

Gathering us in ... A Meditation on Psalm 27 ... for Elul  
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The month of Elul is a month of reflection and introspection, in preparation for the high holy days. Elul is traditionally observed by reading Psalm 27 each morning. The following meditation focuses on some of the themes of this psalm. Before reading the meditation, take a few slow, deep breaths, then read the meditation slowly, pausing after each paragraph to close your eyes and breathe slowly two or three times, repeating to yourself "breathe in ... breathe out".

Adonai o-ri v'yi-shi,  
mi-mi i-ra;  
Adonai ma-oz chay-yei,  
mi-mi ef-chad.  
Adonai is my light and my help,  
whom should I fear;  
Adonai is the strength of my life,  
what should I be afraid of .  
We all find ourselves in tight spots  
armies are encamped all around us  
armies are encamped within us  
our lives sometimes feel like battlegrounds.

We all have our personal concerns  
we are concerned about  
health ... family ...  
relationships ... careers  
We all have our personal fears  
sometimes we are afraid of death  
sometimes we are afraid of life  
Sometimes we are afraid of the past  
sometimes of the future  
and often of the present.

But You, Rib-bo-no shel o-lam,  
You know our fears  
You are aware of our concerns  
and You hear us when we call out to You.  
Ka-rov Adonai l'chol ko-rav,  
L'chol a-sher yik-ra-u-hu b'e-met  
You are close to all of us ...  
when we call out to You  
when we call upon you sincerely and honestly  
Your house is always open to us  
You are always prepared to accept us  
to gather us in  
for Your love for us  
is unconditional.

When we look to You  
when we seek Your presence  
when we turn to Your face  
we see the hope,  
the strength  
the courage  
that You provide  
Ka-vei el Adonai  
Put your hope in Adonai  
Cha-zak v'a-meitz li-be-cha  
v'ka-vei el Adonai.  
You strengthen and fortify your heart  
when you hope in Adonai  
Ka-vei el Adonai.  
Hope in Adonai  
Ka-vei el Adonai.

As the high holy days approach  
a time we look more closely at ourselves  
We see ourselves as we are  
we see ourselves as we could be  
and we see the gap between the two  
We know that we fall short in many ways  
We can hide our deeds ... our failings ...  
our fantasies ... our feelings  
We can hide them from other people  
but we cannot hide them from You  
You know us inside out  
You know our sitting down and our rising up  
You know every word that our souls utter.

You know every word that our souls utter  
to You our lives are an open book  
If others knew us as well,  
we might well expect them to reject us  
Even those who love us the most  
might well turn away from us  
but You, God,  
will not.

A-vi v'i-mi a-za-vu-ni,  
vA-do-nai ya-as-fei-ni.  
Though even my parents abandon me  
You, Adonai, You gather me in  
You gather me close to You  
You are always nearby  
always waiting for me  
always ready to provide me ...  
with hope, with strength.

You are always there for me  
gathering me in  
caring for me  
loving me  
providing me a home.  
Take a moment to imagine  
the feeling of unconditional acceptance  
of being welcomed by God  
welcomed with open arms  
of being gathered in ...  
to God's presence.

Being welcomed into Your presence is all I really need.  
A-chat sha-al-ti mei-eit Adonai,  
only one thing have I asked of Adonai  
o-to a-va-keish  
this I ask most urgently  
shif-ti b'veit Adonai  
to dwell in the house of Adonai  
kol y'mei cha-yai  
all the days of my life  
la-cha-zot b'no-am Adonai  
to experience the sweetness of Adonai  
u-l'va-keir b'hei-cha-lo  
to dwell in Your presence.

How can we find this place?  
How can we dwell in Your presence?  
We may be able to find Your presence  
to feel Your presence  
beside a pool of still waters  
or on a majestic mountain top  
listening to the roaring waves of the ocean  
or smelling the fragrance of an orange grove  
Your house may be a glittering palace  
the synagogue of our childhood  
a secluded spot in our own house or garden  
or a sacred place deep within ourselves.

For our ancestor Jacob,  
Beth-El, the house of God,  
was a rocky place  
where he encountered God in a dream  
after a hasty departure from home.  
"Surely God is in this place,"  
Yaakov said  
afterwards  
"but I didn't know it."

God is everywhere  
God is ha-Ma-kom  
the place  
every place  
all place.

How can we find Your house?  
It is wherever we look.

Each of us  
each day  
has the opportunity  
to dwell in God's house  
to feel the showering of God's blessings  
to feel completely at home with Adonai.

Whenever we are afraid  
whenever we are in narrow straits  
whenever we feel pain or aloneness  
whenever our lives feel overwhelming

We can draw a few deep breaths  
and visualize ourselves as dwelling in Your house  
as the recipients of Your blessings  
of Your hope  
of Your strength  
of Your courage

Take a moment to imagine the feeling  
of dwelling in God's house  
of feeling the hope and strength  
that God provides.

“Kol ha-o-lam ku-lo ge-sheer tzar m'od”  
The whole world is a narrow bridge  
says Rabbi Nachman

“v'ha-i-kar lo l'fa-cheid k'lal”  
but the most important thing to know  
the essence of the situation  
is that we need not fear at all.

Adonai o-ri v'yi-shi  
mi-mi i-ra

Adonai is my light and my help  
who should I fear

Im ta-cha-neh a-lai ma-cha-neh  
lo yi-ra li-bi

Through trouble surround me  
my heart will not fear

Though battles rage around me  
and within me

I will trust in Your presence  
and Your assistance.

For we are in the house of Adonai  
and You will always gather us in  
will always provide for our needs  
will always provide us with care  
with love  
with hope  
with strength.

As we embark on our Elul journey of introspection  
we remind ourselves  
that even while we are on this journey  
we are still in Your house  
that even when things look the darkest  
we can turn toward You  
with hope and with courage

Ka-vei el Adonai

Hope in Adonai

Cha-zak v'a-meitz li-be-cha

Ka-vei el Adonai

strengthen your heart

hope in Adonai

turn to Adonai

Ka-vei el Adonai.