



PSALM 27¹

THERE ARE EASIER PSALMS: Some ring with “HalleluYah” or feature nature’s joy in field and tree; others darker, give us short and piercing cries of the heart.

But not Psalm 27. Not this poem that Jewish tradition bids us read for fifty consecutive days each year. Here, we encounter something more nuanced: the psalm of spiritual struggle, the heart that sings *and* weeps, the intimate wrestling match between faith and doubt that characterizes our existence...

Psalm 27 knows our pain and our joy...It is the voice of stubborn and challenged faith...it is for the obstacles without and the obstacles within. It is whiplash, journey and mirror at once...May the ancient psalm that plumbs the heart open your own.

~ Rabbi David Stern, *Opening Your Heart with Psalm 27*, from the Foreword by Rabbi Debra J. Robbins.

¹ Translation from *The Hirsch Tehillim*, Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch

Verse 1

לְדָוִד יְהוָה אֹרֵי וַיִּשְׁעֵי מִמִּי אֵיךְא יְהוָה מְעוֹז תִּי מִמִּי אֶפְחָד

Le'David ADONAI ori ve'yishi, mimi ira? ADONAI Maoz chayai mimi ef'chad?

By David. G-d is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? G-d is the source of my life's strength, of whom, then, shall I be afraid?

Verse 2

בְּקִרְבִּי עָלַי מְרַעִים לֶאֱכֹל אֶת-בְּשָׂרִי צָרִי וְאֵיבֵי לִי הֵמָּה כָּשְׁלוּ וַנִּפְּלוּ

Bi'krov alai me'reim, le'echol et'besari, tsarai ve'oivai li hema, kashlu ve'nafalu.

Even when evildoers came upon me to eat up my flesh, they who always appeared to me as my oppressors and my foes, always stumbled and fell.

Verse 3

אִם-תַּחֲנֶנֶה עָלַי מַחֲנֶה לֹא-יִירָא לְבִי אִם-תִּקְוִים עָלַי מִלְחָמָה בְּזֹאת אֲנִי בּוֹטָח

Im-tachane alai ma'cha'ne lo-yira libi, im takum alai milchama, be'zot ani vo'te'ach.

Though a camp should encamp round about me, my heart would not be afraid; even if war were to rise against me, I should still remain confident.

Verse 4

אֶחָת שְׁאַלְתִּי מֵאֵת-יְהוָה אֹתָהּ אֶבְקֵשׁ שְׁבִתִּי בְּבֵית-יְהוָה כָּל-יְמֵי תַי לַחֲזוֹת
בְּנֶעֱם-יְהוָה וּלְבַקֵּר בְּהֵיכָלוֹ

Achat sha'alti me'et-ADONAI, ota avakesh: Shi'viti be'veit-ADONAI kol-yemei chayai, lach'azot be'noam-ADONAI u'levaker be'heicha'lo.

One thing have I asked of G-d, only this will I seek: my peaceful sojourn in the House of G-d all the days of my life, to behold the glory of G-d's ways and to seek deep understanding in His Temple.

Verse 5

כִּי יִצְפְּנֵנִי בְּסֻכָּה בְּיוֹם רָעָה יִסְתְּרֵנִי בְּסִתֵּר אֶהְלוּ בְּצוּר יְרוּמֵמֵנִי

Ki yits'pe'neni be'suko be'yom ra'a, Yas'tir'eni be'seter aho'lo, be'tsur ye'rom'meni.

For He conceals me in His tabernacle on the day of calamity; He keeps me from being found in the hidden folds of His tent, He lifts me on high upon a rock.

Verse 6

וְעַתָּה יְרוּם עַל-אֵיבֵי סְבִיבוֹתַי וְאֶזְבְּחָהּ בְּאֶהְלוֹ זִבְחֵי תְרוּעָה אֲשִׁירָה וְאֶזְמְרָה לַיהוָה

Ve'ata yarum roshi al'oivai seviv'otai , ve'ezbecha ve'aholo, ziv'chei te'rua ashira va'zamra la'ADONAI.

Even now my head is lifted up high above my enemies round about me, and I shall bring meal-offerings of rejoicing in His tent; I will sing praises, I will sing to G-d.

Verse 7

שְׁמַע-יְהוָה קוֹלִי אֶקְרָא וְחַנּוּנִי וְעֲנֵנִי

Shema, ADONAI, koli ekra , ve'cha'neni va'a'neni.

Hear, O G-d, my voice with which I call, be gracious unto me and answer me.

Verse 8

לָךְ אָמַר לְבִי בִקְשׁוּ פָנַי אֶת-פָּנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֲבַקֵּשׁ

Le'cha amar libi, Bakshu fanai, et-pa'neicha ADONAI, avakesh.

Of You does my heart say, Seek My countenance, Your countenance, O G-d, will I seek.

Verse 9

אַל-תִּסְתֵּר פָּנֶיךָ מִמֶּנִּי אַל-תֵּט בְּאָף עֲבֹדְךָ עֲזַרְתִּי הֵייתָ אַל-תִּטְשֵׁנִי וְאַל-תַּעֲזֹבֵנִי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל

Al-taster pa'neicha mi'meni, al-tat be'af av'decha, ezrati hayita, al-tit'sheni, ve'al-ta'az'veni Elohei yishi.

Hide not Your countenance from me, put not away Your servant in anger; You have been my help; do not cast me off, and forsake me not, O G-d of my salvation.

Verse 10

כִּי-אַבִּי וְאִמִּי עָזְבוּנִי וַיְהִיָּה יֹאסִפֵּנִי

Ki-avi ve'imi aza'vuni va'ADONAI ya'as'feni.

For even if my father and mother would have forsaken me, G-d would still take me up.

Verse 11

הוֹרְנִי יְהוָה דְרֹכְךָ וּנְחֵנִי בְּאֶרֶחַ מִישׁוֹר לְמַעַן שׁוֹרְרָי

Ho'reni ADONAI dar'kecha; u'neche'ni be'orach mi'shor le'maan shor'rai.

Teach me Your way, O G-d; and lead me in the path of uprightness because of them that lie in wait for me.

Verse 12

אַל-תִּתְּנֵנִי בְּנַפְשׁ צָרִי כִּי קָמוּ-בִּי עֵדֵי-שֶׁקֶר וַיִּפַּח חָמָס

Al-titne'ni be'nefesh tsa'rai, ki kamu-vi edei-sheker vi'fe'ach chamas.

Do not deliver me up to the will of my oppressors, for false witnesses have risen up against me, and one who, sanctimoniously, does wrong.

Verse 13

לוֹלֵא הָאֶמְנָתִי לְרֵאוֹת בְּטוֹב-יְהוָה בְּאֶרֶץ חַיִּים

Lu'le he'eman'ti lirot be'tuv-ADONAI be'erets chayim!

Had this not been, then I would have believed to look upon the goodness of G-d in the land of the living!

Verse 14

קוּהַ אֶל-יְהוָה חֲזַק וַיֵּאֲמֵץ לִבְךָ וְקוּהַ אֶל-יְהוָה

Kav'eh el-ADONAI chazak ve'ya'amets li'becha, ve'kaveh el-ADONAI.

Wait upon G-d, remain strong, and let your heart give you courage; indeed, wait upon G-d.