

"ROOTS": "KITTEL" AS RESOURCE: chesed<sup>h</sup> [700] as illustration

One of the enemies of my sleep is the recently completed ten-volume translation of G. Kittel's THEOLOGISCHES WOERTERBUCH ZUM N.T. by Eerdmans, tr. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley [the completing ed. of the Ger. being Gerhard Friedrich]. So rich for biblical study is this material that some of the pp. in my copy have almost as much underlined text as ununderlined! Aesop's hare/tortoise comes to mind: the Ger. took 45 yrs., the Eng. 10, and they finished together: 1973. As the volumes proceeded, there was some tendency to give less attention to etymology, more tendency to order by stem than by root-- which is to say, from the standpoint of "roots," some degeneracy [but not in quality, otherwise]. One of the solid values is Hebraic sensitivity: the Jew is not overwhelmed by the Greek, and reading the lg. of each [in the Hebrew and Greek alphabets] is assumed, the work being "translated" only in the sense that the original German is Englished. "The English reader" [= the student without Hebrew and Greek], however, can get most of the meaning, getting to his/her subject through the use of the lexica in Strong's Concordance.

As illustration of Kittel use, this thinksheet takes LOVE-GRACE, the former appearing in the first volume and the latter in the last. I.22: "Love in the OT is basically a spontaneous feeling which impels to self-giving" to persons, to getting things, and to pleasure-action--and what a rich feast of Hebrew roots! Here the principle I emphasize in teaching "Roots" applies: "grasp the content of the thought in the immanent [i.e., secular] sphere, and [then proceed] "to judge the scope and bearing of the religious statements accordingly" [p.23]. Profanely, the power of sexuality needs no proving, and its glory and danger is that it is 180° from law ["complete difference"]. Since "love" is [p.24] "spontaneous and irrational" [= the "normative element" forbidding Heb. to make sharp distinction of (Gk.) eros/agape], the love commandment [e.g., Lev.19.18] is [p.25] "not really a legal statement" but an oxymoron [Gk., "sharp-foolish" self-contradiction] shockingly pointing to the possibility of love as "a disposition": the paradoxical love-command points to a law-base not in power but in "love," so that the principle of social ordering is to foster the flowering of all human life through nurturing, protecting, and encouraging that feeling which is fundamentally the impulse to self-give to another person, and only derivately the desire to possess [property-rights legislation!] whatever awakens the feeling and to perform actions that heighten the feeling in the form of pleasure. Here is, already, the entire base for biblical ethics and therefore for a biblical politic, and a steady criterion for social judgment.

You might have picked up the essence of this, though in less gutsy form, in Richardson's [A THEOLOGICAL WORD BOOK OF THE BIBLE] "Love..." and "Loving-Kindness." That second word leads us, in Kittel, from "love" to "grace," an Eng. wd.\* on the same root as Gk. "c<sup>h</sup>aris," which usu. trs. the Heb. wd. in the title of this thinksheet. "The product of the Spirit is love, joy" [Gal.5.22 Wms.], both of which are direct, spontaneous, self-evidencing, self-confirming. The "joy" root [c<sup>h</sup>ar] is in 11 NT wds. and takes 57pp. in Kittel to expound [IX. 359-415]! In Gk., "grace" is fundamentally "joy": to receive grace and not be joyful is, at least etym., impossible. "Love" is relational, interpersonal, in essence; "joy" is intrapersonal, inside your own skinbag, the harmonious culmination of personal energy, [Aug.] "the [unconscious] praise we give to God." In LXX, "c<sup>h</sup>aris" trs. two Heb. wds: (1) c<sup>h</sup>en, the consonance of fellow-feeling and helpful ["kindly," "merciful," perhaps root "stooping"] action, a process in which somebody gives something needed to the needy; (2) c<sup>h</sup>esed<sup>h</sup>, kindness-in-continuing-relationship, secondarily the duty dimension in such relationship ["leal-love," "loyalty," "constancy," even "truth"], in fulfilment of a promise, oath, blessing, sign--thus human-human and divine-human covenant [pp.381-7].

\* Another Eng. wd. on the same root is "gratitude."