

## ספר תהילים קכא | Tehillim / Psalms 121

MATSATI.COM Ministry | <http://www.matsati.com>

### Love and the Emotionally Unavailable

In this week's study from *Tehillim / Psalms 121:1-8*, the psalm opens saying, א שִׁיר לְמַעְלוֹת אֲשָׁא עֵינַי 121:1 *I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From whence shall my help come? (NASB)* Is the Psalmist asking a rhetorical question? Why does he look to the mountains? Is it because of the high places in which Israel sacrificed and worshiped God? David answers his question saying, ב עֲזָרִי 121:2 *My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. (NASB)* When David looks to the mountains, he thinks of the Lord God of Israel, of His mighty works to deliver Israel, and His power to work in the hearts of men. He states, ג אֶל-יִתְּנָן לְמוֹט רַגְלֶךָ אֶל-יָנוּם שְׁמֹרֶךָ: ד הֲנֵה 121:3 *He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. (NASB)* The Lord does not slumber or sleep. Though it may seem as if the Lord does not answer when we pray, David reassures us the Lord is not asleep as some would suggest. He continues saying, ה יְהוָה שְׁמֹרֶךָ יְהוָה צִלְּךָ עַל-יַד יְמִינֶךָ: ו יוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ 121:5 *The Lord is your keeper; The Lord is your shade on your right hand. (NASB)* 121:6 *The sun will not smite you by day, Nor the moon by night. (NASB)* 121:7 *The Lord will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. (NASB)* David says the Lord keeps us in times of trouble. What does he mean by the sun not smiting during the day nor the moon by night? The verse is not speaking about any harm from the sun or the moon, but instead speaks to harm that occurs night and day; in this respect, the psalmist speaks to divine protection during the time of the sun (day time) and time of the moon (night time). David concludes his psalm saying, ח יְהוָה יִשְׁמְרֶ-צְאֹתְךָ וּבֹאֶךָ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם: 121:8 *The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in From this time forth and forever. (NASB)*

עברית	Hebrew	ארמי	Aramaic	ελληνικός	Greek
<b>ספר תהלים פרק קכא</b>	<b>ספר טוביה פרק קכא</b>	<b>ΨΑΛΜΟΙ 121</b>			
א שִׁיר לְמַעְלוֹת אֲשָׁא עֵינַי אֶל-הַהָרִים מֵאֵין יְבֹא עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה שְׁמַיִם וְאָרֶץ: ג אֶל-יִתְּנָן לְמוֹט רַגְלֶךָ אֶל-יָנוּם שְׁמֹרֶךָ: ד הֲנֵה לֹא יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל: ה יְהוָה שְׁמֹרֶךָ יְהוָה צִלְּךָ עַל-יַד יְמִינֶךָ: ו יוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא-יִכָּפֵה וְיָרֵחַ בַּלְיָלָה: ז יְהוָה יִשְׁמְרֶ-מְכַלְרַע יִשְׁמֹר אֶת-נַפְשְׁךָ: ח יְהוָה יִשְׁמְרֶ-צְאֹתְךָ וּבֹאֶךָ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם:		א שִׁירָא דִּאתָמֵר עַל מְסִיקִין דִּתְהוּמָא אֲזֻקֹּף עֵינַי לְטוּרִיא מִן הָאן יִיתִי סַעְדִּי: ב סַעְדִּי מִן קִדָּם יְהוּה דַּעְבַּד שְׁמִיא וְאַרְעָא: ג לֹא יִתֵּן לְאַתְמוּטְטָא רִיגְלְךָ לֹא נְאִים יָנוּם בְּטַרְךָ: ד הָא לֹא נְאִים וְלֹא יִדְמוּךָ בְּטִיר יִשְׂרָאֵל: ה יְהוּה יִנְטְרִינְךָ יְהוּה יִטְלִיל עַלְךָ מִן בְּגַלְל מְזוּזוּתָא דְקַבֵּי-עָא עַל סְטֵר יְמִינְךָ בְּמִיעַלְךָ: ו יִימָם כַּד שְׁלִיט שִׁימְשָׂא לֹא יִמְחוּנְךָ צְפִרֵי-רֵי וְלִילֵי כַּד שְׁלִיט סִיְהֵרָא בְּלִילֵיא: ז מִימְרָא דִּיהוּה יִנְטְרִינְךָ מְכַל בִּישׁ יִנְטוּר יִת נַפְשְׁךָ: ח יְהוּה יִנְטוּר מִפְקֶךָ לְפִרְגַּמְטִיא וּמִיעַלְךָ לְמִיעַסְקָא בְּאוּרִיתָא מִן הַשְׁתָּא וְעַד עַלְמָא:		121:1 ὠδὴ τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν ἦρα τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς μου εἰς τὰ ὄρη πόθεν ἔξει ἡ βοήθειά μου 121:2 ἡ βοήθειά μου παρὰ κυρίου τοῦ ποιήσαντος τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν 121:3 μὴ δῶς εἰς σάλον τὸν πόδα σου μηδὲ νυστάξῃ ὁ φυλάσσων σε 121:4 ἰδοὺ οὐ νυστάξει οὐδὲ ὑπνώσει ὁ φυλάσσων τὸν Ἰσραὴλ 121:5 κύριος φυλάξει σε κύριος σκέπη σου ἐπὶ χεῖρα δεξιάν σου 121:6 ἡμέρας ὁ ἥλιος οὐ συγκαύσει σε οὐδὲ ἡ σελήνη τὴν νύκτα 121:7 κύριος φυλάξει σε ἀπὸ παντὸς κακοῦ φυλάξει τὴν ψυχὴν σου 121:8 κύριος φυλάξει τὴν εἰσοδὸν σου καὶ τὴν ἔξοδόν σου ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν καὶ ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος	

