

Psalm 27 - My Only Request:

1. **Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 128, 2: (1864)** The custom in our countries is to say “To David. G-d is my light and my salvation” (Tehillim 27) every morning and evening from the first of Elul until Shmini Atzeres. This is based on the midrash “G-d is my light” on Rosh Hashana, “and my salvation” on Yom Kippur, “For He will hide me in his Succah” hints to Succos.
2. **Question:** We should start saying Psalm 27 on Rosh Hashana - not in Elul ?
3. **Question:** Why is there no source for this custom in the Talmud or Shulchan Aruch ?
4. **Sefer Shem Tov Katan by R’ Binyomin Beinsh HaKohein (1706):** “I would like to tell you a great secret (sod), “Whoever says this psalm from *Rosh Chodesh Elul* until after *Simchas Torah*, even if an evil decree has been inscribed from heaven against a person, he can annul it. He will annul from himself all evil, harsh decrees, and go free, and be meritorious in his judgment. One must be very, very careful to say this psalm evening and morning, every day, from *Rosh Chodesh Elul* until after *Simchas Torah*. Then one will be assured that he will live his years and days in goodness and it will be pleasant for him and through this, one will subdue all kinds of accusers.”
5. God's name appears thirteen times in the psalm, once each for the thirteen gates of rachamim – mercy and hope – which are open to us during the month of Elul.
6. These thirteen references to God are also said to correspond to the “Thirteen Attributes” which are recited as part of the Selichos in Elul and Tishrei.
7. **Talmud Bavli Brachos 4a:** “Had I not trusted that I would see the goodness of G-d in the land of life” (Tehillim 27:13). It was taught in the name of Rabbi Yosse: Why are there dots over the letters of the word לולא (had I not)? David Hamelech said before G-d, ‘Master of the Universe, I am certain that You repay good reward to the righteous in the future. But I don’t know whether I will have a share amongst them or not, perhaps sin has caused [me to lose my share].’
8. **Pri Tzadik (Devarim) for Rosh Chodesh Elul 2:** The word לולא (had I not...) is hinted at in the letters of the word Elul because this is the time for a person to fix their actions so that sins don’t cause [them to lose out on the reward in the world to come], as they learn from this verse in the Talmud (Brachos 4a). This is what the Baal HaTurim means when he writes that from Elul onwards I tremble before G-d, which is hinted at in the name Elul as we said. This is the reason that we say this psalm during the month of Elul, because it contains this verse. For all the other reasons given, that “G-d is my light” on Rosh Hashana, “and my salvation” on Yom Kippur, “For He will hide me in his Succah” hints to Succot - we wouldn’t have to start until Rosh Hashana. Rather because of this verse which reminds a person that in Elul they must improve their actions so that their sins won’t cause them [to lose out].... And G-d is elevated through the shofar, as the verse states “G-d has ascended with the teruah blast” (Tehillim 47:6). The explanation of this is that through the shofar blast the name E-lokim, which is the name of justice, ascends, and becomes the name Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh which is the name of mercy. This is similar to that which is stated ‘when they blow the shofar, He arises and the attribute of justice switches to become the attribute of mercy’ (Midrash Tehillim 47). We then continue to blow for the whole month of Elul to warn people about repentance, for these are the days of ratzon.
9. **Question:** It would seem that Psalm 51, would be more appropriate for creating a mood of Teshuvah. It is that psalm which records, with unsurpassed eloquence, David’s broken-hearted confession of sin and his profound remorse over his guilt.
10. **Proof: R’ Yona in Sefer Hayir’ah:** From when Elul enters until Motzei Yom Kippurim a person should fear and tremble from the awesome judgment.
11. **Rambam Laws of Teshuva 3,4:** Even though the sounding of the shofar on Rosh HaShanah is a decree, it contains an allusion. It is as if [the shofar's call] is saying: Wake up you sleepy ones from your sleep and you who slumber, arise. Inspect your deeds, repent, remember your Creator. Those who forget the truth in the vanities of time and throughout the entire year, devote their energies to vanity and emptiness which will not benefit or save: Look to your souls. Improve your ways and your deeds and let every one of you abandon his evil path and thoughts.

