

The Psalms of Ascent: Psalms 120-134

The fifteen **Psalms of Ascent** are placed in the Psalter after Psalm 119, Israel's love letter to YHWH for his *Torah*, his instructions for life in YHWH's mercy, grace, steadfast love, and faithfulness. (See Exodus: 34:6.)

In the same way Psalm 119 shows us *how a faithful Israelite immersed himself in Torah*, the **Psalms of Ascent** show us *what faithful Israelites sang about as they made their way to the Temple in Jerusalem for festivals*. These 15 psalms were “probably first brought together to provide a hymn-book for traveling companies on their way to Zion for the annual pilgrim feasts.” (Motyer, Psalms, New Bible Commentary, p. 572) So what were the *main topics* that pilgrims sang about as they headed to worship YHWH in his Temple?

Three main topics emerge in Psalms 120-134:

1. Facing *situations of distress and trouble* (Psalms 120, 123, 126, and 129)
2. Recalling *YHWH's power to keep/deliver/build/give hope* (Psalms 121, 124, 127, 130)
3. Resting in the *security of Zion and YHWH* (Psalm 122, 125, 128, 131)

The last three Psalms of Ascent, 132, 133, and 134 are all *psalms of arrival*—the ark in Zion (132), fellowship in Zion (133), and blessing in Zion (134).

“The pilgrim who begins far off in a harsh world (120), indeed in this world's ‘darkness’ (*Kedar*, 120:5 means black) ends in a very different *night* (134:1), secure in the Lord's house and under his blessing.” (Motyer, 572)

Try reading these psalms in triads, 3 at a time, noticing how **facing** *situations of distress* in the first psalm, leads to **recalling** *YHWH's power to keep* in the second psalm, and then to **resting** *in the security of Zion and YHWH* in the third psalm. Here are the triads:

Psalm 120, 121 and 122

Psalm 123, 124, and 125

Psalm 126, 127, and 128

Psalm 129, 130, and 131

Let's read and pray these pilgrim psalms to help us:

1. Face the reality of the coronavirus pandemic
2. Recall our Triune God's power to keep us, to deliver us and to build our hope and courage to love and serve Him and others
3. Access peace and rest in Him