<b>Tehillim Psalms 121</b>	<b>Toviyah Psalms 121</b>	<b>Psalmoi Psalms 121</b>
<p>121:1 I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From whence shall my help come? 121:2 My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. 121:3 He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. 121:4 Behold, He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep. 121:5 The Lord is your keeper; The Lord is your shade on your right hand. 121:6 The sun will not smite you by day, Nor the moon by night. 121:7 The Lord will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. 121:8 The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in From this time forth and forever. (NASB)</p>	<p>121:1 A song that was uttered on the ascents of the abyss. I will lift up my eyes to the mountains. Whence shall come my help? 121:2 My help is from the presence of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. 121:3 He will not allow your foot to falter, your guardian does not slumber. 121:4 Behold, he does not slumber and he will not sleep, the guardian of Israel. 121:5 The Lord will guard you, the Lord will overshadow you, on account of the mezuzah affixed on your right side as you enter. 121:6 By day, when the sun rules, the morning-demons will not smite you, nor will the liliths, at night, when the moon rules. 121:7 The word of the Lord will guard you from all harm, he will guard your soul. 121:8 The Lord will guard your going out for business and your coming in to study Torah, from now and forevermore. (EMC)</p>	<p>A Song of Degrees. 121:1 I lifted up mine eyes to the mountains, whence my help shall come. 121:2 My help shall come from the Lord, who made the heaven and the earth. 121:3 Let not thy foot be moved; and let not thy keeper slumber. 121:4 Behold, he that keeps Israel shall not slumber nor sleep. 121:5 The Lord shall keep thee: the Lord is thy shelter upon thy right hand. 121:6 The sun shall not burn thee by day, neither the moon by night. 121:7 May the Lord preserve thee from all evil: the Lord shall keep thy soul. 121:8 The Lord shall keep thy coming in, and thy going out, from henceforth and even for ever. (LXX)</p>

