

# Psalm 12

## Psalm 12:1–22

## Believers Preserved by God in an Evil World

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## An Introduction to Psalm 12

**Introduction:** Because of a word in the inscription, I originally wanted to place Psalm 12 with the moving of the Ark; however, one verse into the psalm, and it was clear that this did not belong with David moving the Ark. In this psalm, David speaks of evil men being everywhere, what they are like, and what God will do to them. He also deals with the believer living in a time of evil.

There are two common time periods where this psalm is placed, but not with any certainty. Saul began to pursue David when Saul’s mental illness kicked into high gear, and David left the city of Saul and spent a great deal of time on the run. Men came to him, but David also faced betrayal by many. For this reason, some suggest that he wrote this psalm during that period of time. Others suggest that David wrote this when his son Absalom revolted against him, and tried to take his place. The idea that there would be popular support for his son may have caused David to write this psalm. Let me offer a 3<sup>rd</sup> view: David, as king, was a brilliant man, and part of his brilliance was, he observed and he took mental notes. People who are always talking often have nothing to say, as they are too busy talking to observe anything. David may have observed a downtrend among the people of

Israel, and that may be the key to what is going on. David could have observed this at any point in his life, and his being persecuted is not necessarily a prerequisite for these observations. I would think that, during the reign of Saul, Israel was in a general downturn, as a society. During David's reign, things seemed to turn around. For this reason, I would think that this psalm may have been written during Saul's reign, when David was a young adult.

I'll include some of the comments about when this psalm was written:

### The Occasion of Psalm 12

Commentator	Occasion
<b>Barnes</b>	<i>On what occasion it was composed is now unknown, and there is nothing in the psalm itself to enable us to decide. Some have supposed that it was written in view of the persecution of David by Saul; and others, that it was in view of the rebellion of Absalom. There is nothing in the psalm, however, which shows that it has any spectral reference to those persecutions or troubles; nothing which might not have been uttered if those troubles had never occurred. All the expressions in the psalm are of a general character, and seem rather to refer to a prevailing state of iniquity than to any particular manifestation of wickedness as pertaining to the psalmist himself.<sup>1</sup></i>
<b>Clarke</b>	<i>The Arabic has "Concerning the end (of the world which shall happen) on the eighth day. A prophecy relative to the Advent of the Messiah." Some think that this Psalm was made when Doeg and the Ziphites betrayed David to Saul, see 1 Samuel 22 and 23; but it is most likely that was written during the Babylonish captivity.<sup>2</sup> Obviously, if written during the Babylonia captivity, then David was not the writer of this psalm.</i>
<b>Henry</b>	<i>It is supposed that David penned this psalm in Saul's reign, when there was a general decay of honesty and piety both in court and country, which he here complains of to God, and very feelingly, for he himself suffered by the treachery of his false friends and the insolence of his sworn enemies.<sup>3</sup></i>
<b>Spurgeon</b>	<i>It is supposed to have been written while Saul was persecuting David, and those who favoured his cause.<sup>4</sup></i>

The view of Matthew Henry is my preference—that David writes this psalm during the reign of Saul, noting the dishonesty and degeneracy around him.

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I only found a couple of outlines, and Barnes was the most different from mine.

### An Alternate Outline of Psalm 12 by Albert Barnes

I. A statement of the prevailing condition of things, as a reason why it was proper for God to interpose, Psalm 12:1–2.

II. The fact that the Lord would interpose in such cases, and would cut off this class of persons, Psalm 12:3–5.

<sup>1</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12 introduction.

<sup>2</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12 introduction.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12 introduction.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 12 introduction.

## An Alternate Outline of Psalm 12 by Albert Barnes

III. The strong contrast between the words of the Lord and the language which was then in prevalent use, Psalm 12:6. The words of the Lord were pure; pure as silver tried by the severest tests of fire.

IV. A deep conviction on the part of the psalmist that God would be the protector of those who were thus exposed to injury and wrong; particularly he would keep them from the purposes of such a generation forever, Psalm 12:7.

V. The closing verse, "[The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted](#)" Psalm 12:8, seems to be but the carrying out of the idea of the divine protection in the psalm: "[Let the wicked walk about, therefore, on every side when vile men are exalted to power, for God is the protector of his people, and all such men are under his control.](#)" Or it may be the statement of a fact that wickedness did abound, or that people seemed to be unrestrained when wicked men were in power, though with the idea that God saw them, and would so check and restrain them that the injured and the wronged would be protected.

This is taken from Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12 introduction.

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Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge gives us a nice summary of this psalm: *David, destitute of human comfort, craves help of God (vv. 1–4); He comforts himself with God's promises (vv. 5–6), and his judgments on the wicked (vv. 7–8).*<sup>5</sup>

The NET Bible® also sums this chapter up quite nicely: *The psalmist asks the Lord to intervene, for society is overrun by deceitful, arrogant oppressors and godly individuals are a dying breed. When the Lord announces his intention to defend the oppressed, the psalmist affirms his confidence in the divine promise.*<sup>6</sup>

When it comes to interpreting this psalm, I must admit to having a very difficult time with it on the first run-through. Part of that I attribute to not having a time and place during which to place this psalm. That helps to give the psalm a general tenor. In some ways, it paints a very bleak picture of the world; but, that makes this psalm parallel to our society. We live during a time of great moral degeneracy, but during a time when there are many believers in the United States, and at least a double-handful of doctrinal churches.<sup>7</sup> What I particularly liked about this psalm was its emphasis upon verbal sins and how evil the tongue can be.

My biggest problem with this psalm was the translation of it; once I put together [a nearly literal rendering](#) of the psalm, as well as [a paraphrased version](#) of it, it all fit together and made a great deal more sense, despite the fact that I was unable to assign to it a place in time in David's life.

Another key to understanding this psalm is filling in the ellipsis of v. 6, and then organizing this psalm. Bullinger put this all into perspective when he explained what is missing in v. 6, and then he organized the psalm, an organizational ability which I rarely see in other exegetes. You may find it instructive to go directly to a proper

<sup>5</sup> *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, Psalm 12 introduction. I inserted the verses.

<sup>6</sup> *The Net Bible®*; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 12:1.

<sup>7</sup> I should clarify this point: what I mean by a doctrinal church is, rebound is clearly taught, along with verse by verse studies from the Bible. Bible teaching should be preeminent; and all other activities in the church should be clearly secondary, even to the most casual observer. *Rebound* is a term popularized by R. B. Thieme Jr., which means that, after we sin, we name our sins to God, and these sins are forgiven and we are restored to fellowship (1Cor. 11:31 1John 1:9). Do not be confused at this point; people can be saved and attend a variety of churches or not at all. Salvation is only through faith in Jesus Christ, and any person can do that at any time. What they do after salvation can be a whole different matter. With proper Bible teaching, people lead effective, meaningful Christian lives (which does not mean that they do not fail now and again).

rendering of this psalm, which is placed side-by-side **Bullinger's organization** of this psalm. Bullinger will help you see the forest for the trees (which was much of my problem).

Let me take this opportunity to highly recommend Bullinger's *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*. There are a number of things in the Bible which make little sense; and then, you read Bullinger's take, and it suddenly makes complete sense.

As an aside, both the Tanakh and the New Living Bible (also known as the Open Bible) offer marvelous translations of this psalm. Sometimes I get mired down in the NASB, even though it is a outstanding translation in general. Both the Tanakh and the New Living Bible provide easy-to-understand and very readable translations, and yet remain reasonably accurate. Although I list the New Living Bible with the paraphrases, it never offers renderings which are as far off from the Hebrew as the Message or the Contemporary English Version.

I wrote this commentary and translation of Psalm 12 in the year 2007; there are few psalms or passages which are more relevant to the time in which we live. I have seen the left lie and slander and defame; they rarely debate—in some instances, claiming the debate to be over; they tear down and they insult. The few times that I post a comment here or there at a political site, the first thing out of the mouth of someone who disagrees with me is a character assault. Almost every posting that disagrees with me will contain one or more paragraphs wherein my name, my background (real or imagined) and/or my associations are insulted and slandered. I watched the first political “debate” of the Democratic candidates the other evening, and easily 75% of what they said were Bush-bashing talking points which they were able to deftly slip into their answer to whatever question was asked of them. If I did not have a calendar to refer to, I would have thought that these candidates were running against President George Bush. The thrust of this psalm are the words of the reprobate in David's time, which were slanderous and vicious.

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## Psalm 12 Inscription

Slavishly literal:

**To the preeminent [one]; upon the eighth [or, *sheminith*]; a psalm to David.**

**To the one who is preeminent; on the octave; a Davidic psalm.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text  
Septuagint

To the preeminent [one]; upon the eighth [or, *sheminith*]; a psalm to David.  
For the end, A Psalm of David, upon the eighth.

Significant differences:

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV  
NET Bible®  
New Jerusalem Bible  
New Living Testament

(A psalm by David for the music leader.)  
*For the music director; according to the sheminith style; a psalm of David.*  
*For the choirmaster On the octachord Psalm Of David*  
*For the choir director: A psalm of David, to be accompanied by an eight-stringed instrument.*

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

Complete Apostles' Bible For the end, A Psalm of David, upon the eighth.  
 HCSB For the choir director: according to Sheminith. A Davidic psalm.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

*The Amplified Bible* To the Chief Musician; set [possibly] an octave below. A Psalm of David.  
 English Standard Version To the choirmaster: according to The Sheminith. A Psalm of David.  
 MKJV To the Chief Musician, on eight. A Psalm of David.  
 Young's Literal Translation To the Overseer, on the octave. --A Psalm of David.

**What is the gist of this verse?** This psalm was written either to God or for the choir director, and it was written by David.

### Psalm 12 inscription a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l <sup>o</sup> ]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
nâtsach (נָצַח) [pronounced naw-TZAHKH]	<i>to oversee, to supervise; to be preeminent, to be enduring; the Preeminent One</i>	Piel participle with the definite article	Strong's #5329 BDB #663

The Piel participle of nâtsach is given a wide variety of renderings: *overseer* (Young), *the music leader* (CEV), *choir director* (NASB, NLT), *choirmaster* (Owens), *leader* (NRSV, NEB, NAB) and *chief musician* (Rotherham).

**Translation:** *To the preeminent one;...* As we have seen with the numerous translations above, no one is clear as to who this person is. This psalm could be dedicated to God, which would be represented by capitalizing *Preeminent One*. On the other hand, this psalm could be written to be conducted by the chief musician, which is how Rotherham understands it. Most translators assume that this is given over to the choir director or the conductor or the one in charge of those who sang. The strongest argument against this psalm being dedicated or written to God is, *David could have used a well-known designation for God, but he did not.*

Unfortunately, the exact meaning of the lâmed preposition is also hard to determine. We find several psalms which are ascribed to David written *to David*; but the idea is, the psalm *belongs to David*. The lâmed preposition is used more often when something is given *to* someone else or something is *for* someone else, the chief meanings of the lâmed preposition. Despite the use of the lâmed preposition with David throughout the book of Psalms, I have taken this to me that this psalm is written *for* whoever this preeminent person is.

Barnes comments on this portion of the inscription: *This phrase in the title, "To the chief Musician," occurs at the beginning of 53 psalms, and at the close of the hymn in Habak. 3:19. It is uniformly rendered "to the chief Musician," and means that the psalm was intended for him, or was to be given to him, probably to regulate the manner of performing it. In no one instance does the title imply that he was the author. The word rendered "Chief Musician" is derived from [ a Hebrew word] properly meaning "to shine," but not used in the Qal. In the Piel form it means to be conspicuous; to be over anything; to be chief; to be superintendent (2Chron. 2:2, 18 34:12) and then it means to lead in music. The meaning of the form used here, and in the other places where it occurs as a title to a psalm, is "Chief Musician," or precentor; and the idea is, that the psalm is to be performed under his direction; or that the music is to be directed and adapted by him.*<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 4 introduction.



Even though we have the same preposition used here as we find used with *David*, when he is the author, the many times that this phrase is found in combination with the author’s name suggests more that there is a musical organization and that this song was delivered over to the Choirmaster (or conductor) of that organization to be sung and performed at various functions.

The NIV Study Bible has its opinion on this matter: *[For the director of music is] probably a liturgical notation, indicating either that the psalm was to be added to the collection of works to be used by the director of music in Israel’s worship services, or that when the psalm was used in the temple worship, it was to be spoke [or, sung?] by the leader of the Levitical choir—or by the choir itself (see 1Chron. 23:4–5, 30 [Of the overseers over the works of the house of the Lord there were twenty-four thousand, and there were six thousand scribes and judges; and four thousand gatekeepers, and four thousand to praise the Lord with instruments which he made to praise the Lord...to stand in the morning to praise and give thanks to the Lord, and so in the evening] 25 [assignments are given to the sons of Korah, among others]). In this liturgical activity the Levites functioned as representatives of the worshipping congregation. Following their lead the people probably responded with “Amen” and “Praise the LORD” (Hallelujah); see 1Chron. 16:36 Neh. 5:13; compare 1Cor. 14:16 Rev. 5:14 7:12 19:4.*<sup>9</sup>

A reasonable question would be: *we can make a reasonable guess as to who this preeminent one is, but we really don’t know, so why did God the Holy Spirit include this inscription (and the many like it) in the psalms.* This is a good question as, many of the psalms have information which help us to place the psalm into a particular time and place, which provides us with an enriched understanding of the psalm; however, here, although we can certainly come to a conclusion or make a reasonable hypothesis, we really do not know if this is the solution or not. Let me suggest that the use of the word has an intentional double-meaning: (1) David writes this psalm and will turn it over to the choirmaster, the music conductor; (2) but, in a larger sense, this psalm is written to God, with God in mind, inspired by God the Holy Spirit, and is therefore, dedicated to *the Preeminent One*.

Psalm 12 inscription b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
‘al (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i> ]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong’s #5921 BDB #752
sh <sup>e</sup> mīynīyth (שְׁמִינִיִּית) [pronounced <i>sh<sup>e</sup>-māe-NEETH</i> ]	<i>eight; eighth key; octave; transliterated <i>sheminith</i></i>	feminine singular adjective numeral; with the definite article	Strong’s #8066 & #8067 BDB #1033

**Translation:** *...on the octave* [or, *sheminith*];... Originally, I wanted to place this psalm with 1Chron. 15, because there is a rare word found here and in 1Chron. 15. However, even by v. 1, it appears to be clear that this psalm would not be appropriate to the celebration of bringing the Ark into Jerusalem.

From looking at the other translations, it should be apparent that no one really knows what this word means, although it is probably a musical term and it is the feminine form of the numeral *eight*. However, we know little else besides this. A CEV footnote suggests that this is a musical instrument.<sup>10</sup>

God the Holy Spirit must have known that, 3000 years into the future, we would read this and be nonplussed. So, *why would He include this word?* First off, not everything in Scripture is written for your benefit or for mine. So, at one time, this may have meant something to the reader; specifically, in this case, for the music director.

<sup>9</sup> *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 782 (footnote). Text slightly edited and some of the passages were included as well.

<sup>10</sup> *The Promise* (The Contemporary English Version); Thomas Nelson Publishers; ©1995; p. 587 (footnote).

Secondly, some of these words and some things which take place are later archeologically discovered to come from the place and time that we expect it to. Thirdly, most agree that this is a musical term, which tells us, that the psalms were written to be sung/performed and that there is nothing wrong with musical professionalism. I've seen the Word of God handled with anything but professionalism; and I have been in churches where there is no professionalism. It is God's way to run an organizations with professionalism, which would include authorities, integrity, accountability, and intelligence. A church service should not be a free-for-all; and a Christian organization should not lack organization or accountability.

