

Real Help

Psalm 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? ²My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth. ³He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber. ⁴Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep. ⁵The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand. ⁶The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night. ⁷The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. ⁸The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time forth and forevermore.

Written for a pilgrim viewing Jerusalem's hills, or by a psalmist when he is feeling overwhelmed. He finds that God, who created all things, is his helper. (TLSB)

The words, *I will up my eyes to the hills*, express the pilgrim's present and intense contemplation of the journey. After all, the way to the holy city would be through hills fraught with danger – slippery paths and loose rocks and deep valleys, as well as robbers and wild animals.

His help and security do not come from the hills, but from the Lord who made the hills and everything else in the universe.

The participle “maker” stresses the characteristic of the Lord as the creator; and the expression “heaven and earth” signifies the whole universe and everything in it as his creation. The point is that if the Lord created everything, then he created the hills through which the pilgrim must walk; and whatever the Lord has created he can control.

Because this word “protect/keep” is used six times in these eight verses it is clearly the focus of the passage. God's protection of his people at times came through direct, divine intervention, such as through angels who were given charge over people lest they dash their foot on the way (Ps. 91:11), or through unexpected super events (Judg. 5:4), or through the circumstances of life in which the Lord was clearly at work but remained hidden (Gen. 12:10-20), or through the agency of other believers (leaders such as kings and priests who were to shepherd the people) who were God's instruments for guiding and protecting the people.

Slumber or sleep – God does not become drowsy and inattentive. He does not sleep while His people struggle like Baal. (TLSB)

The words “sun” and “moon” form the expressed subjects of the verb. But they are to be explained as figurative, intending to convey what goes on under the sun and the moon; they also complement what is expressed in “day” and “night,” meaning all the time. This, too, would comfort the pilgrims since the journeys to the holy city often meant traveling for a day or two.

All of this is also available to us at all times.

Prayer: O Lord, we trust in Your vigilant love. You will preserve us in order to bring us home. Amen. (TLSB)