12. **Ohr Yisroel 14: (mid 1800's)** It is well known that in earlier generations, when the holy month of Elul was announced, everyone was gripped with fear (cf. Iyov 21:6). This fear generated a positive effect by drawing people close to Divine service, each man according to his level.
13. **Question:** How were people in the earlier generations aroused by the coming of Elul, while people in the later generations are not aroused?
14. **Bereishis 17,27:** And he smelled the scent of his garments – B'Gadav.
15. **Talmud Sanhedrin 37a:** "He smelled the scent of his traitors – BoGDov.
16. **Bereishis Rabbah 65,22:** During the destruction of Jerusalem, the Romans sought to enter the Temple. "Let one of the Jewish traitors themselves enter," they said, "and be the first to desecrate their sacred vessels." They told Yossi Mashisa that, if he went in, he could keep whatever he found. He entered, and came out with the golden Menorah. "This is not for the likes of you," the Romans told him, and took it away. "Go in again, and take whatever you want." However, he refused to enter a second time. They promised him the taxes of the entire city for the next three years if he would re-enter, but he still refused. "Isn't it enough that I angered God once," he said, "must I anger Him again?!" So the Romans tied him to a thick plank and sawed him through. "Oy! Oy! Oy!" he cried, "that I angered my G-d!"
17. **POINT:** The earlier generations did not lack the recognition or knowledge of the truth...all they lacked was to stop and reflect...but once they reflected and aroused the truth within themselves, they reached the highest levels!
18. **Mesilas Yesharim 2:** this is one of the cunning strategies of the evil inclination, to relentlessly burden people's hearts with his service so as to leave them no room to reflect and consider which road they are taking. For he knows that if they were to put their ways to heart even the slightest bit, certainly they would immediately begin to feel regret for their deeds. The remorse would go and intensify within them until they would abandon the sin completely....as long as a person is pre-occupied with worldly affairs, it is impossible for him to pay attention to his actions.
19. **POINT:** Elul is the time of year to stop and reflect...and the fear of Hashem should automatically penetrate into the person, and arouse him to do Teshuva.
20. **CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGE:** We lack the true outlook on the world and life. Even if we are aroused, there is nothing true that can penetrate into the person !
21. **Letters of Chazon Ish 1, 23:** people (of our generation) are sunken into a deep hole of heresy and apostasy.
22. Zohar: The people, on the day of Yom Kippur, bark like dogs, 'give us sustenance' (like an aggressive dog, who barks for bread)." (People come on the Days of Awe with a wish list. "Hav, Hav (Give, Give) -- give us food, give us sustenance.)
23. **Answer:** This Psalm says nothing of Teshuva. Nevertheless, it combats sin by teaching how to prevent it at its source.

Overview of Psalm 27:

24. **Pesukim 1-6:** Introduction of David's Only Request & Its Benefits:
25. **Pesukim 7-11:** David's Prayer that Hashem Should Remove The Obstacles Which Interfere With His Avodas Hashem
26. **Pesukim 12-14:** Benefits of Bitachon

