

Psalms 27 — The LORD Is My Light — One Fearless Confidence, One Whole Desire, and the Long Discipline of Waiting

Psalm 27: a psalm of David — trust and confidence in the face of enemies and armies. It opens in serene assurance (the LORD as light, salvation, and strength; vv. 1–6), then turns without warning into urgent petition (hide not thy face; leave me not; vv. 7–14), and closes with a charge to wait on the LORD and be of good courage. A psalm of the first temple / tabernacle era; traditionally Davidic.

We have stepped out of the running story of Israel — the kings, the battles, the long ledger of who did right and who did evil in the sight of the LORD — and into the Psalter, where the same history is happening again, only now from the inside. A psalm does not tell you what happened to David; it tells you what it felt like to be David while it happened. Psalm 27 is a war psalm and a temple psalm at once: it opens with an army camped against the poet and closes with him longing for the house of the LORD, and it never once pretends those two things belong to separate lives. The enemies are real. The longing is real. Faith is what holds them in the same hand.

Hebrew Word Studies

or (H216) (אֹרֶךְ) — light, daylight, illumination — the first created thing v. 1. "The LORD is my light" — *or* is the light of Genesis 1:3, spoken into existence before sun or star, the light in which everything else becomes visible. Hebrew keeps it concrete: not a warm feeling but the physical possibility of seeing. To make the LORD your *or* is to say you have no independent way of seeing your life — his light is the seeing itself. The Psalter loves this: "in thy light shall we see light" (Ps. 36:9); "the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light" (Isa. 60:19). Latter-day revelation gathers the whole idea into a person — the Light of Christ that "proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space" and is "in all things" (D&C 88:12–13), the same light Christ claimed when he stood among the Nephites and said "I am the light" (3 Ne. 11:11). Fear, in this psalm, is a lighting problem before it is anything else; and the answer to a lighting problem is not more courage but more light.

baqash (H1245) (בָּקַשׁ) — to seek, search out, desire, require — to look for with intent vv. 4, 8. The verb that stitches the two halves of the psalm together. In verse 4 David "will seek after" the one thing he desires — the house of the LORD; in verse 8 the same verb answers God's own call: "Thy face, LORD, will I seek." *Baqash* is not idle wishing; it is active pursuit, the word for searching out a lost thing until you find it (as Joseph "sought" his brothers, Gen. 37:16) or petitioning a king for a request. So David's desire is not a mood he waits to pass — it is a search he intends to conduct. And crucially, the object of the seeking is the same in both verses: the *presence* of God, named first as his house and then as his face. The whole psalm is one sustained act of *baqash* aimed at one place. The Lord folds the same verb into his covenant promise: "seek me diligently and ye shall find me; ask, and ye shall receive; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (D&C 88:63) — the seeking is never one-directional, because the God being sought is the one who first said "seek my face."

panim (H6440) (פָּנִים) — face, presence, countenance — literally "the turned-toward part" vv. 8, 9. *Panim* is grammatically plural — Hebrew has no singular "face" — and it means far more than the front of a head. It is *presence*, the turned-toward attention of a person: to be "before someone's face" is to be in their presence, to have God's face "shine" on you (Num. 6:25) is to enjoy his favor, and to have it "hidden" is to feel abandoned. So verse 8's exchange — "Seek ye my face" ... "Thy face, LORD, will I seek" — is not about seeing a literal countenance but about pursuing God's presence itself, and verse 9's "hide not thy face" is the fear of that presence withdrawing. The whole covenant hope of scripture rides on this word: Moses spoke with God "face to face" (Ex. 33:11); the promise to the pure in heart is that they "shall see God" (Matt. 5:8); and the Restoration makes it a standing invitation — "seek my face... shall see my face and know that I am" (D&C 93:1; cf. 101:38). David's whole psalm is the pursuit of a face that has invited its own pursuit.

chay (H2416) (חַי) — living, alive, life — the living God, the land of the living vv. 1, 4, 13. The word for *life* runs quietly through the psalm and ties its far ends together. In verse 1 the LORD is "the strength of my *life*" (*chay*) — God is the vitality David draws on. In verse 4 he longs to dwell in God's house "all the days of my *life*." And in verse 13 he believes to see God's goodness "in the land of the *living*" (*chayyim*, the plural of the same root). *Chay* is the adjective behind the great oath "as the LORD *liveth*" and behind the divine title "the *living* God" — the God who is alive as the idols are not, and who therefore makes alive. So the psalm's confidence is finally a life-conviction: the living God is the strength of the poet's life, the one he wants to spend his life beside, and the one whose goodness he expects to see while he is still among the living. Fear says *you will not survive this*; verse 13 answers that the God who *is* life intends to be seen, by the living, in the land of the living — a hope the Restoration extends past the grave itself, for "he that hath eternal life is rich" (D&C 6:7) and the living God is "the

same yesterday, today, and forever" (D&C 20:12).

qavah (H6960) (קָוָה) — to wait for, look for, hope, expect — with the tension of a stretched cord v. 14 (twice). The final word of the psalm and its final instruction, spoken twice: "Wait on the LORD... wait, I say, on the LORD." *Qavah* is not the waiting of resignation but of expectation — the same root gives *tiqvah*, "hope," and the word for a measuring *line* or *cord*, something drawn taut. To wait on the LORD is to be stretched toward him, leaning into an answer you fully expect but have not yet received. Isaiah makes the promise explicit: "they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles" (Isa. 40:31) — the same verb, the same reward David names here, "he shall strengthen thine heart." This is the discipline the whole psalm has been building toward: not the courage of the rescued but the courage of the still-waiting, the faith that holds the taut cord in the silent middle. The Restoration frames the same posture as endurance rewarded — "he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (D&C 53:7) — the strength promised not at the start of the waiting but through it.

From the Chapter's Architecture

The binding is the final verse. Verse 14 does not belong to either mood exactly — it is the psalmist stepping back from both the confidence and the pleading to give a single verdict on how to live between them: wait. That is the psalm's true architecture. Not confidence then fear as two contradictory halves, but confidence and petition held inside one long act of waiting-on-the-LORD — the taut cord that runs from the light of verse 1 to the courage of verse 14. The Hebrew parallelism reinforces it everywhere in miniature: "my light and my salvation," "whom shall I fear... of whom shall I be afraid," "hear... have mercy... answer me," "wait... be of good courage... wait." The psalm thinks in doubled lines because it is, at every scale, a poem about holding two things at once.