Psalm 12 inscription c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
miz <sup>e</sup> môwr (מִזְמוֹר) [pronounced <i>mizê-MOHR</i> ]	<i>melody, song, poem, psalm</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4210 BDB #274
lâmed (ל) [pronounced <i>l</i> °]	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâviyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced <i>daw-VEED</i> ]	<i>beloved and is transliterated David</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187

**Translation:** ...a psalm of David. As has been discussed in the past, the lâmed preposition can indicate authorship in these psalms, and when found with *David*, it is reasonable to assume that he is the author of this psalm.

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### The Psalmist Calls on God to Deliver Him from the Ungodly

Slavishly literal:

**Save, O Y<sup>e</sup>howah—  
for has come to an end a pious [one],  
for have ceased faithful [ones] from sons  
of man.**

Psalm  
12:1

Moderately literal:

**Preserve [us] [or, Deliver (us)], O Y<sup>e</sup>howah,  
for the gracious [man] has come to an end;  
for those who are faithful have ceased [to  
be] from mankind [lit., sons of man].**

**Preserve us, O Jehovah,  
for the gracious believer is no longer,  
for those who are faithful have ceased to be among men.**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

Save, O Y<sup>e</sup>howah—  
for has come to an end a pious [one],  
for have ceased faithful [ones] from sons of man. In the MT, v. 1 is the inscription and this is v. 2.

Septuagint

Save me, O Lord; for the godly man has failed; for truths are become rare from among the children of men.

Significant differences: Although the second verb appears to be different, it is simply another translation of the Hebrew verb. It is very likely that *truths* from the LXX is their rendering of *faithful ones*. The final verb in the LXX is possibly an alternate rendering of *to cease* from the Hebrew; it is not a New Testament verb, so I could not say for certain. Furthermore, this Hebrew verb is found nowhere else in Scripture, so our English translations are making guesses at its meaning as well. You will notice that below, I have listed a lot of translations for this verse; that indicates that there will be some difficulty in rendering it into English and in understanding what it is saying. Therefore, I don't think that the differences that we find in the Greek are significant or indicative of different words in the Hebrew.

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Please help me, LORD! All who were faithful and all who were loyal have disappeared.
Good News Bible (TEV)	Help us, LORD! There is not a good person left; honest people can no longer be found.
<i>The Message</i>	Quick, GOD, I need your helping hand! The last decent person just went down, All the friends I depended on gone.
New American Bible	Help, LORD, for no one loyal remains; the faithful have vanished from the human race.
New Jerusalem Bible	Help, Yahweh! No one loyal is left, the faithful have vanished from among the children of Adam.
New Living Testament	Help, O LORD, for the godly are fast disappearing! The faithful have vanished from the earth!
Revised English Bible	Save us, LORD, for no one who is loyal remains; good faith between people has vanished.

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	Send help, Lord, for mercy has come to an end; there is no more faith among the children of men.
Complete Apostles' Bible	Save me, O Lord; for the godly man has failed; for truth is diminished from among the children of men.
<i>God's Word</i> ™	Help, O LORD. No godly person is left. Faithful people have vanished from among Adam's descendants!
HCSB	Help, LORD, for no faithful one remains; the loyal have disappeared from the human race.
JPS (Tanakh)	Help, O LORD! For the faithful are no more; the loyal have vanished from among men.
NET Bible®	Deliver, LORD! For the godly have disappeared; people of integrity have vanished.
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	Save, יהוה, for the kind one is no more! For the trustworthy have ceased from among the sons of men.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Help, Lord! For principled and godly people are here no more; faithfulness <i>and</i> the faithful vanish from among the sons of men.
Updated <i>Emphasized Bible</i>	O save, Yahweh, For the man of lovingkindness [or, <i>grace</i> ] is no more, For the faithful have vanished from among the sons of men.



English Standard Version	Save, O LORD, for the godly one is gone; for the faithful have vanished from among the children of man.
LTHB	Help, O Jehovah, for the godly ceases to be; for the faithful fail from among the sons of men.
Young's Updated LT	Save, Jehovah, for the saintly have failed, For the steadfast have ceased from the sons of men.

**What is the gist of this verse?** David calls to Jehovah for help, because it appears to him that believers and mature believers have seemed to have disappeared from his periphery.

This is v. 2 in the Hebrew and all of the verses in the original Hebrew are off by one. Bear in mind that the division of the Bible into chapters and verses was done long after Scripture was originally written.

Psalm 12:1a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yâsha' (עֲשֵׂה) [pronounced yaw-SHAHG]	<i>to deliver, to save; to set free, to preserve; to aid, to give relief</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil imperative; with the voluntative hê	Strong's #3467 BDB #446
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yoh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

**Translation:** [Preserve \[us\]](#) [or, *Deliver (us)*], [O Y<sup>e</sup>howah,...](#) It is not clear what or whom David wants God to deliver. There are no suffixes for this verb. David could be asking for himself, which is quite likely; and he could be asking for himself and those around him; and he could be asking for the nation Israel.

Poetry is often somewhat more vague, and, for this reason, can be applied in more situations. As we will find in the next portion of this verse, it is unclear as to *why*, but those who are believers and those who are faithful believers appear to be missing from David's periphery. This could be a psalm written by a lonely David when watching the sheep out in the fields as a young man. This could be David when he is pursued by his own son Absalom. This could be David when he finds himself face to face with Achish, king of Gath. Given these various situations, we may apply this psalm to ourselves in much the same way.

I recall that, soon after being saved, I was exposed to doctrine. I began to study that, along with a lot of cultic crap (which I eventually rejected). The few Christians that I knew either seemed to be cut from a cookie cutter (those I met from Campus Crusade—no offense meant to Campus Crusade, by the way); and those that I knew from church appeared to have absolutely no real interest in the Word of God, although they were up for being religious. After awhile, I began to wonder, *am I that far gone? I am the only person I know who seems to have this interest in the Word of God being taught carefully, word by word, verse by verse.* So, at any point in time, when you feel that you are alone, you may go to this psalm to call upon God for preservation and deliverance.

Can you imagine being a believer in a Muslim country? Everything that you saw, everything that you read, would tell you that you are wrong and misguided. Not only would your friends and family reject you, but many of them would actually want to see you die. Some of them would like this to be an unpleasant death. You might not even know another believer, or, if you do, meeting with them could be life-threatening. When a person feels that they are the only one left—whether or not this is a true perception—then they should go to this psalm for comfort.

## Psalm 12:1b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
gâmar (גָּמַר) [pronounced <i>gaw-MAHR</i> ]	<i>to complete, to finish, to end, to come to an end; to leave off, to fail</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #1584 BDB #170
châçîyd (חַסִּיד) [pronounced <i>khaw-SEED</i> ]	<i>gracious, kind, pious; gracious one, pious one</i>	masculine singular adjective	Strong's #2623 BDB #339

**Translation:** ...for the gracious [man] has come to an end;... The adjective used here means *gracious* and this word is often used to describe the mature believer (one who is grace-oriented). David examines his periphery, and there appear to be no mature, grace-oriented believers around. As mentioned above, this could have taken place on a number of occasions in David's life. His family seemed to reject him, and he found himself out under the stars watching over his father's sheep for most of his young life. Here, he would be completely alone. He could be walking toward Goliath, ready to take this giant on, knowing that no one in the entire army of Saul came forward to do this over a period of 40 days. Later, Saul hated David and pursued him, and David had to leave, again, completely alone (he was joined by others, but not immediately). He even showed up in Gath, a heathen city (although I would not be surprised if Achish was a believer). And, David's own son pursued him much later in his life, with the intent of killing him. On any of these occasions, David could have looked around and saw that there were no strong believers in his periphery.

## Psalm 12:1c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced <i>kee</i> ]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
pâçaç (פָּצָח) [pronounced <i>paw-SASS</i> ]	<i>to cease, to leave off; to disappear, to vanish; to fail; to spread oneself abroad</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #6461 BDB #821
The Hebrew verb pâçaç (פָּצָח) occurs only here. An Akkadian cognate means "efface, blot out." <sup>11</sup>			
ʿâman (אֱמָן) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHN</i> ]	<i>those who stand firm, the faithful [ones], the unshaken ones; those who are secure</i>	masculine plural, Qal passive participle	Strong's #539 BDB #52
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, off, out from, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
bên (בֵּן) [pronounced <i>bane</i> ]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119

<sup>11</sup> *The Net Bible*®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 12:1.

## Psalm 12:1c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾādām (אָדָם) [pronounced aw-DAWM]	a man, a human being, mankind, Adam	masculine singular noun	Strong's #120 BDB #9

**Translation:** ...for those who are faithful have ceased [to be] from mankind [lit., sons of man]. The verb here is only found here, so I have listed all of the possible meanings from several sources. This is in identical parallel to the previous portion of this verse, so we may reasonably assume that this word is a synonym for the verb in v. 1b.

The verb which is a participle acts like the subject of the main verb, and this is the common verb which means to *trust, to believe, to have faith in, to place faith in, to put one's weight upon*. In the passive sense, this is a class of men who have done so—they have placed their faith in Jehovah Elohim, Who is Jesus Christ.

In the previous portion of this verse, it appears that David may have been speaking of grace-oriented believers; however, in this part of the verse, it appears as though he is simply speaking of other believers.

Now, there are two ways that this final phrase could be understood. This could be rendered *believers from the sons of men have disappeared*; or, *believers have disappeared from the sons of man*. The difference is slight, but there is a difference.

In any case, David examines his periphery and it appears that there are no believers around him. Recall that Elijah felt the exact same way; he thought that he was the only one left in all Israel (God told him that he was wrong, by the way).

Gill comments: *The words design the paucity of them, and the sad degeneracy of the times to which they refer: and they may belong either to the times of David, when Saul's courtiers flattered him, and spoke evil of David; when the men of Keilah intended to have delivered him up; when the Ziphites discovered him to Saul, and invited him to come and take him; or when Absalom rose up in rebellion against him, and so many of the people fell off from him: or else to the times of Christ; the people of the Jews in his age were a wicked and faithless generation; and even among his own disciples there was great want of fidelity: one betrayed him, another denied him, and all forsook him and fled; after his death, some doubted his being the Redeemer, and one of them could not believe he was risen from the dead, when he was. And these words may be applied to the antichristian times, the times of the grand apostasy, and falling away from the faith, upon the revealing of the man of sin; since which the holy city is trodden under foot; the witnesses prophesy in sackcloth; and the church is in the wilderness, and is hid there. Yea, to the second coming of Christ, when there will be great carnality and security, and little faith found in the earth. A like complaint with this see in Isa. 57:1 (*The righteous man perishes, and no one lays it to heart; devout men are taken away, while no one understands. For the righteous man is taken away from calamity*).<sup>12</sup>*

It might be worthwhile to see some of the verses where we find *the faithful ones*:

God Preserves Those Who Believe in Him	
Verse	Quotation
Psalm 3:4	Know that the LORD has set apart the faithful for Himself; the LORD will hear when I call to Him.

<sup>12</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1 (I added the text of Isa. 57:1).

God Preserves Those Who Believe in Him	
Verse	Quotation
Psalm 18:25	With the faithful You prove Yourself faithful; with the blameless man You prove Yourself blameless.
Psalm 31:23	O love Jehovah, all you His saints; for Jehovah preserves the faithful, and abundantly recompenses the proud doer.
Psalm 37:28	For the LORD loves justice and will not abandon His faithful ones. They are kept safe forever, but the children of the wicked will be destroyed.
Psalm 86:2	Protect my life, for I am faithful. You are my God; save Your servant who trusts in You.
Psalm 97:2	You who love the LORD, hate evil! He protects the lives of His godly ones; He rescues them from the hand of the wicked.

These verses were taken from *The Net Bible*®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 12:1.

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There are going to be two things which help to tie this psalm together into a nice, neat package: the first is this phrase, *the sons of Adam* (or, *the sons of men*). This short phrase will be in the final verse of this psalm as well. These are unbelievers, these are those who are fallen and have not believed in Jesus Christ; these are the ones who persecute or defile or exploit others for their own gain.

**Application:** Because of the society which I live in, some automatically think of a rich businessman who exploits his workers, but this is but one form of exploitation (and not all employers exploit their employees). Furthermore, being a rich businessman and hiring people to work for you is not a sin nor is it exploitation in and of itself. We have more consistent examples from our society: drug dealers who exploit young boys to sell or hold their drugs; and who exploit those who are addicted. We have porn merchants, some of whom are involved, in one way or another, in human slavery of children and young women; and who exploit the lusts of man. We have in our society politicians who pretend to stand for the poor, who pretend to stand up for *the other America*, but exploit these people for their votes, and bribe them with federal and state funds in order to rob them of their own initiative. When we come to the afflicted and the needy, I will remind you of these examples of exploitation.

The second key to this psalm are *words, promises, things which are said*. From degenerate man, these are lies spoken in order to exploit and manipulate those who hear them. Speaking lies means nothing to them; there is no evil connotation to such activity in their own minds. In contrast to this will be *the promises of God*, which are trustworthy and dependable.

**Application:** The lack of truthfulness among men has been something which I have observed over the past several years. I first noticed such a change in my students; and, during the final few years that I taught, I observed that a large number of students, including one Christian student that I can recall specifically, had little regard for the truth or for any sort of personal integrity. After retiring, I began to notice this with those who had a political agenda; particularly those from the left (although I saw a few instances on the right as well). I recall one particular presidential candidate who would parrot any lie about his opponent, without first waiting for the thing to be confirmed or proven wrong. If it was slanderous, and someone said it, then this candidate would say it. I know of a number of individuals that, when an email comes to them expressing their own political views, they forward it along to everyone they know, even if they know the email is filled with inaccuracies.

**Application:** As another tangent, I should add that sin does not exist in a vacuum. Rarely do you find just one sin to be prominent. Also, one of the things which I have noticed, particularly over the past several years (I am

writing in the year 2007), is that the lies about President Bush is more than political posturing; there is also a genuine hatred for Bush among a significant number of people. Hatred always clouds a person's objectivity, which I observed with Nixon, Reagan and now Bush. So, these people will express their hatred in a variety of ways, and rarely is it important for them to be 100% accurate when expressing their vehemence. Truthfulness is simply not an issue to them. This is how man functions; men lie, and many of them see nothing wrong with their lies.

As we come to these various keys, I will alert and remind you of them. Again, they are *the sons of Adam* and *words, promises and things which are spoken*.

**Iniquity [or, falsehood] speak a man to his neighbor;  
a lip of flatteries in a heart and a heart they speak.**

Psalm  
12:2

**Everyone speaks lies [or, emptiness] to his neighbor [or, associate];  
they speak with a double heart [and] flattering lips.**

**Everyone speaks lies and emptiness to his neighbor;  
they flatter them while thinking something else entirely.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

Iniquity [or, falsehood] speak a man to his neighbor;  
a lip of flatteries in a heart and a heart they speak.

Septuagint

Everyone has spoken vanity to his neighbour: their lips are deceitful, they have spoken with a double heart.

Significant differences:

*Everyone*, in the LXX, is a legitimate translation for *a man*. *Vanity* is a reasonable translation for the Hebrew word which I have rendered *iniquity*. It is questionable whether the Septuagint word *deceitful* is an accurate rendering of the Hebrew; however, it is a reasonable understanding of the verse in general. As in v. 1, there is no indication that the Hebrew that the Greek translators dealt with is any different from the Hebrew that we work with today.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV

Everyone tells lies, and no one is sincere.

Good News Bible (TEV)  
*The Message*

All of them lie to one another; they deceive each other with flattery.  
Everyone talks in lie language; Lies slide off their oily lips. They doubletalk with forked tongues.

ew Jerusalem Bible

Friend tells lies to friend,  
and, smooth-tongued, speaks from an insincere heart.