א שִׁיר לַמַּעֲלוֹת אֲשֶׁר עֵינַי  
 121:1 I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From whence shall my help come? (NASB) Is the Psalmist asking a rhetorical question? (*Rhetorical is -of a question- asked in order to produce an effect or to make a statement rather than to elicit information.*) Why does he look to the mountains? Is it because of the high places in which Israel sacrificed and worshiped God? The high places were places of worship on elevated pieces of ground. These generally were found on the mountain tops. The Torah describes the high places being dedicated to idol worship (*Vayikra / Leviticus 26:30, Bamidbar / Numbers 33:52*), just as we read of Midian and the Moabites according to Parashat Balak. (*Isaiah 16:12*), note how Balak brought Bilam to the high place to see Israel and make sacrifices. In the Neviim (Prophets), we read of Israel worshiping God in the high places too. In the case of idolatry, these places often included an altar and a sacred object such as a stone marble foundation, a pillar or wooden pole in various shapes identified with the object of worship (*e.g. animals, constellations, goddesses, and fertility deities, etc*). The Neviim section of the Tanach describe the high place as being set up in a spot that had been artificially elevated. The author of *2 Kings 16:4* makes a distinction between the high places and the hills. The prophet Jeremiah writes of Israel turning away from the God of Israel to practice Molech worship and so the people built high places for Baal (*Jeremiah 32:35 And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire to Molech; ...*). We also read of King Solomon towards the end of his life built idolatrous high places for his foreign wives outside of Jerusalem and worshiped with them, causing his children to loose the kingdom (*1 Kings 11:11*). The people were still sacrificing at these high places before the temple was built, and Solomon joined them. After the Lord appeared to him in a dream at Gibeon, the king returned to Jerusalem and sacrificed offerings; however, he continued to waver between the two places of worship. As we study the high places described in the Tanach, not all high places were dedicated to idol worship. These high places also played a major role in Israelite worship, and the earliest biblical mention of a site of worship as a “high place” is found in *Bereshit*

/ *Genesis 12:6-8* where Abram built altars to the Lord at Shechem and Hebron. Abraham built an altar in the region of Moriah and was willing to sacrifice his son there (*Bereshit / Genesis 22:1-2*). The Rabbis believe this to be the same high place where the temple of Jerusalem was built. Jacob set up a stone pillar to the Lord at Bethel (*Bereshit / Genesis 28:18-19*), and Moses met the Lord on the mountain of Sinai (*Shemot / Exodus 19:1-3*). The high places were visited regularly by the prophet Samuel (*1 Samuel 7:16*). The high places were known as sites of Canaanite idol worship (*Judges 3:19*) which extended on into the period of time that Elijah was a prophet over Israel (*1 Kings 18:16-40*). The Lord God chose only one place as His high place where sacrifice was authorized, and that was the temple in Jerusalem (*2 Chronicles 3:1*). The Lord commanded that all other high places be destroyed. King Josiah destroyed them in *2 Kings 22-23*. These high places were warned about in the Torah because they were a localized or regional center of worship that was dedicated to a god. Worshiping at these places included making sacrifices, burning incense, holding feasts or festivals, and sexual immorality. (*1 Kings 3:2-3, 12:32*). These high places contained altars, graven images, and shrines (*1 Kings 13:1-5, 14:23, 2 Kings 17:29, 18:4; 23:13-14*). Based upon what we read in *1 and 2 Kings*, the presence of the “high places” served as a type of litmus test for Israel’s morality and dedication to the Lord God of Israel. When the kings built these worship sites, the people forsook the Lord for foreign gods. When the people listened to the Lord and removed these places, the Lord was pleased and promised His presence would remain with them (*2 Kings 18:3-4, 22:2, 23:4-27*).

After the temple was established, these high places were not viewed positively even when they were dedicated to the God of Israel. The Lord wanted to be worshiped in the place (במקום) where He made His name known (*Devarim / Deuteronomy 12:4-5*). For the ancient Israelite, to worship the God of their fathers anywhere else was disobedience, and the consequences were severe. In *1 Kings*, Solomon’s lack of loyalty to the God of his father David which demonstrated a lack of respect and disobedience to the covenant relationship resulted in the Lord splitting the kingdom (*11:6-13*). For the divided kingdoms, it also resulted in royal lines being cut off, civil and foreign wars and sin leading to the eventual exile of Israel (see *1 Kings 13:33-34, and 2 Kings 17:20*). Like many aspects of the biblical text, high places present us with some ambiguity, however, the most significant message we can take from this study is the Lord God is long-suffering and He is willing to forgive His people’s disobedience if they repent and turn from their sins. So when David was looking to the mountain tops and seeking from where shall his help come from, was he thinking about these high places that are spoken of in the history of Israel? The rabbis using midrash state the following in relation to these things:

