
Psalm 44

Psalm 44:1–26

Why Has God Forsaken Israel?

Outline of Chapter 44:

	Inscription
vv. 1–3	The psalmist knows what God did in the past
vv. 4–8	The psalmist calls upon his God to deliver him in his day
vv. 9–16	God has shamed Israel before the Gentiles
vv. 17–21	The pivot has not forgotten God
vv. 22–26	The pivot calls to God to raise them out of the dust

Charts and Maps

Introduction	The Interpretation of Judah's History Part I
v. 9	Why Is My Life Totally Screwed Up?
v. 21	Psalm 44:20–21
v. 22	The Interpretation of Judah's History Part II

Introduction: Originally, I was going to place this psalm at the end of Lev. 26, when Israel had not yet entered into the land. However, God, in that chapter, tells Israel what her future would be in the land. He lays down the warnings of what Israel could expect if the Jews transgressed His laws. In Psalm 44, written hundreds of years later, the psalmist recognizes that Israel is at a low point, spiritually speaking, and he reminisces of the time that God displaced the nations who occupied the Land of Promise and gave this land to Israel. He complains that it appears as though God has completely forsaken Israel. However, after reading Barnes' argument for where this psalm belongs in history, not only did he completely convince me, but logically placing the psalm at the end of 2Kings 23:30 seemed to be the only reasonable thing to do.

It appears as though this psalm was written during the dispersion by an advanced believer who was captured and enslaved by several other mature believers. What is confusing is why would such a psalm be dedicated to the choir director (we don't even know if such an office would have existed during the time of the dispersion. Famous exegetes have expressed similar views: Calvin, Venema, Dathe,¹ and Rosenmüller all saw this as occurring during the time that Antiochus Epiphanes, who made a bloody attack upon Jerusalem. However, the time frame for the attack of Antiochus Epiphanes was 67 B.C., which is not the proper time frame for Old Testament Scripture. Keil and Delitzsch place this psalm during the time of David, being written prior to Israel's overthrow of Edom. Their primary reason was that this was the only time in Israel's history when Israel was free of foreign religious influence.² DeWette places this prior to the Babylonian exile, either during the reign of Jehoiakim or Jehoiachin, both of whom were rulers when Nebuchadnezzar invaded Palestine. Tholuck places this during the time of Jehoiachin or Zedekiah, when Israel was invaded by Babylon, or when the captivity began.³ Keil and Delitzsch mention that there is a tradition which places this psalm during the time of the Maccabees, which is the intertestamental period, which is not a time when Scripture was written. Personally, I believe that it appears from this psalm as though Israel is

¹ Venema and Dathe, by the way, are two old Bible guys.

² See Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 5, pp. 319–320 for their full argument.

³ This information all came from *Barnes' Notes, Psalms; Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 16.

either occupied by enemies, recently defeated by enemies, or pushed out of the land altogether. The latter appears to be the most likely, as the psalmist speaks of Israel being scattered throughout the surrounding nations (v. 11).

One of the things which makes me very humble is, after I exegete a chapter of the Bible, as soon as I turn to someone like Barnes, he completely opens my eyes to several important considerations which did not occur to me as I exegeting the chapter. He both organizes and places this psalm, and then offers enough reason for me to change my placement of the psalm. I know that, apart from Barnes, and hundreds of others who have gone before, I would not do a tenth of the job necessary to exegete a verse. What Barnes very aptly explains is the occasion of the psalm without, at first, being particularly dogmatic about its exact time period. (1) *...it was a season of defeat and disaster, when the armies of Israel were discomfited* (vv. 9–10); (2) *...their armies and people were scattered among the heathen, and that the people were "sold" among them* (vv. 11–12); (3) *...they were made a reproach and a by-word among surrounding nations* (vv. 13–14); (4) *...this discomfiture and disgrace had befallen them in some place which might be called "the place of the jackal"* (v. 19); and (5) *...this had occurred at some time when the author of the psalm, speaking in the name of the people, could say that it was not on account of prevailing idolatry, or because, as a people, they had stretch out their hands to a strange god"* (vv. 17–18, 20).⁴ Barnes suggests that, given these facts, this might best be placed at the end of the reign of Josiah. Josiah instituted several reforms which temporarily removed idolatry from the land (2Kings 23:24), but this was not enough to placate Jehovah Elohim, Who was still angry with Jerusalem (2Kings 23:25). So that you understand what the deal is—external worship is not the key, but the heart of man. Certainly, demon worship could have been outlawed, but demon worship began because men in Israel were unbelievers. Removing demon worship did not suddenly change them into believers. King Josiah will soon be removed from Israel in a battle against Pharaoh Neco (2Kings 23:29). Barnes makes a compelling case for this time period, as this time period was immediately prior to the Babylonian captivity and that time period was filled with calamities that befell Israel.

Now, another option is that we take this to refer to the time of the exile of Judah. Then it is possible that the psalmist, in observing those around him, that they were not idolaters; however, this does not mean that was true of all Israel (we will discuss this later).

Barnes: *The psalm is an earnest appeal to God to interpose amid the calamities of the nation, and to arise for their defence and deliverance.* Then Barnes divides this psalm up into its component parts: I. In the past, God had played a significant part in the life of nation Israel. He had shown Himself to be a powerful God, able to carve a small nation out of a territory held by fierce heathen warriors. The psalmist mentioned this by way of argument—if this is how God treated Israel, then the psalmist invokes God to return to Israel and to bless her. Vv. 1–8. II. Then the psalmist gives the present condition of Israel, which was in a state of national disaster. Israel had become a laughingstock among the Gentile nations. *Their armies were turned back and plundered.* Some people found themselves sold into slavery and Gentiles did not take Israel seriously as a country ruled by God. Vv. 9–16. III. The psalmist then asks why has God chosen to treat Israel in this way? Israel is not a nation of idolaters. Israel is not serving some foreign god. However, God appears to be treating Israel as if that were the case. Vv. 17–22. IV. Finally, the psalmist appeals to God one last time for His gracious interference.⁵

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

The Interpretation of Judah's History Part I

Assuming that this psalm was written during the last years of Judah, there are therefore two interpretations of Judah's history during her last days prior to the Assyrian invasion which eventuated in the deportation of most of Judah.

⁴ Barnes' Notes, *Psalms; Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 16. Barnes called *the place of the jackal, the place of the dragon*, instead, but we will fix that in the exegesis of that verse.

⁵ This was quoted and paraphrased from Barnes' Notes, *Psalms; Volume 2*, reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 16.

1. What I had personally adhered to was that both the kings of Judah and the people of Judah had reached such a level of degeneracy that God finally removed them from the land because of this intense degeneracy. This appears to be the interpretation of most Bible scholars, who would quote 2Chron. 36:13–16 to support this view.
2. The second interpretation is that Josiah's reforms were real; the people of Judah responded favorably toward this spiritual renewal, and that the people remained spiritually focused from the time of Josiah until the deportation, during which time they were martyred and removed from the land. It was the leaders of Judah who rebelled against God (including even Josiah during the final days of his reign). One would support this view with Psalm 44 and 119.

I had personally believed in the first interpretation of history and did so all the way to v. 22 when the tenor of this psalm and Barnes' interpretation seemed to indicate that actually #2 was more accurate. Obviously, this will be discussed in more detail as we continue.

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

I had mentioned my appreciation for those who have gone before me earlier. As I write this, I have just finished the second wave of exegesis (I first translate the psalm, giving a bare-bones interpretation; then I go through the psalm again, examining all the related verses, and examine the commentaries of Barnes and the NIV Study Bible. Finally, I pick up a few miscellaneous books (about 30–40 of them) and scan them for additional information. In finishing this psalm, I had two problems (1) when was it actually written (and I am comfortable with the answer); and, (2) if I was correct as to the time it was written, why did God allow Israel to endure this suffering when much of Israel was born-again? And then J. Vernon McGee, in one sentence, explains it: *[This psalm has a] prophetic interpretation. This will be the final experience of the faithful remnant of Israel before their Messiah returns to deliver them.*⁶ This psalm describes in detail the intimate feelings of the faithful during the final seven years of human history.

With regards to style, the writer of this psalm has a reasonably easy vocabulary, and most of this psalm is going to be fairly easy to translate and straightforward in its interpretation. In fact, it is so easy, that of the twenty or so English translations that I consult, none of them varied from another in vv. 20–21.

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

Slavishly literal:

**To the end [or, choirmaster]—
to sons of Korah,
a maskil [or, an instruction].**

**To the director of music
an instructive psalm by the sons of Korah.**

Moderately literal:

Psalm
44 inscription **To the director [of music],
a instructive psalm of the sons of Korah.**

Let's first see what others did with this verse:

JPS (Tanakh)	For the leader. Of the Korahites. <i>A maskil.</i>
NASB	For the choir director. A Maskil of the sons of Korah.
NIV	For the director of music. Of the Sons of Korah. <i>A maskil.</i>
The Septuagint	For the end, a Psalm for understanding, for the sons of Core.
TEV	A poem by the clan of Korah.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	To the Overseer.—By sons of Korah. An Instruction.

⁶ J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Chapters 42–89*, ©1991 by J. Vernon McGee; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; p. 21.

This verse begins with the lamed preposition, the definite article and the Piel participle of *nâtsach* (נָצַח) [pronounced *naw-TZAHKH*], a word which means *pre-eminent, enduring*. It can refer to a person in a supervisory position (1Chron. 23:4 2Chron. 2:2, 18 34:13). Often, this position is related to music (1Chron. 15:21 Psalm 4:intro 5:intro 6:intro etc.). This is why we have such varied renderings as *overseer* (Young), *the music leader* (CEV), *choir director* (NASB, NLT), *choirmaster* (Owens), *leader* (NRSV, NEB, NAB) and *chief musician* (Rotherham). Strong's #5329 BDB #663. This could read: *To [or, for] the enduring [or, choir director]*. In case you are wondering, *enduring* may theoretically refer to someone with a long-term position.