New Living Testament

Neighbors lie to each other,  
speaking with flattering lips and insincere hearts.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English

Everyone says false words to his neighbour: their tongues are smooth in their talk, and their hearts are full of deceit.

God's Word™

All people speak foolishly. They speak with flattering lips. They say one thing but mean another.

HCSB

They lie to one another; they speak with flattering lips and deceptive hearts.

JPS (Tanakh)

Men speak lies to one another;  
their speech is smooth;

NET Bible® they talk with duplicity.  
 People lie to one another;  
 they flatter and deceive.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	To his neighbor each one speaks words without use or worth or truth; with flattering lips and double heart [deceitfully] they speak.
A Conservative Version	They speak falsehood everyone with his neighbor. With flattering lip, and with a double heart, they speak.
English Standard Version	Everyone utters lies to his neighbor; with flattering lips and a double heart they speak..
New King James Version	They speak idly everyone with his neighbor; <i>With</i> flattering lips and a double heart [ <i>an inconsistent mind</i> ] they speak.
WEB	Everyone lies to his neighbor. They speak with flattering lips, and with a double heart.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Vanity they speak each with his neighbour, Lip of flattery! With heart and heart they speak.

**What is the gist of this verse?** Everyone speaks emptiness and falsehoods to those around them; they use flattery, while they are thinking something else entirely.

In the previous verse, David observes that mature believers appear to be in short supply, and, in this verse, he gives evidence for this observation.

Psalm 12:2a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shâv <sup>ע</sup> (שׂוּ) [pronounced shawv]	wickedness, iniquity; destruction, calamity; falsehood, a lie, false report; vanity, emptiness, unsubstantial, worthlessness	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #7723 BDB #996
It is that which furnishes no support, that which cannot uphold or sustain, and will give away when any trust is placed in it.			
dâbar (דָּבַר) [pronounced daw <sup>b</sup> -VAHR]	to speak, to talk [and back with action], to give an opinion, to expound, to make a formal speech, to speak out, to promise, to propose, to speak kindly of, to declare, to proclaim, to announce	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Piel imperfect	Strong's #1696 BDB #180
ʾîysh (אִישׁ) [pronounced eesh]	a man, a husband; anyone; a certain one; each, each one, everyone	masculine singular noun (sometimes found where we would use a plural)	Strong's #376 BDB #35
ʾêth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	generally untranslated; occasionally to, toward	indicates that the following substantive is a direct object	Strong's #853 BDB #84
This is identical to the preposition which is translated with.			



## Psalm 12:2a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
One early printed edition, the Vulgate and the LXX all have <i>unto</i> instead.			
rêa' (רֵא) [pronounced RAY-ahg']	associate, neighbor, colleague, fellow, acquaintance	masculine singular noun with a 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7453 BDB #945

**Translation:** *Everyone speaks lies* [or, *emptiness*] *to his neighbor* [or, *associate*];... Those things which are spoken between men are worthless, empty and false.

**Application** (more or less): One of the things which I have noticed, particularly with forwarded emails, that so much of what is sent is false. Now, of course, there are the inconsequential forwards, e.g., stupid things that lawyers say; but I have seen a huge number of political ones, filled with lies about various candidates. For the longest time, I received these forwards from liberals, and there were lots of them; but, as of recent, there are conservatives who are doing the same thing. Some of the falsehoods have hung on to a point where it appears to me that people actually believe them. For instance, George Bush lied about intelligence which he had received about Iraq, and used these lies to get us into a war in Iraq. Even Senator Clinton has publically said that he fooled her in this regard. That Bush lied about the intelligence which he received (or that he spun it in some way) in order to get us into a war in Iraq is completely and demonstrably false; but this lie has been repeated so many times, that it is taken as truth by a substantial number of people. I recall listening to a woman marching in an illegal immigrant march, and 2 or 3 questions into her interview, and she was calling George Bush a liar for this exact reason. In other words, these lies have reached even those outside of mainstream voting America.

Furthermore, a significant number of the Democratic party have no problem with speaking falsehood after falsehood, as Senator Clinton's campaign has shown (I write this in 2007). A significant example of this is, Senator Clinton made it clear that, when she voted for the war in Iraq, she double-checked with *other sources* besides the intelligence presented by President Bush and his cabinet (and being the wife of a former president, she had access to other sources). Then, once the war became unpopular, Senator Clinton says that George Bush bamboozled her into voting for the war.

These are just examples from politics. When I was raised, the idea of lying was abhorrent to my parents and they drummed that into my soul. As a result, I would find it very difficult to lie to my mother even as an adult; and the number of lies which I have told to authority figures could probably be counted with the fingers of one hand. However, as a teacher, after teaching for a few years, my students began to lie and cheat more and more. Now I can recall some individual examples from when I began teaching, because these students stood out (actually, I can only recall one off the top of my head). However, after about 10 or 15 years, I noticed that a very large number of kids would lie and cheat and appear to give it very little thought. David writes this psalm in an atmosphere like this.

Recall that one of the themes of this psalm—or some of the glue which holds this psalm together—are the words of man versus the words of God. Here, men speak lies to one another. They flatter one another, while their minds are somewhere else entirely. God's promises, by contrast, are faithful, tried by fire in this earth, and can be leaned upon (v. 6).

## Psalm 12:2b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
sâphâh (הַפֹּה) [pronounced saw-FAWH]	<i>lip, tongue; words, speech; dialect, language; edge, border [or, lip] [of something]</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #8193 BDB #973
chel <sup>o</sup> qâh (חֶלְקָה) [pronounced khe <sup>o</sup> -KAW]	<i>smooth and slippery place, smooth part, smoothness, flattery; allotment, a portion, a part [of land]; field</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #2513 BDB #324 & #325
BDB treats this as a homonym, where the translations <i>allotment, a portion, a part [of land]; field</i> are Strong's #2513 BDB #324.			
b <sup>o</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>oh</sup> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced lay <sup>b</sup> v]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3820 BDB #524
Owen lists this as a construct; the confusion is the wâw conjunction which follows. Lêb would reasonably be a construct without the intervening conjunction. This should properly be a masculine singular noun.			
w <sup>e</sup> (or v <sup>e</sup> ) (וּ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lêb (לֵב) [pronounced lay <sup>b</sup> v]	<i>heart, inner man, mind, will, thinking</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3820 BDB #524
dâbar (דָּבַר) [pronounced daw <sup>b</sup> -VAHR]	<i>to speak, to talk [and back with action], to give an opinion, to expound, to make a formal speech, to speak out, to promise, to propose, to speak kindly of, to declare, to proclaim, to announce</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Piel imperfect; pausal form	Strong's #1696 BDB #180

The only difference between this verb here and in v. 2a is a vowel point.

**Translation:** ...they speak with a double heart [and] flattering lips. I am not completely satisfied with putting the translation together as I have, although I think it is the best rendering of v. 2b. However, I am not completely comfortable with the relationship of the verb to a heart and a heart (a double heart) and [with] flattering lips. I will assume that we have two things which are related to one another and to the verb.

Barnes speaks about the feminine plural noun found here: *chel<sup>o</sup>qâh means properly to divide, to distribute; then, to make things equal or smooth; then, to make smooth or to shape, as an artisan does, as with a plane; and then, "to make things smooth with the tongue," that is, "to flatter."* See Psalm 5:3, 9 26:28 28:23 29:5. The meaning is, that no confidence could be placed in the statements made. There was no certainty that they were founded on truth; none that they were not intended to deceive. Flattery is the ascribing of qualities to another which he is known not to possess – usually with some sinister or base design.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:2.

The verb related to this noun shows up a number of times in the Bible:

Flattery in Scripture	
Verse	Quotation
Psalm 5:9	For there is nothing reliable in what they say; destruction is within them; their throat is an open grave; they flatter with their tongues.
Psalm 55:21	His buttery words are smooth, but war is in his heart. His words are softer than oil, but they are drawn swords.
Prov. 2:16	[Wisdom] will rescue you from a forbidden woman, from a stranger with her flattering talk. Prov. 7:5 says essentially the same thing.
Prov. 5:3-4	Though the lips of the forbidden woman drip honey and her words are smoother than oil, in the end she's as bitter as wormwood and as sharp as a double-edged sword.
Prov. 7:21	She seduces him with her persistent pleading; she lures with her flattering talk.
Prov. 26:28	A lying tongue hates those it crushes, and a flattering mouth causes ruin.
Prov. 28:23	One who rebukes a person will later find more favor than one who flatters with his tongue.
Prov. 29:5	A man who flatters his neighbor spreads a net for his feet.
Isa. 30:10	[Israel in rebellion] says to the seers, "Do not see," and to the prophets, "Do not prophesy the truth to us. Tell us flattering things. Prophecy illusions.
Rom. 16:17-18	Now I implore you, brothers, watch out for those who cause dissensions and pitfalls contrary to the doctrine you have learned. Avoid them; for such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattering words they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.

This selection of verses was suggested by Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:2; and by *The Net Bible*®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 12:2; and by *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, Psalm 12:2.

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The idea is, they are saying one thing, but they are thinking another. This is speaking *with (or, from?) a double heart*. The *flattering lips* is the substance of what they are saying. They are saying nice things to others, but these things mean absolutely nothing. What they say is not a reflection of their thoughts, but is quite the opposite of what they are thinking.

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### God Will Intervene and Cut Off the Wicked

May cut off Y<sup>e</sup>howah all lips of flatteries;  
a tongue speaking great [things];...

Psalm  
12:3

May Y<sup>e</sup>howah remove all flattering lips,  
[and] tongues which boast great things,...

May Jehovah cut down those with flattering lips  
and those whose tongues boast great things,...

Here is how others have translated this verse:

### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	May cut off Y <sup>e</sup> howah all lips of flatteries; a tongue speaking great [things];...
Septuagint	Let the Lord destroy all the deceitful lips, and the tongue that speaks great words.

Significant differences: Interestingly enough, the Latin and Greek both have *deceitful* lips and the Hebrew and Syriac have *flattering*. I seem to recall several instances in Psalms 24 and 46 where the Latin and Greek agreed, and were different from the Syriac and the Hebrew. Throughout much of Samuel, where there are glaring differences between the Greek and Hebrew, the most common occurrence was for the Latin and Syriac to agree with the Hebrew. Here, in the psalms, ancient versions appear to have different allies, so to speak. As usual, the differences are not so substantive as to affect any major or minor doctrine; they slightly affect the interpretation of the verse, and here, very slightly. Bear in mind that often, flattering lips are also deceitful (and that is definitely the case in this context).

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Won't you chop off all flattering tongues that brag so loudly?
Good News Bible (TEV)	Silence those flattering tongues, O LORD! Close those boastful mouths that say,...
<i>The Message</i>	Slice their lips off their faces! Pull The braggart tongues from their mouths!
New Living Testament	May the LORD bring their flattery to an end and silence their proud tongues.

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	The smooth lips and the tongue of pride will be cut off by the Lord.
Complete Apostles' Bible	Let the Lord destroy all the deceitful lips, and the tongue that speaks great words;...
HCSB	May the LORD cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaks boastfully.
JPS (Tanakh)	May the LORD cut off all flattering lips, every tongue that speaks arrogance.

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

LTHB	Jehovah shall cut off all with flattering lips and the tongue that speaks great things;...
New King James Version	May the LORD cutt off [ <i>destroy</i> ] all flattering lips, And the tongue that speaks proud [ <i>great</i> ] things.
A Voice in the Wilderness	Jehovah shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaks proud things,...
WEB	May Yahweh cut off all flattering lips, And the tongue that boasts,...
Young's Updated LT	Jehovah cuts off all lips of flattery, a tongue speaking great things.

**What is the gist of this verse?** David either asks for God to cut off flattering lips, or asserts that God will do this at some time in the future. It appears that this applies to the person who speaks boastful things, and continues into the following verse.

## Psalm 12:3a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kârath (כרת) [pronounced kaw-RAHTH]	<i>to kill, to destroy [men]; to separate, to remove, to withdraw; to cut off, to cut down; to allow to perish</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect; apocopated form	Strong's #3772 BDB #503
This often is a word used to separate some from a community. See Barnes quote below with supporting text.			
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yoh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
kôl (כל) [pronounced kohl]	with a plural noun, it is rendered <i>all of; any of</i>	masculine singular construct with a masculine plural noun	Strong's #3605 BDB #481
sâphâh (שפה) [pronounced saw-FAWH]	<i>lip, tongue; words, speech; dialect, language; edge, border [or, lip] [of something]</i>	feminine plural construct	Strong's #8193 BDB #973
chel <sup>q</sup> âh (חלקה) [pronounced khel <sup>q</sup> -KAW]	<i>smooth and slippery place, smooth part, smoothness, flattery; allotment, a portion, a part [of land]; field</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #2513 BDB #324 & #325

BDB treats this as a homonym, where the translations *allotment, a portion, a part [of land]; field* are Strong's #2513 BDB #324.

**Translation:** [May Y<sup>e</sup>howah remove all flattering lips,...](#) There are two ways to interpret v. 3a: (1) David is asking God to remove all flattering lips (implying that these are deceitful and/or manipulative flatteries); or (2) David is asserting that God will remove all flattering lips at some point in the future. The idea of the second interpretation is, at some point in time (the Millennium and the Eternal State), God will remove verbal sins from this earth. Those in the new civilization will apparently begin without old sin natures. However, man will apparently retain free will to the point where some will still reject God and go their own way. The prevailing opinion is, David is asking God to do this thing. The NET Bible® points out that the verb is in the jussive form, indicating that the verb is imprecatory.<sup>14</sup>

The *removing* of all flattering lips does not indicate that God will necessarily do a lip-ectomy. This word used here is for removal from a group. David could be petitioning for these types of men to be removed from his periphery or for these actions to be removed from those in his periphery. Who among us does not know a person who could so richly benefit from believing in Jesus Christ?

Barnes says, concerning this verb *to cut off, to remove*: *The word used here is the common one to denote disowning or excommunicating, and derives its meaning from the act of separating offenders from a community. See Gen. 17:14 ("If any male is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that man will be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.") Lev. 17:10 18:29 (Any person who does any of these abominations must be cut off from his people) 20:3, 6.*<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> The Net Bible®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 12:3.

<sup>15</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:3. I added the text of the verses.

**Psalm 12:3b**

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lāshōwn (לשׁוֹן) [pronounced <i>law-SHOHN</i> ]	<i>tongue; lapping; tongue-shaped</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3956 BDB #546
Owen lists this is a feminine singular noun, but BDB has it as a masculine singular noun. This is something which I quite frankly do not understand: this is a masculine singular noun in that form (there is apparently a feminine form); but this is placed with a feminine singular, Piel participle.			
dābar (דָּבַר) [pronounced <i>daw<sup>b</sup>-VAHR</i> ]	<i>to speak, to talk [and back with action], to give an opinion, to expound, to make a formal speech, to speak out, to promise, to propose, to speak kindly of, to declare, to proclaim, to announce</i>	feminine singular, Piel participle	Strong's #1696 BDB #180
gādōwl (גָּדוֹל) [pronounced <i>gaw-DOLE</i> ]	<i>great in quantity, great in magnitude and extent, mighty, vast, unyielding, immutable; great things, significant and astonishing [or mind-blowing] things</i>	feminine plural adjective often used as a substantive	Strong's #1419 (& #1431) BDB #152

**Translation:**...[and] tongues which boast great things,... The verb in v. 3a should be applied here as well. God will cut off or remove the tongues which boast great things. This does not mean that, at some point in time, God will cut out some people's tongues and leave others; if that were the case, almost everyone you know would face a tongue-ectomy. *Tongue* is a metonym, and it stands for the person who speaks boastfully. In the Millennium, civilization will begin, apparently, with the Jewish believers who survive the Tribulation, and it appears as though they will be cleansed of their old sin natures.