***Midrash Tanchuma, Toldot 14:1***

*A song of ascents. I will lift up mine eyes to the mountains (Ps. 121:1). Scripture alludes here to the verse Who art thou, O great mountain before Zerubbabel? Thou shalt become a plain (Zech. 4:7). This verse refers to the Messiah, the descendant of David. Why was he called a great mountain? Because he will be greater than the patriarchs, as is said: Behold, My servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high (Isa. 52:13). He shall be exalted above Abraham; lifted up above Isaac; and shall be very high above Jacob. He shall be exalted above Abraham, concerning whom it is said: I have lifted up my hand unto the Lord (Gen. 14:22); lifted up above Moses, of whom it is said: That thou shouldst say unto me: Carry them in thy bosom (Num. 11:12); and shall be very high like the ministering angels, concerning whom it is said: As for their wings, they were high (Ezek. 1:18). Hence Scripture says: Who art thou, O great mountain?*

The rabbis say David lifting his eyes up to the mountains is alluding to his looking for the Messiah of God. Here the rabbis describe the Messiah, the one who is identified as the descendant of David, will be greater than the patriarchs. This provides the people with a future expectation of the majesty of the Messiah and the high level of work that He will perform while He is here amongst His people. The Midrash states the Messiah is great because He will be lifted up, raised up for all to see. This parallels *John 3:14 And as Moses lifted up the bronze snake on a pole in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, English Standard*

*Version And as Moses lifted up the serpent ... and in John 12:32 So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing on My own, but speak exactly what the Father has told me ... (NASB)* Yeshua told us the thing that was about to happen before it had happened. This is an indication that He was doing what the Lord God in heaven wanted him to do. It is in this way when we humble our lives to live and walk according to His Torah, we can know that we are doing what the Lord God in heaven wants for us to do.

David answers his question saying, *עֲזָרִי מֵעַם יְהוָה עֲשֵׂה שְׂמִימִם וְאֶרֶץ: ב 121:2 My help comes from the Lord, Who made heaven and earth. (NASB)* When David looks to the mountains, he thinks of the Lord God of Israel, of His mighty works to deliver Israel, and His power to work in the hearts of men. This is illustrated in *Midrash Rabbah on Bereshit / Genesis Parashat 68 Part 2*.

### ***Midrash Rabbah Bereishit / Genesis Parashat 68 Part 2***

*The following dialogue, one of many, is reported in the name of R. Yosi ben Halafta, one of the Mishnah's most prominent sages, and an unnamed Roman woman of rank. She asked R. Yosi, "In how many days did God create the world?" "In six," he answered. "And since then," she asked, "what has God been doing?" "Matching couples for marriage," responded R. Yosi. "That's it!" she said dismissively. "Even I can do that. I have many slaves, both male and female. In no time at all, I can match them for marriage." To which R. Yosi countered, "Though this may be an easy thing for you to do, for God it is as difficult as splitting the Sea of Reeds."*

Rabbi Yosi states that the Lord is busy at work matching men and women for marriage. Note how the slaver master states dismissively that she is able to do match making of couples for marriage from among her slaves. The rabbi says however that it may seem easy for you to do, but for the Lord it is as difficult as splitting the Sea (Parashat Beshalach). What the Lord does in match making has very intimate implications. The heart of a man and woman must fall in love. There is something about love and intimacy that are a difficult thing to match. For example, some people tend to be attracted to an emotionally unavailable person who is emotionally protected and difficult to get close with, or another person may have a history of pushing away the sort of person who is available, caring, and easy to get close with? The process of connecting and disconnecting occurs in different ways for different people. The issues that may occur between men and women are overworking, criticizing, interrupting, withdrawing, alcoholism, withholding your opinion, taking on too much responsibility, lying, keeping secrets, finding fault, withholding affection, etc. It is not difficult to see the intricacies of life and the behaviors that may spoil a relationship. These very same things parallel our relationship with God and His Messiah Yeshua. These things may be considered disconnecting behaviors and are deeply rooted problems with ourselves, and this is why Rabbi Yosi says the match making process is as difficult as splitting the Sea. We should not be too dismissive in our understanding on how the Lord is working in our lives or in the lives of others.

