SOFTWARE & TECH

I Lift Up My Eyes Unto The Hills Lyrics

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Introduction: The Enduring Power of a Psalm-Based Hymn

Few pieces of sacred music have captured the human longing for divine help as poignantly as the hymn based on Psalm 121, famously beginning with the line **"I lift up my eyes unto the hills."** The lyrics, drawn directly from one of the most beloved psalms in the Bible, have resonated across centuries, denominations, and cultures. Whether sung in a grand cathedral, a small rural church, or a contemporary worship service, the phrase "I lift up my eyes unto the hills" evokes a sense of looking beyond our immediate troubles toward a source of unfailing help. This article explores the rich tapestry of the **I Lift Up My Eyes Unto The Hills lyrics**, examining their biblical roots, various musical settings, theological significance, and enduring place in both traditional and modern worship. We will also consider how this ancient text continues to offer comfort and hope in an ever-changing world.

The Biblical Foundation: Psalm 121 and Its Poetic Imagery

Before delving into the specific lyrics of the hymn, it is essential to understand the source text. Psalm 121 is part of the "Songs of Ascents" (Psalms 120–134), a collection of pilgrim psalms sung by Israelites traveling to Jerusalem for festivals. The opening verse immediately sets a scene of vulnerability and trust:

"I lift up my eyes to the mountains— where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1-2, NIV)

The phrase "I lift up my eyes unto the hills" is rich with interpretive possibilities. Some scholars suggest the hills refer to the hills surrounding Jerusalem, which might have been associated with pagan high places—thus the psalmist is consciously turning away from false gods and toward the true God. Others see the hills as a symbol of the obstacles or dangers that lie ahead on a journey. In either case, the motion of lifting one's eyes signifies an act of faith, a deliberate choice to seek help from above. The subsequent verses promise that the Lord will not let our foot slip, that He watches over us day and night, and that He will guard our going and coming forever. This complete trust in divine protection is the emotional and theological core of the **I Lift Up My Eyes Unto The Hills lyrics** in any version.

Variations of the Lyrical Phrasing

While the original Hebrew text and most English Bible translations render the line as "I lift up my eyes to the hills," hymnal versions often adjust the wording slightly for meter and rhyme. The most common lyrical form found in traditional hymnbooks is:

- "I lift up my eyes to the hills— from whence doth my help come?"
- "I lift up my eyes unto the hills— whence cometh my help?"
- "I lift up my eyes unto the hills— my help comes from the Lord."

These small variations retain the essence of the original while fitting a singable melody. The King James

Version wording (“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills”) is also frequently used in more formal settings. Many contemporary paraphrase versions have also emerged, but the core sentiment remains unchanged.

Historical Musical Settings of the Hymn

The text of Psalm 121 has been set to music for centuries. However, the hymn most commonly associated with the exact phrase "I lift up my eyes unto the hills" is often attributed to a specific tune or arrangement. One of the most famous musical settings is the one by the British composer and organist **John Goss (1800–1880)**, whose tune "Goss" or "Psalm 121" is widely used in Anglican and Protestant hymnals. Another beloved version is the Scottish metrical paraphrase, which uses a different melody. Additionally, the text appears in the repertoire of the **Mormon Tabernacle Choir** and many other choral groups.

The Traditional Hymn: "I Lift My Eyes Unto the Hills"

In many hymnals, the hymn is listed under the title "Psalm 121" or "I Lift My Eyes Unto the Hills." The lyrics are a direct or slightly adapted rendering of the psalm. A representative example of the **I Lift Up My Eyes Unto The Hills lyrics** as sung in many churches (often to the tune "Dunfermline" or "St. Paul") is as follows:

1. I lift my eyes unto the hills, whence doth my help arise? My help comes from the Lord, who made the earth and skies.
2. He will not let thy foot be moved; thy guardian never sleeps. Behold, He who keeps Israel no slumber keeps.
3. The Lord is thy protector, thy shade upon thy right. The sun shall never smite thee by day, nor moon by night.
4. From every evil shall He keep thy soul, and guard thy ways; Thy going out and coming in, forever and always.

Note that the pronouns shift between first person ("I lift my eyes") and second person ("thy foot," "thy soul"), a common feature of many psalter versions that address the worshiper directly.

Contemporary and Choral Arrangements

In recent decades, new musical settings of Psalm 121 have become popular in contemporary Christian worship. Artists such as **Shane & Shane**, **Keith & Kristyn Getty**, and **Fernando Ortega** have recorded versions that blend modern instrumentation with the ancient text. The Getty version, for example, uses the refrain “I lift my eyes unto the hills” and often incorporates a Celtic-influenced melody. Other modern worship bands have written original songs that quote the psalm directly. The enduring appeal of these lyrics lies in their simplicity and depth—they express a universal human need for help and protection.