There may be a more immediate interpretation here; that God would physically remove many of those during David's time who lied, boasted, and flattered others in order to manipulate them.

It might be good to observe some of the sins of the tongue found throughout the Bible.

Sins of the Tongue	
Sin	Scripture
<b>Arrogance</b>	<p>Psalm 17:10: <i>They have become hardened; their mouths speak arrogantly.</i></p> <p>Ezek. 28:2: "Son of man, say to the ruler of Tyre: This is what the Lord GOD says: Your heart is proud, and you have said: I am a god; I sit in the seat of gods in the heart of the sea. Yet you are a man and not a god, though you have regarded your heart as that of a god."</p> <p>2Peter 2:18: <i>For uttering bombastic, empty words, they seduce, by fleshly desires and debauchery, people who have barely escaped from those who live in error.</i></p>



Sins of the Tongue	
Sin	Scripture
<b>Boasting</b>	<p>Ex. 15:9: The enemy said: "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil. My desire will be gratified at their expense. I will draw my sword; my hand will destroy them."</p> <p>1Sam. 2:3: Do not boast so proudly, or let arrogant words come out of your mouth, for the LORD is a God of knowledge, and actions are weighed by Him.</p> <p>1Sam. 17:44: "Come here," the Philistine called to David, "and I'll give your flesh to the birds of the sky and the wild beasts!"</p> <p>Ezek. 29:3: Speak to him and say: This is what the Lord GOD says: Look, I am against you, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great monster lying in the middle of his Nile, who says: My Nile is my own; I made it for myself.</p>
<b>Cursing, Blasphemy</b>	<p>1Sam. 17:43: He said to David, "Am I a dog that you come against me with sticks?" Then he cursed David by his gods [God?].</p> <p>Rev. 13:5–6: A mouth was given to him to speak boasts and blasphemies. He was also given authority to act for 42 months. He began to speak blasphemies against God: to blaspheme His name and His dwelling--those who dwell in heaven.</p>
<b>Flattering in order to Manipulate Another</b>	<p>Judges 1:16: These people are discontented grumblers, walking according to their desires; their mouths utter arrogant words, flattering people for their own advantage.</p> <p>Psalms 12:2–3: They lie to one another; they speak with flattering lips and deceptive hearts. May the LORD cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaks boastfully.</p>
<b>Mocking God</b>	<p>2Kings 19:23: You have mocked the Lord through your messengers. You have said: With my many chariots I have gone up to the heights of the mountains, to the far recesses of Lebanon. I cut down its tallest cedars, its choice cypress trees. I came to its farthest outpost, its densest forest.</p>
<b>Speaking Against God</b>	<p>Daniel 7:25: He will speak words against the Most High and oppress the holy ones of the Most High. He will intend to change religious festivals and laws, and the holy ones will be handed over to him for a time, times, and half a time.</p> <p>Mal. 3:13: "Your words against Me are harsh," says the LORD. Yet you ask: "What have we spoken against You?"</p>
<b>A Variety of Sins</b>	<p>Psalms 73:8–9: They mock, and they speak maliciously; they arrogantly threaten oppression. They set their mouths against heaven, and their tongues strut across the earth.</p>

Most of these verses came from *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, Psalm 12:3.

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...that they say to our tongues we confirm our lips with us who an adonai to us?      Psalm 12:4      ...[and cut off those] who have said, “We will prevail because of our speech [lit., *tongue*]; our lips [are] our own; who is our lord [lit., *who is a lord to us*]?”

...and those who have said, “We will prevail by our speech; we can say whatever we want to say; no one is our master.”

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text      ...that they say to our tongues we confirm our lips with us who an adonai to us?  
Septuagint      ...who have said, We will magnify our tongue; our lips are our own: who is Lord of us?

Significant differences:      Although it appears that the beginning of this verse is different, it really isn't. The second verb in the Greek means *to magnify, to make conspicuous, to esteem; to get glory and praise*. The corresponding verb in the Hebrew means *to make strong [firm]; to confirm [a covenant verbally]; to prevail*. This is the primary difference. The Latin agrees with the Greek and Syriac is in agreement with the Hebrew.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV      They say to themselves, "We are great speakers. No one else has a chance."  
Good News Bible (TEV)      "With our words we get what we want. We will say what we wish, and no one can stop us."  
*The Message*      I'm tired of hearing, "We can talk anyone into anything! Our lips manage the world."  
New American Bible      Those who say, "By our tongues we prevail;  
when our lips speak, who can lord it over us?"  
New Living Testament      They say, "We will lie to our hearts' content.  
Our lips are our own—who can stop us?"  
Revised English Bible      They say, 'By our tongues we shall prevail,  
With words as our ally, who can master us?'

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English      They have said, With our tongues will we overcome; our lips are ours: who is lord over us?  
Complete Apostles' Bible      ...who have said, We will magnify our tongue; our lips are our own: who is Lord of us?  
*God's Word*<sup>TM</sup>      ...that has said, "We will overcome with our tongues. With lips such as ours, who can be our master?"  
HCSB      They say, "Through our tongues we have power; our lips are our own--who can be our master?"  
JPS (Tanakh)      They say, "By our tongues we shall prevail;  
with lips such as ours, who can be our master?"  
NET Bible<sup>®</sup>      They say, "We speak persuasively;  
we know how to flatter and boast.  
Who is our master?"

#### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

The Amplified Bible

Those who say, With our tongue we prevail, our lips are our own [to command at our will]; who is lord and master over us?

English Standard Version

...those who say, "With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are with us; who is master over us?"

MKJV

...that has said, With our tongue we shall do much; our lips are our own; who is lord over us?

Young's Updated LT

Who [who have] said, "By our tongue we do mightily; Our lips are our own; who is lord over us?"

**What is the gist of this verse?** This appears to be a continuation of the previous verse where Jehovah God is cutting off (ending) the lips of the arrogant; here, He cuts off those who claim to prevail with their speech; who say, "We can say what we want to say, no one is our master!"

**Psalm 12:4a**

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿāsher (אֲשֶׁר) [pronounced uh-SHER]	that, which, when, who, whom	relative pronoun	Strong's #834 BDB #81
ʾāmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]	to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think	3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
lāmed (ל) (pronounced l <sup>e</sup> )	to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by	directional/relational preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

The meanings of the lāmed preposition broken down into groups: ❶ to, towards, unto; it is used both to turn one's heart toward someone as well as to sin against someone; ❷ to, even to; in this sense, it can be used with a number to indicate the upper limit which a multitude might approach (nearly). ❸ Lāmed can be equivalent to the Greek preposition eis (εις), meaning into, as in transforming into something else, changing into something else (Gen. 2:7). This use of lāmed after the verb hâyâh (הָיָה) [pronounced haw-YAW] (Strong's #1961 BDB #224) is one thing becoming another (Gen. 2:7). ❹ Its fourth use is the mark of a dative, after verbs of giving, granting, delivering, pardoning, consulting, sending, etc. This type of dative is broken down into several categories, but one includes the translation by, which would be apropos here. ❺ With regards to, as to. Similar to the Greek preposition eis (εις) plus the dative. [Numbering from Gesenius]. ❻ On account of, because, propter, used of cause and reason (propter means because; Gesenius used it). ❼ Concerning, about, used of a person or thing made the object of discourse, after verbs of saying. ❽ On behalf of anyone, for anyone. ❾ As applied to a rule or standard, according to, according as, as though, as if. ❿ When associated with time, it refers to the point of time at which or in which anything is done; or it can refer to the space of time during which something is done (or occurs); at the time of.

lāshōwn (לְשׁוֹן) [pronounced law-SHOHN]	tongue; speech; language; lapping; tongue-shaped	masculine singular noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix	Strong's #3956 BDB #546
gâbar (גָּבַר) [pronounced gaw <sup>b</sup> -VAHR]	to make strong [firm]; to confirm [a covenant verbally]; to prevail	1 <sup>st</sup> person plural, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #1396 BDB #149

**Translation:** ...[and cut off those] who have said, “We will prevail because of our speech [lit., tongue];... The verb is a plural, and therefore probably refers back to the lips of flattery in the previous verse.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, this is a continuation of the previous verse, where Jehovah will cut off certain groups of people, and in v. 3, He spoke of cutting off those who spoke with flattering speech. Here, He cuts off those who claim that, with their speech, they will prevail. Whatever they say, in their eyes, is right. They are beyond correction.

**Application:** The tongue is quite powerful, and what a person says and how he or she says it can be quite powerful as well. In our current political atmosphere, the liberals and democrats are quite pleased with their speech, and in some ways, they ought to be. With their speech, they have rallied a great many people, despite their repeated corrections, restatements, and out-and-out verbal contradictions. There is a group of people who will ignore these things. Because of the power that they have gained with their tongues, they think that they can do anything with their tongues; so we have a huge number of Democrats thinking that they can speak to and reason with any foreign dictator, regardless of how crazy they might be. In fact, about a month previous to this, Nancy Pelosi, a Democratic Speaker of the House, went to Syria to speak with them, even though the President asked her not to. They are so powerful in the United States with their speech, that they have this conflated idea that they have this power everywhere. What is rather humorous is, they don’t believe that they have the same power in speaking to our president or to those on the other side of the aisle from them; but they think they can change the policies of a foreign dictator with their speech. Perhaps in the 30’s, these same people would have gone to Hitler and said, “Let’s talk about this Jew thing you have going on; and your aggression; we think that it is bad.” No Democrat from that era would have ever been so delusional; but we have a party of people who seem to be so out of touch with reality, that they have destroyed what was once a great political party (guaranteed, FDR, Truman and John Kennedy would all be considered hawk conservative republicans today).

**Application:** The key here is the proper use of the tongue and the control of one’s own speech. What one says can be very powerful; on the other hand, speaking is not all-powerful. You can destroy other people with your speech: Jer. 18:18: *Then they said, "Come, let us make plots against Jeremiah, for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, let us strike him with the tongue, and let us not pay attention to any of his words."* James 3:5–6: *So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things. How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell.* On the other hand, you cannot bring peace with what you say. Jer. 6:14: *They have healed the wound of my people slightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace.*

Psalm 12:4b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
sâphâh (סָפָה) [pronounced saw-FAWH]	<i>lip, tongue; words, speech; dialect, language; edge, border [or, lip] [of something]</i>	feminine plural noun with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix	Strong’s #8193 BDB #973
’êth (אֶת) [pronounced ayth]	<i>with, at, near, by, among, directly from</i>	preposition (which is identical to the sign of the direct object); with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix	Strong’s #854 BDB #85

This preposition can also refer to being in one’s possession or in one’s keeping. This can also mean *to proceed from someone*. The key to this word is *close association with, close proximity to* beyond simple geographical proximity.

<sup>16</sup> From *The Net Bible*®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 12:4 (footnote).

**Translation:** ...our lips [are] our own;... I think the idea here is, they can say whatever they want. They can flatter, they can speak lies, they can say anything, and, the implication is, no one can stop them.

Barnes writes: *Our lips are our own: That is, we may use them as we please; no one has a right to control us in the use of what properly belongs to ourselves. It cannot be meant that they intended to assert this openly as a right, for there are perhaps none who will not admit in words that they are responsible for what they "say," as well as for what they "do." But their conduct was such that this was the fair interpretation to be placed on what they said. They would speak this if they openly professed and avowed what was their real opinion.*<sup>17</sup>

**Application:** What I have noticed with the advent of the internet and, particularly, with society as a whole embracing the internet, that some "information" is passed around as true, when it is not. I know people overseas, and so many of them, based upon what they have heard and read, think that our current president, George W. Bush, is a crook, has a staff of criminals, lies, is crafty, and, at the same time, is unbelievably stupid. None of these things are true. However, these lies have been repeated and repeated so often that people believe them,<sup>18</sup> and this is something that we can do on the internet, which is rather unnerving. This is something which liberals have brought into their arsenal, and something I hope that conservatives do not adopt, but I fear that they will. I recently heard for Tom Delay calling for conservatives to go after Rosie O'Donnell in the same manner that people have gone after Imus (if you are reading this a year after I write this, these names may mean nothing to you). Tom Delay is a former congressman from Texas, and he has been severely beaten down by his enemies (quite frankly, I have never put much study into his background, so I have no opinion on whether it is justified or not), and now he is calling for political enemies on the left to be taken down as he was. As believers, this should not be our approach; we don't go tit for tat. We do not attempt to exact our own revenge, no matter how much we believe we deserve it.

**Application:** This past week or so has been a marvelous example of this—of people speaking without any thought of the consequences, without any self-restraint. I write in April of 2007, and, in the middle of a war in Iraq, Senate majority leader Harry Reid proclaims that, the war is lost. No person in high office has ever said anything like this before. In the darkest days of World War I or World War II, or even during the Vietnam War, no high ranking politician has proclaimed that the war has been lost by the United States before. Now, if a Senator really believed this, then there should be a call to immediately de-fund the war, as it is lost, and every lost American life would be a wasted American life. However, at least at this point, Reid will say whatever pops into his head, but he will not back this with any actions. What he says is simply to gain a political advantage; he does not take into regard what this might do to soldier morale; he does not consider their families; he does not consider how our enemies might rejoice to hear these words spoken by such a prominent politician. In the previous month, Don Imus, a *shock-jock*, referred to the female members of a college basketball team as *nappy-headed ho's*. Now, no doubt, Imus was making an attempt to fit into the hip-hop culture and to sound cool and hip, but it did not come off like that. Again, Imus simply said whatever popped into his head, without much thought to the repercussions. And given our society of complete confusion, Imus was condemned with greater ferocity than Reid, although what Reid said was far more damaging. In the past several months, Rosie O'Donnell, who speaks to a huge audience of women daily, has made the most absurd statements imaginable; e.g., the U.S. government planted explosives at the twin towers because otherwise, "This would be the first time that fire melted steel." She has likened Christian conservatives to Islamic extremists; and during a luncheon, with under-18 women present, used the f-word and used other expressions that I would not use in a private conversation. In the case of Reid and O'Donnell, these are prepared speeches, and they are fully aware of who their audience is, and that their words will be heard throughout the world. Imus, on the other hand, I believe was just riffing, just talking off the top of his head, and had no idea at the time, that his words would have such an impact (having spoken for 6 hours a day, I can understand that sometimes, you are going to say things that you had wish you hadn't). In any case, my point is, these are people who say whatever they want to say; they mouth is their own; no one is master over them.

<sup>17</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:4.

<sup>18</sup> "Repeat a lie a thousand times and it becomes the truth ..." - usually credited to Dr Joseph Goebbels, Propaganda Minister of the Third Reich. This was taken from [http://www.ausairpower.net/DT\\_F-111\\_Costs.pdf](http://www.ausairpower.net/DT_F-111_Costs.pdf)



## Psalm 12:4c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
mîy (מִי) [pronounced mee]	who; occasionally rendered <i>how</i> , <i>in what way</i>	pronominal interrogative	Strong's #4310 BDB #566
ʾādôwn (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced aw-DOHN]	lord, master, owner, superior, sovereign	masculine singular noun	Strong's #113 BDB #10
lâmed (ל) [pronounced lʰ]	to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to	directional preposition with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

**Translation:** *...who is our lord [lit., a lord to us]?"* This is a rhetorical question. No answer is expected here. These are men who have no authority orientation; they recognize no authority, they do not recognize any other man as their authority, nor do they recognize God as their authority.

Barnes: *Who is Lord over us? That is, who has a right to control us in the case? There are many who practically avow this as a principle of conduct, and who seem to feel that they are not responsible for their words, however much they may admit their responsibility for their actions. There is usually a greater degree of recklessness among men in regard to their speech than in regard to their conduct; and many a man who would shrink from doing another wrong by an act of dishonesty in business, may be utterly reckless as to doing him wrong by an unkind remark.*<sup>19</sup> Before God, we are accountable for our thoughts, words and deeds.

