**Research: Ps 91**

The 91st Psalm is one of the greatest chapters in the Bible. Like the rest of the Scriptures, the underlying thought is developed through a series of symbols and it is by appreciation of the values lying behind these that the power of this prayer is understood. . . The best way to get the most out of this Psalm is to read it through quietly, pause after each verse to consider the meaning. . . If you are in a specific trouble or fear, after reading this Psalm several times, your fears will be gone. (an excerpt of a paper by Bliss Knapp on the Ninety
First Psalm).

**1He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of the Almightly.**

**Dwelleth**: *yashab*: sit down, remain, settle, inhabit, keep house, have one’s abode

**in the secret place:** *cether*: cover, hiding place, protected covering, shelter

Commentators compare “the secret place of the most High” with “the secret of his tabernacle” (Psalms 27:5) and “the secret of thy presence” (Psalms 31:20). The Hebrew word for secret in these verses (cether) carries the meaning of shelter or covering. This passage alludes to the safety of the innermost room of the tabernacle, representing God’s very presence and protection. (Bible Lens from the periodicals).

**of the most High:** *elyown*: supreme, highest, upper, elevated, as God or kings

(infinity is a secret to the finite senses)

**shall abide:** *luwn*: lodge, be there stay permanently, dwell, tarry all night

**under the shadow:** *tsel*: defense, shade, shadow, protection

In the desert lands of the Bible, the welcome refuge of shade has long been appreciated. Among other metaphorical uses, therefore, shade became a synonym for protection, as here (compare Ps. 57:1; Isa. 49:2; 51:16; Hos. 14:7). Widespread in the ideology of that culture was the notion of the "shade of the king," the protective function of a ruler in guarding his domain and its loyal citizens. This image suggests cool shade amid scorching heat, as well as the protection of God's presence—a presence so substantial

that it can be pictured casting a shadow. (Bible Lens from periodicals).

(1st edition of S&H Mrs. Eddy used ‘shadow’ instead of ‘image’)

**of the Almighty:** *Shaddai*: breasted one, Mother-Love; the Almighty; most powerful;

581:3

ALMIGHTY. All-power; infinity; omnipotence.

"To dwell" means "to abide as a permanent resident ... to live in a place." "The secret place of the most High" is the sanctuary of God's presence. It is well to ask ourselves whether we have made an honest effort actually to dwell in that secret sanctuary where evil cannot come.

The writer had studied and contemplated this psalm daily for many years before she realized that the promises contained in its verses depend on or revolve around this wonderful first verse. She found it easy enough to keep herself in "the secret place" while she was studying the Lesson-Sermon from the *Christian Science Quarterly* and doing her daily metaphysical work, but when that was finished, she often left "the secret place" by letting into her consciousness such errors as criticism, discouragement, fatigue, regret for past mistakes, fear of the future, dislike of the work she was doing, self-pity, and so on. . .

“One Christian Scientist was heard to say, "When the going gets difficult, I just climb up in the ninety-first Psalm and stay there." A very wise move, but how much more protection one can experience if he learns to abide in God's presence, "the secret place," instead of climbing up into it only in times of distress.

“Mrs. Eddy makes this statement: "The 'secret place,' whereof David sang, is unquestionably man's spiritual state in God's own image and likeness, even the inner sanctuary of divine Science, in which mortals do not enter without a struggle or sharp experience, and in which they put off the human for the divine."[2](https://sentinel.christianscience.com/issues/1966/10/68-43/abiding-in-god-s-presence%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnote-2) (*Abiding in God’s Presence,* Margret E. Keatts, October 22, 1966, CSS).

**Ps 91:2**

**I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust.**

**Refuge**: *machaceh*: shelter, place of refuge, trust, shelter from rain or storm or danger or falsehood

**fortress**: *matsuwd*: castle, defence, stronghold, net to catch prey; castle;

I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust. (Psalms 91:2–4) Several scholars cite Deuteronomy 32:11, as a similar figure of God's mothering love and care. To “trust” has the general meaning of being strong, firm, or faithful—qualities of man’s response to God’s promises. References to birds abound in Scripture as a metaphor for God’s trustworthy protection and love. In the Old Testament, for example, the word wing and its related forms are used some seventy times. (Bible Lens from the periodicals).

**will I trust:** *batach*: be confident, trust, be sure, “will continually trust,” to make secure; feel safe

*The position of the secret place is unassailable, no moat, wall, drawbridge or battlement could make us so secure as when the hosts of the Lord environ around us.*

**Ps 91:3**

**Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the flowler, and from the noisome pestilence.**

**Deliver:** *natsal***:** Defend, escape without fail, rescue, free, release, save

**Snare**: *pach*: Entrapment, lure, instrument for catching fowls; bird trap; snare of plots; calamities

A fowler:

Uses a cord, string, slip-knots to entangle the leg of the prey

Anything by which one is entangled to bring into unexpected evil or danger

**Noisome:** *havvah*: desire in a bad sense; chasm of destruction engulfing ruin; calamity; eagerly coveting and rushing upon;

**Pestilence**: Slanderous word, blasting and injurious

**Fowler**: *yaquwsh*: Sportsman who pursues wild fowls or takes and kills for food; properly entangled; a snare; bait-layer trapper.

A "fowler" is one who traps birds for food or sport. The use of this phrase is metaphorical in the Bible. According to IDB, "The snare is wickedness, evil, or idolatry." WBC translates "from the fowler's trap (and) from the threat of destruction." TEV paraphrases "He will keep you safe from all hidden dangers and from all deadly diseases." Commentators offer several suggestions regarding the meaning of "noisome pestilence." “Noisome” means destructive or deadly. It is used in Scripture to describe disease, calamity, wickedness, and mischief. Dahood in AB translates the phrase as a venomous or poisonous substance. It certainly refers to something harmful, noxious, unwholesome, destructive. (Bible Lens).