<p>1 Of David. The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; from whom shall I be frightened?</p>	<p>א לְדָוִד יְהוָה אֹרֵי וְיִשְׁעֵי מִמִּי אִירָא יְהוָה קְעוֹז חַיִּי מִמִּי אֶפְחָד:</p>
<p>2 When evildoers draw near to me to devour my flesh, my adversaries and my enemies against me—they stumbled and fell.</p>	<p>ב בְּקִרְבִּי עָלַי מְרַעִים לֹאכְלִי אֶת־בְּשָׂרִי צָרִי וְאֹיְבֵי לִי הִמָּה כָּשְׁלוּ וְנָפְלוּ:</p>
<p>3 If a camp encamps against me, my heart shall not fear; if a war should rise up against me, <u>in this I trust</u>.</p>	<p>ג אִם־תִּתְחַנֶּה עָלַי מִחֲנֶה לֹא־יִירָא לְבִי אִם־תִּקְוִים עָלַי מִלְחָמָה בְּזֹאת אֲנִי בֹטֵחַ:</p>
<p>4 <u>One [thing]</u> I ask of the Lord, that I seek - that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to see the pleasantness of the Lord and to visit His Temple every morning.</p>	<p>ד אַחַת שְׁאֵלַתִּי מֵאֵת־יְהוָה אוֹתָהּ אֲבַקֵּשׁ שְׁבֹתִי בְּבֵית־יְהוָה כָּל־יְמֵי חַיִּי לְחַזֹּת בְּנֹעַם־יְהוָה וּלְבַקֵּר בְּהִיכָלוֹ:</p>
<p>5 That He will hide me in His shelter on the day of calamity; He will conceal me in the secrecy of His tent; He will lift me upon a rock.</p>	<p>ה כִּי יִצְפְּנֵנִי בְּסֹכֹ (כְּתִיב בְּסֹכֶה) בְּיוֹם רָעָה יִסְתִּירֵנִי בְּסֹתֵר אֱהִלּוּ בְּצֹר יִרְוּמֵנִי:</p>
<p>6 And now, my head will be raised over my enemies around me, and I will sacrifice in His tent sacrifices with joyous song; I will sing and chant praise to the Lord.</p>	<p>ו וְעַתָּה יְרוּם רֹאשִׁי עַל־אֹיְבֵי סְבִיבוֹתַי וְאֲזַבְחָה בְּאֱהֱלוֹ זִבְחֵי תְרוּעָה אֲשִׁירָה וְאֲזַמְרָה לַיהוָה:</p>
<p>7 Hear, O Lord, to my voice [which] I call out, and be gracious to me and answer me.</p>	<p>ז שְׁמַע־יְהוָה קוֹלִי אֶקְרָא וְחַנּוּן וְעֲנֵנִי:</p>
<p>8 On Your behalf, my heart says, "Seek My presence." Your presence, O Lord, I will seek.</p>	<p>ח לֵךְ אֲמַר לְבִי בְקִשׁוּ פָנַי אֶת־פָּנֶיךָ יְהוָה אֲבַקֵּשׁ:</p>
<p>9 Do not hide Your presence from me; do not turn Your servant away with anger. You were my help; do not forsake me and do not abandon me, O God of my salvation.</p>	<p>ט אַל־תִּסְתֵּר פָּנֶיךָ מִמֶּנִּי אַל־תֵּט בְּאַף עַבְדְּךָ עֲזַרְתִּי הֵייתָ אֶל־תִּטְשֵׁנִי וְאַל־תַּעֲזֹבֵנִי אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵי:</p>
<p>10 For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord gathers me in.</p>	<p>י כִּי־אָבִי וְאִמִּי עֲזָבוּנִי וְיְהוָה יֶאֱסָפֵנִי:</p>
<p>11 Instruct me, O Lord, in Your way, and lead me in the straight path because of my watchful foes.</p>	<p>יא הוֹרֵנִי יְהוָה דְרֹכְךָ וְנַחֲנִי בְּאֶרֶחַ מִישׁוֹר לְמַעַן שׁוֹרְרָי:</p>
<p>12 Do not deliver me to the desires of my adversaries, for false witnesses and speakers of evil have risen against me.</p>	<p>יב אַל־תִּתְּנֵנִי בְּנַפְשׁ צָרִי כִּי קִמוּ־בִי עֲדֵי־שֹׁקֵר וַיִּפְחֵ חֲמָס:</p>
<p>13 Had I not believed in seeing the good of the Lord in the land of the living!</p>	<p>יג לֹלֵאֵא הֲאֵמַנְתִּי לִרְאוֹת בְּטוֹב־יְהוָה בְּאֶרֶץ חַיִּים:</p>
<p>14 Hope for the Lord, be strong and He will give your heart courage, and hope for the Lord.</p>	<p>יד קוּוֶה אֶל־יְהוָה חֲזַק וַיִּאֲמָץ לְבָבְךָ וְקוּוֶה אֶל־יְהוָה:</p>

Malbim's Pasuk by Pasuk Commentary:

Pesukim 1-6: Introduction of David's Only Request & Its Benefits:

Pasuk 1: "Yir'a" is a fear from something that you are aware of. "Pachad" is fear of the unknown.

- Dovid does not have Yir'a from the enemies that he is aware of who might: 1) surprise attack him at night, because "The Lord is my light"; and 2) overpower him militarily, because The Lord is "my salvation."
- Dovid does not have Pachad from enemies who may secretly be plotting against him, because "The Lord is the stronghold of my life."

Pasuk 2: (Elaboration on what Dovid has no Pachad from) Whether the enemies want to hurt Dovid for their own personal gain or out of hatred and hostility, they will stumble and fall.

Pasuk 3: (Elaboration of what Dovid has no Yir'a from) Whether the enemies are preparing for or actually warring with me, Dovid has no Yir'a because.....

