

Psalm 4:8

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

Analysis

I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety. This concluding verse expresses the psalm's resolution—from distress and opposition to peaceful rest through trust in God's protection. The emphatic construction "I will both... and" stresses the completeness of David's confidence: he will both lie down peacefully and actually sleep, not merely attempt rest while anxious thoughts prevent sleep.

"In peace" (beshalom, בְּשָׁלוֹם) uses shalom, that rich Hebrew word encompassing wholeness, completeness, security, prosperity, and harmony. This isn't merely absence of conflict but positive wellbeing—the peace that comes from resting in God's sovereignty regardless of circumstances. This peace exists not because threats have vanished (the psalm addresses ongoing opposition) but because God's protection surrounds His people. It's the peace Jesus would later promise: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

"And sleep" (v'ishan, וְיִשְׁן) indicates actual rest, not merely lying awake worrying. In ancient contexts where enemy attack often came at night, ability to sleep demonstrated remarkable trust. David isn't maintaining anxious vigilance but resting confidently, knowing God neither slumbers nor sleeps in watching over Israel (Psalm 121:4). Sleep becomes an act of faith—releasing control, ceasing from self-protection, trusting God's watchful care. Proverbs 3:24 promises, "When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep

shall be sweet."

"For thou, LORD, only" (ki-atah Yahweh levadad, קַי-אַתָּה יְהוָה לְבָדָד) emphasizes exclusive trust in Yahweh alone. Levadad means "alone," "by yourself," "singly." No other god, no human ally, no military strength, no personal cunning—only God—provides true security. This echoes the Shema's call to exclusive devotion: "The LORD our God is one LORD" (Deuteronomy 6:4). All trust ultimately must rest on God alone, not on secondary means or partial securities.

"Makest me dwell in safety" (toshiveni lavetach, תָּשִׁיבֵנִי לְבָטֵח) uses yashav (to dwell, sit, abide) and betach (security, safety, confidence). God causes David to dwell securely, establishing and maintaining his safety. This isn't David securing himself through vigilance or preparation but receiving security as God's gift. The causative form emphasizes divine action—God makes His people dwell safely. Deuteronomy 33:28 promised, "Israel then shall dwell in safety alone." Jeremiah prophesied of messianic days when "Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely" (Jeremiah 23:6). Ultimate safety comes not from human effort but divine provision.

Historical Context

Ancient Near Eastern life involved constant vulnerability to night attack. Enemies struck under cover of darkness; wild animals prowled; bandits raided sleeping encampments. City walls, guards, and vigilance were essential for security. Against this backdrop, David's confidence to sleep peacefully is remarkable. Whether hiding in wilderness caves fleeing Saul, or facing Absalom's rebellion from Jerusalem, or confronting other threats during his reign, David experienced many nights when danger loomed.

The contrast with sleepless, anxious nights appears elsewhere in Scripture. Psalm 6:6 describes sleepless weeping: "I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim." Psalm 77:4 laments, "Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak." Job experienced tortured nights: "When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day" (Job 7:4). The ability to sleep peacefully despite danger testified to extraordinary faith.

Jesus demonstrated this confidence when sleeping in the storm-tossed boat while disciples panicked (Mark 4:38). His peace in the storm revealed perfect trust in the Father's protection. For Christians facing various dangers—persecution, illness, financial crisis, opposition, uncertainty—this verse offers Christ-modeled confidence: we can rest peacefully because our Father neither slumbers nor sleeps in watching over us. Paul and Silas sang hymns in prison at midnight after being beaten (Acts 16:25); Peter slept peacefully between guards the night before his planned execution (Acts 12:6). Such peace transcends circumstances, rooted in trust that God governs all things for His people's good and His glory.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. What circumstances or worries currently prevent you from 'lying down in peace and sleeping' in confident trust?
2. How does the truth that 'the LORD only' provides security challenge trust in other securities (wealth, relationships, plans, etc.)?
3. What does it mean practically to let sleep become an 'act of faith' rather than an anxious struggle for rest?
4. How did Jesus model this kind of peaceful trust in the Father's protection, and how can you follow His example?
5. What spiritual disciplines help cultivate the kind of peace that allows sleep despite ongoing troubles?

Interlinear Text

בָּשָׁל וּמִ in peace	יְחִידָה I will both	יְחִידָה lay me down	אֲשַׁכֵּב הַ and sleep	וְאִישׁ H3588	אַתָּה פָּ H859	אַתָּה הַ H3068	וְהִנֵּה for thou LORD
H7965	H3162	H7901	H3462				
לְבָדְךָ דְּבָרָ only	לְבָדְךָ דְּבָרָ in safety	תַּשְׁכַּחֲנִ makest me dwell					
H910	H983	H3427					

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 3:24 (Parallel theme): When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet.

Psalms 3:5 (References Lord): I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.

Deuteronomy 12:10 (References Lord): But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety;

1 Thessalonians 5:10 (Parallel theme): Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.

Leviticus 26:5 (Parallel theme): And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time: and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely.

Hosea 2:18 (Parallel theme): And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely.

Revelation 14:13 (References Lord): And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

Ezekiel 34:25 (Peace): And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and will cause the evil beasts to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods.

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