David states in his Psalm saying, *אֵל-יִתֵּן לְמוֹט רַגְלֶךָ אֵל-יָנוּם שְׁמֵרָה: ד הִנֵּה לֹא יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוּמֵר, 121:3 He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. 121:4 Behold, He who keeps Israel Will neither slumber nor sleep. (NASB)* The Lord does not slumber or sleep. Though it may seem as if the Lord does not answer when we pray, David reassures us the Lord is not asleep as some would suggest. *Tehillim / Psalms 121:3* describes the Lord's continual concern for us, just as David says, "He who keeps you will not slumber." In the context of this psalm, the writer makes it clear the Lord is diligent in sleeplessness for our good. Verse 5 says, "The Lord is your keeper." The concept here is the Lord God of Israel keeps us, protects us, and cares for us. Our Protector is constantly seeking our good. On the other hand, the Tanach describes false gods sleep, according to *1 Kings 18:27* "Either he is musing, or he is relieving himself, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened." In the story of Elijah on mount Carmel, he challenged the priests of Baal and they all gathered together to see which god would answer by sending fire to consume the offerings. When the priests of Baal called out nothing happened.

And so Elijah taunted them asking whether Baal was asleep? In our case, the One true God may seem to be asleep, in the sense that the Lord doesn't appear to hear our prayer. Note, David does say according to *Tehillim / Psalms 44:23*, “*Awake! Why are you sleeping, O Lord? Rouse yourself! Do not reject us forever!*” indicating there are times when we struggle with the Lord in prayer and with His will and timing. When we sleep we are weak and vulnerable and this is why in the Tanach we read of the watchman who stayed up during the night to watch over the people from her enemies. We also know the darkness is a parallel to evil, and so the night time is a time in which the wicked (ungodly) move about to sin. As a result we are susceptible to attack from the enemy, and so the Lord does not slumber but remains awake to protect us. Because of this we do not need to fear, but can have peace. *Tehillim / Psalm 91:5* states, “*You will not fear the terror of the night ...*” because the Lord is our refuge and fortress; our shelter. The psalm continues saying, הַיְהוָה יְשׁוּמְךָ יְהוָה צִלְּךָ עַל-יַד יְמִינֶךָ: ו יוֹמָם הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ לֹא-יִכָּפֶךְ וְיָרַח בַּלַּיְלָה: ז יְהוָה יִשְׁמְרֶךָ מִכָּל-רָע יִשְׁמַר אֶת-נַפְשְׁךָ: *121:5 The Lord is your keeper; The Lord is your shade on your right hand. 121:6 The sun will not smite you by day, Nor the moon by night. 121:7 The Lord will protect you from all evil; He will keep your soul. (NASB)* David says the Lord keeps us in times of trouble. We are able to sleep peacefully knowing that the God of Israel is protecting us. Note how this is described in the psalms, “*I lay down and slept; I woke again, for the Lord sustained me*” (*Tehillim / Psalm 3:5*) and “*In peace I will both lie down and sleep; for you alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety.*” (*Tehillim / Psalm 4:8*) In addition, the Lord may speak to us during the night as David wrote in *Tehillim / Psalm 16:7* saying, “*I bless the Lord who gives me counsel; in the night also my heart instructs me,*” and as Job wrote in *Job 35:10* saying, God gives “*songs in the night.*” And in *Job 33:15-16* saying, “*In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, while they slumber on their beds, then God opens the ears of men and terrifies them with warnings.*” David writes of the Lord speaking to us in dreams saying, *Tehillim / Psalm 127:2* “*It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.*” ב שׂוֹא לָכֶם | מְשַׁכְּמִי קוֹם מֵאַחֲרַי-“ (שָׁבַת אֲכָלִי לָחֶם הַעֲצָבִים כִּן יִתֵּן לִידָדוֹ שָׁנָא: ) This last phrase speaks of the Lord giving to his beloved while he sleeps. Note how the Lord is busy with providing for our needs even while we sleep.