The Greek takes this first line altogether differently. First of all, the preposition is *eis* (εἰς) [pronounced *ICE*], which means *into, to, toward*. *Eis* can also be used for an intention, purpose, aim or end, and therefore could be rendered *unto, in order to, for, for the purpose of, for the sake of, on account of*. Strong's #1519. We will take this to simply mean *to*, keeping the other meanings in the back of our mind. Then we have *to telos* (τὸ τέλος) [pronounced *TOH-TEHL-oss*], which means *limit, conclusion, result, end*. Strong's #5056. Arndt and Gingrich render this *in the end, finally, to the end, until the end*. In other words, the Greek does not have that this psalm is set apart for someone in particular, although I don't know if I have a clear fix on what the translators believed the Hebrew to read (my thinking is that they simply gave this a word-for-word translation). In other words, the Greek really does not help us at this point, except, perhaps, to lead us away from the idea that this is *to the choir director*, but it does not give us a clear understanding of what the alternative understanding really is (i.e., what does it really mean to say, *to the end?*). The NIV Study Bible avoids all this talk about *the end* and states that this was *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 it was to be sung or spoken by the leader of the Levitical choir or the choir itself.*⁷

The second line is: *To [or, for] sons of Korah*. This is how it reads in both the Greek and the Hebrew. In Num. 16, Korah will lead a communistic revolt against Moses. His revolt will be so horrific that God Himself will intervene with a great work (not necessarily a miracle). There will be a tremendous earthquake and the ground will open up and Korah and his minions will fall into the earth. In fact, their households will fall into the earth with them, but it is apparent by the genealogies in 1Chron. 5 that not each and every member of their families were involved. That is, members of the family of Korah survived. You are not responsible for the misdeed and actions of your family members (although there is certainly some limited responsibility when it comes to your children). But what your cousins, aunts, uncles, parents, etc. do is not your responsibility per se. Korah led a full scale rebellion against Moses, enough that God required of him his life, along with the lives of his followers and their families. However, there were some members of their families who were not involved in this rebellion. These lines will be more fully fleshed out in Ex. 6 and 1Chron. 6:22–24, however, what is important is the aspect of grace here. From the seed of the man who led a full-scale rebellion against Moses comes a family closely related to the psalms and the music of Israel, and who are mentioned throughout Scripture as *the sons of Korah*. **The Doctrine of the Sons of Korah** was covered in Num. 16:33. We do not know if the sons of Korah were the recipients, the recipients along with the choir director, or whether they wrote the psalm. Although this may have been clear to the early readers of Hebrew, it is not clear to us today. It appears that the psalm was written for or to the choir director by one or more of the sons of Korah (and, in the Hebrew, this could be translated *to the choir director, for the sons of Korah*). In other words, we know little about this author. We cannot even unequivocally say that he is named in the inscription of the psalm.

One more thing to consider: what about this *sons*? Are we dealing with dual (or more) authorship? Do we have one person writing the psalm and another the music for the psalm? Do we have a trio involved in lyrics, music and arrangement? Or do we have an author who is *of the sons of Korah*, and prefers to be only known that way? And finally, is *sons of Korah* even a reference to the author(s) of this psalm? These, again, are all questions that I do not have satisfactory answers to. Happily, we can understand the psalm without knowing who the author was.

In the third line, we have the Hebrew word *mas^ekîyl* (מַשְׁכִּיל) [pronounced *mahs^e-KEEL*], which means (according to BDB) *contemplative poem*, and is found in several of the psalm titles (32, 42, 44, 45, 52–55, 74, 78, 88, 89, and 142, as well as in Psalm 47:8.* It comes from the verb *sâkal* (סָכַל) [pronounced *shaw-KAHL*], which means *to be prudent, to be wise*. We may better render this *[A psalm of] wisdom [or, instruction]*. Strong's #4905

⁷ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 782.

BDB #968. The Greek reads *eis sunesin psalmos* (εἰς σύνεσιν ψαλμός), which means *for [the purpose of] a wisdom psalm*. Therefore, our rendering is apt.

This gives us: **To the enduring [or, *choirmaster*], to [or, *for*] sons of Korah, an instruction [or, *maskil*]**. Now, recall, in the psalms *for* or *to* (the lâmed preposition) does not always indicate to whom the psalm is written but who is the author of the psalm. I lean towards the interpretation of the NASB or the NIV, to render this: **To the director of music, a instructive psalm of the sons of Korah**. Fortunately, our understanding or lack thereof of this title will not affect our grasp of the psalm itself.

The inscription of Psalm 42 reads: **For the choir director. A Maskil of the sons of Korah**. The similarity between the two inscriptions does not mean that they were composed at the same time or by the same person. The themes are not altogether dissimilar, however.

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

The Psalmist Knows What God Did in the Past

**O Elohim, with our [two] ears, we have heard;
Our fathers have recounted to us a deed You
have done in their days,
days of antiquity.**

Psalm
44:1

**O God, we have heard with our ears;
Our fathers have recounted to us the work
You have worked in their days,
[in] days of old.**

**O God, we have heard ourselves what our fathers have recounted to us—
the works which you have done in their days, in the days of antiquity.**

At one point, I was terribly concerned about the verse number. In the Hebrew, this is verse 2. In most English translations, it is v. 1, the previous verse being the inscription and not a part of the psalm itself. I will mention that here, but not number the psalm as some have done [Psalm 44:1 (2)]. Now, for the translations of this verse:

Keil and Delitzsch (updated)	Elohim, with our own ears have we heard, Our fathers have declared to us: A work You have done in their days, in the days of old.
NASB	O God, we have heard with our ears, Our fathers have told us, The work that Thou didst in their days, In the days of old.
The Septuagint	O God, we have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us, the work which You did in their days, in the days of old.
TEV	With our own ears we have heard it, O God— our ancestors have told us about it, about the great things you did in their time, in the days of long ago.
Young's Literal Translation	O God, with our ears we have heard, Our fathers have recounted to us, The work Thou didst work in their days, In the days of old.

This verse appears to be fairly simple to translate and to understand. The psalmist opens the verse with the vocative ʾēlōhîym^8 (מֵֹלֵֹךְ) [pronounced *el-o-HEEM*], which means *gods* or *God*. When this word is used, either the Trinity is being referred to or one member of the Trinity when the essence of deity is being emphasized. Strong's #430 BDB #43. Then we have *in [or, with] our [two] ears*. This is followed by the 1st person plural, Qal perfect of *to hear, to listen*. This gives us: **O Elohim, with our ears, we have heard**.

Then we have *our fathers* followed by the 3rd person plural, Piel perfect of çâphar (רָפַר) [pronounced *saw-FAHR*], which means, in the Piel, *to recount, to enumerate, to tell with praise, to celebrate, to recall, to declare, to narrate, to tell or declare something from memory, to declare the facts or particulars of, to tell in a specific order*. This word properly means *to engrave, to cut into a stone*, which, therefore means *to write*. It has come to mean *to recount*.

⁸ Since this is so commonly referred to in reference books, we will use the designation *Elohim* as well.

Strong's #5608 BDB #707. Then we have *to us*. [Our fathers have recounted to us...](#) We have a similar phrase in Psalm 78:3, which is a [Maskil \[or, an instructive psalm\] of Asaph](#) (who is a descendant of Korah).

Then we have the masculine singular noun $pô' al$ (לַעֲל) [pronounced *POH-ahl* or *POH-gahl*], which means *work, deed, doing*. Strong's #6467 BDB #821. The singular noun indicates that what God did on behalf of Israel was taken as one complete act or purpose. This is followed by its verbal cognate, the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect of $pâ' al$ (לַעֲל) [pronounced *paw-AHL*], which is the poetical equivalent of $'âsâh$ (see Strong's# 6213 BDB# 793), and it means *to do, to make, to construct, to fabricate, to prepare*. Strong's #6466 BDB #821. Then we have a phrase which helps us to determine the exact meaning of this verse—in *their days*. This is followed by *in days of* followed by the masculine singular noun $qedem$ (קֶדֶם) [pronounced *KEH-dem*] and it means *eastward, east, ancient, antiquity, front, aforeside*. Strong's #6924 BDB #869. This gives us: [Our fathers have recounted to us a deed You have done in their days, days of old.](#)

We are about to hear what God did during the time that He carved out the nation Israel for the Jews. Those who wrote this psalm did not hear this information directly from those who were there at that time. This information was recorded by Moses, who was there at that time, and then it was taught throughout the many subsequent generations to Israel. They have heard these doctrines taught for many years, and this portion of the psalm celebrates the work of God in preparing the Land of Promise for the Jew, and then delivering on that promise.

We ignorantly point to the Old Testament as a time of many and great miracles, when, in fact, there were relatively few, given the time period that the Old Testament covered. In fact, there was one relatively short period of time, the exodus from Egypt into the Land of Promise during which God's great works were showcased, and Israel was forever told to look back upon those days and recall what God had done (Ex. 12:26–27 Deut. 6:20 32:7 Judges 6:13 Psalm 77:5 78:3, 12 Isa. 51:9 63:9). The first several verses of this psalm also look back to that time and celebrates it; and then the psalmist asks God, *but where are You today?*

The purpose of this psalmist looking backward in time is twofold: (1) he recognizes God's power to save; and, (2) he recognizes God's willingness to deliver Israel. What he is asking for is within the character of God. What will appear to be the case is that God does not deliver Israel in this case, which is a point of strong confusion to the psalmist, as well as to me—until McGee explained it in one sentence.

**You, Your hand, nations You caused to dispossess;
and so You planted them;
You caused evil [to] peoples
and so You sent them [i.e., Gentiles] out
[or, and so You sent them (Israelites) forth].**

Psalm
44:2

**You, [by] Your hand, You have caused to dispossess the Gentiles;
then You planted them [Israel].
You caused evil [to befall Gentile] peoples;
then you sent them [the Israelites] forth.**

**You, by Your own hand, You have driven out the Gentile nations
and then You planted Israel in their place
You brought evil against the Gentiles but caused Israel to spread forth in the Land.**

The interpretation of this verse seems to be able to go in two basic directions: (1) the 3rd person plural here can refer to the Gentiles in the Land of Promise; or, (2) we see an alternating between the Gentiles who are thrown out of the land and the Israelites who are planted in the land. Let's first see what others have done with this verse:

JPS (Tanakh)	With Your hand You planted them, displacing nations; You brought misfortune on peoples, and drove them out.
NASB	Thou with Thine own hand didst drive out the nations; Then Thou didst plant them; Thou didst afflict the peoples, Then Thou didst spread them abroad.
NIV	With your hand you drove out the nations and planted our fathers; you crushed the peoples and made our fathers flourish.
NLT	You drove out the pagan nations and gave all the land to our ancestors; you crushed their enemies, setting our ancestors free.

