


Overcoming Overwhelm: A Psalm 27 Elul Workshop
Week 1 August 17, 2023

Greg Marcus, PH.D.
Practitioner, Facilitator, Innovator of American Mussar
Rabbi in training AJRCA



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Welcome

Why are you here?



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About This Spiritual Practice Workshop

- Thank you Rabbi Susan Freeman and Rabbi Debra Robbins
- Designed to support the Practice of Reading Psalm 27 every day in Elul
- More “frontal” than the weekly Mussar gathering
- Participation through chat, and in breakout rooms
 - Ok to exchange contact info to get an “accountability partner” to check in every day
- Today
 - About this workshop, spirituality and Psalms
 - Read Psalm 27 and preliminary analysis
 - Break out room to analyze Psalm 27
 - Read out
 - Discuss practice moving forward

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What is a Spiritual Practice?

And why would we do one?



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Reasons to do a spiritual practice include...

- Personal growth and transformation
- Healing
- Understanding self/others/the world
- Improve relationships
- Support to confront painful personal truths
- Connect with something higher
- Reduce stress – greater peace of mind
- Combat overwhelm
- Prepare for the future

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About Psalms

- Longest book in the bible
- 150 Psalms divided into 5 sections
- Psalms have a uniquely personal appeal
 - Liturgy
 - Healing
 - Funerals
 - Asking for support
 - Connect to human experience, which is universal
- First records of reading Psalm 27 every day during Elul in the 1700s
 - Robbins p. xxiv
 - Perhaps a “bottom up” custom, widely adapted because of the impact it had on people

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Blessing for the Psalms Practice

BLESSING FOR THE PRACTICE 5

I praise You, *Adonai*, as I give thanks, celebrate, and engage with Your sacred Psalms.

ברוך אתה, יי, שמתן לי להודות, ולהלל,
ולעסוק בדברי תהלים.

*Baruch atah Adonai shenatan li l'hodot, ul'haleil,
v'laasok b'divrei T'hilim.*

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Psalms 27 – Translation by Rabbi Richard Levy

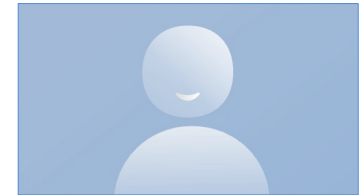
Psalms 27

1 Of David.
Adonai is my light and my victory—
From whom should I feel fright?
Adonai is the stronghold of my life—
From whom should I feel terror?
2 When evildoers approach me in
battle to feed on my flesh—
My pursuers, my adversaries—
They have stumbled, they have
fallen down.
3 If a camp encamps against me,
my heart will not fear;
If a war arises against me,
In this I would trust:
4 One thing have I sought from
Adonai—how I long for it:
That I may live in the House of
Adonai all the days of my life;
That I may look upon the
sweetness of Adonai,
And spend time in the Palace;
5 That You might hide me in
Your sukkah on a chaotic day,
Hide me in the hiding places
of Your tent,
Raise me high upon a rock.
6 Now my head rises high above
my enemies roundabout,
And in Your tent I'll offer
offerings to the sound of *"mash."*
I shall sing and chant praises
to Adonai!

7 Hear, Adonai, my voice—
I am crying out!
Be gracious to me, answer me!
8 My heart has said to You:
"Seek my face."
I am seeking Your face, Adonai—
9 Do not hide Your face from me,
Do not turn Your servant away
in anger,
You have been my help—
Do not forsake me, do not aban-
don me, God of my deliverance!
10 For my father and my mother
have abandoned me,
Yet Adonai gathers me up.
11 Make Your path apparent
to me,
Guide me in the upright road
Because of those up ahead who
lie in wait for me.
12 Do not hand me over to the
lust of my adversaries—
For false witnesses have risen
against me, puffing violently!
13 Had I not the faith
That I would see the goodness
of God in the land of life . . .
14 Wait for Adonai—
Fill your waiting with hope in
Adonai;
Let your heart be strong and
of good courage,
And wait hopefully for Adonai.

Translation by Rabbi Richard N. Levy, from *Songs Ascending:
The Book of Psalms, A New Translation* (New York: CCAR Press, 2017).

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Worksheet

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Daily Practice

- **Basic:**
 - Read Psalm 27 Every day
- **Medium:**
 - Read Psalm 27 Every day
 - Journal for 5 minutes
 - Mediate for 5 minutes
- **Full Practice**
 - Listen to song
 - Read for 5 minutes
 - Psalm 27 out loud
 - Reflection prompt
 - Journal 5 minutes



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Directions for the full practice Robbins p 2-3

2 DAILY DIRECTIONS

Daily Directions

Gather

Gather everything together before you begin:

- ☐ Psalm 27
- ☐ Reflection for Focus
- ☐ Notebook and pencil
- ☐ Timer
- ☐ Musical recording

Settle

- ☐ Sit still, pay attention, take a deep breath.
- ☐ Listen to, hum along to, or even sing *Kaveit el Adonai* (or something else if you prefer).

Bless

- ☐ Read the blessing in Hebrew or English.
- ☐ Take another deep breath.

Read

- ☐ Read for just five minutes.
- ☐ Read Psalm 27 in English (aloud if possible or in Hebrew if you can understand it).
- ☐ Read the Reflection for Focus (maybe twice).

Write

- ☐ Write for just five minutes:
- ☐ Set the timer for just five minutes and start it.
- ☐ Write whatever comes to mind about the Reflection for Focus or something you noticed about a word or phrase or idea in Psalm 27. It doesn't matter what you write, just write. Don't edit or erase, try not to censor your words, just write for just five minutes.

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3 DAILY DIRECTIONS

☐ Use these prompts if you need help getting started:

How does this phrase (or a different two to four words) speak to you today and why?

What memories or images, what aspirations or questions does it evoke?

Sit

- ☐ Set the timer for just 5 minutes.
- ☐ Sit comfortably. Your feet might be on the floor, your hands could rest on your lap or thighs, and perhaps close your eyes or lower your gaze.
- ☐ Start the timer.
- ☐ Try to pay attention to only your breath—try to feel it moving in and out of your lungs.
- ☐ Try to think about the phrase related to the Reflection for Focus, or what you just wrote, or what you just read. When you get distracted, go back to paying attention to your breath, and try again to think about what you read or wrote, or say the phrase over and over in your head.

Forgive

- ☐ Show compassion to yourself if you got distracted.

Remember

- ☐ Take a photo of the phrase and make it your screen saver.

Celebrate

- ☐ Give thanks that you made time for this spiritual practice.

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Next Steps

- Journal the next seven days on the first stanza
 - Readings 1-7 in Robbins
 - Or use your own prompts
- August 24th – Second Stanza

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