The Jewish commentary Shney Luchot HaBrit states the following:

### ***Shney Luchot HaBrit, Terumah, Torah Ohr 98***

*When we consider all this we can understand a Midrash on the words: ועשו לי מקדש, which otherwise is difficult to understand. The Midrash quotes G'd as saying to Israel: “You are My flock, and I am your shepherd.” This is based on Psalms 80,2: “Give ear, O shepherd of Israel.” Construct a dwelling for the shepherd so that he can come and guard you. This is why the Torah says: “They shall make a Temple for Me and I shall dwell amongst them.” G'd said to Israel: You are a vineyard, since we have a verse “For the house of Israel is a vineyard of the Lord of Hosts” (Isaiah 5,7). I am the guard (of the vineyard) says G'd, for we have a verse telling us “the guardian of Israel neither sleeps nor slumbers” (Psalms 121,4). G'd said: “Make a hut for the watchman so that he will watch over you.” G'd also said: “You are children and I am your father.” We have a verse in Deut. 14,1: “You are children of the Lord your G'd.” We also have a verse showing that G'd is our father, in Jeremiah 31,8: “For I have been a father to Israel.” It is an honor for the father to be found near his children, and it is an honor for the children to be near their father, as we know from Proverbs 17,6: “Grandchildren are the crown of their elders. G'd said: “Make a Temple for Me!” Thus far the Midrash.*

The rabbis are speaking of the Lord commanding the people to make for Him a Mikdash (Tabernacle), a holy place that He may dwell in their midst. This is connected to the Lord being a shepherd to His people. The midrash parallels the people to a vineyard in which the Lord takes care of and prunes, guards, takes care of, waters, feeds, and protects from enemies who might steal the fruits of the people. The rabbis say “*It is an honor for the father to be found near his children, and it is an honor for the children to be near their father,*

as we know from Proverbs 17,6: “Grandchildren are the crown of their elders. G’d said: “Make a Temple for Me!” Thus far the Midrash.” To stand along side of your dad in a way which shows respect for both the dad and the son is a very honorable thing based upon this midrash. The concept here is the Lord protects us, helps us in our burdens and removes our anxieties. We are able to let go and rest because the God of Israel is busy working on all this even as we rest. The Lord is taking care of us 24/7 with no sleep, and no vacations where the point of all this is to say that the Lord is always there for us! The Lord is great in power that He does not need rest, and He is merciful on our behalf to work even while we sleep. It is for these reasons we are thankful and are able to give praise to the Lord because we serve a powerful and good God. This is the meaning behind David’s words of the sun not smiting during the day nor the moon by night? The verse is not speaking about any harm from the sun or the moon, but instead speaks to harm that occurs night and day; in this respect, the psalmist speaks to divine protection during the time of the sun (day time) and the time of the moon (night time). He does not slumber nor sleep.

The Talmud Bavli Sota 48a part 7 states the following:

***Talmud Bavli Sota 48a:7***

ואף הוא ביטל את המעוררים מאי מעוררים אמר רחבה בכל יום ויום שהיו עומדים ליום על זוכן ואומרים (תהלים מד, כד) עורה למה תישן ה' אמר להן וכי יש שינה לפני המקום והלא כבר נאמר (תהלים קכא, ד) הנה לא ינום ולא יישן שומר ישראל אלא בזמן שישראל שרויין בצער ועובדי כור § *The mishna further taught: He also nullified the actions of the awakeners. The Gemara poses a question: What are awakeners? Rahava says: On each and every day when the Levites stood on the platform in the Temple they would say: “Awake, why do you sleep, O Lord?” (Psalms 44:24). Therefore, they were called awakeners. Yohanan the High Priest said to them: Does the Omnipresent sleep, that you call upon Him to awaken? But isn't it already stated: “Behold, He that keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps” (Psalms 121:4)? Rather, when the Jewish people are in a state of suffering, and the nations of the world are in a state of calm and serenity, it is with regard to this that it is stated: “Awake, why do you sleep, O Lord?” If the verse were to be recited every morning it would be interpreted in the wrong way, so Yohanan the High Priest therefore canceled the daily recitation of this verse.*

