

## Be Merciful and Refuge – Psalm 57:1

In consideration of Psalm 57:1, the words **merciful** and **refuge** are emphasized. David was in an imminent crisis, encompassed by ruthless adversaries, and he trusted that only the sovereign God could rescue him. One who believes as David did will find peace during times of unrest and uncertainty in his grace.

Due to the vast differences between the English and Hebrew languages, one must examine the meanings merciful and refuge to determine if the English definition(s) are appropriate for the Hebrew translation of grace. In further analysis, “grace” in Hebrew provides two derivatives of חן (hhen; parent root (grace)), חנה (Hh.N.H: verbal root (*to pitch*)), מחנה (mahhaneh; noun (*camp*)). In observance of Genesis 26:17, “And Isaac departed thence, and pitched his tent in the valley of Gerar, and dwelt there,” one can conclude that the English translation for grace does not imply the same as its original Hebrew translation, but here more accurately rendered “to pitch a tent.” Substituting the word grace would undoubtedly change the meaning of the Old Testament verse. Though more closely related to Psalm 57, a semantic field study will determine that חן (the derivative חנן) is also associated with words or phrases such as healing, help, being lifted, finding refuge, strength, and salvation (or the literal word rescue).<sup>1</sup> In Psalms 57:1, one finds that grace is rendered as both merciful and refuge. Both of which God is.

“**Be merciful** 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.

Though a psalm of petition, the major theme of Psalm 57 is God as a refuge. In the case of David life (1 Samuel 22:1-2, 24), the historical setting is similar to that of Psalm 56 where David’s prayer for deliverance is rooted in the confidence of a merciful God who is his refuge.

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<sup>1</sup>James Strong, *Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Greek references 5485, χάρις and χάριτι, Hebrew references 2580, 2583, 4264, 2603, מחנה, חנה, חן), “grace.”