The Septuagint	Your hand completely destroyed the heathen and You planted them; You afflicted the nations, and You cast them out.
TEV	How you yourself drove out the heathen and established your people in their land; how you punished the other nations and caused your own to prosper.
Young's Literal Translation	Thou, with Thy hand, nations hast dispossessed. And Thou dost plant them. Thou afflictest peoples, and sendest them away.

We begin this verse with the 2nd person masculine singular personal pronoun (*You*) followed by *Your hand* followed by the masculine plural noun *gôwyîm* (גוֹיִם) [pronounced *goh-YEEM*], which is used to mean [*Gentile*] *nations*, *Gentiles*. Strong's #1471 BDB #156. Then we have the main verb of this first line, which is the 2nd person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect of *yârash* (יָרַשׁ) [pronounced *yaw-RAHSH*], which means *to possess, to take possession of*. In the Hiphil, it means *to cause to possess, to cause to inherit, to cause to dispossess*. Strong's #3423 BDB #439. This gives us: *You, [by] Your hand, You have caused to dispossess [the] [Gentile] nations*. Recall what Joshua said to his people: “By this you will know that the Living God is among you and that He will assuredly dispossess from before you the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Hivite, the Perizzite, the Girgashites, the Amorite and the Jebusite.” (Joshua 3:10b; see also Acts 7:45).

This is followed by the *wâw* consecutive (which tends to move the action along, followed by the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect (with a 3rd person masculine plural suffix) of *nâṭaʿ* (נָטַע) [pronounced *naw-TAHḠ*] and it generally means *to plant*. However, it also means, figuratively, *to establish*. (See Ex. 15:17 Deut. 11:15 Ezra 36:36 Psalm 44:3) We use it in a similar fashion today. “Young man, let’s just plant yourself right there in that chair until I determine what to do with you.” Strong's #5193 BDB #642. This gives us: *Then You planted [or, established] them*. What happened to the Gentile nations was not that much of a concern to God (those who were heathen). What God was concerned about was Israel. So the planting here refers to His planting of Israel in the Land of Promise. Moses put similar words in his song: “You will bring them and plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance—the place, O Jehovah, which You have made for Your dwelling, the sanctuary, O Jehovah, which Your hands have established.” (Ex. 15:17; see also 2Sam. 7:10). The idea of these two lines is quite simple; God uprooted the Gentiles and planted the Jews in their place, just as one might removed all the weeds from an area to be gardened.

In the next line, we have the 2nd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect of *râʿa* (רָעָה) [pronounced *raw-ḠAHḠ*], which means *to be evil, to be bad, displeasing, injurious*. In the Hiphil, it means *to make evil, to do evil, to do ill, to cause to do evil, to cause something injurious to be done*. Strong's #7489 BDB #949. This is followed by the masculine plural noun *ʿôwm* (עַמִּים) [pronounced *ʿohm*], which means *people*. Although there are exceptions, this is generally a word reserved for *vulgar, common people*; i.e., *Gentile peoples*. Strong's #3816 BDB #522. This gives us: *You have caused evil [to Gentile] peoples*.

The next line begins with the *wâw* consecutive followed by the 2nd person masculine singular, Piel imperfect (with a masculine plural suffix) of *shâlach* (שָׁלַח) [pronounced *shaw-LAHKH*], which means *to send, to send forth, to send away, to dismiss, to deploy*. In the Piel it means *to send off, to send away, to dismiss, to give over, to cast out, to let go, to set free, to shoot forth [branches], to shoot [an arrow]*. Strong's #7971 BDB #1018. *Then you sent them [the Gentile peoples] out*. This may be taken in a different way, which would also maintain the parallelism. God could have caused the Israelites to shoot forth branches; that is, they settle in an area, and then cause them to spread much like, say, bamboo spreads, by sending out shoots and then these shoots come up. *Shâlach* is used in that sense in Psalm 80:11 Jer. 17:8 Ezek. 17:6–7 (these are all instances of the Piel stem). Being that this is poetry, and that often a parallelism is maintained, it would make poetical sense for this verse to alternate *Gentile, Jew, Gentile, Jew*. We have this latter understanding in Psalm 80:8–11: *You removed a vine from Egypt; You drove out the Gentiles then planted it. You cleared [the ground] before it, and it took deep root and filled the land. The mountains were covered with its shadow, and the cedars of God with its boughs. It was sending out its branches to the sea and its shoots to the River.*⁹

⁹ Actually, the next couple of verses of Psalm 80 continue the parallelism between these two passages, as Asaph, the author of Psalm 80, asks why did God then break down the hedges (i.e., the borders of Israel) and allow Gentiles to come through and sample their produce (Psalm 80:12–13).

The psalmist knows his history. What God has done in the past is He caused the dispossessing of the Land of Promise from the Gentiles who occupied it. They were either conquered and destroyed, or they fled for their lives, leaving the land for the Israelites. That God eradicated the Gentile of the land and planted Israel is found confirmed throughout Scripture (Ex. 15:17 2Sam. 7:10 Neh. 9:24 Psalm 135). Historically, this is all described in the books of Exodus through Joshua, which events took place during the lives of Moses and Joshua.

<p>For not in their sword did they dispossess [the] land and their arm they did not deliver [it] to them. For Your right hand and Your arm and a light of Your faces for You have found them acceptable.</p>	<p>Psalm 44:3</p>	<p>For they did not take possession of the land by their sword and their arm did not deliver them, for Your right hand and Your arm and the light of Your face [delivered them] because You have found them to be acceptable.</p>
---	-----------------------	--

**For they did not take possession of the land by their sword, nor did their own arm deliver them.
It was Your right hand and Your arm, along with the light of Your face, which delivered them,
because You found them to be acceptable.**

Like the previous verses in this psalm, this one is long. Much of that is because there is one entire thought here covered in several lines. Let's see what others have done first:

<p>NASB</p>	<p>For by their own sword they did not possess the land; And their own arm did not save them; But Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy presence, For Thou didst favor them.</p>
<p>NIV</p>	<p>It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, for you loved them.</p>
<p>The Septuagint</p>	<p>For they inherited not the land by their sword, and their arm did not deliver them; but Your right hand and Your arm and the light of Your face, because You were well pleased in them.</p>
<p><i>Young's Literal Translation</i></p>	<p>For, not by their sword, Possessed they the land, And their arm gave not salvation to them, But Thy right hand, and Thine arm, And the light of Thy countenance, Because Thou hast accepted them.</p>

The general idea in this verse is fairly simple—Israel did not take the land because they were a great and strong people. They were given the land because God favored them. The key was that they were regenerated in Him, and therefore, He looked out for them. The first line begins with the explanatory conjunction (*for, because*) followed by the negative and *in their sword*. The main verb is the 3rd person plural, Qal perfect of *yârash* (יָרַשׁ) [pronounced *yaw-RASH*] again (*to possess, to take possession of, to occupy [all] geographical area—by driving out the previous occupants*), *to inherit, to dispossess*). Strong's #3423 BDB #439. Then we have *land* in its pausal form, giving us: **For they did not take possession [of the] land by their sword,...**

Then we have the *wâw* conjunction, *their arm*, the negative and the 3rd person feminine singular (which is associated with *their arm*), Hiphil perfect of *yâsha'* (יָשַׁע) [pronounced *yaw-SHAHQ*], which means *to deliver, to save*. Joshua's name was in part built upon this word. This verb is found only in the Hiphil and Niphal. Strong's #3467 BDB #446. This is followed by the *lâmed* preposition and the 3rd person masculine plural suffix. **...and their arm did not deliver them.** Or, **...and their arm did not deliver [it] to them.**

The next line begins with the *kîy* preposition again (*that, for, when, because*) followed by *Your right hand*. The right hand is used here, because this is the hand which carries the sword or the spear. Then we have *and Your arm* followed by to the *wâw* conjunction and the masculine singular construct of *'ôwr* (אוֹר) [pronounced *ohr*], which means *light*. This is used for moonlight, sunlight and morning light. Strong's #216 BDB #21. Then we have *of Your faces* (we would think of it as, *of Your face*). This gives us: **For Your right hand and Your arm and [the] light of Your face [delivered Israel].** Israel owed her place in the land entirely to God. It was His guidance, strength and preservation which brought them into the land and allowed them to take the land.

We have the explanatory conjunction again, followed by the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect (with a 3rd person masculine plural suffix) of *râtsâh* (רָצָה) [pronounced *raw-TSAWH*] means *to be acceptable, to be pleased with, to enjoy*. Strong's #7521 BDB #953. **For You have found them acceptable**; or, **You have found them to be acceptable**; or, **You have delighted [in] them**. We have to be careful of this last line. God was pleased with Israel; God found them to be acceptable. This does not mean that Israel exhibited any good in itself. God's love of Israel has always been based upon His graciousness. **"Jehovah did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But because Jehovah loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, Jehovah brought you out by a mighty hand, and He redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt."** (Deut. 7:7–8).

Here is the quick and easy explanation. Israel was regenerated. Israel was all believers. This is noted when the psalmist says that God found them to be acceptable or that He was pleased with them. For that reason, God dispossessed those who lived in the land and gave this land over to Israel. Israel did not gain the land through their own personal efforts, but God gave them the land using His power and strength. **"Otherwise, you might say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.' But you will remember Jehovah your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day."** (Deut. 8:17–18; see also Deut. 4:37 Joshua 24:12 Psalm 77:15 78:54).

