

Psalm 121

"The Pilgrims' Praise of Yahweh, Protector of Israel"

(A Song of Ascents.)¹

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A1 THE PSALMIST'S CONTEMPLATION OF HELP AS HE JOURNEYS TO JERUSALEM: Yahweh, the Creator, Is My Help 121:1-2

B1 Though Mountains Are the Most Prominent Feature En Route to Jerusalem, Is That My Source of Help? 121:1

C1 The Prominence of the Mountains: *{1}* I² will lift up my eyes to the mountains;³

C2 The Source of Help? From whence shall my help come?

B2 The Affirmation that Help Springs from Yahweh, the Creator of Heavens and Earth 121:2

C1 Help Comes from Yahweh: *{2}* My help *comes* from the LORD,

C2 Only the Creator is Adequate to Provide Help! Who made heaven and earth.

A2 THE COMPANION'S EXPOSITION ON HELP AS HE TRAVELS ALONGSIDE: Yahweh, Ever Alert, is Israel's Protector 121:3-8

B1 Yahweh, Your Protector, Never Slumbers 121:3-4

C1 *{3}* He will not allow your⁴ foot to slip;

C2 He who **keeps**⁵ you will not slumber.

¹ Psalm 121 Superscription - Song of Ascents: See footnote on Psalm 120.

² Psalm 121:1 - I: The first two verses are first person singular.

³ Psalm 121:1 - mountains: En route to worship in Jerusalem, the traveler's attention would focus on the mountains, to which he would need to ascend.

⁴ Psalm 121:3-8 - your: The pronouns are second person singular. Evidently the companion or the companions of the psalmist are reaffirming Yahweh's guardianship and protection in an antiphonal chorus, addressing the singular psalmist. Less likely, the psalmist addresses his companion, or else he addresses the group traveling with him, but speaks to each one individually in a teaching mode.

⁵ Psalm 121:3 - keeps: "Keeps" here translates the Heb. *shamar* ([8104](#)). Six times in this brief psalm *shamar* is used, translated "keeper" in v. 5, "protect" in v. 7, and "guard" in v. 8. The first three uses of this word in the Bible are instructive: Man was placed in the garden of Eden both to cultivate it and to **preserve** it (Gen. 2:15). After man's sin and expulsion from the garden, Yahweh Elohim placed cherubim and a flaming sword at the east of the garden to **guard** so man could never again eat of the tree of life and be cursed with a body that would age but never

C3 {4} Behold, He who **keeps** Israel

C4 Will neither slumber nor sleep.

B2 Yahweh, Your Protector, Shields from Harm Always 121:5-6

C1 The Affirmation of Yahweh as Guardian {5} The LORD is your **keeper**;

C2 The Quality of Yahweh's Shade: The LORD is your shade on your right hand.

C3 The Timelessness of Yahweh's Shade 121:6

D1 Sufficiency by day: {6} The sun will not smite you by day,

D2 Sufficiency by night: Nor the moon by night.

B3 Yahweh Will Protect You From All Evil All the Time! 121:7-8

C1 Yahweh's Protection of Your Soul from Evil

D1 {7} The LORD will **protect** you from all evil;

D2 He will **keep** your soul.

C2 Yahweh's Eternal Protection of Your Movements

D1 {8} The LORD will **guard** your going out and your coming in

D2 From this time forth and forever.

Expanded Analysis of Psalm 121

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expire (Gen. 3:24). After he had killed his brother, and Yahweh asked him where Abel was, Cain flippantly asked in response, "Am I my brother's **guardian**?" (Gen. 4:9). Yahweh, on the other hand is the careful guardian, protector of Israel. I have highlighted the corresponding Biblical text in this analysis to alert the reader of the repetition of *shamar*.