- **Malbim Tehillim 27,1:** This psalm explains that G-d's providence is contingent upon a person's attachment to G-d. Someone who attaches themselves to Him will have His constant providence which will protect him from all bad things. Therefore someone whose heart relies on G-d will not need to fear anything bad. Bad things cannot happen to a righteous person except at a moment that the thread of attachment breaks and he turns away from serving G-d. This is explained in Moreh Nevuchim (3: 53). Therefore out of all the many entreaties that a person makes from G-d, it is worth turning himself to this single request, that he should be attached to G-d continually, because in it he will find all his other entreaties. Based on this a person should pray that G-d will help him to attach himself to Him, and will remove from him any obstructions that will prevent him from attaining this great goal which is the purpose of his entreaty and request.

Pasuk 4:

1. "She'ala" is a spoken request. "Bakasha" is what your heart actually desires." A particular She'ala could conceivably be for an ultimate "Bakasha."
 - Dovid does not make many different requests based on different situations.
 - The only "she'ala" (request) he has is, "that I seek-that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life" in order that his ultimate "Bakasha" (desire) of "to see the pleasantness of the Lord and to visit His Temple every morning" be fulfilled.
 - He has no interest other than cleaving to Hashem. He has no ulterior motive from this "She'ala" that all other issues be taken care of as his "Bakasha."
 - Once his "She'ala" and "Bakasha" are fulfilled, all other issues in life will be taken care of by Hashem and there will be no obstacles in his path towards this goal.
2. "Shivti" means to dwell permanently. "Levakeir" means to visit. The visitor realizing that his trip is a short one, lets not a minute go to waste. Likewise, Dovid says: "Although I ask to dwell in God's house forever, I do not wish to do so like a permanent resident who does not feel the compulsion to use his time wisely. My wish, therefore, is that I should feel like an excited visitor to whom every moment is precious.
3. Midrash Shochar Tov: Hashem said to Dovid, "First you said 'Only one thing I have asked from Hashem, then you proceed to ask for many things, i.e. 'to behold the delight of Hashem, and also to meditate in His sanctuary'! Dovid replied: 'Hashem, should not the servant imitate the ways of his master? First You ask but for one thing, 'And now Israel, what does Hashem ask of you, except that you should fear Hashem your God? (Devarim 10,12) But then You proceed to demand many things 'to go in all His ways and to love Him and to serve Hashem etc.'

Pasuk 5: This is the conclusion as to what Dovid means that 'in this I trust' that....

- “*That He will hide me in His shelter on the day of calamity*” because....
- “*He will conceal me in the secrecy of His tent*” the fact that I am concealed in the secrecy of his tent, that will provide strong protection from my enemies, as if....
- “*He will lift me up on a rock*” so that no enemy will be able to succeed against me.
- The verb “Tzafun” [lit. concealment] is never used in connection with something trivial. It is used only to denote the storage of something very special, especially a spiritual treasure. David is confident that Hashem will safeguard him carefully as befits a spiritual treasure.
- The word “shelter” is spelled as “a shelter,” but it is read as “His shelter.” David declares, “Often when I am in danger, ‘a shelter’ seems to appear as if by chance. I am not misled. I am fully aware of the fact that God Himself provided this salvation and that it is *His shelter*.”

Pasuk 6:

- “*And now*” I am not afraid from any enemy, because of the protection of Hashem....
- “*my head will be raised over my enemies around me, and I will sacrifice in His tent sacrifices with joyous song,*” Others thank Hashem for defeating their enemies by offering sacrifices, while I thank Hashem, due to my dwelling in the tent of Hashem - that dwelling in the tent was the trumpet battle blast and cause of victory; thereby I myself...
- “*I will sing and chant praise to the Lord.*” for His defeating my enemies before me.

Pesukim 7-11: David’s Prayer that Hashem Should Remove The Obstacles Which Interfere With His Avodas Hashem:

Pasuk 7: David says that his request is not for his personal needs, but rather in order to achieve the ultimate goal, which is to be able to serve Hashem.....

Pasuk 8: Even though I ask for many things with my mouth, but my heart has already told your my primary request: “My presence seeks Your presence” - that is my only real request. My presence seeks nothing else other than Your presence - which is *Deveikus* and comprehension of God’s presence.

