

PSALM 121

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

Jehovah the True Helper and Keeper of Israel.

ANALYSIS

(See Inserted Headlines.)

(Lm.) Song of the Steps.

(THE KING, SEEING JERUSALEM SURROUNDED
BY AN ARMY.)

1 "I keep lifting mine eyes unto the mountains—
whence cometh my help?"

(STRONG COUNSELLOR'S ASSURANCE.)

2 "Help¹ is from Jehovah—
maker of heaven and earth!"

(WEAK COUNSELLOR'S PIOUS WISH.)

3 "May he not² suffer thy foot to slip!
may he that keepeth³ thee not² slumber!"

(STRONG COUNSELLOR'S RE-ASSURANCE.)

4 "Lo! neither⁴ will slumber nor⁴ sleep
the Keeper of Israel.

5 Jehovah—thy Keeper—Jehovah
is thy shade on thy right hand:

6 By day the sun shall not smite thee,
nor the moon by night.

7 Jehovah will keep thee from every evil—
he will keep thy person,⁵

1. Merely omitting the suffix *yod* from the noun for "help" converts this verse into a timely positive assurance.

2. The subjective or deprecatative negative is here used, and by the headline is dramatically accounted for.

3. N.B. how the "strong counsellor" catches up this word and repeats it five times.

4. In contrast with the negative in ver. 3, that here used is positive, and states a fact.

5. Heb. *nepshesh*: U.: "soul." We need to be reminded how frequently *nepshesh* means "person"—in good contrast, here, with "goings."

STUDIES IN PSALMS

- 8 Jehovah will keep thy going out and thy coming in—
from henceforth and to the ages!"⁶

(Nm.)

PARAPHRASE

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Shall I look to the mountain gods for help?

2 No! My help is from Jehovah who made the mountains!
And the heavens too!

3, 4 He will never let me stumble, slip or fall. For He
is always watching, never sleeping.

5 Jehovah Himself is caring for you! He is your defender.¹

6 He protects you day and night.

7 He keeps you from all evil, and preserves your life.

8 He keeps His eye upon you as you come and go, and
always guards you.

EXPOSITION

Notwithstanding his strong faith in Jehovah, Hezekiah's confidence would naturally be tried as the Assyrians approached the sacred city. Jerusalem was surrounded by mountains; and to these the King would instinctively lift up his eyes to see whether the Assyrians were coming; and, in moments of distress, might well ask—whence his *help* could come. Such a strong man as Isaiah would be at hand to assure him; and ver. 2 would be worthy of *him* and of the occasion. It is easy to apprehend how a weaker counsellor might thereupon express the pious wish that Jehovah's help might not fail, but in such terms as tended rather to weaken the King's faith than to strengthen it. The first adviser, therefore, renews his assurances of Jehovah's help in more vigorous and ample terms. *Lo!* says he,—*Look you!*—as of some open and manifest truth—and then he proceeds with his re-assurance in positive terms of utmost vigour; accumulating the Divine titles to confidence, figuratively picturing the pervading presence of Jehovah's protection, playing with the word employed by his weaker friend—*Keeper*—till it echoes with triumphant faith. Then, too, the very word *keep* is exquisitely fitted to the position of a king who could not move—

6. Cp. Intro., Chap. III., "Ages."

1. Literally, "your shade at your right hand."

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but must wait till he should "see the salvation of God." How much easier thus to apply the words, than to force the accustomed thought of help coming from the mountains of Judæa to bring the returning exiles out of Babylon.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Verse one of this psalm is very much misunderstood. The help *does not* come from the hills—from whence? Discuss.
2. Who would give help and assurance to Hezekiah? (i.e. besides God)
3. There seems to be two counsellors in this psalm. What does each say? Who are they?

P S A L M 1 2 2

DESCRIPTIVE TITLE

The Tribes Welcomed to the Passover.

ANALYSIS

(See Inserted Headlines.)

(Lm.) Song of the Steps—By David¹
(A PILGRIM'S REMINISCENCE OF THE
START FROM HOME.)

- 1 I rejoiced with those who were saying to me:—
"To the house of Jehovah we go!"

(A BAND OF PILGRIMS' OUTBURST OF
TRIUMPH ON ARRIVAL.)

- 2 Standing are our feet—
within thy gates—
O Jerusalem!

(THE PILGRIMS, ADMIRING THE CITY, ARE
REMINDED OF ITS RELIGIOUS USE.)

- 3 Jerusalem!
She that hath been built up a veritable city,
Joined for her part into a unity:

1. Some cod. (w. Aram., Sep., Vul.) omit: "By David"—Gn.