Gill adds: *who is Lord over us? which is the very language and conduct of antichrist, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God (2Thess. 2:3–4—Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God); and is indeed the language of the hearts and lives of all wicked and ungodly men, sons of Belial, men without any yoke or restraint; who walk, and are resolved to walk, after the imagination of their own evil hearts; not knowing the Lord, and being unwilling to obey him, or to be restrained by him (Ex. 5:2—But Pharaoh said, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, and moreover, I will not let Israel go.")*<sup>20</sup>

**Application:** Lack of authority orientation has been one of the greatest ills of American society since the 60's. For some people, every authority figure must prove himself repeatedly to receive any respect; in life, we sometimes just do not have that kind of time. When a teacher is not given immediate respect and deference, then there is time lost which could be spent on learning. When a policeman's authority is not respected, lives are lost. One of the recent news stories from New York City is a man who was shot by 4 police officers the night before his wedding as he charged at them in a car; had he learned from his mother to respect police, that man would be alive today—no question. There are athletes who do not respect their coaches, soldiers who do not respect their officers, and a people who do not respect their president. There is a price to be paid for lack of authority orientation. This doesn't mean that you cannot question authority nor does it mean that you cannot disagree with those who have authority over you; but, you begin by giving due respect to authority, you don't begin by requiring every authority figure to prove him or herself to you—that is pure arrogance.

<sup>19</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:4.

<sup>20</sup> Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:4 (passages added by me).



**Application:** It is interesting that those who do not respect authority, believe that their authority should be respected; they believe that their opinions are correct and should be recognized as such; and they abhor it when someone disrespects them.

Matthew Henry sums up v. 4: *When the enemies of God, and religion, and religious people, are impudent and daring, and threaten to run down all that is just and sacred, then the times are very bad, when proud sinners have arrived at such a pitch of impiety as to say, "With our tongue will we prevail against the cause of virtue; our lips are our own and we may say what we will; who is lord over us, either to restrain us or to call us to an account?"*<sup>21</sup>

Jude speaks of the end times, which sounds very much like the previous few verses: **It was about such men also that Enoch, the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied when he said: "See! The Lord comes with myriads of His people to execute judgment upon all, to convict all the godless of their godless deeds which in their godlessness they have committed, and of all the harsh things that godless sinners have said against Him." These persons are grumblers, ever complaining about their lot. They live to satisfy their evil passions, their lips boast arrogant things, and they flatter others for personal gain** (Jude 14–16—Williams NT).

**"From devastation of poor, from clamor of destitute [ones], now I rise up," says Y<sup>e</sup>howah  
"I will place in deliverance he blows to him.**

Psalm  
12:5

**"On account of the oppression of the grace oriented [or, poor] [and] on account of the clamor of the destitute, I will now arise," says Y<sup>e</sup>howah,  
"[and] I will place [him] into the safety [or, deliverance] he pants [after] for [or, for which he longs]."**

**Because of the oppression of the grace oriented believer and because of the crying out of the destitute,  
I will now arise," says the Lord, "and I will put [him] into a place of safety that he desires."**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Dead Sea Scrolls	["Because of the oppression of the poor, because of the groaning of the needy—now I will rise] up," says the LORD, "[for the right]eous; I will pla[ce (them) in the safety for which they yearn.]" Bear in mind that what is in the brackets is assumed to be in the Dead Sea Scrolls (it is unreadable). The phrase <i>for the righteous</i> is not found in the MT or in the LXX.
Latin Vulgate	"Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan, I will now arise," says the LORD; "I will place him in the safety for which he longs."
Masoretic Text	From devastation of poor, from clamor of destitute [ones], now I rise up," says Y <sup>e</sup> howah "I will place in deliverance he blows to him.
Peshitta	Because of the oppression of the poor and the groans of the needy, now I will arise, says the LORD, and I will bring salvation openly.
Septuagint	Because of the misery of the poor, and because of the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, says the Lord, I will set <i>them</i> in safety; I will speak <i>to them</i> thereof openly.
Significant differences:	Given the Latin and the Dead Sea Scrolls, it appears as though the final phrase should be <i>for which he desires [yearns]</i> . There are a variety of ways that the

<sup>21</sup> Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:1–8.

individual words can be rendered throughout the rest of the verse, and the translations appear to be in general agreement elsewhere.

### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	But you, LORD, tell them, "I will do something! The poor are mistreated and helpless people moan. I'll rescue all who suffer."
Good News Bible (TEV)	"But now I will come," says the LORD, "because the needy are oppressed and the persecuted groan in pain. I will give them the security they long for."
<i>The Message</i>	Into the hovels of the poor, Into the dark streets where the homeless groan, God speaks: "I've had enough; I'm on my way To heal the ache in the heart of the wretched."
New Jerusalem Bible	'For the poor who are plundered, the needy who groan, now will I act,' says Yahweh, 'I will grant salvation to those who sigh for it.'
New Living Testament	The LORD replies, "I have seen violence done to the helpless, and I have heard the groans of the poor. Now I will rise up to rescue them, as they have longed for me to do."

### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	Because of the crushing of the poor and the weeping of those in need, now will I come to his help, says the Lord; I will give him the salvation which he is desiring.
Complete Apostles' Bible	Because of the misery of the poor, and because of the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, says the Lord, I will set them in safety; I will speak <i>to them</i> openly.
<i>God's Word</i> <sup>TM</sup>	"Because oppressed people are robbed and needy people groan, I will now arise," says the LORD. "I will provide safety for those who long for it."
HCSB	"Because of the oppression of the afflicted and the groaning of the poor, I will now rise up," says the LORD. "I will put in a safe place the one who longs for it."
JPS (Tanakh)	"Because of the groans of the plundered poor and needy, I will now act," says the LORD. "I will give help," He affirms to him. [The meaning of this final line in the Hebrew is uncertain].
NET Bible <sup>®</sup>	"Because of the violence done to the oppressed, because of the painful cries of the needy, I will spring into action," says the LORD. "I will provide the safety they so desperately desire."

### Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Now will I arise, says the Lord, because the poor are oppressed, because of groans of the needy; I will set him in safety <i>and</i> in the salvation for which he pants.
Bullinger (text/interpretation)	For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now I will arise, says Jehovah; I will set him [i.e., <i>each one</i> ] in safety; he blows upon [i.e., <i>he despises</i> ] it [i.e., <i>the oppression</i> ].
Updated <i>Emphasized Bible</i>	Because of violence done to the poor, Because of the crying of the needy Now I will arise! I may Yahweh say, "I will place [him] in safety—let him puff at him [or, <i>he pants for it</i> ]!"
English Standard Version	"Because the poor are plundered, because the needy groan, I will now arise," says the LORD; "I will place him in the safety for which he longs."
New King James Version	"For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy,

Now I will arise," says the LORD;  
 "I will set *him* in the safety for which he yearns."  
 WEB "Because of the oppression of the weak and because of the groaning of the needy,  
 I will now arise," says Yahweh; "I will set him in safety from those who malign him."  
 Young's Updated LT Because of the spoiling of the poor, Because of the groaning of the needy, Now do  
 I arise, says Jehovah, I set in safety *him who* breathes for it.

**What is the gist of this verse?** It appears as though Jehovah will place the poor and the needy in a safe place that they long for.

The translation of this verse, and therefore, the interpretation, is quite difficult, despite the agreement that we find above.

In any case, this begins a quote from God, as will be clear in this verse, and is quite interesting that here, and in many places throughout the Bible, a writer speaks for God or from God's viewpoint. People disparage the Bible for a variety of reasons, and some even for passages like this. However, it is amazing that, in Scripture, a huge variety of men, over hundreds of years, took the same liberty. It would appear to be a very random selection of men, if one were to view Scripture impartially (an approach which is almost impossible for anyone to take; a huge number of people have made up their minds, with or without research, that the Bible either *is* or *is not* the Word of God). We have several military leaders, priests, shepherds, political leaders who seem to come from a variety of backgrounds, and suddenly come onto the scene, and they all propose to be speaking from divine viewpoint. Furthermore, their pictures of God coincide, despite their disparate backgrounds and personalities. Contrast this with the Muslim world, where, after having received their Scriptures from Mohammed, and after bastardizing Old Testament Scriptures in order to conform to their philosophy, are unable to come to any sort of consensus. We have radical and non-radical versions of Islam, and we have one group of Muslims killing a multitude of people, which is primarily other Muslims. They already have an accepted authority, and they cannot come to an agreement. Even *Christian* groups today vary widely on their interpretation of Scripture (although, we tend to be less likely to blow ourselves up in the sanctuary of a group with whom we disagree); yet the original writers continue to present God as perfect righteousness, perfect justice, omnipotent and omnipresent, a God of love. The God of the Bible is the Creator of all things, yet He is specially connected to Israel. If we were to take the fundamental principles of Bible doctrine, we could go to any one of these writers and find these principles as their core beliefs. I've spent years in the book of 1 Samuel, and it is clear, again and again, even in a narrative format, Who God is and how He interacts with His people, Israel.

To me, this is fascinating. This is one of the reasons I have, on several occasions, gone back and approached the **Doctrine of Inspiration**. The variety of backgrounds, the variety of men who composed Scripture, who do so in a variety of circumstances, all lend themselves to a presentation of the same God of justice, a God Who loves us, and God Who has provided for us in every way, despite our continued rebellion against Him. To me, it is absolutely fascinating that so many would claim to speak for God, and still, present God consistently, and still present themselves as failed men. Every person who writes Scripture is a man with an old sin nature and, when it comes to presenting himself in Scripture, he so evaluates himself. In our examination of David in the book of Samuel, we see him warts and all. There is no doubt about it—David was a great man of great spiritual integrity, and yet, he was a man who had feet of clay, who failed again and again and again. Yet, every time, David got up and moved forward spiritually. And God the Holy Spirit allowed David to speak for Him, God the Holy Spirit spoke through David.

I personally spend hours every day examining the Word of God, and I record what I believe to be the proper interpretation of each word, verse and passage which I examine. There are times that I am quite pleased with the result and times when it does not seem to come together as a coherent whole or a verse seems to make little sense. In those cases, I endeavor to give what I believe is an accurate explanation, and when I am uncertain, I general caveat my explanation or offer alternative approaches. I've done this writing for 12 years now, and, at no point, apart from the backing of Scripture, would I purport to speak for God, or to quote God and then to throw out some random sentence which just came out of my mind. V. 5—these are the words of God, as it says—and we can examine and extrapolate principles from these words, but no way would I begin pretending that God is

speaking through me, saying this or that. Yet, men of Scripture did just that very thing. Not only does David give us an accurate representation of men during this particular part of his life, but he offers up God’s promise to us as well, as spoken by God.

Psalm 12:5a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong’s Numbers
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, off, out from, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong’s #4480 BDB #577
shôd (שׁוֹד אוֹ שׁוֹדָה) [pronounced <i>showd</i> ]	<i>havoc, (domestic) violence, devastation, ruin, national disaster [unrest]; intense unrest [street rioting, looting]; general lawlessness; oppression; desolation, destruction</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong’s #7701 BDB #994
<p>My feeling is that this would refer to intense national unrest, such as street rioting and looting, and general lawlessness. This works well with Isa. 51:19 Ezek. 45:9 Joel 1:15 Habak. 1:3, and less well with Psalm 12:5 Prov. 24:2. To grasp why it works with one and not another, civil unrest and strife was not as often the cause in the old world for rioting, looting and rape. These things usually accompanied attacks from without.</p>			
<p>The homonym means <i>breast, bosom, teat</i>. Strong’s #7699 BDB #993 &amp; #994.</p>			
ʿânîy (עֲנִיִּים) [pronounced <i>gaw-NEE</i> ]	<i>poor, afflicted; humble, grace oriented; those in circumstances of humiliation and poverty</i>	masculine plural adjective (functions here as a noun)	Strong’s #6041 BDB #776

**Translation:** “On account of the oppression of the grace oriented [or, poor]... The masculine singular construct found here sometimes indicates national unrest, which would include possibly rioting and looting. I don’t know if we have anything in the history of the Jewish people which would suggest this kind of action; I just don’t picture them rioting in the streets like the Watts riots, for instance (although, for their day and time, the unrest may seem to be quite radical. This word can also mean *unrest, oppression, and destruction*. Therefore, we may more reasonably be speaking of the *oppression of the poor (or, the grace oriented)*. The preposition found here can mean *on account of, because*. Although the construct can have several meanings, the masculine plural adjective here is not generally found used other than for *the poor, the afflicted, the humble, the grace oriented, the impoverished*.

Now, recall how this psalm has begun: David calls out to God, for the godly man seems to have disappeared, and how God is going to cut off all those who flatter. Suddenly, we are dealing with the *oppression of the afflicted*.

**Application:** I have to be careful in exploring this subject: there are situations where those in power exploit their power and take advantage of others. In Israel, families were to retain certain blocks of land, and, even if they lost these tracts of land due to mismanagement, bad luck or neglect, God set up a system where their land was restored to their family after 49 years. So, when you bought or took the land of one family, even in a legitimate way, this land had to be returned to that family every 49 years. Now, it is possible that it was not, and that is the oppression which is spoken of. It is possible that those who had financial dealings with their fellow Jews cheated them (for instance, charged them interest on a loan; Jews were not to charge other Jews interest).

**Application:** Now, there are companies which certainly exploit the poor and there are individuals today which exploit the poor; this does not mean that every large business or every successful businessman is guilty of doing this. Loyalty is a two-way street, and a business owner should be loyal to his employees, just as they should be

loyal to their company. This does not mean that the government needs to step in and set up specific percentages and ratios of profit to wages or anything like that. However, this definitely means that the owner of a company needs to look out for his employees; which would include paying them a decent wage, making the workplace safe, and being mindful of their individual situations. An executive should be able to do this and still maintain a decent salary for himself (which can even seem to some to be extraordinary). When this does not occur, as we have found, other groups—e.g., unions—step in, and they can throw things way out of wack.

We may have a harder time, in this generation in the United States, understanding this verse. There are very few true poor in the United States. Now, of course, according to government numbers, we have a huge population of those living below the poverty line, but these include an overwhelming percentage of people who receive food stamps, section 8 housing vouchers, and are the recipients of a number of governmental programs. I've been inside their houses, and the sheer number of possessions which they own is surprising, when I compare them to what my family had when I was growing up. Almost all of them own large screen televisions, a small library of dvd's, a vehicle, and live in a house which I worked for years in order to live in a house that size. Quite frankly, I have no idea as to how many truly destitute people that we have in the US; how many are truly poor.

We do have homeless people, but these are not people who work—for the most part (obviously, there are going to be exceptions here)—so, these are not people who are being oppressed or exploited here. So, again, it is more difficult for us to understand this concept.

There is the liberal myth that there are two America's, and you have two huge populations of people, some of whom are doing very well and the other group who are oppressed, poorly paid, living in great poverty, etc., but, as I have pointed out, the percentage of truly poor in the United States, as I write this, is extremely small, and government programs provide for a great many of them. In fact, in many cases, the government programs rob many of these people of their will to work. I suggested to one family that I know, that she get a job or that her teenage son mow lawns, and she called me racist and told me that she was not going to make her son into a slave. When the government provides too much, then there is little motivation to work (don't misunderstand me in this point; many of those who receive government aid do have jobs). But, my point is, we have a more difficult time understanding this verse in the United States. However, we are coming to a point where a large segment of our population, the baby boomers, are reaching retirement age, and there is going to be fewer people paying taxes, which means fewer government programs, which could cause a number of people to become impoverished in the short span of a decade or so. I am not saying that this could happen, as our nation has been graced out by God again and again. So, in order to understand this verse, we have to think of those who are truly destitute, who have few if any options, and who are taken advantage of, oppressed, and/or exploited.