Hos 9:8

The watchman of Ephraim was with my God: but the prophet is a snare of a fowler in all his ways, and hatred in the house of his God.

Animal magnetism is the snare that….Would keep the snare hidden

**FALSE PROPHECY**: is a snare:

**THEOSOPHY** is a snare: looking for truth in other religions

**DEATH** is a snare: Ps 18:5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.

**MALPRACTICE** is a snare: Ps 38:12 They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.

**Ps 91:4**

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

“Far from being objects of fear, *birds, wings,* and *feathers* are used as similes over and over again in the Bible to convey safety, spiritual love, and protection, most notably in the beloved 91st Psalm, where the Psalmist pictures the most High as brooding over His beloved creation. "He shall cover thee with his feathers," he writes, "and under his wings shalt thou trust."[6](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/2006/4/124-4/a-spiritual-view-of-birds%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnote-6) According to Mary Baker Eddy, "These two words in Scripture suggest the sweetest similes to be found in any language—*rock* and *feathers,"* and she spoke of *feathers* as meaning "covered from the devourer by divine protection and affection."[7](https://journal.christianscience.com/issues/2006/4/124-4/a-spiritual-view-of-birds%22%20%5Cl%20%22footnote-7)

In *Science and Health,* Mrs. Eddy took the Biblical metaphor one step further and revealed the true idea of God's birds, the harmless spiritual idea that we include and could never fear. She wrote, "The fowls, which fly above the earth in the open firmament of heaven, correspond to aspirations soaring beyond and above corporeality to the understanding of the incorporeal and divine Principle, Love." (“*A Spiritual View of Birds*,” Barbara Cook Spencer, April 2006, CSJ.)

He shall cover thee with his feathers ... - As the parent bird protects its young.

He shall act towards thee as the hen does to her brood, - take thee under his wings when birds of prey appear, and also shelter thee from chilling blasts. This is a frequent metaphor in the sacred writings.

His truth." His unfailing promise; the certainty that what he has promised to do he will perform.

Several scholars cite Deuteronomy 32:11, as a similar figure of God's mothering love and care. To “trust” has the general meaning of being strong, firm, or faithful—qualities of man’s response to God’s promises. References to birds abound in Scripture as a metaphor for God’s trustworthy protection and love. In the Old Testament, for example, the word wing and its related forms are used some seventy times. (Bible Lens from periodicals).

**cover**: *sakak*: 5526a overshadow, screen, cover; shelter

*1828 Webster’s Dictionary:* **cover** *means to overspread; to hide; conceal; to clothe; to conceal from notice or punishment; to envelop; wrap or enfold; to brood;*

**feathers**: *ebrah*: pinion, wings,

**wings**: *kanaph*: wings; covering; garment; wingspan

**truth**: *emeth*: truth; faithfulness; stability; reliability; sureness;

**shield**: *tsinnah* : shield; bucklers; shield-bearer;

*1828:* **shield***: to cover as with a shield; to protect; defending from attack*

**buckler**: *socherah*: something surrounding a person;

*1828:* **buckler:** *a piece of defensive armor, used in war; worn on the left arm; useful in causing stones and darts to glance off. Could be four feet long and covered the whole body*

Ancient shields were often rectangular frames of metal or wood with animal hides. The word translated “buckler” may more properly mean "wall." A shield and a wall both offer protection from attack. Hebrew syntax may suggest a close comparison between these words, so that one might translate, “a wall thick shield is his truth.” (Bible Lens).

5Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day;

"Thou shalt not be afraid" is expressed in the Hebrew as a “rather startling use of the command form" for which, as WBC also points out, "Obedience is expected." References to dangers both day and night are to be taken as representing "a comprehensive statement of the perils of life" (WBC). The commentary continues, "The 'plague' [KJV 'pestilence'] and the ‘scourge' [KJV 'destruction'] in v 6 are metaphors which suggest attacks of illness, whereas the 'terror' and the 'arrow' in v 5 suggest the attacks of human enemies, though the words are inclusive and the context resists specific interpretation.”

**Terror**: *pachad*: sudden alarm; object feared; dread;

6Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

ML gives, "The plague that lurks in the darkness ... the calamity that spreads havoc at noontime." "Destruction" represents a Hebrew term whose meaning is not precisely known to modern scholars. Hence the versions offer several possibilities: "sudden death" (Moffatt); "scourge" (WBC); "evils" (TEV). Several sources mention a possible connection with the demonic.

**Pestilence**: *deber*: plague; cattle disease;

9Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation;

The words "which is" do not appear in the original, as shown by the fact that they are italicized in many editions of the KJV, and many commentators consider that in the earliest manuscripts there appeared a word all but identical in form with that rendered “my refuge,” but meaning "your refuge.” When written, or even when printed, the two words are all but indistinguishable. Consequently, Smith renders, "You have made the Lord your refuge, and the Most High your habitation"; while Moffatt suggests, “You have sheltered beside the Eternal, and made the Most High God your home.”

**Refuge**: *machaceh*: a shelter; trust; shelter from rain or storm or danger; to flee for protection; to put trust in God; confide or hope in God.

10There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.

The Hebrew word nega’ (plague) has a wide variety of meanings, which also include "blow, stroke, punishment, leprosy, pestilence.” So the protection from "any plague” referred to in the KJV can be construed as broad in its effects. Smith suggests the word “calamity,” translating the complete verse: "No disaster will befall you, Nor calamity come near your tent.”

**Plague**: *nega*: a blow; infliction; a spot; sore; wound; mark; disease; leperosy.