot” (“a hot shot”), etc. Such multiple usage is called polysemy, and context determines which meaning applies.
18. This translation of *hesed* is first found in English in *The Coverdale Bible* (1535) as the hyphenated “loving-kindness.” *The King James Bible* (1611) later picked it up and removed the hyphen, rendering it “lovingkindness.” More recent translations that use the term “lovingkindness” are *The American Standard Version* (1901), and *The New American Standard Version* (1971 and 1995 editions).

19. This is precisely the point Jesus is making in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7, when He quotes Hosea 6:6. This is a little hard to follow for those unfamiliar with Hebrew and Greek. The quotation of Hosea 6:6 renders the Hebrew *hesed* with the Greek term *eleos* (following the LXX).
20. I first came across the clever idea that this phrase served as a national motto in Michael Card's book, *Inexpressible: Hesed and the Mystery of God's Lovingkindness* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018).
21. I am aware of the "root fallacy" (assuming a word's meaning is related to the root it is derived from). However, the fact that this error can happen does not mean that terms are never affected by the root they are derived from. In the case of *raham* and related words, it is clear that the emotional element can be, and often is, informed by the root.
22. Technical note: There are times when the Bible says that God withholds His compassion, in particular when a group is being extremely rebellious. This simply means that He is not going to help. It does not mean that He no longer has feelings for them. On such occasions, the feeling in God's heart would need to be described using a different Hebrew word. A good example of this can be seen in the book of Hosea: "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I surrender you, Israel? ... My heart is turned over within Me and all My affections (*nihuma*) are enflamed." (11:8)

23. The words of *The Derakim*, including "compassionate," are even used to describe God's attitude toward the brutal nation of Assyria, who ruthlessly oppressed the Jews and ultimately destroyed and scattered the northern kingdom of Israel (see Jonah 4:2).
24. It is also worth noting that this word *hanun* (gracious) is the adjective that regularly corresponds to the noun *hesed*. If God is said to be *hanun* (gracious), it is because He has *hesed* (lovingkindness). Why does *hanun* not correspond to the expected noun *hen*? The noun *hen* is used almost exclusively in the historical writings as part of the figure of speech, "to find favor (hen) in someone's eyes" (e.g., Genesis 6:8; 19:19; 32:5; 33:8; et al.). This is a little bit technical, and will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.
25. See, e.g., Psalm 25:10; 40:10; 57:3; 61:7; 69:13; 85:10; 86:15; 89:14; et al.

26. Many New Testament scholars have noted this connection. Richard Bauckham argues that Jesus Christ was identified as God because He manifested the “character description given by God in His self-revelation to Moses: ‘YHWH, YHWH, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness ...’ (Exod. 34:6 and constantly echoed elsewhere in the biblical and later Jewish literature).” Richard Bauckham, *God Crucified* (Great Britain: Paternoster Press, 1998), 9. For an in-depth study of the subject, see Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *Grace and Truth: A Study of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (London: SPCK, 1975). For a discussion of biblical scholarship on the topic, see Alexander Tsutserov, *Glory, Grace, And Truth* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2009).
27. This truth can be seen in numerous biblical passages, but perhaps none clearer than Colossians 3:10-12: “**Put on the new self, which is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him ... So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience.**”

28. I have found a group of people who already know the message of *The Derakim* very well. They tend to be get-it-done Christians out on the battlefield of life, actually helping others. One of my personal heroes, Brother Andrew, for instance, mentions this description of God in the beginning of his radical book on prayer, *And God Changed His Mind*. Another man who had a profound impact on me when I was young, Bruce Wilkinson, emphasizes this description of God in the beginning of his *New York Times* best seller, *The Prayer of Jabez*. But the fact remains that *The Derakim* is, for all intents and purposes, locked out of serious theological discussion.
29. Many passages of Scripture state that human intelligence is not the key to knowing God. **“If anyone thinks that he is wise according to this world’s standards, let him become a fool so that he might become truly wise.”** (1 Corinthians 3:18; also Jeremiah 9:23; Proverbs 3:5-6; Matthew 11:25-20; 19:13-15; 21:15-16; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15-17; et al.)