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By David.

PSALM 27: 1 The LORD is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life. Of whom shall I be afraid?

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The righteous man's confidence in God, Psa 27:1-3; his ardent desire to have the spiritual privilege of worshipping God in his temple, because of the spiritual blessings which he expects to enjoy there, Psa 27:4-6; his prayer to God for continual light and salvation, Psa 27:7-9; has confidence that, though even his own parents might forsake him, yet God would not, Psa 27:10. Therefore he begs to be taught the right way to be delivered from all his enemies, and to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, Psa 27:11-13; he exhorts others to trust in God; to be of good courage; and to expect strength for their hearts, Psa 27:14.

In the Hebrew and Chaldee this Psalm has no other title than simply דָּוִדִּי ledavid: To or For David. In the Syriac: "For David; on account of an infirmity which fell upon him." In the Vulgate, Septuagint, Arabic, and Ethiopic, it has this title: "A Psalm of David, before he was anointed." The Anglo-Saxon omits all the titles. For this title there is no authority in fact. However, it may be just necessary to state that David appears to have received the royal unction three times:

1. In Bethlehem from the hand of Samuel, in the house of his father Jesse; 1Sam 16:13.
2. At Hebron after the death of Saul, by the men of Judah, 2Sam 2:4.
3. By the elders of Israel, at Hebron, after the death of Ishbosheth, when he was acknowledged king over all the tribes; 2Sam 5:3.

At which of these anointings the Psalm was written, or whether before any of them, we know not; nor is the question to be decided. Some commentators say that it is a Psalm belonging to the captivity, and upon that system it may be well interpreted. And lastly, it has been contended that it was written by David after he had been in danger of losing his life by the hand of a gigantic Philistine, and must have perished had he not been succoured by Abishai; see the account 2Sam 21:17 (note); and was counselled by his subjects not to go out to battle any more, lest he should extinguish the light of Israel. To these advisers he is supposed to make the following reply: -

Verse 1

The Lord is my light and my salvation - This light can never be extinguished by man; the Lord is my salvation, my safeguard, my shield, and my defense; of whom then should I be afraid?

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PSALM 27: 2 When evildoers came at me to eat up my flesh, even my adversaries and my foes, they stumbled and fell.

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Verse 2

When the wicked - came upon me - Near as I appeared to you to be in danger of losing my life, I was safe enough in the hands of the Lord; and those who thought to have eaten me up, stumbled, failed of their purpose and fell; the Philistine lost his own life.

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PSALM 27: 3 Though an army should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Though war should rise against me, even then I will be confident.

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Verse 3

Though a host should encamp against me - I am so confident of the Almighty's protection, that were I alone, and encompassed by a host, I would not fear. I am in the hand of God; and while in that hand, I am safe.

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PSALM 27: 4 One thing I have asked of the LORD, that I will seek after, that I may dwell in the LORD's house all the days of my life, to see the LORD's beauty, and to inquire in his temple.

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Verse 4

One thing have I desired - If I am grown too old, and from that circumstance unable to serve my country, I shall then prefer a retirement to the tabernacle, there to serve God the rest of my days. There I shall behold his glory, and there I may inquire and get important answers respecting Israel.

But though these words may be thus interpreted, on the above supposition, that David penned the Psalm on the occasion of his escape from the Philistine, and the desire expressed by his subjects that he should go no more out to war; yet it appears that they more naturally belong to the captivity, and that this verse especially shows the earnest longing of the captives to return to their own land, that they might enjoy the benefit of Divine worship.

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PSALM 27: 5 For in the day of trouble he will keep me secretly in his pavilion. In the covert of his tabernacle he will hide me. He will lift me up on a rock.

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Verse 5

He shall hide me in his pavilion - בסכה besucchoh, in his tabernacle. I would make his temple my residence; I would dwell with God, and be in continual safety. Pavilion comes from papilio and παπιλιων, a butterfly. It signifies a tent made of cloth stretched out on poles, which in form resembles in some measure the insect above named.