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to Chart Index>>](#)

The Psalmist Calls upon His God to Deliver Him in His Day

**You [are] He my King, O God;
command salvations of Jacob.**

Psalm
44:4

**You, O God, [are] He, my King;
command the salvation of Jacob.**

**You, God, are my King;
command that Jacob be saved.**

From hereon in, the verses will be somewhat shorter. Here are what others have done with it:

JPS (Tanakh)	You are my king, O God; decree victories for Jacob!
NASB	Thou art my King, O God; Command victories [lit., <i>salvation</i>] for Jacob.
NIV	You are my King and my God, who decrees victories for Jacob.
The Septuagint	You are indeed my King and my God, Who commands deliverance for Jacob.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Thou art He, my king, O God, Command the deliverances of Jacob.

We begin this verse with the 2nd person masculine singular personal pronoun, which is accurately rendered *You*. Then we have the masculine singular demonstrative adjective *hûw'* (הוּא) [pronounced *hoo*], which means *he, it*. Strong's #1931 BDB #214. Often, with either pronoun, we would include the absolute status quo verb *to be*. Then we have the 1st person singular suffix affixed to *melek*^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced *MEH-lek*], which means *king, prince*. This is the ultimate ruler of the land, or one in line for that position. Strong's #4428 BDB #572. Then we have the masculine plural noun *Elohim*, giving us: **You [are] He, my King, O God**. The psalmist recognizes the absolute and total sovereignty of Jehovah God of Israel. The reading of the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate is slightly different at this point: **You are my King and my God**.

Interestingly enough, Barnes suggests that this could even be the ruling monarch of Israel who wrote this psalm¹⁰ (and, given the time frame that Barnes argued for, this would be Josiah near the end of his rule). He bases this upon the fact that the psalmist calls *God, my King*. It is an interesting point of view, which, unfortunately, does not have much internal support in this psalm (no more so than there being internal support for any author). Most of

¹⁰ *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 18. In the alternative, Barnes says that the author was certainly one who at least *personated* the ruler of Israel in the language of this verse, representing his feelings.

Josiah's cabinet would be dedicated believers; Josiah enacted many spiritual reforms throughout the land—therefore, as far as he and his immediate surroundings are concerned, he and those around him have been faithful to God and have not pursued false gods. However, the enactment of the various Josiah reforms does not necessarily change the hearts of the populace, which had become obviously degenerate during Josiah's time (otherwise, there would have been no need for reforms in the first place).

In the second line, we have the 2nd person masculine singular, Piel imperative of *tsâvâh* (הִצַּו) [pronounced *tsaw-VAW*], which means *to commission, to mandate, to lay charge upon, to give charge to, charge, command, order*. This is a verb found only in the Piel. Strong's #6680 BDB #845. Then we have the feminine plural construct of *yêsha'* (יְשׁוּעָה) [pronounced *YAY-shahg'*], which means *safety, salvation*. Strong's #3468 BDB #447. This is followed by *of Jacob*, which is a synonym for Israel—often for degenerate Israel, giving us: **Command salvations of Jacob**. This is not based upon any good thing in Jacob; the psalmist points to God's relationship to Israel in the past and asks for God to continue to deliver Israel out of grace. Again the Septuagint and Vulgate (and the Syriac Targum) are slightly different, reading: **Who commands deliverances for Jacob**. The name *Jacob*, of course, is a synonym for the descendants of Jacob, that is, *Israel*. Whereas this is not always the case, *Jacob* can refer to degenerate *Israel*, as Jacob was not the most admirable believer around (God did rename him *Israel*). The psalmist knows that if God gives the command, then it will be carried out.

We have a parallel verse in Psalm 74:12: **Yet God is my King from of old, Who works deeds of deliverance in the midst of the earth.**

<p>In You our enemies we push [down]; in Your name we tread down our assailants.</p>	<p>Psalm 44:5</p>	<p>We are victorious over our enemies by You; we trample down those standing against us by Your name.</p>
---	-----------------------	--

**It is through You that we are victorious over our enemies;
it is by Your name that we trample down those who take a stand against us.**

Let's first see what others have done:

<p>JPS (Tanakh) NASB NIV The Septuagint TEV <i>Young's Literal Translation</i></p>	<p>Through You we gore our foes; by Your name we trample our adversaries. Though Thee we will push back our adversaries; Through Thy name we will trample down those who rise up against us. Through you we push back our enemies; through your name we trample our foes. In You, we will push down our enemies, and in Your name, we will bring them to nought that rise up against us. ...and by your power we defeat our enemies. By Thee our adversaries we do push, By Thy name tread down our withstanders,...</p>
--	--

We begin this verse with the *bêyth* preposition and the 2nd person masculine singular suffix, which would be translated *in You, among You, against You, with You, through You, by You*. Strong's #none BDB #88. Then we have the object of the verb, which is the masculine plural of *tsar* (צָר) [pronounced *tsahr*], which means *an adversary, an enemy, distress, affliction*. Strong's #6862 BDB #865. This is affixed to a 1st person plural suffix. The main verb is next, which is the 1st person plural, Piel imperfect of *nâgach* (נָגַח) [pronounced *naw-GAHKH*], which means *to push, to thrust, to gore, to strike with the horn* [used of horned animals]. This word is used of animals goring a person in Ex. 21:28, 31–32. In the Piel, it is used of a victor prostrating nations before him (see Deut. 33:17 1Kings 22:11 Psalm 44:6). Its Piel meaning is pretty much the same as its Qal meaning in Ezek. 34:21 Dan. 8:4. Strong's #5055 BDB #618. This gives us: **By You, we push back [or, are victorious over] our enemies**. The psalmist recognizes that only through God have the Jews been victorious over their enemies. As Joshua told those while on his deathbed: **"Jehovah your God will thrust them [the Gentiles] from before you, and you will possess their land, just as Jehovah your God has promised you."** (Joshua 23:5).

The second line begins *In (or, by) Your name*. Then we have the 1st person plural, Qal imperfect of *bûwç* (בוּעַ) [pronounced *booc*], which means *to tread down, to trample*. One of the common images of the ancient world was

a victor walking over the bodies of those he has defeated in battle (Job 40:12 Psalm 7:5 Isa. 10:6 63:3 Daniel 7:23). Strong's #947 BDB #100. Who they trample down is the masculine plural, Qal active participle of *qûwm* (קוּם) [pronounced *koom*], which means *to stand, to rise up*. As a masculine plural, Qal active participle, this should be rendered *withstanders, those rising up [against], those standing [against]*. We may understand it to mean *adversaries*. Strong's #6965 BDB #877. The 1st person plural suffix is attached to this. This gives us: **By Your name, we trample down those standing against us**. This line is parallel to the one above and means essentially the same thing—the psalmist fully recognizes that it is through Jehovah Elohim that Israel has been delivered. There is an interesting nuance here, however. We would associate the word *qûwm* more with rebellion than we would with external forces. The word suggests that someone in the middle of Israel takes a stand against the ruling authority.

We find a parallel verse in Psalm 60:12: **Through God, we will do valiantly. Furthermore, it is He Who will tread down our adversaries.**

**For not in my bow I do trust
and my sword cannot save me.**

Psalm
44:6

**For I do not trust in my bow
and my sword will not deliver me.**

For I do not trust my own bow or my own spear to deliver me.

Let's quickly see what others have done:

NASB	For I will not trust in my bow, Nor will my sword save me.
The Septuagint	For I will not trust in my bow, and my sword will not save me.
Young's Literal Translation	For, not in my bow do I trust, And my sword doth not save me.

We begin with the explanatory preposition followed by the negative, the *bêyth* preposition and the feminine singular noun (with a 1st person singular suffix) *qesheth* (קֶשֶׁת) [pronounced *KEH-sheth*], which means *bow*. Strong's #7198 BDB #905. Then we have the main verb, which is the 1st person singular, Qal imperfect of *bâṭach* (בָּטַח) [pronounced *baw-TAHKH*], which means *to trust, to rely upon, to have confidence in, to be secure in*. Strong's #982 BDB #105. **For, not in my bow do I trust**, is the reasonable and literal translation. The psalmist recognizes that his strength is not in his bow.

The second line is a parallel of the first. We begin with *and in my sword*, followed by the negative, followed by the 3rd person feminine singular, Hiphil imperfect of *yâsha'* (יָשַׁע) [pronounced *yaw-SHAHÇ*], which means *to deliver, to save*. This is only found in the Niphal and the Hiphil. Strong's #3467 BDB #446. With the verb is the 1st person singular suffix, giving us: **And my sword does not deliver me**. The psalmist recognizes that he does not deliver himself or his nation through his weapons. One parallel passage would be Psalm 33:16: **The king is not delivered by a mighty army, nor a warrior deliver by great strength**. Or, Hosea 1:7: **"But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and I will deliver them by Jehovah their God, and I will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen."** Or David's testimony to Goliath: **"Jehovah does not deliver by sword or by spear; for the battle is Jehovah's and He will give you into our hands."** (1Sam. 17:47b). Zechariah, a prophet of the post-exilic period, was told by an angel: **"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says Jehovah of the armies.** (Zech. 4:6b).

Barnes concludes: *[The psalmist said]...that the ancestors of the Jewish people had not obtained possession of the promised land by any strength or skill of their own, and he now says that he, and those who were connected with him, did not depend on their own strength, or on the weapons of war which they might employ, but that their only ground of trust was God.*¹¹

Now, don't get weird on me here. This does not mean that the psalmist is suggesting that Israel go to war armed with rocks and blunt sticks and to forgo all military tactics and battle strategy. It simply means that the victory will be determined by God. There are times in Israel's history when military strategy played a part, and there were times when God simply defeated the enemy by His great power, apart from anything that Israel had done.

¹¹ Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 19.

**For You have delivered us from our enemies
and those hating us You will cause to be
disconcerted [or, *discouraged and confused*].**

Psalm
44:7

**For You have delivered us from our enemies
and You will cause to be disconcerted those
who hate us.**

**For you have delivered us in the past from our enemies
and You continue to disconcert those who hate us.**

First, the other translations:

JPS (Tanakh)
NASB

You give us victory over our foes; You thwart those who hate us.
But Thou hast saved us from our adversaries, And Thou hast put to shame
those who hate us.

