

# Psalm 27: Reflections for the Season of Teshuva

Source Sheet by Rabbi Lindsey Healey-Pollack

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## Psalms 27

*Adonai* is my light and my help, whom should I fear?

*Adonai* is my source of strength, who can frighten me?

Though those who wish me harm draw near to devour me -these foes, these enemies – they stumble and fall.

If they surrounded me on all sides, still my heart would be fearless—

If they warred on me, I would still trust.

## תהילים כ"ז

(א) לְדָוִד | יי | אֹרְחֵי וְיִשְׁעֵי מִמֶּי אֵירָא יי  
מְעוֹז־חַיִּי מִמֶּי אֶפְקֹד: (ב) בְּקִרְבִּי עָלַי | מְרַעִים  
לְאֵכָל אֶת־בְּשָׂרִי צָרִי וְאִיְבִי לִי הִמָּה כְּשִׁלּוֹ  
וְנָפְלוּ: (ג) אִם־תִּתְחַנֶּה עָלַי | מִתְחַנֶּה לֹא־יִקְרָא  
לִבִּי אִם־תִּקְרוּם עָלַי מִלְחָמָה בְּזֹאת אֲנִי בֹטָח:

*In the first section, the Psalmist expresses faith and confidence in God's protection. Given the context of the rest of the psalm, this reads less as an expression of total confidence than an attempt to remind him or herself of God's protecting power. It seems like a mantra, lines we say to ourselves as encouragement in times of difficulty and stress.*

## Reflection:

- *What has helped you cope in times of stress or difficulty? Do you have a go-to line or mantra that gives you strength and encouragement?*

I have just one request of *Adonai* –  
 for this I yearn—  
 Let me dwell in the house of *Adonai* all the  
 days of my life,  
 let me gaze on the loveliness of *Adonai* , in  
 God's sanctuary.  
 For God will hide me in a shelter when times  
 are evil,  
 Concealing me in God's own tent, standing  
 me high on a rock  
 to raise my head above all the enemies  
 around me:  
 I will make offerings to God in that tent,  
 shouting for joy,  
 singing and chanting praise of *Adonai*

(ד) אַחַת | שְׁאַלְתִּי מֵאֲתֵי אֹתָהּ אֲבִקֵּשׁ  
 שְׁבִתִּי בְּבֵית־יְיָ כָּל־יְמֵי תַיִגִּי לַחַזְזוֹת בְּנֹעַם־יְיָ  
 וּלְבַקֵּר בְּהֵיכָלֹ: (ה) כִּי יִצְפְּנֵנִי | בְּסֹכֶה בְּיָוֵם  
 וְרָעָה יִסְתַּרְנִי בְּסִתְרֵ אֹהֶלֹ בְּצִוֵּר יְרוּמִימֵנִי: (ו)  
 וְעַתָּה יְרוּם רֵאשִׁי עַל אֵיבֵי סְבִיבוֹתַי וְאַזְבְּחָהּ  
 בְּאֹהֶלֹ זִבְחֵי תְרוּעָה אֲשִׁירָה וְאַזְמַרְהָ לֵי:

*The speaker yearns to be in God's presence or protection. Although references to God's house and sanctuary are typically understood as referring to the Temple in Jerusalem, here they can also be read as seeking intimacy and security with God. The psalm also uses the beautiful imagery of God offering shelter in a sukkah or hiding us from harm in a tent.*

### **Reflection:**

- *What place, person, or activity do you seek out when you are in need of refuge?*

O hear my voice, *Adonai*, when I call You—  
 be gracious to me—  
 answer me—my heart yearns for You  
 to see me. It is Your face that I seek—  
 O God, do not hide Your face from me in  
 anger—  
 do not turn away from me—  
 You have been my help always,  
 do not abandon me – don't leave me,  
 O God Who saves me.  
 Though my father and mother leave me,  
*Adonai* will gather me in.  
 Teach me Your way, *Adonai*,  
 by leading me on a straight path  
 to confound my foes. Don't give me over to  
 them,  
 false witnesses  
 who have risen against me,  
 whose every breath is violence.

(ז) שְׁמַע־יְיָ קוֹלִי אֶקְרָא וְחַנּוּנִי וְעֲנֵנִי: (ח) לָהּ |  
 אֶמַר לְבִי בִקְשׁוּ פָנַי אֶת־פְּנֵיךָ יְיָ אֲבִקֵּשׁ:  
 (ט) אֶל־תִּסְתֵּר פְּנֵיךָ | מִמֶּנִּי אֶל־תִּטֹּב־בְּאָף  
 עֲבָדָה עֲזַרְתִּי הִגִּיתְ אֶל־תִּטְשֵׁנִי וְאֶל־תִּעַזְבֵּנִי  
 אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

(י) כִּי־אֲבִי וְאִמִּי עֲזָבוּנִי וְיְיָ יִאֲסֹפֵנִי: (יא)  
 הִזְרַנִּי יְיָ זִרְכָּה וְנַחֲנִי בְּאַרְחַ מִיִּשׁוּר לְמַעַן  
 שׁוֹרְרֵי: (יב) אֶל־תִּתְּנֵנִי בְּיַד צָרִי כִּי קָמוּ־בִי  
 עַד־יִשְׁקָר וַיִּפַח חָמָס:

*The Psalmist asks for God's help and support, with a series of requests: Hear my voice, be gracious to me, answer me; Do not hide your face from me, do not turn away, do not forsake me; Teach me, lead me on your way; don't hand me over to my foes. The opening of this supplication echoes the words of our prayers throughout the High Holy Days when we ask God to hear our voices - sh'ma koleinu - and to answer us in our time of need.*

### **Reflection**

- *What do you want God to hear from you this Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur?*
- *What do you hope to gain from the holidays this year and this season of teshuva?*

Let me believe  
I will see the goodness of *Adonai*  
in this land of the living –  
and I will hope in *Adonai*—  
be strong, have  
a heart of courage,  
and hope in *Adonai*!

(ג) לֹא־אֶמְנָתִי לִרְאוֹת בְּטוֹב־יְיָ בְּאֶרֶץ  
חַיִּים: (ד) קִוְיָה אֶל־יְיָ חֲזַק וְיִצְמַח לִבְךָ וְקִוְיָה  
אֶל־יְיָ

*The psalmist ends with an expression of hope that he or she will make it through this time of trouble and experience goodness and the fullness of life once again. The speaker concludes with words of encouragement - to him or herself, and to us - to have courage and hope. Hope, it seems, does not mean that we are free from fear or expecting a dramatic reversal overnight. Perhaps having hope gives us the strength and courage needed to cope with the challenges we face.*

### **Reflection:**

- *What words of encouragement would you offer to a friend or family member in a moment of crisis?*
- *What gives you hope right now?*

(Translation adapted from Miriyam Glazer, "Psalms of the Jewish Liturgy: A Guide to Their Beauty, Power & Meaning.")