Pasuk 9: My heart yearns for Your presence, but there are two ways in which my hopes can be dashed:

1. “*Do not hide Your presence from me*” - That You will conceal Yourself from me. i.e. that Your conceptual presence be beyond comprehension. (from God’s end)
2. “*do not turn Your servant away with anger*” - By becoming so angry at me that the punishment will break my faith and take away my desire to cling to such a wrathful God. i.e. My limited comprehension or sinful behavior. (from David’s end)
3. “*You were my help*” - *You have always been my help until now in areas that were beyond my abilities, so too now “do not forsake me and do not abandon me.”*

Pasuk 10: David compares himself to an orphan, whose parents left him, and Hashem took compassion on him and took him into His house and raised him. Since Hashem has always taken care of all his needs, then he can ask for the following, since only He supervises him.....

Pasuk 11: David asks Hashem to make the means of knowing and comprehending Hashem easier. There are two obstacles that prevent this:

1. Not knowing what path to go on.... “*Instruct me, O Lord, in Your way*”
 2. There are obstacles on the correct path, such as the *Yetzer Hora*, lusts, life’s necessities, etc. ... “and lead me in the straight path”
- David needs all this help... “because of my watchful foes.” ...who either want to kill him or cause him to sin.

- **Doresh Tov pg. 113-114:** Only after a person recognizes his absolute dependence on Hashem, can he know what he is supposed to ask for.

Pesukim 12-14: Benefits of Bitachon:

Pasuk 12: David is stating that his deliverance from those who slandered him before King Saul who wanted me dead was because of.....

Pasuk 13:

1. Simple Meaning: The merit of his great faith in Hashem's promises of the Kingdom and that he would once again see the Land of Israel.
 - His great faith always gave him encouragement & courage to escape from his enemies.
2. Talmudic interpretation: The merit of his great faith in the World to Come saved him from the false beliefs that sprung up in his heart of his suffering in spite of his being righteous.
 - His great faith saved him from the slanderous evil inclination who suggested that David's suffering proved that God was not supervising him and did not administer reward / punishment for man's behavior.
 - This is why David asks Hashem.... "Instruct me, O Lord, in Your way."

Pasuk 14: Hoping for Hashem's help is greatly different from hoping for the aid of man...

1. "Hope for the Lord, be strong and He will give your heart courage." Woe unto the unfortunate soul who must beg for favours from others! Heartache, despondency, and disillusionment are his lot. Not so with God. Hoping for Him is an exhilarating experience which brings encouragement and renewed strength.
2. "Hope...be strong ...and hope for the Lord." Hoping for the aid of flesh and blood is certainly not a goal to be desired. At best it can be tolerated as an unpleasant means towards an end. indeed, one longs for the realization of the end purpose so that this means will no longer be necessary. Such is not the case with hoping for Hashem. This hope is itself a desirable goal as it demonstrates an intensive level of pure faith. Thus, David continues to repeat that he hopes for Hashem even though he has already hoped and was fortified with an answer.
 - **Chovos Halvavos** describes Bitachon in Hashem is the most wonderful experience which life has to offer, far surpassing all earthly fortunes. For example: "Peace of mind from the worries of this world. Peace from the frenzy and drive to pursue the lusts of this world. Feeling calm, secure, at peace in this world....Another benefit, joy in whatever happens to him, even if it is something difficult and against his nature, because he trusts that G-d will do only what is good for him in all matters, just like a mother has compassion on her baby in washing it, diapering it, and harnessing or unharnessing it against its will..."
 - **Brisker Rav:** Since trusting in hashem is the highest commandment, it deserves a proportionately great reward. This is what David declares: "Place confidence in Hashem" and your reward will be that God will strengthen your heart to achieve even higher levels of intense faith; "and place [even more] confidence in Hashem!"
 - **Talmud Brachos 32b:** A person who prayed and saw that he was not answered, should pray again, as it is stated: "Hope in the Lord, strengthen yourself, let your heart take courage, and hope in the Lord" (Psalms 27:14). [prayer needs constant devotion]
 - **Bereishis 25,21:** "Va'Ye'etar Yitzchak l'Hashem..." [Yitzchak entreated Hashem]
 - **Rashi:** "hirba v'hiftzir b'tefillah" [he importuned much through prayer] - he was persistent in his davening.
 - **Question:** Why is there such a difference between the way we should ask G-d and the way we should ask man?
 - **Answer:** The reason the Almighty wants us sometimes to daven over and over and over again is because He wants the relationship. He wants us to ask (sometimes multiple times) because He wants us to have a connection with Him.