We do have this sort of thing taking place in huge quantities in other countries. So, we have to understand it more theoretically than through our own experience (that could change at any point in time; I write this in the year 2007, after the US has enjoyed several decades of great prosperity).

Barnes offers this explanation: *For the oppression of the poor – That is, on account of the wrong done to the poor in the manner specified above – by the abuse of the power of speech. On account of the slanders uttered against them, or the frauds perpetrated on them by the abuse of this power. The reference is to the wrongs done when no confidence could be placed in men's words; when they uttered words of "vanity" and "flattery" Psalm 12:2; when promises were made only to be broken, and obligations assumed never to be fulfilled. In such a state of things the "poor" were the most likely to suffer. In performing service for others – in daily labor on a farm or in a mechanical employment – they would depend for support, on the promises made by their employers; and when their pay was withheld, they and their families must suffer.*<sup>22</sup>

Another way to understand this is, those who are grace oriented are being oppressed. This is easier to understand. In the United States, where something like 80–90% of the people believe in God,<sup>23</sup> and about 80%

<sup>22</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

<sup>23</sup> I write this in 2007 and the stats for the past 10 years show a quick decline from 94% in 1998 to 82% in 2006



of the American population identifies themselves as Christians, yet, the one group which tends to receive a great deal of slander and negative speech is Christians. Rarely is a Christian ever portrayed as intelligent, open-minded, articulate, introspective, intellectually curious, etc. This occurs in a culture which is overwhelmingly Christian; imagine how we would be portrayed if our numbers were much smaller. Satan despised the believer and would do anything within his power to attack believers. Therefore, we should not be surprised when believers are slandered, defamed, ridiculed, persecuted or oppressed. In most Arabic nations, even if being a Christian is not against the law, Christians are likely to find themselves persecuted.

Now, lets bring this back around to David writing this psalm. I don't know of a period of time in David's life where he would have been persecuted for believing in Jesus Christ. The only time this might have been an issue is when David was young and apparently somewhat of an outcast within his own family. However, just as when he was persecuted by King Saul, there is no indication in Scripture that this had to do with David believing in Jehovah Elohim. It may have, but I cannot find any indication of this in my most detailed examinations of the historical narratives of these two time periods. Similarly, I do not find any indication that David was ever oppressed as a poor man. This suggests a couple of possibilities: (1) David did not write this psalm (which is apparently the view of some, despite his name being found in the inscription); or, (2) David was inspired by God the Holy Spirit to include this verse, even though it was not directly David's experience. That is, despite the fact that David had not been persecuted, defamed or oppressed for believing in Jesus Christ, he sees this as a possible experience for some believers under some circumstances. Most of us have not been persecuted specifically for believing in Jesus Christ, although, no doubt, there have been demonic attacks launched against us for that reason. However, Israel, as a nation, would face great oppression for its relation to Jehovah Elohim; believers in certain nations and during specific periods of time face persecution for their faith in Christ Jesus; therefore, I believe what is happening here is the latter option: much of this psalm is personal to David, even though this particular verse is not. However, writing under the inspiration of God the Holy Spirit, David includes these words which refer to the oppression and persecution of the grace oriented throughout history.

Psalm 12:5b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	from, off, out from, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ʾānāqāh (אֲנָקָה) [pronounced uh-naw-KAW]	clamor; crying; groaning; lamenting	feminine singular construct	Strong's #603 BDB #60
This is a homonym for some kind of a lizard or reptile, so named for the sound it makes (although the LXX and the Vulgate render this <i>shrew-mouse</i> ). Strong's #604 BDB #60.			
The NET Bible® gives us more information about the use of this particular word: <i>Elsewhere in the psalms this noun is used of the painful groans of prisoners awaiting death (Psalm 79:11 102:20). The related verb is used of the painful groaning of those wounded in combat (Jer. 51:52 Ezek. 26:15) and of the mournful sighing of those in grief (Ezek. 9:4 24:17).</i> <sup>24</sup>			
ʾēb̄yōn (אֲבִיּוֹן) [pronounced eb̄-ve-YOHN]	destitute, in want or need [of food, clothing, shelter, money], needy, poor, bankrupt	masculine plural singular noun/adjective	Strong's #34 BDB #2

<sup>24</sup> The Net Bible®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 12:5 (footnote).



## Psalm 12:5b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
This second word can also be applied to those without the means to secure their own salvation; they are the slaves on the slave market of sin, unable to purchase their own freedom. This does not mean that they are <i>spiritually destitute</i> or <i>spiritually bankrupt</i> , per se; but simply lack the <i>inherent</i> means to secure a place with God and to grow spiritually.			

**Translation:**...[and] on account of the clamor of the destitute,... We understand the meaning of the previous phrase based upon this phrase, as it does not have a number of different meanings; here we have the *clamor* or *crying of the destitute* (*needy, poor*).

The idea is, during times of national degeneracy, the poor and needy find themselves in even more desperate straights.

As you can see, I have had no little difficulty in interpreting this particular verse. Are we dealing with believers? Are we dealing with mature believers? Are we dealing with the poor and the destitute? I believe that I have presented both sides in v. 5a—I approached this as if we are speaking of the poor and I approached this as if we are speaking of the grace oriented. In poetry and prophetic writings, it is common to find passages which have more than one meaning. That being said, we find these two words—*the poor and the destitute*—placed together over and over again in the Law and elsewhere (Deut. 15:11 24:14, Job. 24:4, 14, Psalm 9:18 12:5 35:10 37:14 40:17 70:5 72:4, 12–13 74:21 82:4 86:1 109:16, Psalm 109:22 113:7 Prov. 30:14 31:9, 20 Isa. 14:30 25:4 32:7 41:17 Jer. 22:16, Ezek. 16:49 18:12 22:29 Amos 4:1 8:4 8:6). In fact, these words occur together so often, that I think this requires me to examine the **Doctrine of the Poor and the Needy**. To give you the skinny on these two terms, they have two sets of meanings: (1) those who are temporally impoverished and (2) those who are believers with some doctrine (the grace-oriented ones) and those who recognize that they do not have the wherewithal within themselves to save themselves (the needy). That essentially sums up this doctrine, where these ideas are pursued more carefully.

We need to take in the entire Bible and not simply the parts which fit a liberal or a conservative agenda. There were provisions for debt relief, which did not include going bankrupt. When a person got into debt, they had the opportunity to sell themselves into slavery in order to pay off their debt (which is an outstanding idea, in my opinion). Obviously, when a person becomes a servant, then there is a tremendous potential for abuse, and perhaps this is to what this refers. On the other hand, a servant can be treated well and fairly, and things can be quite different. At the time of the Civil War, several things happened in the south which some do not realize. Stonewall Jackson and Robert E. Lee, if I recall correctly, set their slaves free, in order to make it clear that they were fighting for state's rights and not for slavery. Other slave owners left their women, children and plantations in the charge of their slaves, as they trusted them that much. Of course, there were certainly some slaves who had been mistreated, and those no doubt left when they had the chance.

## Psalm 12:5c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿattāh (הַתָּאָה) [pronounced <i>gáht-TAWH</i> ]	<i>now, at this time, already</i>	adverb of time	Strong's #6258 BDB #773

**Psalm 12:5c**

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
qûwm (קוּמ) [pronounced <i>koom</i> ]	<i>to stand, to rise up, to get up; to establish, to establish a vow, to cause a vow to stand, to confirm or to fulfill a vow</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6965 BDB #877
ʾamar (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>aw-MAHR</i> ]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
YHWH (יְהוָה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i> ]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

**Translation:** ...I will now arise," says Y<sup>e</sup>howah... God now enters into the picture. He has already said that He will cut off the sycophants of the land; now He will rise up or he will vow to do something more. Since God is a spirit, this is an anthropopathism; God does not actually stand up or rise up. However, this indicates that His involvement is going to become more apparent to mankind; in particular, to the *poor and the needy*.

**Application:** There will be times when we find ourselves under great pressure, where there appear to be no human solutions. God periodically places us into these situations, and then He allows some time for these things to percolate, so to speak. However, at some point in time, He will arise; He will step in and take care of the things which we cannot take care of.

**Psalm 12:5d**

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shîyth (שִׁיַּת) [pronounced <i>sheeth</i> ]	<i>to put, to set, place; to appoint; to arrange, to set in order; to found; to station</i>	1 <sup>st</sup> person singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7896 BDB #1011
<p>Gesenius tells us that shîyth means ❶ <i>to set up</i> that which is supposed to be upright; ❷ <i>to place</i> or <i>to put</i> something where it properly belongs, ❸ <i>to put</i> in the sense of <i>directing</i> or <i>turning</i> in some direction, ❹ <i>to make</i> or <i>to render</i> when followed by an accusative or an accusative with the lamed or bêyth prepositions; and ❺ more rarely <i>to make, to prepare</i> (for someone) when followed by a dative and even <i>to give</i>. My thinking is that with this verb you are placing something or doing something to something to make it the way it is supposed to be. Something should properly be upright, so you set it upright. Something should be turned in a specific direction, so you turn it in that direction.</p>			
b <sup>e</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b<sup>eh</sup></i> ]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
yêsha <sup>h</sup> (יְשָׁה) [pronounced <i>YAY-shah<sup>h</sup></i> ]	<i>deliverance; aid; salvation; safety, welfare</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3468 BDB #447

**Translation:**..."[and] I will place [him] into the safety [or, deliverance]... We are told here that God will deliver or place someone or something into safety, although we do not have an object here, which is why the next phrase is interpreted as the object.

Clarke puts a whole different spin on this verse, by placing it in a specific period of time: *For the oppression of the poor* - This seems to refer best to the tribulations which the poor Israelites suffered while captives in Babylon. The Lord represents himself as looking on and seeing their affliction; and, hearing their cry, he determines to come forward to their help. *Now will I arise* - I alone delivered them into the hands of their enemies, because of their transgressions; I alone can and will deliver them from the hands of their enemies; and the manner of their deliverance shall show the power and influence of their God.<sup>25</sup> Now, whereas I like this interpretation, the problem with applying it here is, this is a psalm written for the Choirmaster and there are musical specifications suggested by the writer of the psalm. Furthermore, it is said to be a psalm of David. In case you don't have the time line in your mind, the captivity of Babylon occurs several centuries after the reign of David. So this interpretation, although it makes sense, would have to be a prophetic application. David may be applying this to his own time, but God the Holy Spirit is looking down the road a few centuries, to where Israel's poor are truly oppressed as a whole, and when God would, at some point, arise, and deliver them to a place of safety (back into the Land of Promise).

**Application:** Being in the United States, very few of us have ever lived under oppression; we have no clue as to what real poverty is like. However, we have been under great stress and pressure at times; we have all been in difficult straits; and we have all had problems that seemed to be without answers; it is in situations like these, when there are no human solutions, that we look toward God to step in, to arise, and to deliver us to a place of safety. Most of us will be in situations like this.

Psalm 12:5d			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
pûwach (פּוּחַ) [pronounced poo-AHKH]	to blow [through, upon, against, out]; to utter; to pant, to hasten; to rail against, to reproach	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #6315 BDB #806
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l']	to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to	directional preposition with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

The panting here may represent huffing and puffing as you run after something? Gesenius offers 5 sets of definitions under the Hiphil of the Hebrew verb, all given above, and not one of them seems to fit. The Latin Vulgate and the Dead Sea Scrolls seem to agree that this final phrase should be *for which he longs* [referring back to the poor and destitute longing for salvation or deliverance].

I'm not the only person who struggled with the end of this verse; Barnes writes: *Prof. Alexander renders this, "I will place in safety him that shall pant for it." Gesenius renders it, "whom they puffed at; that is, the oppressed." The language in the original is difficult. It may mean either "he pants for it," or "he puffs at him;" and the meaning can only be determined by the connection. That would rather seem to be what is indicated in our common version; to wit, that the persons referred to as oppressing the poor and needy, "puffed" at them; that is, they looked upon them with contempt, and felt that with a puff of their breath they could blow them away. They regarded them as insignificant and worthless. By this construction, also, the connection with the main statement will be best preserved - that the injury referred to in the psalm was done by "words," by the breath of the mouth - thus indicating that by a "word" or a "breath" they could destroy them.*<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

<sup>26</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:5.

**Psalm 12:5d**

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
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The NET Bible® offers its explanation here: *“I will place in deliverance, he pants for it.” The final two words in Hebrew comprise an asyndetic relative clause, “the one who pants for it.” “The one who pants” is the object of the verb “place” and the antecedent of the pronominal suffix (in the phrase “for it”) is “deliverance.” Another option is to translate, “I will place in deliverance the witness for him,” repointing [the Hebrew verb] (a Hiphil imperfect from “To pant”) as a noun meaning “witness.” In this case the Lord would be promising protection to those who have the courage to support the oppressed in the court of law. However, the first part of the verse focuses on the oppressed, not their advocates.*

Again, it may be simpler to simply accept the Latin and the Dead Sea Scrolls as being correct here, and to understand this to mean *for which he longs*.

**Translation:** *...he pants [after] for [or, for which he longs].* This is an odd verb to find here, and it actually reads, *he blows against it*. It is possible that the idea is, he pants after it—he desires a place of safety. I don't know if this is a stretch in terms of interpreting this verse, but it is how most interpret this verse. What possibly has happened is, there is an error in the Hebrew text, and the Latin and Dead Sea Scrolls represent the true text, *for which he longs*. Then the idea is, God will step in and provide them with the deliverance that they desire.

A good illustration of this verse would have been the exodus generation. These were poor and oppressed people whom the Egyptians exploited and violated. At a specific point in time, God did arise and God did deliver them.

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**Man is Preserved by the Word of God, though Lawless Men are Everywhere**

<p><b>Words of Y<sup>e</sup>howah, words pure; silver being refined in a furnace to the ground, being purified seven times.</b></p>	<p>Psalm 12:6</p>	<p><b>The words of Y<sup>e</sup>howah [are] pure words, [like] silver being refined in a furnace; [words] pertaining to the earth, having been purified seven times.</b></p>
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**Jehovah's promises are pure,  
like silver which has been refined;  
words of the earth,  
having been purified seven times.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

**Ancient texts:**

Masoretic Text	<p>Words of Y<sup>e</sup>howah, words pure; silver being refined in a furnace to the ground, being purified seven times.</p>
Septuagint	<p>The oracles of the Lord are pure oracles; as silver tried in the fire, proved <i>in a furnace of the earth</i>, purified seven times.</p>
Significant differences:	<p>There is an extra verb in the Greek, but it does not appear to alter the overall meaning.</p>

**Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

CEV	Our LORD, you are true to your promises, and your word is like silver heated seven times in a fiery furnace.
Good News Bible (TEV)	The promises of the LORD can be trusted; they are as genuine as silver refined seven times in the furnace.
<i>The Message</i>	God's words are pure words, Pure silver words refined seven times In the fires of his word-kiln, Pure on earth as well as in heaven.
New Jerusalem Bible	Yahwe's promises are promises unalloyed, natural silver which comes from the earth seven times refined.
New Living Testament	The LORD promises are pure, like silver refined in a furnace, purified seven times over.
Revised English Bible	The words of the LORD are unalloyed: silver refined in a crucible, gold purified seven times over. <i>Gold</i> is the probable reading; Hebrew reads <i>to the earth</i> .

**Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

Bible in Basic English	The words of the Lord are true words: like silver tested by fire and burned clean seven times.
JPS (Tanakh)	The words of the LORD are pure words, silver purged in an earthen crucible, refined sevenfold.
NET Bible®	The LORD's words are absolutely reliable. They are as untainted as silver purified in a furnace on the ground, where it is thoroughly refined.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

Bullinger (text/interpretation)	"The words of the LORD are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace; [ <i>words</i> ] of the earth (or, <i>pertaining to the earth</i> ), purified seven times." His explanation will be a part of the exegesis.
English Standard Version	The words of the LORD are pure words, like silver refined in a furnace on the ground, purified seven times.
Hebrew Names Version	The words of the LORD are flawless words, as silver refined in a clay furnace, purified seven times.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Sayings of Jehovah are pure sayings; Silver tried in a furnace of earth refined sevenfold.

**What is the gist of this verse?** God's words are pure like silver which has been refined seven times.

In the previous verse, when the poor have been oppressed, God has promised that He will arise; in this verse, we are told that we can depend upon His Word.

**Psalm 12:6a**

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾāmarōwth (אִמְרוֹת) [pronounced <i>uh-mawr-OHTH</i> ]	<i>words; promises; commandments</i>	feminine plural construct	Strong's #565 BDB #57

## Psalm 12:6a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i> ]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217

**Translation:** The words of Y<sup>e</sup>howah [are] ... The noun here could refer to *promises, words or commandments*, which can be quite different and change the thrust of the verse. In the next verse, we speak of God's protection, so I will go with *promises* here. The insertion of a verb is also a matter of interpretation.

This is in contrast to the words of men, which are spoken only to deceive. flatter and exploit.

## Psalm 12:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾāmərôwth (אֲמָרוֹת) [pronounced <i>uh-mawr- OHTH</i> ]	<i>words; promises; commandments</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #565 BDB #57
ṭâhôwr (טְהוֹר) [pronounced <i>taw-BOHR</i> ]	<i>clean, ceremonially clean; pure, physically pure (like pure gold)</i>	feminine plural adjective	Strong's #2889 & #2890 BDB #373

**Translation:** ...*pure words*,... The promises of God are seen as pure, and the word used here can mean *physically pure*, like metal which has been refined. Men say one thing, but they may mean something entirely different (for instance, men may be flattering you, but their intention is to exploit you). God's promises are accurate, true and are not designed to exploit or to use us. God does not have an exterior motive; there is not something else mixed in with what He has said to us. God's promises and words are contrasted with those of man in vv. 2–3.

Let's just take a few points on this:

### God's Words and Promises Contrasted with Man's Words and Promises

1. God's words are true; what man says may or may not be true.
2. God's promises are reliable; when God promises that He will do something, then we can depend upon Him to do it.
3. God does not flatter us in order to manipulate us or to exploit us.
4. God's promises are pure; He does not think one thing, but say another; He does not have a secret agenda for us which is beneficial to Him but not to us.
5. God's words are uncorrupted by sin, ulterior motive, or double-mindedness.

This is in contrast with man's words and flatteries, designed to manipulate or to exploit us.

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## Psalm 12:6c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
keṣeph (כֶּסֶף) [pronounced KEH-sef]	silver, money	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3701 BDB #494
tsâraph (צָרַף) [pronounced tzaw-RAHF]	to smelt, to refine, to assay, to test [the purity and the genuineness of a metal]	Qal passive participle	Strong's #6884 BDB #864
b <sup>o</sup> (בְּ) [pronounced b <sup>oh</sup> ]	in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
ʿălîyl (עֲלִיִּל) [pronounced guh-LEEL]	furnace, crucible; workshop	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5948 BDB #760
lâmed (לְ) [pronounced l <sup>o</sup> ]	to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to	directional preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿerets (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced EH-rets]	earth (all or a portion thereof), land	feminine singular noun; with the definite article	Strong's #776 BDB #75

**Translation:** ...[like] silver being refined in a furnace; [words] pertaining to the earth,... I have inserted the comparative adverb *like*, which many other translators have done. This does appear to be an analogy, since the promises of Jehovah are called pure in the previous portion of this verse. They are seen to be as pure as silver which has been refined in a furnace (or, crucible). I don't know why the crucible I specifically to said to be *on the ground*. Many take this to be an *earthen furnace*, although, quite frankly, I don't know what that means either.

This may not be that important, but let me present what others have said about this furnace to the ground:

### What is this Furnace to the Ground?

Commentator	Opinion
Barnes	<i>The word here rendered "furnace" properly means a workshop. Perhaps it corresponds nearly with our word "laboratory," as the term is now used by chemists. It evidently refers to some place where the metal was tried and purified. The words rendered "of earth" literally mean "on the earth," or "in the earth?" The language does not mean that the "furnace" was "made" of earth, as would seem to be implied in our version, but that the "furnace" or laboratory was erected on the earth, or in the earth. It may refer to something like a crucible placed on the ground, around which a fire of intense heat could be made. It is probable that some such structure would be made near the mines where ore was obtained, and that the ore would be thus purified from dross before it was removed.<sup>27</sup></i>

<sup>27</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:6.

## What is this *Furnace to the Ground*?

Commentator	Opinion
Keil and Delitzsch	As Olshausen observes on this subject, “Silver that is purified in the furnace and flows down to the ground can be seen in every smelting hut; the pure liquid silver flows down out of the smelting furnace, in which the ore is piled up.” For it cannot be ל of reference: “purified with respect to the earth,” since ארץ does not denote the earth as a material and cannot therefore mean an earthy element. <sup>28</sup> Apparently the idea is, the silver flows to the ground?

Obviously, not many commentators chose to comment on this.

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Clarke seems to be pretty confident of the equipment to which David refers: *[This is] a reference to the purification of silver by the cupel. This is a sort of instrument used in the purification of silver. It may be formed out of a strong iron ring or hoop, adjusted in width and depth to the quantum of silver to be purified, and rammed full of well pulverized calcined bone. The metal to be purified must be mingled with lead, and laid on the cupel, and exposed to a strong heat in an air furnace. The impurities of the metal will be partly absorbed, and partly thrown off in fume. The metal will continue in a state of agitation till all the impurities are thrown off; it will then become perfectly still, no more motion appearing, which is the token that the process is completed, or, according to the words of the text, is seven times, that is, perfectly purified.*<sup>29</sup>

More importantly, what sort of significance is a furnace of the earth or in reference to the earth? I believe the idea which David is getting across to us is, God’s words are designed for us here on earth; they have been purified in the furnace of the earth—they have been shown to be effective, meaningful, beneficial and pure, when believed on in this earth.

My explanation above was the best I could come up with; I liked it more than what I had read, but did not feel as though I tied it all together. Then I read Bullinger’s explanation. **Do not skip over Bullinger’s explanation;** this pulls everything together, and this verse makes sense, based upon his approach.

### Bullinger Applies Ellipsis to *Furnace to the Earth*

The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

Here there is an important Ellipsis. It has been a great difficulty with many to think that the LORD’s words should require purifying, especially after the declaration in the first part of the verse, that they are “pure.” What increases the difficulty is the fact that the word for earth is `erets (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced EH-rets], *the earth*: i.e., *the dry land* or *the world as created*, as in Gen. 1:1 (*In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth*). It is generally taken as though it were used of a crucible made of earth or clay, but in this case, it would be `ādâmâh (אֲדָמָה) [pronounced uh-daw-MAWH], which means *ground, soil, clay*; and not *erets*, which is *the whole earth*. Moreover, the lâmed preposition (ל) means *to* or *pertaining to*. It is the sign of the dative case [*to something, for something, on behalf of something*] and not of the genitive case [*of something*]. the Revisers note this and render it: “*As silver tried in a furnace on the earth,*” as though it was important for us to note that it is not *in* or *under* the earth! But this does not touch the real difficulty. This is removed only by correctly supply the *Ellipsis*, and repeating the noun “words” from the beginning of the verse.

<sup>28</sup> Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 12:5–6.

<sup>29</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:6.

### Bullinger Applies Ellipsis to *Furnace to the Earth*

Then, all is clear, and we not only may, but must then take the rest of the words in the vital sense. Thus: “**The words of the LORD are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace; [words] of the earth** (or, *pertaining to the earth*), purified seven times.”

That is to say, the words in which Jehovah has been pleased to make His revelation, are not the words of angels (1Cor. 13:1), nor the “**unspeakable words of Paradise**” (2Cor. 12:4), but they were words pertaining to man in this world—human words—but refined and purified as silver. Hence, in taking human language, there are many words which the Holy Spirit has not chosen, and which cannot be found in the Scriptures:

Then Bullinger cites some examples of this, something which had occurred to me while exegeting this psalm, but something which eluded me specifically at this verse. That is, as I examined this verse, this phenomena came into my mind, but I was unable to actually apply it. The idea is, there are words of the earth which God the Holy Spirit takes and uses in a different, *spiritual* sense; He refines these words seven times (indicating Godly perfection)—these words of the earth—and then uses them in a slightly different way.

That being said, let us return to Bullinger’s text:

Some are exalted to an altogether *higher* meaning, such as:

### Earthly Words Appropriated by God the Holy Spirit

ἀρετή (aretê), as man used it, meant merely *excellence* of any kind, *manhood, nobility, valor, prowess*. But, in the Scriptures, it is used in the higher sense of *glory* (Habak. 3:3), *praise* (Isa. 42:8, 12 43:21 63:7). And so in the New Testament (Philip. 4:8 1Peter 2:9 2Peter 1:3, 5).

ἦθος (êthos) was only the *haunt* of an animal, but it became *custom, morals, character*.

Some are used in a totally different sense from that in which they had ever been used before.

χορηγέω (chorêgeô) was simply *to furnish or lead a chorus*, but it was changed *to furnish, to supply*. 1Peter 4:11: **My God will supply all your needs.**

εὐαγγέλιον (euangelion) was merely *the dispatch* continuing the news, but it was used in the new sense of *the gospel* of God.

ἐκκλησία (ekklêsia) was used by the Greeks of any *assembly*, but especially of citizens, or as we should say of a selection from the, “burgesses.” The words means *an assembly of those called out, an elect assembly*.

Hence, it is used in the Septuagint of Israel as called out from and as being an election from the nations.

Then, it was used of the congregation worshipping at the Tabernacle as distinguished from the rest of the people.

In this sense, it is used in the Old Testament, the gospels, and partly in the Acts. But in the Pauline Epistles, the Holy Spirit uses this word and exalts it to a far higher meaning: *viz.*, of the special election from both Jews and Gentiles, forming them as members of Christ’s Mystical Body into a new *ecclesia* or *assembly*. This is a sense in which it had never been before used. In other words, this refers to the *church*, which is *His body*.

σωτηρία (sôtêria) was merely *preservation* or *deliverance* from danger, but in the Scriptures, it is *the salvation* of God.

παράκλητος (paraclêtos) was merely the *leal assistant* or *helper*. In the New Testament, there is one *Paraclêtos* within us that we may not sin (John 14:16, 26 15:26 16:7); and another *Paraclêtos* with the Father if we do sin (1John 2:1).

σκάνδαλον (skandalon) was used only of the *trigger* of a trap to catch animals; but in the New Testament, it is used in a new and moral sense, or that which causes any one to be caught or made to trip.

Other words were coined by the Holy Spirit Himself, and cannot be found in any human writings:

σκανδαλίζω (skandalizô) is a new word altogether. It is never used in classical Greek, it means *to cause to stumble or fall, to give cause of offense*.

ἐπιούσιος (epiousios) is a word used only by our Lord (Matt. 6:11 Luke 11:3) in the Lord’s Prayer, where it is rendered *daily*.

Hence the difficulty in interpreting this word, as there is no usage to help us. It is a question, therefore, of etymology. It is the preposition ἐπί (epi), *upon*, prefixed to the participle of a verb, but which verb? It cannot be the participle of the verb εἶμι (eimi), *to be*, for its participle is spelled very differently.<sup>30</sup> It must therefore be the participle of εἶμι (eimi), *to go, to come*, for its participle is οὔσα (ousa), and the combination of οὔσα and ἐπί would be ἐπιούσα, as used by our Lord. The word means, therefore, *coming upon or going upon*, and would refer either to bread for our *going or coming* or to the bread *coming or descending upon* us from heaven, as the manna descended and came down upon Israel (John 6:32–33).

Hence, it combines the two ideas of *heavenly* and *daily*, inasmuch as the manna not only came down from heaven, but did so every day, and on the strength of this, they journeyed. It is a word, therefore, of great fulness of meaning.

Now, quite frankly, I think that this is a secondary meaning of this verse, and not the primary one; however, the key here is the ellipsis, and I will, at the end of this verse, go back and reapply Bullinger’s approach, and it will all come together and make sense.

### Bullinger Applies Ellipsis to *Furnace to the Earth*

As I began to read Bullinger’s explanation, my jaw dropped, and it all made sense. These are things which I had struggled with in this psalm, and felt as though I really did not grasp what was being said here; but Bullinger pulls it all together into a nice, but not so neat, package.

Bullinger also organizes this psalm, which I will reproduce at the end of the entire exegesis.

*Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; pp 71–73. I did a little bit of editing.

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Now, let’s apply this information to this particular verse:

### Bullinger Organizes Psalm 12:6

Psalm 12:7	Organization
The words of Y <sup>e</sup> howah [are] pure words,	A   The words of Jehovah are pure
[like] silver being refined in a furnace;	B   They are like silver refined in a furnace
[words] pertaining to the earth,	A   These are even words used by God which are common to man (to the earth)
having been purified seven times.	B   Like silver which has been purified seven times. Actually, the two concepts are brought together here; silver is purified perfectly and words used by man are purified by God in Scripture.

<sup>30</sup> Bullinger gives the spelling, but the gist is, εἶμι is an irregular verb, so its participle is very different from what we have here.

When the verse is pulled apart like this, it is easier to see what should be supplied for the ellipsis.

Taken from *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 74 (severely edited).

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### Psalm 12:6d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
zâqâq (זָקַק) [pronounced zaw-KAHK]	<i>to be purified, to be refined</i> [used of metal and of wine]	Pual participle	Strong's #2212 BDB #279
shib <sup>e</sup> âthayim (שִׁבְעָתַיִם) [pronounced shib-ġaw-THAH-yihm]	<i>seven-fold, seven times</i>	feminine dual noun	Strong's #7659 BDB #988

**Translation:** ...[having been purified seven times](#). God's promises are like silver which has been purified seven times. The way a promise would be purified is, it has been believed and the promise has been fulfilled. The promise is therefore trustworthy, and one can take God at His Word. Again, the contrast is with word of men, which are lies, which are flattery, which are spoken in order to exploit or to manipulate. Their words are mixed with bad intentions toward you.

Barnes on God's promises being like silver that has ben purified seven times: *By passing it seven times - that is, very often - through the fire. The word "seven" in the Scriptures denotes a complete or perfect number, and is often used to denote frequency. The idea here would seem to be that the process was repeated until the silver became entirely pure. The sense is, that the words of the Lord are "perfectly pure." There is no admixture of falsehood in his statements; there is no deception in his promises; there is no flattery in what he says. This was the ground of confidence on the part of the psalmist - that while men (even those who professed to be good men) so failed that no reliance could be placed on their statements, the most perfect trust could be reposed on all the statements of God.*<sup>31</sup>

The NET Bible® also comments: *"[like] silver purified in a furnace of [i.e., "on"] the ground, refined seven times." The singular participle "refined" modifies "silver." The number seven is used rhetorically to express the thorough nature of the action. For other rhetorical/figurative uses of "seven times," see Gen. 4:15, 24 Psalm 79:12 Prov. 6:31 Isa. 30:26.*<sup>32</sup>

Now let's look at the verse as a whole, and supply the missing words as Bullinger would for this ellipsis. One might understand this verse in this way:

[The promises of Y<sup>e</sup>howah \[are\] pure promises,](#)  
[\[like\] silver being refined in a furnace;](#)  
[\[promises\] pertaining to the earth,](#)  
[having been purified seven times.](#)

The Hebrew noun can mean *words* but it can also refer to *promises, commandments*. God's promises and pure and His commandments are pure, even those promises which pertain to the earth. They are like silver which has been refined in a furnace; like silver which has been refined seven times.