The Septuagint

For You have saved us from them that afflict us, and has put to shame them that
hated us.

Young's Literal Translation

For Thou hast saved us from our adversaries, And those hating us Thou hast put to
shame.

We begin this verse with the explanatory preposition once again followed by the 2nd person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect (with a 1st person plural suffix) of *yâsha'* again (*to save, to deliver*). Then we have the *mîn* preposition and the masculine plural noun *tsar* again (*enemies, adversaries*). With the 1st person suffix, this gives us: **For You have delivered us from our enemies**. The psalmist recognizes that it is God Who delivers us from our enemies. The perfect tense means that we are speaking of an accomplished fact. As Moses said, "It is Jehovah your God who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to deliver you." (Deut. 20:4).

The second line begins with a *wâw* conjunction followed by the masculine plural, Piel participle (with a 1st person suffix) of *sânê'* (אָנִי) [pronounced *saw-NAY*] and this verb means *to hate*; in the participle, it is *the ones hating*. Strong's #8130 BDB #971. This is followed by the 2nd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect of *bôwsh* (בֹּשָׁה) [pronounced *bôsh*], which means *anxious, ashamed, disconcerted, discouraged*; and maybe *apprehensive, disappointed*. The Hiphil is the causal stem. Strong's #954 BDB #101. This gives us: **And those hating us You will cause to be disconcerted (discouraged and confused)**. It is God who throws the enemies of Israel into a panic.

Although Israel fought with their military and used good military tactics, it was God Who gave them the victory and provided them whatever guidance that they needed. There was no reason to suppose, from human viewpoint, that the Israelites who marched out of Egypt, former slaves, would have been able to march into Canaan and take it from the many nations who inhabited it. It was only through God that this occurred. The psalmist points back to this as a basis for his appeal to God.

**In Elohim, we have celebrated all the day
and Your name to forever we praise.
Selah!**

Psalm
44:8

**In God, we celebrate all the day
and we forever praise Your name!
Selah!**

**We celebrate all the day in God
and we praise Your name forever!
[Musical Interlude]**

Let's see what others have done first of all:

JPS (Tanakh)
NASB

In God we glory at all times, and praise Your name unceasingly.
In God we have boasted all day long, And we will give thanks to Thy name
forever. [Selah].

NLT
The Septuagint

O God, we give glory to you all day long and constantly praise your name. *Interlude*
In God we will make our boast all the day, and to Your name we will give thanks
forever. Pause.

Young's Literal Translation

In God we have boasted all the day, And Thy name to the age we thank. Selah.

This verse begins with *In Elohim* and the 1st person plural, Piel perfect of *hâlal* (לָלַחַ) [pronounced *haw-LAHL*], which means *to be boastful, to praise*. More precisely, it means *to be clear, to be brilliant*; and in the Piel, it means *to sing, to celebrate, to praise*. Its most common usage is in conjunction with God. Strong's #1984 BDB #237. Then we have *all the day*, giving us: *In Elohim, we celebrate all the day*. As a nation blessed by God, the psalmist celebrates.

in the second line, we have the *wâw* conjunction, *Your name*, the *lâmed* preposition and the masculine singular noun *ʿôwlâm* (עוֹלָם) [pronounced *go-LAWM*], a word indicating *long duration, perpetuity, antiquity, futurity*. With the *lâmed* preposition it means *forever* (Eccles. 1:4). Strong's #5769 (& #5865) BDB #761. Then we have the main verb for the second line, the 1st person plural, Hiphil imperfect of *yâdâh* (יָדָה) [pronounced *yaw-DAWH*], which means *to cast, to throw, to profess, to confess*. It means, in the Hiphil, *to give thanks*. Strong's #3034 (3027) BDB #392. *And we give thanks forever [for] You name*. Or, *And Your name [is] forever—we give thanks*. However, *yâdâh* can also mean *to praise*, which then gives us: *And we praise Your name forever*.

In any case, this is the human side of: *"If a man boasts, let him boast about this, that he knows and understands Me, that I am Jehovah who exercises grace, justice and righteousness on the earth, for I delight in these things."* (Jer. 9:24a).

The final word of this verse is the interjection *çelâh* (חֲלֵה) [pronounced *seh-LAW*], which means *to lift up, to elevate, to exalt [with one's voice], to gather, to cast up [into a heap]*. The verbal cognate is *ʿâlâh* (חֲלֵה) [pronounced *saw-LAW*], which means *to lift up and toss aside*. In the Piel stem, it means *to weigh*, which involves lifting up the object and placing it upon the balance. So, even though Gesenius gives the meaning of *çelâh* as *rest, silence, pause*, it does not necessarily match the meaning of its cognates. My thinking, which is a combination of BDB and Gesenius, is that the voices build up to a crescendo here, and, very likely, it is then followed by silence. This would reconcile the points made by Gesenius and still make this compatible with its cognates.¹² Another reasonable possibility is that the instruments *are lifted up* for a musical interlude. Strong's #5542 BDB #699.

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to Chart Index>>](#)

God Has Shamed Israel Before the Gentiles

In this next section, the psalmist complains that Israel has been militarily defeated by the Gentiles, with some being sold into slavery (vv. 9–12), greatly dishonoring Israel before her neighbors (vv. 13–16). This is in sharp contrast to God's relationship with Israel in the previous section.

In fact, You have abominated [us] and so You humiliate us; and You do not go out in our armies.

Psalm
44:9

Yet, You have rejected [us]; you humiliate us and You do not go out with our armies.

Furthermore, because You have rejected us, you therefore humiliate us by not going out with our armies in war.

First, let's see what others have done with this verse:

CEV	But now you have rejected us; you don't lead us into battle, and we look foolish.
JPS (Tanakh)	Yet You have rejected and disgraced us; You do not go with our armies.
NASB	Yet Thou hast rejected <i>us</i> and brought us to dishonor, And does not go out with our armies.
The Septuagint	But now You have cast [us] off and put us to shame; and You will not go forth with our armies.

¹² For more discussion, see H.W.F. Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*; ©1979 by Baker Books; p. 588.

Young's Literal Translation In anger Thou hast cast off and causes us to blush, And goest not forth with our hosts.

This verse begins with the conjunction *ʿaph* (אָפּ) [pronounced *ahf*] and it means *in fact, furthermore, also, yea, even, indeed*. However, I like the rendering of JPS and the NASB here (*yet*). Strong's #637 BDB #64. Even though we do not have an extensive vocabulary in this psalm, the author did not stay with the continued use of *and* or *and so*. Then we have the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect of *zânach* (נָחַח) [pronounced *zaw-NAHKH*], which means *to stink, to be rancid, to be corrupt*; metaphorically, it means *to be abominable*, and therefore, transitively, *to loath, to spit out, to reject, to spurn*. Context determines the shade of meaning which we adopt. Strong's #2186 BDB #276. We would expect a 1st person masculine plural suffix, but there is none in the Hebrew. The Syriac codex does add an *us*. However, there is one for the following verb, which might be taken as a suffixal ending for both. *Zânach* is followed by the *wâw* consecutive and the 2nd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect of *kâlam* (כָּלַם) [pronounced *kaw-LAHM*], which means *to humiliate, to disgrace, to mortify, to shame, to disgrace*. The original Qal meaning of this verb was *to wound* (i.e., *to pierce, to cut*); however, we do not find this in the Qal form. In the Hiphil, it means *to reproach, to hurt some one, to treat shamefully, to injure, to put someone to shame*. We had a similar association of words when I was in high school—*to cut low* meant *to humiliate*. A similar use today: *to cut one down to size*. Strong's #3637 BDB #483. This gives us: **Furthermore, You deem [us] abominable and so you humiliate [and disgrace] us.**

For the psalmist, this was difficult to understand. God had a unique relationship with Israel. At no previous time had God taken a nation out of a nation and planted them in an almost adjacent country (it is interesting that, to some extent, this is what happened in the United States at its founding). However, God has seemed to have done a complete 180° with respect to His affiliation to Israel. At this point in Israel's history, there does not appear to be an intimate relationship between God and Israel. He looks to the past and understands God's closeness to Israel. However, he looks around him, and this bond no longer appears to exist.

Why Is My Life Totally Screwed Up?

There are several things that we need to understand: (1) First of all, throughout the lives of many believers, there have been times when their relationship with God is strained. **You are the God of my strength; why have You rejected me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?** (Psalm 43:2). (2) There are times when God's relationship to Israel appears to be nonexistent. **O God, You have rejected us and You have broken us. You have been angry; restore us** (Psalm 60:1). **O God, why have You rejected us forever? Why does Your anger smoke against the sheep of Your pasture?** (Psalm 74:1). **Have You not rejected us, O God? Will You not go out with our armies, O God?** (Psalm 118:11). (3) In fact, God warned Israel what would occur when Israel fell out of sorts with Him. Before they even walked into the land, God gave them Lev. 26, a strong warning against national apostasy. He warned them through Moses: **"Then My anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and I will hide My face from them, and they will be consumed and many evils and troubles will come upon them; so that they will say in that day, 'Is it not because our God is not among us, that these evils have come upon us?'"** (Deut. 31:17). (4) Now, do you recall that evangelist who told you to believe in Jesus and everything would be alright? Well, first of all, more than likely, he confused you with a great deal of legalism and added a lot to faith when he gave you the gospel; and secondly, *everything is going to be alright?* Pure, unadulterated crap. You have just launched yourself into the angelic conflict, which means there will be times when everything seems to go wrong. Add to this the time that you are out of fellowship, and you will wonder whether or not you have a relationship with God.

Why Is My Life Totally Screwed Up?

Now, to answer the question:

- ◆ Most of the time, your life sucks because you are out of fellowship.
- ◆ Often, another major problem is that you have not bothered to grow up spiritually. You attend church once or twice a week, and that just is not going to cut it.
- ◆ Now and again, you are simply put under testing, which means we can cling to His promise that **He will not suffer us more than we can endure.**
- ◆ Finally, there are times when God is very near and very involved in our lives, and we do not recognize it. The time period of the exodus was the time during which God was more closely intertwined with Israel than every before. They heard His audible voice, they saw several great works and miracles. What did they do? They still bitched and moaned and complained. And, after seeing God's great power and after hearing His voice, they still, even while Moses was on the mountain speaking with God, built a golden calf idol to worship. My point is, God's nearness is sometimes a matter of perception.

