

Psalms 17:15

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

Analysis

As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness. The psalm concludes with one of the Old Testament's clearest expressions of hope for fellowship with God beyond death. Having contrasted himself with the wicked whose portion is "in this life" (verse 14), David declares his ultimate hope: seeing God's face and being satisfied with His likeness.

"I will behold thy face in righteousness" (ani betzedeq echezeh phanekha, אֲנִי בְצֶדֶק אֶחְזֶה פָּנֶיךָ) expresses confident expectation. Chazah means to see, behold, gaze upon—not casual glancing but steady contemplation. To behold God's "face" (panim) means to experience His personal presence, His favorable regard, His unveiled glory. The phrase "in righteousness" (betzedeq) indicates the basis: not David's perfect merit but his justified standing before God, his covenant relationship maintained by faith and integrity.

"I shall be satisfied, when I awake" (esbe'ah ba'hakitz, אֶשְׂבֶּעַה בְּהִקְיִי) introduces the temporal element. Sava means to be satisfied, filled, satiated—complete contentment with no remaining hunger. "When I awake" (ba'hakitz) most naturally refers to waking from the sleep of death—resurrection. While some interpret this as waking each morning (daily renewal of hope), the context of contrasting temporal prosperity with eternal hope points toward eschatological waking.

"With thy likeness" (temunathekha, תְּמוּנָתְךָ) is profoundly significant. Temunah means form, likeness, image. David expects to awake beholding not merely God's

works or gifts but God's very form. This anticipates 1 John 3:2: "We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." The believer's ultimate satisfaction is not heaven's streets of gold but God Himself—seeing His face and being conformed to His image.

Historical Context

This verse represents a remarkable expression of hope for afterlife in the relatively early stages of biblical revelation. While the full doctrine of resurrection awaited later revelation (Daniel 12:2, Jesus' teaching, Paul's epistles), hints appear throughout the Psalms. Psalm 16:10-11 promises God will not leave His Holy One in the grave but will show the path of life. Psalm 49:15 declares: "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave."

The language of "awakening" as death's reversal appears in Daniel 12:2: "Many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Jesus used similar language: Lazarus "sleepeth," and "I go, that I may awake him out of sleep" (John 11:11). Paul writes: "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (1 Thessalonians 4:14).

The hope of seeing God's face was revolutionary. In the Old Testament, no one could see God's face and live (Exodus 33:20). Moses saw God's back but not His face. Yet David expresses confidence that in righteousness—justified, sanctified, glorified—he will behold God's face. This anticipates Revelation 22:4: "They shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads." What was impossible in this life becomes the believer's ultimate destiny.

Related Passages

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does David's hope to 'behold thy face' contrast with the wicked's satisfaction 'in this life' (verse 14)?
2. What does it mean to see God's face 'in righteousness' rather than in our own merit?
3. How does 'awakening' language point toward hope of resurrection and eternal life?
4. Why is being 'satisfied with thy likeness' the ultimate human fulfillment?

Interlinear Text

אֲנִי ' H589	בְּצִדִּיק H6664	אֲחִיז ה H2372	פְּנֵי יְיָ H6440	אֲשָׁבֵעַ ה H7646
	in righteousness	As for me I will behold	thy face	I shall be satisfied
בְּקִלִּי יָץ H6974	תְּמוֹנָתְךָ: H8544			
when I awake	with thy likeness			

Additional Cross-References

Psalms 11:7 (Righteousness): For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

Matthew 5:6 (Righteousness): Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

2 Corinthians 3:18 (Parallel theme): But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Psalms 16:11 (Parallel theme): Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

Isaiah 26:19 (Parallel theme): Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

Psalms 65:4 (Parallel theme): Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.

Philippians 3:21 (Parallel theme): Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Revelation 21:23 (Parallel theme): And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

Joshua 24:15 (Parallel theme): And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

Numbers 12:8 (Parallel theme): With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?