

Menachem Persoff

My Light and My Salvation

These days many have been rendering Perek 27 from the Book of T'hilim, which opens with the words, L'DAVID, HASHEM ORI V'YISH-I, - 'To David: the Lord is my light and my salvation.'

In the opening lines, David recognizes Hashem as "the stronghold of my life", protecting him from enemies, presumably from within and without his kingdom.

David expresses his consequent lack of fear in the face of his foes, noting that ultimately the enemies are the ones that stumble and fall. We would then expect that, in his exhilaration, the king would now continue with ebullient praise to Hashem for his salvation.

Yet the mood of the psalm turns somber. David exhorts Hashem with a singular and poignant entreaty, expressed not as a passing fantasy but as an enduring supplication. David HaMelech, whose dream was to build a House for Hashem, turns to the Almighty, begging that he "may dwell in the House of the Lord" all the days of his life.

What a strange request! For there was as yet no Beit HaMikdash! However, the notion of establishing a Beit HaMikdash was so sincere, authentic, and powerful that, apparently, the Temple already existed in David's mind.

What were David HaMelech's objectives that drove him to this particular appeal? He tells us: to behold Hashem's pleasantness, to inquire of Hashem, and to be concealed in the shelter of His Mikdash.

On the surface, we appear to have a picture of a troubled and stressed individual seeking a tranquil escape from life's harsh realities. Indeed, so intense was David's yearning that he cried out to God like an orphan child with nowhere else to turn but pitifully to Hashem.

But, in essence, David HaMelech's search was much more profound. He seeks intimacy with Hashem; he wishes for HaKadosh Baruch Hu to teach him the proper way to live his life. Thus, he would garner the strength to defeat his enemies and rejoice with all his faculties in his salvation.

In the Chassidic tradition, the search for Hashem's light and salvation also operates at the personal level. For

instance, as Yom Kippur approaches, we might want to implore Hashem to lift our heads above the supreme enemy within us, the Yetzer Hara.

And then, having been forgiven for our iniquities, we will, with Hashem's help, utterly rejoice in his Tabernacle during the holiday of Sukkot. **MP**