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

In the second line, we have the wâw conjunction, the negative and the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of yâtsâ' (אָצֵא) [pronounced yaw-TZAWH], which means *to go out, to come out, to come forth*. Strong's #3318 BDB #422. Then we have the bêyth preposition (*in, with, against*) and the masculine plural noun tsâbâ' (אָצֵב) [pronounced tsaw^b-VAW], and it can mean *armies, wars, or warfare*. Strong's #6635 BDB #838. With this is the 1st person plural suffix, giving us: **And You do not go out with our armies.**

The psalmist has set up a contrast as to what has gone before and what the situation is now. Previously, God, with great power, took Israel out of Egypt and gave the Land of Promise to her, removing the various Gentile armies. However, during the time of the psalmist, it is clear that God does not go out with Israel to war. The psalmist approaches this problem from the standpoint of divine viewpoint. Israel is God's nation—there is only one nation Israel, and God, at that time, had chosen only one nation to work through. God had made a statement to the surrounding nations that Israel was His and that he would provide for Israel. Therefore, when Israel does not receive God's support, it makes His Word seem to be lie and His strength to be weakness. Now, what was happening is that much of Israel was unbelieving. God does not have any sort of relationship with the unbeliever. God has known the believer from eternity past; however, God owes nothing to those who fully and completely reject Him.

**You have made us turn back from a foe
and those hating us have plundered [and
lotted us] for themselves.**

Psalm 44:10 **You have caused us to turn back from [our
enemy;
and the ones who hate us plunder [and pillage
and loot us] for themselves.**

**You have caused us to retreat from our enemy
and this has allowed them to plunder, pillage and loot us.**

First the other translations:

CEV <i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	You made us retreat, and our enemies have taken everything we own. Thou sufferest us to turn back from the adversary, And they who hate us have plundered at will:...
JPS (Tanakh) NASB	You make us retreat before our foe; our enemies plunder us at will. Thou dost cause us to turn back from the adversary; And those who hate us have taken spoil for themselves.
The Septuagint	You have turned us back before our enemies; and they that hated us spoiled for themselves.

Young's Literal Translation Thou causest us to turn backward from an adversary, And those hating us, Have spoiled for themselves.

The quick and dirty version here is the JPS. What you need is pretty much found in that verse, easy to read and easy to understand. Now let's get the nuts and bolts of this verse: we begin with the 2nd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect (1st person plural suffix) of *shûw^bv* (שׁוּב) [pronounced *shoo^bv*]; which means *to return, to turn, to turn back, to reminisce, to restore something, to bring back something, to revive, to recover something, to make restitution*. In the Hiphil stem, it means *to be caused to return, to bring, to be caused to turn back mentally, reminisce, to return something, to restore, to bring back, to regain, to recover, to make restitution, reconsider, think again, or to be caused to return*. Strong's #7725 BDB #996. Then we have adverb-substantive *ʿâchôwr* (אָחֹוּר) [pronounced *aw-KHOHR*], and it means *the hinder side, the back part, backwards* (in poetry). Strong's #268 BDB #30. Then we have the *mîn* preposition (*from, away from, off, off of*) followed by the masculine singular noun (pausal form) of *tsar* (צָר) [pronounced *tsar*] again, which means *an adversary, an enemy, distress, affliction*. Strong's #6862 BDB #865. This gives us: **You have caused us to be turned back away from [our] adversary**. The idea here is that, because God has not gone out with Israel in battle, Israel has been forced to retreat on several occasions.

In the second line, we have the *wâw* conjunction and the masculine plural Piel participle of *sânê^ʿ* (אֲנִי) [pronounced *saw-NAY*] again (*the ones hating*). Strong's #8130 BDB #971. Then we have the 3rd person plural, Qal perfect of *shâçâh* (שָׁחַח) [pronounced *shaw-SAW*], which means *to plunder, to spoil, to pillage, to loot during war*. Strong's #8154 BDB #1042. Again, we might expect a 1st person plural suffix, which is found in the Aramaic and Syriac codices, but not in the Hebrew. Then we have the *lâmed* preposition and the 3rd person masculine plural suffix. This gives us: **And the ones hating us plunder (pillage and loot) for themselves**. Not only is Israel in retreat, but their enemies were then able to plunder and pillage them. **Nebuchadnezzar also brought articles of the House of Jehovah to Babylon and placed them in his temple at Babylon** (2Chron. 36:7; see also 2Kings 24:13 25:13–17). **And Pharaoh Neco imprisoned Jehoahaz [the son of Josiah] at Riblah in the land of Hamath, so that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and he imposed on the land a fine of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold** (2Kings 23:33).

God promised Israel that this would all occur back in Lev. 26:17a: **“And I will set My face against you so that you will be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you will rule over you.”** Throughout history, we have examples of times when God allowed Israel to be plundered by other nations. Gideon asks a similar question in Judges 6:13: **“Oh, my dear sir, if Jehovah is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us about, saying, ‘Did not Jehovah bring us up from Egypt?’ But now, Jehovah has abandoned us and He has given us into the hand of Midian.”**¹³ Ethan, the Ezrahite psalmist, spends most of Psalm 89 speaking of God's covenant to David; then, in v. 38, things take an ugly turn:¹⁴ **But You have cast off and rejected, You have been full of wrath against You anointed. You have spurned the covenant of Your servant; You have profaned his crown in the dust. You have broken down all his walls; You have brought his stronghold to ruin. All who pass along the way plunder him; He has become a reproach to his neighbors. You have exalted the right hand of his adversaries; You have made all his enemies rejoice. You also turn back the edge of his sword, and You have not helped him to stand in battle. You have made his splendor to cease, and You have cast his throne to the ground. You have shortened the days of his youth; You have covered him with shame** (Psalm 89:38–45).

**You make us as sheep, food;
and in the Gentiles [or, nations] You have
scattered us.**

Psalm
44:11

**You designate us as sheep [or as] food;
and You scatter us among the Gentiles.**

**You have designated us as a commodity, as food or as sheep,
and then You have scattered us throughout the Gentile nations.**

¹³ Gideon is speaking to his Lord in this passage, although he does not fully realize that when he says this.

¹⁴ *He*, in this passage, refers to Israel personified through David. In other words, *he* refers to David (the Davidic covenant is made with David); but David is a metonym for Israel (as the covenant is ultimately made with Israel).

First how others have dealt with this verse:

JPS (Tanakh)	You let them devour us like sheep; You disperse us among the nations.
NASB	Thou dost give us as sheep to be eaten [lit., <i>for food</i>], And hast scattered us among the nations.
NKJV	You have given us up like sheep <i>intended</i> for food, And have scattered us among the nations.
The Septuagint	You made us as sheep for meat; and You scattered us among the nations.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Thou makes us food like sheep, And among nations Thou hast scattered us.

We begin this verse with the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect, with a 1st person plural suffix of *nâthan* (נָתַן) [pronounced *naw-THAHN*], which means *to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set*. There are times that we could get away with *designate*. Strong's #5414 BDB #678. Then we have *as sheep* followed by the masculine singular noun *ma`ākâl* (מַאֲכָל) [pronounced *mah-uh-KAWL*], which means *food*. It is unclear how this differs from its cognate *`ôkel*, from whence it is derived. Strong's #3978 BDB #38. The translation is sort of awkward, **You give us as sheep—food [to be eaten]**. The idea is fairly clear, however. Israel is given over to her enemies as sheep or as food. They are a commodity whose ownership is easily transferred.

The second line begins with the *wâw* conjunction and then *in the* followed by the masculine plural noun *gôwy* (גוֹי) [pronounced *GOH-ee*], which you recognize as *goy*. This word means *people, nation*; in the plural it is *gôwyîm* (גוֹיִם) [pronounced *goh-YEEM*], which means [*Gentile*] *nations, Gentiles*. Strong's #1471 BDB #156. Then we have the 2nd person masculine singular, Piel perfect, 1st person plural suffix of *zârâh* (זָרַח) [pronounced *zaw-RAW*], which means *to scatter, to winnow*. Strong's #2219 BDB #279. The translation: **And You have scattered us among the nations**. These two lines are closely related. God has made the Israelites as a commodity to be traded or sold, and they have ended up among the Gentile nations as would sheep would be traded or sold. I have mentioned Lev. 26 several of times already in this psalm. This scattering of Israel among the nations was predicted in Lev. 26:33: **"You, however, I will scatter among the nations and I will draw out a sword after you, as your land becomes desolate and your cities become waste."** God through Moses told the Jews this would happen: **"And Jehovah will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations, where Jehovah will drive you."** (Deut. 4:27). And: **"Moreover, Jehovah will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; and there you will serve other gods, wood and stone, which you and your fathers have not known."** (Deut. 28:64). This is, of course, found elsewhere: **And they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe in His Word, but grumbled in their tents; they did not listen to the voice of Jehovah. Therefore, He swore to them that He would cast them down in the wilderness and that He would cast their seed among the nations, and scatter them in the lands** (Deut. 106:24–27). God spoke to Ezekiel, saying, **"Furthermore, I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among the nations and I would disperse them among the lands."** (Ezek. 20:23).

You sell Your people in not-wealth	Psalm	You sell Your people cheaply
and You have not increased in their wealth.	44:12	and You have not increased in their wealth.

**You sell Your people off cheaply
without even enjoying a proportional increase from the Gentiles.**

The first line appears to be fairly easy; the second may require a bit more finesse. The others translate this:

JPS (Tanakh)	You sell Your people for no fortune, You set no high price on them.
NASB	Thou dost sell Thy people cheaply, And hast not profited by their sale.
NKJV	You sell Your people for <i>next to</i> nothing, and are not enriched by selling them.
The Septuagint	You have sold Your people without price, and there was no profit by their exchange.
TEV	You sold your own people for a small price as though they had little value.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Thou sellest Thy people—without wealth, And hast not become great by their price.

