

## *Songs of Ascents: 120, 121*

## *Psalms that lift the soul*

Each psalm in Psalms 120-134 has the title “a song of ascents.” These 15 psalms form a group.

Here are possible explanations for what *ascents* refers to:

- pilgrimages up to Jerusalem for Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles
- the return to the land of Israel from exile in Babylon
- an ascending poetic structure found in some of these songs
- uplifting content

Psalm 120 starts in foreign lands and Psalm 134 ends up in the house of the LORD.

What weighs down our souls nowadays?

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### ***Psalm 120***

*A song of ascents.*

*1 I call on the LORD in my distress, and he answers me.*

*2 Save me, O LORD, from lying lips and from deceitful tongues.*

*3 What will he do to you, and what more besides, O deceitful tongue?*

*4 He will punish you with a warrior's sharp arrows, with burning coals of the broom tree.*

*5 Woe to me that I dwell in Meshech, that I live among the tents of Kedar!*

*6 Too long have I lived among those who hate peace.*

*7 I am a man of peace; but when I speak, they are for war.*

Write your own one-sentence summary of this psalm.

Concentrate on verses 1-4. What distress bothers the writer?

What is the writer's solution to such distress?

How have you experienced the same distress as the writer?

Concentrate on verses 5-7. Describe the feelings of the writer.

What makes you feel a similar way?

How does this psalm lift your soul?

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**Psalm 121**

*A song of ascents.*

*1 I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from?*

*2 My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.*

*3 He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber;*

*4 indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.*

*5 The LORD watches over you—the LORD is your shade at your right hand;*

*6 the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.*

*7 The LORD will keep you from all harm—he will watch over your life;*

*8 the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.*

Write your own one-sentence summary of this psalm.

What difference do you notice between verses 1-2 and verses 3-8?

Concentrate on verses 1-2.

The name *the LORD* is always significant. Is it the name which God chose for himself.

*And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.” (Exodus 34:6,7)*

Which description of the LORD does the psalm writer find strength in?

Sometimes it helps to ask ourselves questions and provide ourselves the answers. Explain.

Concentrate on verses 3-8. What is the dominant word in this section? Find each occurrence.

Notice the ascending structure in verses 3-4.

How do these two verses lift your soul?

Notice the ascending structure in verses 5-6.

How do these two verses lift your soul?

Notice the ascending structure in verses 7-8.

In verse 8 the order in the Hebrew poetry is *your going and your coming*.

Why is that an uplifting thought?

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Which statement in either of these psalms would you memorize for yourself? Why?