nce—Psalm 27 all I fear? n shall I dread? esh ge me, my life. he calamitous day, s of God's tent. sts. to God's tent.

יהוה אורי וישעי ממי אירא, יהוה מעוז־חַיַּי ממי אפחד. בָּקרב עַלֵי מַרְעִים לאכל את־בּשׁרי, צרי ואיבי לי המה כשלו ונפלו. אם־תחנה עלי מחנה לא־יירא לבי, אם־תַקום עַלַי מלחַמָה בזאת אני בוטח. אַחַת שַאַלַתִּי מָאַת־יהוה, אותה אבקש, שבתי בבית־יהוה, כל־ימי חיי לַחַזוֹת בַּנַעַם־יהוה וּלבקר בּהיכלוֹ. כִי יִצְפָנֵנִי בַּסְכֹּה בִּיוֹם רַעָה, יַסְתָּרֵנִי בְּסֶתֵר אַהַלוֹ, בְּצוּר יִרוֹממני. ועתה ירום ראשי על איבי סביבותי ואַזִבּחַה בָאָהָלוֹ זִבְחֵי תְרוּעָה, אַשִירַה וַאַזִּמִרָה לַיהוה. שַׁמַע־יהוה קוֹלִי אַקרא, וחַנַני וַענני. לַךְ אַמַר לַבִּי בַּקשׁוּ פַנִי, את־פּניך יהוה אבקש. אַל־תַּסְתֵּר פַנִיךְ ממני, אַל תַּט־בָּאַף עַבדּרָ, עזרתי היית, אַל־תַּטְשֵׁנִי וָאַל־תַעַזבני אלהי ישעי. כִּי־אָבִי וְאִמִּי עֲזַבִוּנִי, וַיהוה יַאַסְפֵּנִי. הוֹרֵנִי יהוה דַרְכֵּךְ, וּנְחֵנִי בִּאֹרֵח מִישׁוֹר, לְמֵעֵן שֹׁרְרֵי. אַל־תַתְנֵנִי בְּנֵפֵשׁ צַרֵי, כי קמו־בי עדי־שקר ויפח חמס. סוֹלֵא הָאֱמַנְתִּי, לָרְאוֹת בְּטוֹב־יהוֹה בְּאֲרֵץ חַיִּים. קוָה אֶל־יהוה, חַזַק וְיַאָמֵץ לְבֵּךְ וְקוֵה אֵל־יהוה. תהלים כז

Some congregations recite Mourner's Kaddish after the recitation of this psalm;

see previous page.

Hashanah to Yom Kippur. It has also become customary to recite it during the entire month before Rosh Hashanah, in preparation for the High Holy Days. In mystical Jewish tradition, the days of judgment are extended through the seventh day of Sukkot, known as Hoshana Rabbah, and so the psalm is recited until then. Psalm 27 expresses two

PSALM 27 is recited on each

of the ten days from Rosh

opposite feelings, each of which may be felt on this day. From the very beginning, the psalmist expresses absolute faith in God, culminating in the striking sentence: "Though my father and mother abandon me, Adonai will gather me in...." But at the same time, the psalmist experiences God's absence-the speaker longs to "see God," yet receives no response to this longing. The poem's last line leaves us with a thin, consoling thread of hope, making us realize, perhaps, how much our lives depend on faith.

DO NOT HIDE YOUR FACE FROM ME אַל־תַּסְתֵּר פָּנֶיךְ אמני "Face" suggests "presence"; the concrete metaphor serving the poet more than the abstract sense behind it. The speaker desperately seeks God's face (a privilege denied

Moses). The practical manifestation of God's turning away would be the abandonment of the person to the enemies gathered about. (Robert Alter)

IF I COULD ONLY TRUST לוּלֵא הַאַמנתּי. This is the only verse in the psalm that has no parallel. It is as if the speaker's voice simply trails off and then hears an inner voice calling: קוָה אֵל־יהוה, "place your hope in Adonai." Or, perhaps someone else, in turn, urges the despairing supplicant to continue trusting that God will respond and asks that the person not lose faith.

To Hold On to Life
The Ḥasidic master
Simḥah Bunam once
remarked: "On New
Year's Day the world
begins anew; and before
it begins anew, it comes
to a close. Just as before
dying, all the powers of
the body clutch hard at
life, so too a person at the
turn of the year ought to
clutch at life with all of
that person's might."

-MARTIN BUBER

Psalm 27

Psalm 27 seems anything but a single, unified psalm. The first verses bespeak self-assurance, while later, the poem asks God to have pity and not to abandon the worshipper. It is both a psalm of confidence as well as a psalm of desperation. No wonder, then, that scholars have claimed that Psalm 27 is essentially composed of two psalms. Yet, there are others who are able to see the unity in the psalm and its use ritually during these Days of Awe. Psalm 27 offers an unanswered challenge, not a solution; a question to be dealt with, not a response. It does so by describing two contradictory situations, which share certain terminology, a framework, and a call for "one" understanding. It describes two well-known extremes of life: total assurance or belief and a deep, almost incurable, despondency. Out of these the reader is to create one life of faith.

—BENJAMIN SEGAL (adapted)

A Psalm for the Season of Repentance—Psalm 27

A PSALM OF DAVID.

ADONAI is my light and my help. Whom shall I fear?
ADONAI is the stronghold of my life. Whom shall I dread?
When evil people assail me to devour my flesh
it is they, my enemies and those who besiege me,
who stumble and fall.
Should an armed camp be arrayed against me,
my heart would show no fear;

One thing I ask of Adonai—this I seek: to dwell in the House of God all the days of my life, to behold God's beauty and visit in God's sanctuary.

should they war against me, of this I would be sure.

Aḥat sha alti mei eit Adonai, otah avakkeish shivti b'veit Adonai, kol y'mei ḥayyai la-ḥazot b'no am Adonai u-l'vakkeir b'heikhalo.

Were God to hide me in God's *sukkah* on the calamitous day, were God to enfold me in the secret recesses of God's tent, I would be raised up in a protecting fort.

Now, I raise my head above the enemies that surround me, and come with offerings, amidst trumpet blasts, to God's tent, chanting and singing praise to Adonal.

Adonal, hear my voice as I cry out; be gracious to me, and answer me.

It is You of whom my heart said, "Seek my face!"

It is Your presence that I seek, Adonal.

Do not hide Your face from me; do not act angrily toward me.

You have always been my help; do not forsake me; do not abandon me, my God, my deliverer.

Though my father and mother abandon me

Though my father and mother abandon me, ADONAI will gather me in.

Show me Your way, Adonal, and lead me on a straight path despite those arrayed against me.

Do not hand me over to the grasp of those who besiege me; for false witnesses and those who seek ill have risen against me.

If only I could trust that I would see God's goodness in the land of the living \ldots

Place your hope in Adonal.

Be strong, take courage, and place your hope in Adonai.

Some congregations recite Mourner's Kaddish after the recitation of this psalm; see previous page.

וה אֲבַקשׁ.

ּר, לְמַעַן שֹׁרְרֵי.

ז בְּאֶרֶץ חַיִּים. ז אַל־יהוה. תהלים כז

Some congregations recite Ma see previous page.