We begin with the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of *mâkar* (מָכַר) [pronounced *maw-KAHR*], which means *to sell, to buy*. Strong's #4376 BDB #569. This is followed by *Your people*, the *bêyth* preposition, the

negative and the masculine singular noun *chôwn* (חֹן) [pronounced *kohn*], which means *wealth, sufficiency*. Strong's #1952 BDB #223. This gives us: **You sell Your people in not-wealth**. The *bêyth* preposition can be rendered *in, among, into, against, with, at, through, by*. No Strong's # BDB #88. None of these renderings really help us and one explanation is the we should have the *kaph* preposition here instead (כ, which means *like, as*). Another explanation is that this is simply an idiomatic phrase which means either *cheaply* or *without a price*. The idea, however, is simply that God has seemingly sold His people and He apparently did not make any profit from this sale. Barnes: *Without gain, or advantage; that is, for no price that would be an equivalent. The people were given up to their enemies, but there was nothing in return that would be of equal value. The loss was in no way made up. They were taken away from their country and their homes. They were withdrawn from useful labour in the land; there was a great diminution of the national strength and of the national wealth; but there was no return to the land, no advantage, no valuable result, that would be an equivalent for thus withdrawing them from their country and their homes. It was as though they had been given away.*¹⁵

This and the previous verse also helps us to fix a date on this psalm. It appears as though it was written during the time of the dispersion, at the end of Josiah's reign. It may have even occurred during the first dispersion (as Israel was not scattered among the nations all at once). See the [short] **Doctrine of the Dispersion of Israel**.

In the second line we have the *wâw* conjunction, the negative, and the 2nd person masculine singular, Piel perfect of *râ^bvâh* (רָבָה) [pronounced *raw^b-VAWH*], which means *to become much, to become many, to multiply, to increase in population and in whatever else*. In the Piel, it means *to multiply, to increase, to acquire much*. Strong's #7235 BDB #915. We have the *bêyth* preposition again, followed by the masculine plural noun (with a 3rd person masculine plural suffix) of *m^echîyr* (מְחִיר) [pronounced *m^e-KHEER*], which means *price, hire*. Strong's #4242 BDB #564. This gives us: **You have not increased in their wealth**. When you sell something, you generally acquire some wealth from the person that you sold it to. This is not the case here. God *sold* Israel into the hands of the Gentiles, but He has not increased His own wealth by a proportional amount. We have a parallel passage in Isa. 52:3: **For thus says Jehovah, "You were sold for nothing and you will be redeemed without money."** There were several times in Israel's history where Israel's degeneracy caused God to *sell* Israel into the hands of an enemy nation. **And the anger of Jehovah burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies** (Judges 2:14; see also Judges 3:8).

This, of course, is all metaphorical. Obviously, there was no actual buying and selling which took place. However, this is a way of making it seem cheap the way that God passed along His people into the hands of the Gentiles. It appears as though He simply sold His people cheaply, without even increasing His own wealth. The idea is that God appears to gain nothing when He turns His back on His own people. When His people are defeated in war; when their goods are plundered; when they are taken into slavery—it appears as though God is without power. Therefore, such a position appears to lack any upside for God Himself. Obviously, the Jew is devastated by all of this, but it appears as though God loses as well.

**You place [or, display, make] us a shame to
our neighbors;
a mocking and a derision to our surrounders.**

Psalm
44:13

**You make us a shame [and a disgrace] to our
neighbors;
[as well as] a mocking and a derision to those
around us.**

**You display us in a shameful and disgraceful way before our neighbors;
we are mocked and derided by those around us.**

Let's see what others have done first:

JPS (Tanakh)

You make us the butt of our neighbors, the scorn and derision of those around us.

¹⁵ Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 20.

NASB	Thou dost make us a reproach to our neighbors, A scoffing and a derision to those around us.
REB	You have exposed us to contempt of our neighbors, to the gibes and mockery of those about us.
The Septuagint	You have made us a reproach to our neighbors, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.
Young's Literal Translation	Thou makes us a reproach to our neighbours, A scorn and a reproach to our surrounders.

We begin with the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect, 1st person plural suffix, of sîym (סִיַם) [pronounced *seem*] which means *to put, to place, to set, to make*. Strong's #7760 BDB #962. They have been *placed* or *set* or *displayed* as the feminine singular noun cher^opâh (חֶרְפָּה) [pronounced *kher-PAW*], which means *a reproach, a taunt, scorn, shame, disgrace*. Strong's #2781 BDB #357. Then we have the lâmed preposition followed by the masculine plural abject (with a 1st person plural suffix of shâkên (שָׁכְנוּ) [pronounced *shaw-KAYN*], which means *inhabitants, neighbors, dwellers*. Strong's #7934 BDB #1015. **You have put us a reproach [or, a shame, a disgrace] for our neighbors.** Or, **You have displayed us [as] a disgrace to our neighbors.** God's people are scorned among the nations. They are shamed and disgraced. In the United States, we have been greatly blessed due to the evangelism which takes place, due to the large number of believers in this country, and due to the fact that several believers continue to grow toward maturity. There are many who bask in this prosperity not realizing its origins and not realizing that tomorrow, God could remove all of this from us.

The second line appears to begin with the masculine singular noun la 'êg (לֵאעִיג) [pronounced *LAH-ayg* or *LAH-gayg*], which can mean *mocking, scorning* or *stammering*. The connection here is that some people are *mocked* or *scorned* by another person *stammering*. Strong's #3933 BDB #541. The second noun, which follows the conjunction, is the masculine singular of qeleç (קֵלֶץ) [pronounced *KEH-lehs*], which means *derision*. Strong's #7047 BDB #887. What actually is being carried over is the verb from the first line. So, for all intents and purposes, there is actually no second line, but a continuation of the first line. We then have the lâmed preposition and the plural substantive çâ^bvî^bv (צָבֹוֹ) [pronounced *saw^b-VEE^BV*], which means *around, surrounding, circuit, round about, encircle*. Strong's #5439 BDB #686. With this is the 1st person plural suffix, giving us: **[as well as] as mocking and a derision to our surrounders.** The entire verse reads: **You have displayed us [as] a disgrace to our neighbors; a mocking and a derision to those around us.**

The Israelites are God's people and they are seen as a joke by the surrounding nations. God had warned them of this: **"And you will become a horror, a proverb, and a taunt among all the people where Jehovah will drive you."** (Deut. 28:37; see also Jer. 25:9). God also, after the splitting of the kingdoms, promised the Southern Kingdom that they would suffer the same fate as the Northern Kingdom in Ezek. 23:32: **"Thus says Jehovah God, "You will drink your sister's cup which is deep and wide. You will be laughed at and held in derision. It [the cup] contains much."** And God fulfilled this promise to Israel: **We have become a reproach to our neighbors, a scoffing and derision to those around us** (Psalm 79:4; see also Psalm 80:6 89:41). **"Therefore, the wrath of Jehovah was against Judah and Jerusalem and He has made them an object of terror, of horror, and of hissing, as you see with your own eyes."** (2Chron. 29:8). Barnes: *Surrounding nations treated them with contempt as inspiring no fear, and as having nothing to entitle them to respect.*¹⁶

You place [or, display, make] us a byword in the nations [or, Gentiles]; a shaking of [the] head in [the] peoples.

Psalm
44:14

You make us a proverb among the Gentiles a shaking of the head among the peoples.

You have made us a ridiculing proverb among the Gentiles; they shake their heads derisively at us.

First, what others have done:

¹⁶ Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 21.

JPS (Tanakh)	You make us a byword among the nations, a laughingstock [lit., a wagging of the head] among the peoples.
NASB	Thou dost make us a byword among the nations, A laughingstock among the peoples.
NRSV	You have made us a byword among the nations, a laughingstock among the peoples.
The Septuagint	You have made us a proverb among the Gentiles, a shaking of the head among the nations.
TEV	You have made us a joke among the nations; they shake their heads at us in scorn.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Thou makest us a simile among nations, A shaking of the head among peoples.

We begin with the 2nd person masculine singular, 1st person plural suffix, Qal imperfect of *sîym* (סִיַם) [pronounced *seem*] again (*to put, to place, to set, to make*).¹⁷ Strong's #7760 BDB #962. What the Israelites are *made* is the masculine singular noun *mâshâl* (מָשָׁל) [pronounced *maw-SHAWL*] means *parable, proverb, discourse, memorable recitation*. Strong's #4912 BDB #605. This is followed by *in the nations* or *in the Gentiles*. This gives us: *You place us [or, make us] a proverb in the Gentiles*. This proverb was something along the lines of: *Do you know where losers are from? Israel*. Israel was associated with all that was loss and all that was forsaken and all that is weak and powerless. When there were songs and proverbs and parables which dealt with losers, *Israel* was included somewhere in the song.

Line two begins with *a shaking of [the] head* followed by *בְּלִמְמֵי*, which means something along the lines of *not cubits* or *not tribes* (not exactly). However, it should read *בְּלִמְמֵי*, which means *in [or, among] [the] peoples*. *A shaking of [the] head among [the] peoples*. The idiom-gesture of *shaking one's head* is applicable today. There are times when a student of mine would vocalize a very stupid idea, and, rather than comment, I would shake my head derisively, and move on to the next comment. The NRSV renders this *a laughingstock*.

Again, all of this was prophesied by God: "Then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight. So Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples." (1Kings 9:7). "And I will make them a terror and an evil for all the kingdoms of the earth, as a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse in all places where I scatter them." (Jer. 24:9).

**All the day my dishonor [is] in front of me
and shame my faces has covered [or,
overwhelmed] me...**

Psalm
44:15

**All the day, my dishonor [is] before me
and the shame of my face engulfs me...**

**All day long, I stare into my own dishonor
and I am overwhelmed by my shame...**

This may be more difficult than most of the other verses. Here is what others have done:

JPS (Tanakh)	I am always aware of my disgrace; I am wholly covered with shame...
NASB	All day long my dishonor is before me, And my humiliation has overwhelmed me.
The Septuagint	All the day my shame is before me, and the confusion of my face has covered me,...
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	All the day my confusion is before me, And the shame of my face hath covered me.