<sup>31</sup> Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 12:6.

<sup>32</sup> *The Net Bible*®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 12:6.

By the way, God's words are more valuable than gold or silver (Psalm 18:7–10: The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb). The wisdom gained by God's words is more valuable than gold or silver (Prov. 8:10–11: Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold, for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her).

**You O Y<sup>e</sup>howah keep them,  
You guard us from the generation this to  
forever.**

Psalm  
12:7

**You, O Y<sup>e</sup>howah, will guard us [lit., *them*];  
You will watch over us from this generation  
forever,...**

**You, O Jehovah, will guard us,  
and You will watch over us in this generation and forever more...**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### **Ancient texts:**

Masoretic Text	You O Y <sup>e</sup> howah keep them, You guard us from the generation this to forever.
Peshitta	You will keep them, O LORD; You will preserve me and save me from this generation forever.
Septuagint	You, O Lord, will keep us, and You will preserve us, from this generation, and forever.

Significant differences: Again, we have the LXX and the Vulgate in agreement; this time it is about the first suffix.

#### **Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:**

CEV	You will protect us and always keep us safe from those people.
Good News Bible (TEV)	The wicked are everywhere, and everyone praises what is evil. Keep us always safe, O LORD, and preserve us from such people.
New Jerusalem Bible	You, Yahweh, will watch over them, you will protect them from that brood for ever.
New Living Testament	Therefore, LORD, we know you will protect the oppressed, preserving them forever from this lying generation,...

#### **Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):**

HCSB	You, LORD, will guard us; You will protect us from this generation forever.
NET Bible®	You, LORD, will protect them; you will continually shelter each one from these evil people,...

#### **Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	You will keep them and preserve them, O Lord; You will guard <i>and</i> keep us from this [evil] generation for ever.
NRSV	You O LORD, will protect us; you will guard s from this generation forever.
WEB	You will keep them, Yahweh, You will preserve them from this generation forever.
Young's Updated LT	You, O Jehovah, preserve them, You keep us from this generation to the age.



**What is the gist of this verse?** God preserves us forever.

Psalm 12:7a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿattâh (אַתָּה) [pronounced <i>ahT-TAW</i> ]	<i>you</i> (often, the verb <i>to be</i> is implied)	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #859 BDB #61
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i> ]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y<sup>e</sup>howah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
shâmar (שָׁמַר) [pronounced <i>shaw-MAR</i> ]	<i>to keep, to guard, to watch, to preserve</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect; with the 3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #8104 BDB #1036
The LXX and the Vulgate have the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix ( <i>us</i> ) here instead.			

**Translation:** *You, O Y<sup>e</sup>howah, will guard us* [lit., *them*];... There are some difficulties with the rendering here; the LXX has the suffix as a 1<sup>st</sup> person plural suffix. This would be expected, however, when a translator is trying to make the text easier to understand.

Barnes points out that the psalmist is simply referring back to the poor and the needy of v. 5.<sup>33</sup>

In any case, the idea is, God preserves those who are His.

Psalm 12:7b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nâtsar (נָצַר) [pronounced <i>naw-TSAR</i> ]	<i>to keep, to guard, to watch over, to protect</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal imperfect; with the 1 <sup>st</sup> person plural suffix	Strong's #5341 BDB #665
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i> ]	<i>from, off, out from, out of, away from, on account of, since, than, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
dôwr (דּוֹר) [pronounced <i>dohr</i> ]	<i>generation; race; people; age, period, time period [of a generation], a time slice</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #1755 BDB #189
zûw (זֶה) [pronounced <i>zoo</i> ]	<i>this; which, that, where</i>	both a demonstrative and relative pronoun; undeclinable	Strong's #2098 BDB #262

<sup>33</sup> This does not refer back to *words, promises*, as that is a feminine plural noun, and we have a masculine plural suffix here.

Psalm 12:7b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <sup>l</sup> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿôwlâm (עֹלָם) [pronounced <i>ô-LAWM</i> ]	<i>long duration, forever, perpetuity, antiquity, futurity</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5769 BDB #761
ʿôwlâm together with the lâmed preposition mean <i>forever</i> .			

**Translation:** ...You will watch over us from this generation forever,... God preserves those who are His forever. *This generation* refers to those to whom David first refers—those who lie and who flatter, but with ulterior motives; those who say whatever they want, without thought to their words. We are protected and guarded by God when in a world like this.

It would not hurt to see a few other verses where we are promised that God takes care of His own:

God Preserves His Own	
Citation	Text
1Sam. 2:9	He will guard the feet of his faithful ones, but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness, for not by might shall a man prevail.
Psalm 16:1	David prays <i>Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.</i>
Psalm 37:28	For the LORD loves justice; he will not forsake his saints. They are preserved forever, but the children of the wicked shall be cut off.
Psalm 37:40	The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they take refuge in him.
Psalm 121:8	The LORD will protect you in all you do, now and forevermore.
Psalm 145:20	The LORD protects those who love him, but he destroys all the wicked.
1Peter 1:3–5	Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

In all that you do, in all that you face, God knew about these things in eternity past and made provision for them.

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As Psalm 37:4–8 suggests: *Take delight in the LORD, and He will give you your heart's desires. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in Him, and He will act, making your righteousness shine like the dawn, your justice like the noonday. Be silent before the LORD and wait expectantly for Him; do not be agitated by one who prospers in his way, by the man who carries out evil plans. Refrain from anger and give up your rage; do not be agitated—it can only bring harm.*

Round about, malevolent ones walk  
as lifted up [is] vileness [or, *terror*] to sons of  
Adam.

Psalm  
12:8

...[even though] the malevolent prowl all  
around  
and [lit., *when*] vileness [or, *terror*] is exalted  
by [lit., *to, for*] the sons of man.

...even though the sons of men exalt that which is vile, and the malevolent prowl about everywhere.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

#### Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	The wicked walk round about: according to your highness, you have multiplied the children of men.
Masoretic Text	Round about, malevolent ones walk; as lifted up [is] vileness [or, <i>terror</i> ] to sons of Adam.
Peshitta	The wicked walk everywhere with contemptible pride like the children of Edom.
Septuagint	The ungodly walk around: according to Your greatness You have greatly exalted the sons of men.

Significant differences: There is considerable variation in this final verse. The Latin and Greek both add an additional phrase, which appears to be connected to what follows rather than to the first phrase. The Latin appears to have a different verb, where the sons of men are multiplied. The sense of the Hebrew seems to be reasonable, as long as this is taken along with the previous verse.

#### Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	But all who are wicked will keep on strutting, while everyone praises their shameless deeds.
<i>The Message</i>	From the wicked who collect honors For their wonderful lies.
New American Bible	On every side the wicked strut; the shameless are extolled by all.
New Jerusalem Bible	The wicked will scatter in every direction, as the height of depravity among the children of Adam.
New Living Testament	...even though the wicked strut about, and evil is praised throughout the land.
Revised English Bible	The wicked parade about, and what is of little worth wins general esteem.

#### Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	The sinners are walking on every side, and evil is honoured among the children of men.
Complete Apostles' Bible	The ungodly walk around; according to Your greatness You have greatly exalted the sons of men.
<i>God's Word</i> ™	Wicked people parade around when immorality increases among Adam's descendants.
HCSB	The wicked wander everywhere, and what is worthless is exalted by the human race.
JPS (Tanakh)	On every side the wicked roam when baseness is exalted among men. [The meaning of this last Hebrew phrase is uncertain].
NET Bible®	...for the wicked seem to be everywhere, when people promote evil.

The Scriptures 1998

The wrong walk around on every side, When worthlessness is exalted among the sons of men.

**Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:**

English Standard Version  
WEB

On every side the wicked prowl, as vileness is exalted among the children of man.  
The wicked walk on every side, When what is vile is exalted among the sons of men.

Young's Literal Translation

Around the wicked walk continually, According as vileness is exalted by sons of men!

**What is the gist of this verse?** In this world, there are wicket men who are everywhere, and they promote evil.

Psalm 12:8a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
çâbîyb (כָּבִיב) [pronounced saw <sup>b</sup> - VEE <sup>b</sup> V]	<i>around, surrounding, circuit, round about, encircle; all around; on every side</i>	adverb/preposition	Strong's #5439 BDB #686
BDB lists this as a substantive, but it tells us <i>where</i> the wicked walk (this word is used as an adverb and as a substantive). .			
r <sup>e</sup> shâ'îym (רְשָׁעִים) [pronounced r <sup>e</sup> -shaw- GEEM]	<i>malevolent ones, lawless ones, criminals, the corrupt; wicked, wicked ones</i>	masculine plural adjective (here, it acts like a noun)	Strong's #7563 BDB #957
hâlak <sup>e</sup> (הָלַךְ) [pronounced haw- LAHK <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>to go, to come, to depart, to walk [up and down, about]; to prowl; to go for oneself, to go about, to live [walk] [in truth]; to flow</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Hithpael imperfect; pausal form	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229

**Translation:** ...[even though] the malevolent prowl all around;... The words here are fairly simple, as is the construction. We have lawless men, corrupt men, wicked men, wandering everywhere.

This seems like a rather grim and depressing way to end a psalm. However, one must combine this with the previous verse, where God protects and preserves those who are His, which occurs despite the fact that this evil is all around.

Psalm 12:8b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kaph or k <sup>e</sup> (כ) [pronounced k <sup>e</sup> ]	<i>like, as, according to; about, approximately</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #453
rûwm (רוּם) [pronounced room]	<i>to lift up, to rise, to arise, to raise up, to grow; to be exalted, to become high, to become powerful; to be high an lofty; to be remote, to be in the far distance</i>	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7311 BDB #926

## Psalm 12:8b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
The kaph preposition, or k <sup>e</sup> (כ) [pronounced k <sup>e</sup> ], which means <i>like, as, according to</i> , when this is combined with an infinitive, it can also take on the meaning <i>as, often, when, as soon as</i> . It carries with it a temporal connotation.			
zûllûwth (זללוּת) [pronounced zool- LOOTH]	<i>vileness, worthlessness; terror, trembling; a tempest</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #2149 BDB #273
BDB offers the first two definitions (which seems to be followed by all of the translations which I have) and Gesenius offers the latter three. This word occurs in this psalm only.			
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l <sup>e</sup> )	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
bên (בְּנֵי) [pronounced bane]	<i>son, descendant</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #1121 BDB #119
ʾâdâm (אָדָם) [pronounced aw-DAWM]	<i>a man, a human being, mankind, Adam</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #120 BDB #9

**Translation:** ...and [lit., when] *vileness* [or, *terror*] is exalted by [lit., to, for] *the sons of man*. Although *sons of man* is not the subject here, I believe that it acts like the subject. The Qal infinitive construct plus the kaph preposition give us a temporal understanding of when this takes place—when do evil men prowl all around. This occurs when *vileness* is lifted up or exalted by men.

## An Addendum to Psalm 12

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It may be helpful to see this chapter as a contiguous whole:

A Complete Translation of Psalm 12	
A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase
Inscription	
To the preeminent one; on the octave [or, <i>sheminith</i> ]; a psalm of David.	To the one who is preeminent; on the octave; a Davidic psalm.
David Asks God to Preserve Him	
Preserve [us] [or, <i>Deliver (us)</i> ], O Y <sup>e</sup> howah, for the gracious [man] has come to an end; for those who are faithful have ceased [to be] from mankind [lit., <i>sons of man</i> ].	Preserve us, O Jehovah, for the gracious believer is no longer, for those who are faithful have ceased to be among men.

A Complete Translation of Psalm 12	
A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase
Everyone speaks lies [or, <i>emptiness</i> ] to his neighbor [or, <i>associate</i> ]; they speak with a double heart [and] flattering lips.	Everyone speaks lies and emptiness to his neighbor; they flatter them while thinking something else entirely.
God Intervenes	
May Y <sup>e</sup> howah remove all flattering lips, [and] tongues which boast great things, [and cut off those] who have said, “We will prevail because of our speech [lit., <i>tongue</i> ]; our lips [are] our own; who is our lord [lit., <i>lord to us</i> ]?”	May Jehovah cut down those with flattering lips and those whose tongues boast great things, and those who have said, “We will prevail by our speech; we can say whatever we want to say; no one is our master.”
On account of the oppression of the grace oriented [or, <i>poor</i> ] [and] on account of the clamor of the destitute, I will now arise,” says Y <sup>e</sup> howah “[and] I will place [him] into the safety [or, <i>deliverance</i> ] he pants [after] for [or, <i>for which he longs</i> ].”	Because of the oppression of the grace oriented believer and because of the crying out of the destitute, I will now arise,” says the Lord, “and I will put [him] into a place of safety that he desires.”
God Can Be Depended Upon Despite the Evil of Man	
The words of Y <sup>e</sup> howah [are] pure words, [like] silver being refined in a furnace; [words] pertaining to the earth, having been purified seven times.	Jehovah’s promises are pure, like silver which has been refined; words of the earth, having been purified seven times.
You, O Y <sup>e</sup> howah, will guard us [lit., <i>them</i> ]; You will watch over us from this generation forever, [even though] the malevolent prowl all around and [lit., <i>when</i> ] vileness [or, <i>terror</i> ] is exalted by [lit., <i>to, for</i> ] the sons of man.	You, O Jehovah, will guard us, and You will watch over us in this generation and forever more, even though the sons of men exalt that which is vile, and the malevolent prowl about everywhere.

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Now that we have all of this put together, let’s observe the organization of this psalm:

Bullinger’s Organization of Psalm 12	
Psalm	Bullinger’s Organization
Preserve [us] [or, <i>Deliver (us)</i> ], O Y <sup>e</sup> howah, for the gracious [man] has come to an end; for those who are faithful have ceased [to be] from mankind [lit., <i>sons of man</i> ].	A   Decrease of that which is good (v. 1)
Everyone speaks lies [or, <i>emptiness</i> ] to his neighbor [or, <i>associate</i> ]; they speak with a double heart [and] flattering lips.	B   Man’s words are false and phony (v. 2)



Bullinger's Organization of Psalm 12	
Psalm	Bullinger's Organization
May Y <sup>e</sup> howah remove all flattering lips, [and] tongues which boast great things, [and cut off those] who have said, "We will prevail because of our speech [lit., <i>tongue</i> ]; our lips [are] our own; who is our lord [lit., <i>lord to us</i> ]?"	b   Their end—they are cut off (vv. 3–4)
On account of the oppression of the grace oriented [or, <i>poor</i> ]	C   Oppression (v. 5)
[and] on account of the clamor of the destitute,	D   Sighing, clamoring (v. 5)
"I will now arise," says Y <sup>e</sup> howah,	D   I will arise (because of the sighing (v. 5)
"[and] I will place [him] into the safety [or, <i>deliverance</i> ] he pants [after] for [or, <i>for which he longs</i> ]."	C   I will deliver them from oppression (v. 5)
The words of Y <sup>e</sup> howah [are] pure words, [like] silver being refined in a furnace; [words] pertaining to the earth, having been purified seven times.	B   Jehovah's words are truth (v. 6)
You, O Y <sup>e</sup> howah, will guard us [lit., <i>them</i> ]; You will watch over us from this generation forever,	b   Those who are faithful; their end is preservation (v. 7)
[even though] the malevolent prowl all around and [lit., <i>when</i> ] vileness [or, <i>terror</i> ] is exalted by [lit., <i>to, for</i> ] the sons of man.	A   Increase of that which is evil (v. 8)
David's psalms tend to be very well organized, so it is nice to see when an exegete both recognizes and shares that organization with us.	
Taken from <i>Figures of Speech Used in the Bible</i> ; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 73 (I made a few minor changes).	

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