In the secret of his tabernacle - Were there no other place, he would put me in the holy of holies, so that an enemy would not dare to approach me.

He shall set me upon a rock - He shall so strengthen and establish me, that my enemies shall not be able to prevail against me. He shall hide me where they cannot find me, or put me out of the reach of the fiery darts of the wicked. He who lives nearest to God suffers least from temptation. "Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to thee: resist the devil and he will flee from thee."

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PSALM 27: 6 Now my head will be lifted up above my enemies around me. I will offer sacrifices of joy in his tent. I will sing, yes, I will sing praises to the LORD.

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Verse 6

Now shall mine head be lifted up - We shall most assuredly be redeemed from this captivity, and restored to our own land, and to the worship of our God in his own temple. There shall we offer sacrifices of joy; we will sing praises unto the Lord, and acknowledge that it is by his might and mercy alone that we have been delivered.

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PSALM 27: 7 Hear, LORD, when I cry with my voice. Have mercy also on me, and answer me.

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Verse 7

Hear, O Lord, when I cry - This is the utmost that any man of common sense can expect - to be heard when he cries. But there are multitudes who suppose God will bless them whether they cry or not; and there are others and not a few, who although they listlessly pray and cry not, yet imagine God must and will hear them! God will answer them that pray and cry; those who do not are most likely to be without the blessings which they so much need.

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PSALM 27: 8 When you said, "Seek my face," my heart said to you, "I will seek your face, LORD."

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Verse 8

When thou saidst, Seek ye my face - How much labor and skill have been employed to make sense of this verse as it stands in our translation! The original words are the following, from which our Version has been forcibly extracted: - *לך אמר לבי בקשו פני את פניך יהוה אבקש* - *lecha amar libbi bakkeshu panai*; *eth paneycha, Jehovah, abakkesh*; of which I believe the true rendering to be as follows: "Unto thee, my heart, he hath said, Seek ye my face. Thy face, O Jehovah, I will seek. O my heart, God hath commanded thee to seek his face." Then, his face I will seek. Which may be paraphrased thus: Unto thee, his Church, God hath said Seek ye, all who compose it, my face. To which I, his Church, have answered, Thy face, O Jehovah, I will seek. On referring to Archbishop Secker, I find that he, and indeed Bishop Horsley, are of the same mind.

I had formerly proposed another method of reading this difficult verse. Suspecting that some error had got into the text, for *לך אמר לבי בקשו פני* *bakkeshu panay*, "seek ye my face," I had substituted *אבקש פניך* *abakkesh paneycha*, "I will seek thy face;" or with the Vulgate and Septuagint, *בקשתי פניך* *bakkesti paneycha*, "I have sought thy face," *exquisivit te facies mea*, *Εξζητησα το προσωπον σου*. And this small alteration seemed to make a good sense: "My heart said unto thee, I have sought thy face, (or, I will seek thy face), and thy face, O Lord, I will seek." I have not only done what it was my duty and interest to do, but I will continue to do it. Some have proposed to mend the text thus: *לך אמר לבי* *lech lecha, amar libbi*, "Go to, saith my heart," *נבקש פני יהוה* *nebakkesh peney Jehovah*, "Let us seek the face of Jehovah." This is rather a violent emendation, and is supported by neither MSS. nor

Versions. The whole verse is wanting in one of Dr. Kennicott's MSS. On the whole I prefer what is first proposed, and which requires no alteration in the text; next, that of the Vulgate and Septuagint.

The old Psalter paraphrases thus: Til yhe saide my hert, the my face soght: thy face, lord, I sal seke. "The gernynge of my hert that spekes til god, and he anely heres: saide til the my face, that es my presence soght the and na nother thyng. And fra now I sal seke thy face lastandly, til my dede; and that I fynd my sekyng:" i.e., To thee, said my heart; thee my face sought: thy face, O Lord, I shall seek. The gernynge of my hert, that spekes til God, and he anely heres, "til the my face"; that es, my presence soght the and no nother thyng: and fra now I sal seke thy face lastandly, til my dede, and that I fynd my sekyng:" i.e., The yearning strong desire of my heart, which speaks to God, and he alone hears; my face is to thee; that is, myself sought thee, and none other thing, and from now I shall seek thee lastingly till my death, and till that I find what I seek.