Theological and Devotional Meaning of the Lyrics

Beyond the music, the **I Lift Up My Eyes Unto The Hills lyrics** carry profound theological themes. The act of lifting one’s eyes is a posture of hope. In a world full of anxiety, uncertainty, and personal struggles, the lyrics remind believers that help does not come from human strength, political systems, or material wealth, but from the Creator. The mention of God as "Maker of heaven and earth" grounds all hope in His sovereignty and power.

Furthermore, the imagery of God as a keeper who never sleeps speaks to the intimate care of God for each individual. The promise that He will guard our "going out and coming in" suggests a comprehensive protection—over every journey, every daily activity. This has made the psalm a favorite for travelers, for those facing surgery, and for families sending children off to school or college. The hymn offers a liturgical language for trust.

Using the Lyrics in Personal Devotion and Meditation

Many Christians use the **I Lift Up My Eyes Unto The Hills lyrics** as a daily prayer or meditation. Some write

the words on index cards or use them as a screen saver. The repetitive, rhythmic quality of the phrases helps calm the mind and focus on God's faithfulness. It is not uncommon for pastors to preach a series on Psalm 121, using the hymn as a congregational response. The lyrics also appear in many prayer books and devotional apps.

Popularity in Modern Worship and Media

The phrase "I lift up my eyes unto the hills" has transcended strictly religious contexts. It appears in literature, in film titles, and as a motto for various organizations. For example, the line is often quoted in graduation speeches and funeral services. Its poetic cadence makes it memorable. In the world of Christian worship music, the hymn remains a staple. According to CCLI (Christian Copyright Licensing International) reports, versions of Psalm 121 are consistently among the most sung hymns in evangelical churches, especially during services focused on healing, missions, or the start of a new year.

Comparison with "As the Deer" and Other Psalms

While "I Lift Up My Eyes Unto The Hills" is unique in its focus on help from the mountains, it is often compared to another beloved scripture-based hymn, "As the Deer" (Psalm 42). Both express a deep longing for God. However, "As the Deer" is more about personal thirst and worship, whereas "I Lift Up My Eyes" is about trust in divine protection. Together, they form a complementary pair: one emphasizes inner longing, the other outward reliance.

Aspect	I Lift Up My Eyes Unto the Hills (Psalm 121)	As the Deer (Psalm 42)
Theme	God's protection and help	Personal longing for God's presence
Key Metaphor	Hills/mountains, shade, keeper	Deer panting for water
Emotional Tone	Confident, outward-looking, reassuring	Yearning, inward, vulnerable
Common Use	Travel, protection, new beginnings	Worship, prayer, times of spiritual thirst

Tips for Using the Lyrics in Worship Planning

For worship leaders and pastors, incorporating the **I Lift Up My Eyes Unto The Hills lyrics** into a service can be done in many ways:

- Opening Call to Worship: The phrase "I lift up my eyes" makes a strong opening declaration of faith, especially when sung a cappella.
- Response after Scripture Reading: Use a short choral or congregational setting after reading Psalm 121.
- Offertory or Communion: The reflective nature of the hymn suits quieter moments of the service.
- Benediction: The final verse (“The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in”) is a perfect blessing for the congregation to take with them.

Combining the traditional lyrics with modern instrumentation (e.g., acoustic guitar, piano, cello) can bridge generations. Many contemporary arrangements also add a simple refrain, making it easier for children to learn.

Resources for Finding the Full Lyrics and Sheet Music

If you are looking for the complete **I Lift Up My Eyes Unto The Hills lyrics** in various keys and versions, several online resources are available:

- Hymnary.org: A comprehensive database of hymn texts and tunes, including multiple versions of Psalm 121.
- NetHymnal: offers lyrics, midi files, and background information.
- CCLI: provides licensing for contemporary versions.
- YouTube: Search for "Psalm 121 hymn" to find performances by choirs and worship bands—great for learning the melody.

When selecting a version for congregational use, consider the musical ability of your group and the theological emphasis you wish to highlight. Some versions omit the "sun shall not smite you by day" verse, while others include all six verses.

Conclusion: A Timeless Lyric of Hope

More than three thousand years after the psalmist first wrote the words, "**I lift up my eyes unto the hills**" still speaks to the deepest human need for help beyond ourselves. The **I Lift Up My Eyes Unto The Hills lyrics** have become a trusted companion for generations of Christians, reminding us that our help is not in the shifting circumstances of life but in the unchanging Creator. Whether sung in a majestic choir setting or whispered in a quiet moment of personal prayer, these words offer a firm foundation for faith. In a world that often feels chaotic and threatening, this ancient hymn continues to lift our gaze upward—toward the hills, and beyond them, to the

God who watches over us forever. As you meditate on these lyrics, may you find the same peace and confidence that has comforted believers for centuries: that the Lord is your keeper, your shade, and your eternal help.

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