The Mishnah records the priests at one point used to call upon the Lord to wake up from His slumber. The point is when God’s people are suffering, it is often asked where is the Lord, and why does He not answer our prayers. The Mishnah records that the high priest canceled the job of the awakeners. The reason was to inspire faithfulness in the priests and the people, to be faithful the Lord always hears our cry for help.

David concludes his psalm saying, יהוה יִשְׁמְרֶךָ-צִאֲתָךְ וּבֹאֲךָ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם: 121:8 *The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in From this time forth and forever. (NASB)* It is important to remember how David and his men conducted themselves while coming in and going out. Soldiers at war were required to be sanctified (*Joshua 3:5, 7:13*), and we know that the process of sanctification required a temporary celibacy (*Shemot / Exodus 19:14-15*). It is not that women are inherently evil, but that lust and its effects upon the heart may lead to all sorts of evil, and keeping one’s self from immorality was an important criteria for going before the Lord and seeking that His presence would go with us. We read of this in *1 Samuel 21* when David answers the priest that he and his men have kept themselves from women, and then the priests gave them the consecrated bread to eat.

Ein Yaakov’s commentary states the following concerning *Tehillim / Psalms 121:8*.

***Ein Yaakov (Glick Edition), Avodah Zarah 1:17***

*(Fol. 11) Uunklus b. Klenikuss embraced Judaism, and the Caesar sent militia to take him. He, however, persuaded them, and they also became proselytes. He then sent other militia, warning them that they should not converse with him. When they took him and were going, he*

*said to them : “I will tell you something; usually the torch-bearer carries the light in front of the litter, the chief lecticarius (behind the litter, carries the light) for the dux, the dux for the hegeman, the hegeman for the comes ; but do the comes carry the light before the people ?” And they answered, “No.” Said he: “The Holy One, praised be He! carries the light before Israel, as it is written (Ex. 13, 21) And the Lord went before them in a pillar of cloud, etc.” And they also became proselytes. The Caesar then sent other ones after him, telling them not to talk to him at all. But when they took him, he saw a m’zuzah on the doorpost and said to them: “Do you know what this is?” They answered : “No, but you may tell us.” He then said : “It is customary with a human king that while he is within the palace his servants guard him from without. With the Holy One, praised be He ! it is the contrary. His servants are inside, and He guards them from without, as it is said (Ps. 121, 8) The Lord will guard thy going out and thy coming in, etc.” Then these also became proselytes, and the Caecar did not send any more after him. (Gen. 25, 23) And the Lord said to her, two nations are in thy womb. Said R. Juda in the name of Rab: “This refers to Antoninus (of Essau) and Rabbi (of Jacob) upon whose tables were not missing lettuces, cucumbers and radishes, neither during the summer nor during the winter; as the master said: Radishes cut the food [in the stomach], lettuces overturn it, and cucumbers extend the gut. But have not the disciples of Ismael taught that cucumbers are as harmful to the body as swords? This present no difficulty, as one speaks of large ones, and the other of small ones.”*

