

Psalm 121:1-2

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/ps/ps-121/psalm-1211-2/>

The psalmist looks beyond the earth, up to God, and acknowledges that true help comes from Him.

The opening two verses of the psalm are grammatically rendered in the first person singular point of view. The author, who is anonymous, speaks: *I will lift up my eyes to the mountains*. The anonymity of authorship here can be of great encouragement. A living, vibrant, and practical faith experience is for not only great kings who wrote psalms, such as David and Solomon, but for any and every person. There is a forward-looking confidence and purposeful intent to what the psalmist declares. Whether on a pilgrim's journey or simply in the course of daily living, the speaker deliberately directs his sight upward: *I will lift up my eyes*. This verbal phrase is a metaphor that depicts actively attending to the concerns and hopes at play within mind and spirit, guiding their trajectories upward, by a resolute faith.

It could be that the psalmist had mountains generally in mind, but since this is a psalm of ascents associated with festivals in Jerusalem, it seems likely the writer would have the Judean Hills surrounding Jerusalem specifically in mind.

The general idea of looking up to a mountain appeals to a sense of grandeur in vista and natural power; but the mountains upon which the Holy City of Jerusalem is located appeals to the context of the religious pilgrimage to Jerusalem, the City of David, and the Temple within the city which sits upon Mount Moriah. Either attribution serves the purposes of the psalmist: there is One far greater than any other who comes from "above" (Deuteronomy 4:39; Colossians 3:1–3). The worshipful writer is determined to see the holy places majestically set amid rising heights. There as well the psalmist yearns to be seen by and to encounter the Holy One of Israel.

The psalmist follows his declared intent to look upward with a question more rhetorical than interrogative in nature: *From where shall my help come?* The query's context suggests what follows immediately in verse 2, that his help will come from the Lord. It is notable that we are given two significant insights within the question itself. These are insights regarding the anticipation of real *help*, sufficient to face life's real challenges; and, the importance of the origin of that uniquely efficacious *help* being rooted within the character of God.

It is a given: In life, one will need *help* (Hebrew "ezer"). At some point in life even the most self-sufficient person depends upon someone *else* for such things as counsel, support, training, encouragement, treatment—perhaps even correction. This *help* can be given for purely physical needs, as when an infant is protected and nurtured by a caring mother.

Likewise, *help* can be directed to needs in life that are associated with personal or social development, such as education, vocation, or interpersonal relationships. Spiritual growth especially invites one to be open to help from others who have already spent time grappling with matters of faith. The New Testament reminds us that helping—and we can fairly conclude that

this applies to all aspects of help—is a part of the Christian ethos. Since God is a helper, and we are to reflect our creator, it follows that we ought also to be helpers. Followers of Jesus are to “Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

The matter of help’s origin is of utmost importance to the psalmist. The rhetorical query *from where* is given in anticipation of the unequivocal answer supplied in verse 2: *the Lord*. One easily can imagine any number of plausible scenarios wherein the person pleading for assistance does not know *from where* such *help* might come. Not so the psalmist. It is as if the question asked is itself suggesting the response, “There is only one source of help that is trustworthy, complete, and righteous.”

My help comes from the Lord. The very One, the only One *Who made heaven and earth*, is the one source of help in life the psalmist knows to trust above all others. *The Lord*—given in Hebrew as the revealed personal name “Yahweh” which means “the existent One.” This God is holy beyond all human concept or ability to grasp, yet intimate beyond all human limitation. He is the One in Whom the psalmist places his every hope to gain help. More than hope alone, however, this declaration is saturated by unwavering faith and unassailable confidence. It is a matter of wholehearted conviction: God, who created all that is, cares enough for those whom He created to bring exactly the right help at exactly the right time.

It is notable that the root of the Hebrew word translated here as “help” occurs first in scripture in Genesis 2:18 where it describes the divine purpose for which Eve was created:

“Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.’”
(Genesis 2:18)

The role of being a helper is rooted in the character of God, who is the ultimate helper.

This Hebrew root word is used primarily to describe God’s nature in the Old Testament. God stated that aloneness is not good for man (Genesis 2:18), and that woman is the divine provision to solve aloneness, according to the divine design.

Biblical Text

**¹ I will lift up my eyes to the mountains;
From where shall my help come?
² My help comes from the Lord,
Who made heaven and earth.**