

## Introduction

In this morning's service, we sang the song, "Forever." That song is based off **Psalm 136**. **Psalm 136** is poetry; poetry uses various literary devices, and repetition is one of those devices. Repeatedly in **Psalm 136** the phrase, "**For his mercy endures forever**" appears.

The Hebrew word that our English word 'mercy' is translated from is my favorite word in all the languages of the entire world—the Hebrew word is **chesed**. Now, I cannot pronounce *chesed* correctly (few people can). Hebrew is a guttural language and I have never gotten the hang of it. Therefore, I have asked **Terry Bolden** (the closest thing we have to a Hebrew expert in our church) to pronounce it for me. Terry?

Let's practice that together (and if someone is sitting in front of you and you happen to spit on them, it'll be OK). *Chesed*.

**Psalm 136** has a few names that may be unfamiliar to us—**Sihon and Og**. Sihon and Og were the first two Amorite kings that the Israelites defeated when they crossed Jordan—and various leaders of Israel would repeatedly bring these victories to the Israelite people's minds as they were presented with obstacles.

Now, **Psalm 136** has no title and no author listed. There is no indication of how to sing it or anything about instruments to be used. However, it was popular as it's sung several times in the Old Testament.

The chorus says, "**For his mercy endures forever.**" *Chesed* is most accurately translated, 'loving-kindness,' but **mercy** works as well. Your translation may use the word 'love' or the phrase, 'faithful love,' or 'lovingkindness.' *Chesed* is love for love's sake. *Chesed* is kindness for the purpose of being kind. It expects nothing in return and shows the unending goodness of God. *Chesed* is about as close as you get in the Old Testament to the New Testament concept of *agape* love (God's love).

**Psalm 136** is an example of a **responsive** reading. Baptist churches rarely practice responsive readings, but in other denominations, it is quite common.

**EasyEnglish:** **In this psalm, one group says something and another group answers. . . . The Jews called this psalm "the great Hallel". Other Hallel's are Psalms 113-118 and Psalm 135. They are psalms that praise the LORD, (or tell the LORD that he is great).**

This is most likely the psalm that was read in **Ezra 3:10-11a: When the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, the priests stood in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise the LORD, according to the ordinance of David king of Israel. 11 And they sang responsively, praising and giving thanks to the LORD: "For He is good, For His mercy endures forever toward Israel."**

Today, we are going to read this psalm the way it was read in **Ezra 3:10-11**. Look at your handout and I will read the priest/Levite part and you read the congregation part (I have underlined your part).

## Psalm 136

- 1 Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good!**  
**For His mercy endures forever.**
- 2 Oh, give thanks to the God of gods!**  
**For His mercy endures forever.**
- 3 Oh, give thanks to the Lord of lords!**  
**For His mercy endures forever:**
- 4 To Him who alone does great wonders,**  
**For His mercy endures forever;**
- 5 To Him who by wisdom made the heavens,**  
**For His mercy endures forever;**
- 6 To Him who laid out the earth above the waters,**  
**For His mercy endures forever;**
- 7 To Him who made great lights,**  
**For His mercy endures forever—**
- 8 The sun to rule by day,**  
**For His mercy endures forever;**
- 9 The moon and stars to rule by night,**  
**For His mercy endures forever.**
- 10 To Him who struck Egypt in their firstborn,**  
**For His mercy endures forever;**
- 11 And brought out Israel from among them,**  
**For His mercy endures forever;**
- 12 With a strong hand, and with an outstretched arm,**  
**For His mercy endures forever;**
- 13 To Him who divided the Red Sea in two,**  
**For His mercy endures forever;**
- 14 And made Israel pass through the midst of it,**  
**For His mercy endures forever;**
- 15 But overthrew Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea,**  
**For His mercy endures forever;**
- 16 To Him who led His people through the wilderness,**  
**For His mercy endures forever;**
- 17 To Him who struck down great kings,**  
**For His mercy endures forever;**
- 18 And slew famous kings,**  
**For His mercy endures forever—**
- 19 Sihon king of the Amorites,**  
**For His mercy endures forever;**
- 20 And Og king of Bashan,**  
**For His mercy endures forever—**
- 21 And gave their land as a heritage,**  
**For His mercy endures forever;**
- 22 A heritage to Israel His servant,**  
**For His mercy endures forever.**
- 23 Who remembered us in our lowly state,**  
**For His mercy endures forever;**
- 24 And rescued us from our enemies,**  
**For His mercy endures forever;**
- 25 Who gives food to all flesh,**  
**For His mercy endures forever.**
- 26 Oh, give thanks to the God of heaven!**  
**For His mercy endures forever.**

Now let's take a few minutes to unpack this psalm. Obviously, the most important characteristic of this psalm is that it repeats the phrase, "**For his mercy endures forever.**" There is much more going on here.

**1. For he is good.** Notice that the Psalmist did not talk about his own goodness, but he rather talks about God's goodness. When we base our perception of reality and goodness on ourselves, we are constantly disappointed. When we base everything off God, we are never disappointed. God is the source of all good things. **Matthew Henry: All the streams [of goodness] must be traced up to the fountain**

**Honey (Psalm 119:103: How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth!)**

**1. LORD** = Jehovah

**2. God** = Elohiym

**3. Lord** = variation of Adonai

So, in three verses, you've got the most common three names for God in the Old Testament—the psalmist is letting us know that every aspect of God is good—all of His names point to His goodness and everything that He does is good.

**5-9.** We have been studying **Job** in my Sunday school class and this morning's lesson was **Job 38-41** (where God shows up and starts to question Job about creation). We serve a big, big, God. Let's look at some of **Job 38** and **39** now. Turn to page \_\_\_\_\_ in your pew bible.

However, it is not just that God's in charge of all things, it's that He wants to share that with us forever. The eternal nature of this *chesed* is what blows my mind. *Chesed* will last forever. **There will never be a moment either in time or outside of time that God's loving-kindness won't be in effect. It will go on for all of eternity. It is infinitely larger than anything we can imagine. When we have exhausted our imaginations and used up all of our creativeness, God's loving-kindness will have just begun. It will go on past our dreams, our hopes, our problems, our cares, our concerns, and anything else that we have. It is infinite in both its duration and its strength. Forever and ever . . .**

**11. C. H. Spurgeon: None of them remained in bondage. The Lord brought them out; brought them all out; brought them out at the very hour when his promise was due; brought them out despite their being mingled among the Egyptians; brought them out never to return.** In the same way, God has brought us out. He brought us out of the control of Satan. He brought us out despite our not deserving to be brought out. He brought us out never to return to the power of sin.

**14. C. H. Spurgeon: Even to the depth of the sea mercy reaches,—there is no end to it, no obstacle in the way of it, no danger to believers in it, while Jehovah is all around.**

**15. overthrew** = shake off. This same word in **Isaiah** describes a tree ridding itself of its leaves. Pharaoh's army was but leaves to our God. He shakes off His enemies. We serve a big, big, God!

**24. redeemed** = tear away, snatch, rescue

**Matthew Henry: It is good to enter into the detail of God's favors. . . . Forgetful as we are, things must be often repeated to us.**