Ein Yaakov makes a comparison to this verse of the Lord guarding us during our going out and coming in to military men who were sent from Rome to bring a man to Rome, but all of those Caesar sent became proselytes. The Torah states, *Shemot / Exodus 13:21*, כֹּה וַיְהִי הַלֵּךְ לְפָנֵיהֶם יוֹמָם בְּעַמּוּד עָנָן לְנִהְיֵתָם הַדֶּרֶךְ, וּלְיָלֵךְ בְּעַמּוּד אֵשׁ לְהָאִיר לָהֶם לְלַכֵּת יוֹמָם וּלְיָלֵךְ: כֹּב לֹא-יָמִישׁ עַמּוּד הָעָנָן יוֹמָם וְעַמּוּד הָאֵשׁ לְיָלֵךְ לְפָנֵי הָעָם: 13:21 *The Lord was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. 13:22 He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people. (NASB)* This is described as the Lord going before His people in truth. This is paralleled to the men becoming proselytes because the Word of truth goes before God’s people. This is why the man had such great success while speaking to these men of war, the Lord worked in their hearts to overcome their past and start in newness of life. This is the way the Lord works in our lives, changing us from the inside out so that we have a desire to walk in His ways of righteousness, justice, and truth. Has the Lord been working in your life in this way? Obviously the Lord is part of our lives, otherwise we would not be here reading a commentary on the psalms. But when we ask ourselves what the Lord has been doing in our lives, it forces us to stop and examine our ways. It forces us to think about what the Lord is doing, where He is leading us, and also what we are doing that He is not leading us to do. What the psalmist writes should challenge us as he says חַיְהוּהוּ יִשְׁמַר-צְאֹתָהּ וּבֹאֶתָהּ מֵעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם: 121:8 *The Lord will guard your going out and your coming in From this time forth and forever. (NASB)* How is the Lord guarding your life on a daily basis? This is both an encouraging and challenging verse. Should we only be able to look many years back into our lives to see how the Lord has worked? Can we look in these last few moments, hours, or days to see how He is working and leading us in His ways? This is the definition of repentance, having a change of mind that leads one to walk away from sin and not do it again. This change of mind and attitude, the change of perspective, results in a change in behavior. It means turning from the life of disobedience (sin) that is contrary to God’s Torah, to a way of life that is defined by God’s Torah. Repentance means to surrender our lives, mind, body, and soul, to the will of God according to His word. When we consider the Torah and its purpose, to direct us back to the ways of righteousness, and to cause us to recognize our need for a savior, we realize the truth of what repentance means for God’s people. According to the Apostle John, he wrote of “*the transgression of the law*” in *1 John 3:4*. as “*the transgression of the law*” (KJV). The Torah describes both positive and negative commands (e.g. “*you shall not do...*”). On the positive side, repentance means turning to righteousness through a life of

faith and obedience. The rabbis recognize that many of the mitzvot in the Torah are negative (e.g. “*you shall not do...*”). This however provides us with an opportunity, because each negative command has a positive side. For example, the command forbidding the worship of false gods means “*Worship the true God.*” The command against idolatry means “*Worship God in spirit and in truth.*” The command forbidding taking God’s name in vain means “*Praise His name, and bring honor to His name by your good example.*” The commandment against murder means “*You shall cherish the gift of life*” and especially the life of your brother and even your enemy. Let’s Pray!

Heavenly Father,

Thank You Lord for Your mercy and the great work that you are doing in our lives. We believe You are able to overcome all things, from saving us from our enemies, to the deliverance from sin, and even to work in our hearts to deeply, truly, and honestly seek you all the days of our lives. We recognize the weaknesses in our strength and resolve to serve You and to do what is expected, to be humble and to pray and to remain in Your word. Lord help us to have the strength to stand for truth and life, to have the desire to seek You in prayer and in Your Word, to have faith in Yeshua Your Messiah, and to love our neighbor each day. We thank You Lord for Your continued faithfulness to Your promises and to us. Help us to grow in our faith, to walk in the spirit, and apply these truths to our lives. We praise Your Holy Name and give You all of the honor, and the glory, and the praise forever and ever.

In Yeshua’s (Jesus’) Name we pray! Amen!

Be Blessed in Yeshua, Christ our Messiah!

\*\*\*\*\*

הללויה לאדוננו מורנו ורבינו ישוע מלך המשיח לעולם ועד:

Hallelujah for our Lord, our Teacher, our Rabbi,  
“Yeshua” King Messiah forever and ever



## Notes