PSALM 27: 9 Don't hide your face from me. Don't put your servant away in anger. You have been my help. Don't abandon me, neither forsake me, God of my salvation.

#### Verse 9

Hide not thy face - from me - As my face is towards thee wheresoever I am, so let thy face be turned towards me. In a Persian MS. poem entitled Shah we Gudda, "The King and the Beggar," I have found a remarkable couplet, most strangely and artificially involved, which expresses exactly the same sentiment one meaning of which is: -

Our face is towards Thee in all our ways;

Thy face is towards us in all our intentions.

Something similar, though not the same sentiment is in Hafiz, lib. i., gaz. v., cap. 2: -

How can we with the disciples turn our face towards the kaaba,

When our spiritual instructor turns his face to wards the wine-cellar?

I shall subjoin a higher authority than either: - Ὅτι οφθαλμοὶ Κυρίου ἐπὶ δικαίους, καὶ ὠτὰ αὐτοῦ εἰς δεήσεις αὐτῶν· Πρόσωπον δὲ Κυρίου ἐπὶ ποιοῦντας κακά. 1Pet 3:12.

For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous; And his ears to their supplication: And the face of the Lord is upon the workers of evil.

PSALM 27: 10 When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.

#### Verse 10

When my father and my mother forsake me - Or, more literally, "For my father and my mother have forsaken me; but the Lord hath gathered me up." My parents were my protectors for a time; but the Lord has been my Protector always. There is no time in which I do not fall under his merciful regards.

PSALM 27: 11 Teach me your way, LORD. Lead me in a straight path, because of my enemies.

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Verse 11

Teach me thy way - Let me know the gracious designs of thy providence towards me, that my heart may submit to thy will.

And lead me in a plain path - In the path of righteousness, because of mine enemies, who watch for my halting.

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PSALM 27: 12 Don't deliver me over to the desire of my adversaries, for false witnesses have risen up against me, such as breathe out cruelty.

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Verse 12

Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies - To their soul בנפש benepshesh; their whole soul thirsts for my destruction. Let them not be gratified. They have suborned witnesses against me, but they are false witnesses: unmask their wickedness, and confound their counsels.

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PSALM 27: 13 I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

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Verse 13

I had fainted, unless I had believed - The words in italics are supplied by our translators; but, far from being necessary, they injure the sense. Throw out the words I had fainted, and leave a break after the verse, and the elegant figure of the psalmist will be preserved: "Unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living" - What! what, alas! should have become of me!

Dr. Hammond has observed that there is a remarkable elegance in the original, which, by the use of the beautiful figure aposiopesis, makes an abrupt breaking off in the midst of a speech. He compares it to the speech of Neptune to the winds that had raised the tempest to drown the fleet of Aeneas - Aeneid. lib. i., ver. 131.

Eurum ad se zephyrumque vocat: dehinc talia fatur;

Tantane vos generis tenuit fiducia vestri?

Jam coelum terramque, meo sine numine, venti,

Miscere, et tantas audetis tollere moles?

Quos ego-sed motos praestat componere fluctus.

To Eurus and the western blast he cried,

Does your high birth inspire this boundless pride?

Audacious winds! without a power from me,  
To raise at will such mountains on the sea?  
Thus to confound heaven, earth, the air, and main;  
Whom I - but, first, I'll calm the waves again.

Pitts.

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PSALM 27: 14 Wait for the LORD. Be strong, and let your heart take courage. Yes, wait for the LORD.

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Verse 14

Wait on the Lord - All ye who are in distress, wait on the Lord. Take me for an example. I waited on him, and he strengthened my heart; wait ye on him, and he will strengthen your heart. You cannot be unsuccessful; fear not. Wait, I say, on the Lord; wait for his succor in doing his will. Age viriliter, says the Vulgate; act like a man, hope, believe, work, and fear not.