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A Song of Ascents.

PSALM 121: 1 I will lift up my eyes to the hills. Where does my help come from?

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The resolution of a godly man, Psa 121:1, Psa 121:2. The safety and prosperity of such, as they and theirs shall be under the continual protection of God, Psa 121:3-8.

This appears to be a prayer of the Jews in their captivity, who are solicitous for their restoration. It is in the form of a dialogue. Psa 121:1, Psa 121:2. The person who worships God speaks the two first verses, "I will lift up mine eyes-my help cometh," - Psa 121:1, Psa 121:2. Psa 121:3. The ministering priest answers him, "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved." "He that keepeth thee will not slumber," Psa 121:3.

To which the worshipper answers, that he knows that "he who keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep," Psa 121:4; but he seems to express a doubt whether he shall be an object of the Divine attention. Psa 121:5 etc. The priest resumes; and, to the conclusion of the Psalm, gives him the most positive assurances of God's favor and protection.

Verse 1

Unto the hills - Jerusalem was built upon a mountain; and Judea was a mountainous country; and the Jews, in their several dispersions, turned towards Jerusalem when they offered up their prayers to God.

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PSALM 121: 2 My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

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Verse 2

My help cometh from the Lord - There is no help for me but in my God; and I expect it from no other quarter.

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PSALM 121: 3 He will not allow your foot to be moved. He who keeps you will not slumber.

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Verse 3

He will not suffer thy foot to be moved - The foundation, God's infinite power and goodness, on which thou standest, cannot be moved; and whilst thou standest on this basis, thy foot cannot be moved.

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PSALM 121: 4 Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

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Verse 4

He that keepeth Israel - The Divine Being represents himself as a watchman, who takes care of the city and its inhabitants during the night-watches; and who is never overtaken with slumbering or sleepiness. There is a thought in the Antigone of Sophocles, that seems the counterpart of this of the psalmist, Ταν σαν, Ζευ, δυναμν τις ανδρων Υπερβασια κατασχοι, Ταν ουθ' ύπνος αι - ρει ποθ' ό παντογηρωσ, Ακαματοι τε θεων Μηνες;

Antig. ver. 613, Edit. Johnson.

Shall men below control great Jove above, Whose eyes by all-subduing sleep

Are never closed, as feeble mortals' are; But still their watchful vigil keep

Through the long circle of th' eternal year?

Franklin.

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PSALM 121: 5 The LORD is your keeper. The LORD is your shade on your right hand.

PSALM 121: 6 The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.

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Verse 6

The sun shall not smite thee by day - Thus expressed by the Chaldee: "The morning spectres shall not smite thee by day, during the government of the sun; nor the nocturnal spectres by night, during the government of the moon." I believe the psalmist simply means, they shall not be injured by heat nor cold; by a sun-stroke by day, nor a frost-bite by night.

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PSALM 121: 7 The LORD will keep you from all evil. He will keep your soul.

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Verse 7

The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil - Spiritual and corporeal, natural and moral.

He shall preserve thy soul - Take care of thy life, and take care of thy soul.

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PSALM 121: 8 The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in, from this time forward, and forever more.

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Verse 8

Thy going out and thy coming in - Night and day - in all thy business and undertakings; and this through the whole course of thy life: for evermore.