

Thirteen Attributes of Mercy – Translated and Explained

1. HASHEM – HASHEM is merciful before man sins.
2. HASHEM – HASHEM is merciful after the sin.
3. Kel (God) – the power of Hashem's mercy.
4. Rachum (Compassionate) – Hashem eases the punishment of those being punished.
5. Chanun (Gracious) – God is gracious even to those who don't deserve it.
6. Erech Apayim (Slow to anger) – God gives time for the sinner to repent.
7. v'Rav Chesed (and Abundant in Kindness) – God shows *chesed* to those without personal merits. God removes sins from the scales, to give more merit.
8. v'Emes (and Truth) – God's promise to forgive is irrevocable.
9. Notzer chesed l'alafim (Preserver of kindness for thousands of generations) – those who perform mitzvot benefit their offspring.
10. Nosei avon (Forgiver of iniquity) – God will even forgive those who sin intentionally, if they do *teshuvah* (repentance).
11. Va'Fesha (Forgiver of willful sin) – God will even forgive those who sin intentionally with the purpose of rebelling.
12. v'Chataah (Forgiver of error) – why are lesser iniquities mentioned after the more severe ones? Because God's mercy can transform intentional error to small errors; we then ask for forgiveness for the small ones.
13. v'Nakeh (and who cleanses) – God wipes away the sins of those who repent seriously.*

* We have followed Rabbeinu Tam's opinion of the Thirteen Attributes (*Rosh Hashanah* 17b), as explained by the ArtScroll *siddur*.