

# Psalms 67:1

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah.

## Analysis

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**God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah.** This opening prayer draws heavily from the Aaronic blessing (Numbers 6:24-26), requesting divine favor that extends beyond Israel to all nations. "God be merciful" (Elohim yechanenu, אֱלֹהִים יְחִנָּנוּ) uses the verb chanan (חִנָּן), meaning to be gracious, show favor, have mercy. The imperfect tense suggests ongoing petition: "may God be gracious to us, continually show mercy." This isn't claiming earned favor but requesting gracious kindness from the God who delights to show mercy.

The word chanan appears in the Aaronic blessing: "The LORD bless thee...and be gracious unto thee" (Numbers 6:25). It emphasizes God's unmerited favor, His disposition to bless not because recipients deserve it but because He is gracious by nature. The psalm begins with acknowledging need for divine grace—appropriate starting point for all worship and prayer. Without God's mercy, humanity has no hope; with His mercy, all needs are met.

"And bless us" (vivarekenu, וַיְבָרֶךְנוּ) requests divine blessing. Barak (ברך) means to bless, enrich, cause to prosper. Throughout Scripture, God's blessing encompasses material provision, spiritual vitality, relational harmony, and ultimate flourishing. The repeated "us" (plural) indicates corporate prayer—Israel praying collectively for national blessing. Yet verse 2 reveals the missionary purpose: Israel requests blessing not for selfish enjoyment but so nations might know God's ways. This reflects Abrahamic covenant: "I will bless thee...and thou shalt be a blessing" (Genesis 12:2). Blessing received becomes blessing shared.

"Cause his face to shine upon us" (ya'er panav itanu, פָּנָיו אֶתְנוּ again echoes the Aaronic blessing: "The LORD make his face shine upon thee" (Numbers 6:25). The face represents personal presence and favor. When someone's face shines toward you, they look favorably upon you, are pleased with you, give you their attention and approval. God's shining face indicates divine pleasure, acceptance, and blessing. Conversely, God hiding His face indicates judgment or displeasure (Psalm 27:9, 44:24, 69:17, 88:14, 102:2, 143:7). This request seeks God's favorable presence, His pleasure, His attentive care focused on His people.

The imagery of shining face connects to the sun bringing light, warmth, and life. God's face shining produces spiritual illumination, warmth of relationship, and vitality of life. It recalls the Messiah as light of the world (John 8:12), the Aaronic blessing's fulfillment in Christ whose face shines with glory (Matthew 17:2, Revelation 1:16). The request anticipates Revelation 22:4 where God's servants "shall see his face" in eternal fellowship.

## Historical Context

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Psalm 67 is a communal prayer likely used during harvest festivals or pilgrimages to Jerusalem. The structure and content suggest liturgical use, possibly with a priest or worship leader speaking verses 1-2 and the congregation responding in verses 3-7. The psalm's brevity and repetitive structure (verse 3 repeated as verse 5) support this liturgical function. The reference to earth yielding increase (v.6) confirms agricultural/harvest context.

The Aaronic blessing (Numbers 6:24-26), which this psalm echoes, was pronounced by priests over Israel, particularly at festivals. This blessing wasn't magical formula but theological declaration of God's favorable disposition toward His covenant people. Aaron and his sons were commanded to bless Israel with these words, and God promised: "And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them" (Numbers 6:27). When priests blessed Israel using God's name, God Himself enacted the blessing.

The psalm's missionary dimension reflects Israel's calling to be light to nations

(Isaiah 42:6, 49:6). While much of Israel's history focused inwardly on national survival and purity, prophetic literature consistently envisioned Gentile inclusion. Psalm 67 bridges these—praying for God's blessing on Israel so that nations might know God's salvation. This anticipates the New Testament church's mission: blessed to be a blessing, saved to be witnesses, recipients of grace commissioned to share grace (Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:18-20).

Early Christians adopted Aaronic blessing language and interpreted it christologically. Christ fulfills the blessing—He is God's ultimate mercy and blessing to humanity. His face shines with divine glory (2 Corinthians 4:6). Through Him, believers receive every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3). The church continues this pattern: experiencing God's mercy and blessing, then declaring His ways among nations so all peoples might praise Him. Missionary movements throughout church history have been motivated by this vision of universal worship, fulfilling Psalm 67's prayer that God's ways be known on earth and salvation among all nations.

## Related Passages

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**Psalm 19:1** — Heavens declare God's glory

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Study Questions

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1. How does praying for God's mercy and blessing on yourself relate to being a blessing to others (as verse 2 suggests)?
2. What does it mean practically for God's face to shine upon you, and how do you experience His favor and pleasure?
3. How does the Aaronic blessing (Numbers 6:24-26) inform your understanding of this verse and your approach to worship?
4. In what ways might God 'hide His face' (withdraw favor) today, and what restores the shining of His face toward His people?
5. How does requesting divine blessing for your community differ from seeking personal prosperity?

## Interlinear Text

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אֱלֹהִים יְמִינֵינוּ יְבָרֶכֶنּוּ יְאַרְבֵּנּוּ גַּתִּי אֶתְנָהּ  
God be merciful unto us and bless to shine us and cause his face  
H430 H2603 H1288 H215 H6440 H854

סָלָה:

upon us Selah

H5542

## Additional Cross-References

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**Psalms 4:6** (Parallel theme): There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

**2 Corinthians 4:6** (References God): For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

**Psalms 4:1** (Grace): Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

**Psalms 80:7** (References God): Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

**Psalms 119:135** (Parallel theme): Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes.

**Psalms 31:16** (Parallel theme): Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies' sake.

**Psalms 80:19** (References God): Turn us again, O LORD God of hosts, cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.

**Ephesians 1:3** (Blessing): Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

**2 Corinthians 13:14** (Grace): The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

