

A BIBLICAL STUDY ON FEAR
LESSON TWENTY: ABIDE IN GOD

by Sandy Harber

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. " Psalm 91:1-2

Someone once told me that God's 911 is Psalm 91:1. I found this to be true when my husband got sick, was hospitalized, then died. During those dark days I turned to Psalm 91 for comfort and solace. The imagery of a secret place, God's shadow, a refuge and fortress where I could hide in God gave me peace. The picture of abiding under God's wings, hidden by His feathers (v. 4) made me feel safe and secluded from a hostile world. God hides us away in Himself when circumstances become too overwhelming to deal with.

We sing about how God is a shelter in a time of storm. Sometimes when we are afraid that's exactly what we need: a shelter, a safe place, a haven. Look Who Psalm 91:1-2 says is our Shelter: 1) the Most High; 2) the Almighty; 3) the Lord; and, 4) my God. The "Most High" is the Hebrew "Elyown," which emphasizes God's strength, sovereignty, and supremacy. Elyown literally means "lofty; highest; uppermost." When used as a title it means "supreme." This title for God is in the superlative degree: He is the most high; there is nothing higher. God is at the top. He is Number One. This title for God is introduced in Genesis 14, where He is described as the "possessor of heaven and earth" (Genesis 14:19, 22). The Owner of the universe allows us to dwell in His secret place! The Hebrew word translated "dwell" means "to sit down in quiet; to remain; habitation; to settle." Sounds like the Most High is letting us move right in and stay for a while in that secret place, doesn't it?

At the same time, we may shelter under the shadow of the Almighty. The Hebrew "El Shaddai," translated as "the Almighty," means "all-sufficient; powerful." The word "shadow" in Hebrew brings with it the idea of "hovering over; to shade," figuratively, "defense." Putting it all together, we abide under the protection of the all-powerful One, Who will be our defense. How can we be afraid under these conditions? The Hebrew word for "abide" means "to stop overnight; to stay permanently; continue; lodge; remain; tarry." This invitation seems to be open-ended. We can hide out for a day or two, or stay forever. The implication is that we can abide in safety as long as we need to. God will never evict us from this safe haven.

Verse two goes on to tell us that Jehovah, or Yahweh (Hebrew for "LORD"), is our refuge and fortress. Jehovah is the Self-existent One, Who in Himself possesses eternal life. As Jehovah, God revealed Himself to Israel as a God of righteousness, holiness, and love. In Jehovah we find shelter, a place of hope (refuge) and that shelter is unassailable, a stronghold (fortress). Jehovah shields us from harm in a place of hope, where fear cannot enter.

Finally, with all this assurance of protection, we can declare our trust in God. Elohim (Hebrew for "God"), the Creator, Who is introduced to us in Genesis 1:1, is the recipient of our trust. The Hebrew word translated "trust" means "to flee for protection; have hope; make refuge." We affirm that we are taking God at His Word when we flee to Him for protection, make Him our place of hope and refuge. In other words, we trust in Him. Notice that this is personal: my refuge; my fortress; my God. My shelter!

"He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler." Psalm 91:4