We begin with *all the day* followed by the feminine singular noun (with a 1st person singular suffix) of *k'limmâh* (כְּלִמְמָה) [pronounced *klim-MAW*], which means *shame, dishonor, insult, reproach, ignominy, criticism*. In several places, the KJV renders this *confusion*. Strong's #3639 BDB #484. Then we have the preposition *neged* (נֶגֶד) [pronounced *NEH-ged*], which means *in front of, in the sight of, opposite to, before*. Strong's #5048 BDB #617. Affixed to this is the 1st person singular suffix, giving us: *All the day my dishonor [or, reproach] [is] in front of me*.

¹⁷ In case you are following along in Owen's Hebrew masterpiece, this is also written *sûm* (סִיַם) [pronounced *soom*].

The second line opens with the wâw conjunction and the feminine singular noun bôsheth (בוֹשֶׁת) [pronounced *BOH-sheth*], which means *shame, dishonor*. It can also refer to *ignominy, a vile and ignominious condition*; and it can refer to an *idol*, which brings shame upon those who worship it. Strong's #1322 BDB #102. K^elîmmâh and bôsheth appear to be synonyms and are often found together in the same verse or passage. This is followed by *my faces* (a masculine plural noun) which is followed by the main verb, the 3rd person feminine singular, 1st person singular suffix, Piel perfect of kâçâh (כָּאָחַ) [pronounced *kaw-SAWH*] and it means *to cover, to clothe, to conceal*. The Piel meanings are *to cover, to clothe, to spread over, to overwhelm, to engulf*. Strong's #3680 BDB #491. This gives us: **And [the] dishonor [of] my face engulfs me.** Barnes: *That is, the evidences of disgrace, defeat and disaster, rendering him a reproach to the nations, were everywhere around him, and he could not conceal them from himself...he could not conceal the proofs of his shame and disgrace; he was compelled to exhibit them to all around.*¹⁸

This again sounds like one of the Jewish exiles, or the prelude to one. The psalmist and his nation are ostensibly protected by the God of the Universe, and here they are, defeated, cast out of their country, and absolutely shamed by it all.

...from a voice of scorning and blaspheming from faces of hostility and [self] avenging.	Psalm 44:16	...because of the voice of scorning and blaspheming from before hostility and self-vengeance.
...because of the words of those who scorn and blaspheme, from those who are hostile and seek vengeance.		

What appears to be the case is that this verse is a continuation of v. 15 and should not really be taken separately. First, what others have done (and I have therefore included the previous verse with the JPS and Septuagint):

CEV	But others mock and sneer, as they watch my enemies take revenge on me.
JPS (Tanakh)	I am always aware of my disgrace; I am wholly covered with shame at the sound of taunting revilers, in the presence of the vengeful foe.
NASB	Because of the voice of him who reproaches and reviles, Because of the presence of the enemy and the avenger.
The Septuagint	All the day my shame is before me, and the confusion of my face has covered me, because of voice of the slanderer and reviler; because of the enemy and avenger.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Because of the voice of a reproacher and reviler, Because of an enemy and a self-avenger.

We begin this verse with the mîn preposition, which means *away from, out from, out of from*. It has a rare use (according to BDB) which amounts to a *causal* force; in other words, it may be rendered *on account of, through, because*. Although the mîn preposition wears many hats, I don't know that I agree with BDB here, if only because of its rarity. What I think is possible is that this preposition, which is found in the Hebrew as מִן is possibly מִי, which does mean *for, because*. Bearing in mind that the vowel points were added much later, you can see how a slip of the *pen* could make kîy look like mîn. Strong's #4480 BDB #577. The preposition is affixed to the masculine singular construct of qôwl (קוֹל) [pronounced *kohl*], which means *sound, voice*. Strong's #6963 BDB #876. This is followed by the Piel participle of chârâph (חָרַף) [pronounced *khah-RAHF*], which means *to defy, to reproach*. In the Piel, it means *to scorn, to reproach, to scornfully defy*. Strong's #2778 BDB #357 and #358. Then we have the wâw conjunction and the Piel participle of gâdâph (גָּדַף) [pronounced *gaw-DAHF*], which means *to revile, to blaspheme*. Piel verb. Strong's #1442 BDB #154. I don't see rendering this as nouns, as most translations have done. So we now have: **...because of a voice of scorning and blaspheming.** There is no reason to assume that we have a second line here. The next phase we have is *from faces of*, followed by the Qal active participle of `âya^{bv} (אֵיָא) [pronounced *aw-YA^{BV}*], which means *to be at enmity, to be hostile*. As a participle, it can be reasonably rendered *enemy*, but it is more literally, *the one being at enmity with you*. Here, as a participle, it could be rendered *enmity, hostility*. Strong's #340 BDB #33. We then have the wâw conjunction and the Hithpael participle of nâqam

¹⁸ Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 21–22.

(נָקַמְתִּי) [pronounced *naw-KAHM*], which means *to avenge, to take vengeance*. In the Hithpael, it means *to avenge oneself, to be desirous of vengeance*. Strong's #5358 BDB #667. This gives us: *All the day, my dishonor [is] before me and the shame of my face engulfs me because of the voice of scorning and blaspheming from before [or, from the sight of] hostility and self-vengeance.*

Again, this sounds as though the psalmist is in the midst of his enemy; he has been shamed by defeat, and his enemy scorns him and blasphemes God. Another psalmist asks how long this will go on: *How long, O God, will the adversary revile us and the enemy spurn Your name forever?* (Psalm 74:10).

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to Chart Index>>](#)

The Pivot Has Not Forgotten God

**All of this has come [upon] us
and we have not forgotten You
and we have not dealt falsely in Your
covenant.**

Psalm
44:17

**All this has come [upon] us
although we have not forgotten You
nor have we broken Your covenant.**

All this evil has befallen us, even though we have not forgotten You nor have we treated Your covenant with contempt.

To explain the subheading: *pivot* is a term which Thieme has given to those mature believers who spiritually support a nation. It is because of them that a nation is not put through the same suffering as is found in other countries. The United States is such a country, and Canada and Mexico are prospered by association. Now let's see what others have done with this particular verse:

JPS (Tanakh)	All this has come upon us, yet we have not forgotten You, or been false to Your covenant.
NASB	All this has come upon us, but we have not forgotten Thee, And we have not dealt falsely with Thy covenant.
The Septuagint	All these things are come upon us; but we have not forgotten You nor have we dealt unrighteously in Your covenant.
Young's Literal Translation	All this met us, and we did not forget Thee, Nor have we dealt falsely in Thy covenant.

We begin this verse with *all of this* followed by the 3rd person feminine singular, 1st person plural suffix, Qal perfect of *bôw* (בּוֹא) [pronounced *boh*], which means *to come in, to come, to go in, to go, to enter*. Strong's #935 BDB #97. Our first line should read: *All of this has come [upon] us...*

The second line is the *wâw* conjunction, the negative and the 1st person plural, 2nd person masculine singular suffix, Qal perfect of *shâkach* (שָׁכַח) [pronounced *shaw-KAHKH*], which means *to forget; to forget and leave*. Strong's #7911 BDB #1013. Essentially, in the Hebrew, the second line is simply two words, which we translate *and we have not forgotten You*. We have a parallel passage in Psalm 119:16, 153, 176: *I will delight in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word...Look upon my affliction and rescue me, for I do not forget Your law...I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Your servant, for I have not forgotten Your commandments*. Israel had been warned not to forget the Lord Who bore them: *"Then watch yourselves so that you do not forget Jehovah Who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."* (Deut. 6:12; see Deut. 32:18). *My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for length of days and years of life and peace they will add to you* (Prov. 3:1–2).

The third line begins with the *wâw* conjunction, the negative and the 1st person plural, Piel perfect of *shâkar* (שָׁקַר) [pronounced *shaw-KAHR*], which means *to deal falsely, to do falsely, to deceive*. It means *to break [a covenant]* when followed by the *bêyth* preposition and the word *covenant*. Strong's #8266 BDB #1055. This is followed by

in Your covenant. Covenant is the feminine singular noun בְּרִית (בְּרִית) [pronounced *b^oreeth*], which means *pact, alliance, treaty, alliance, covenant*. This can be used between men or between man and God. Strong's #1285 BDB #136. All of this has come [upon] us and we have not forgotten You and we have not dealt falsely with Your covenant [or, we have not broken Your covenant].

Now you should have some concerns. Is Israel faithful to God, yet God is faithless towards Israel? This is what this appears to sound like. It appears as though the psalmist, who is speaking by the Holy Spirit, claims *we have not broken Your covenant and we have not forgotten You*, yet God has clearly placed them under some great pressure (which appears to be the fifth cycle of discipline). The key is *we*; the psalmist is not referring to himself and every person who lives in Israel; he is referring to himself and other believers who were taken out of Israel. Or he is referring to himself and those around him. During the reign of Josiah, many religious reforms were enacted. This means that the palace was spiritually aware, but it does not mean that they people followed suit. Enforced morality is not true morality. Given the character of Josiah, he probably surrounded himself with mature believers. However, these may have been the only mature believers in all of Israel. Now, if we are dealing with a psalmist who wrote after one of the dispersions, bear in mind that, during the fifth cycle of discipline, Israel was not simply removed from her land, but many were killed first. God picks and chooses whom He wills. God did not deliver the bulk of the unbelieving population but the bulk of the believing population of Israel. What we have is not enough of a pivot (as Thieme referred to them) of mature believers to preserve a nation, but we have enough to preserve. God is not arbitrary or capricious. For instance, during colonial times in this nation, African slaves were brought over in inhumane conditions. Did God simply allow a handfuls of miscellaneous, arbitrarily chosen men to be brought to the states for slavery? He did not! God handpicked each and every slave, knowing the end from the beginning. God brought the Black man from Africa to give him the gospel of Jesus Christ, and God chose men who were principally positive toward the gospel. Black slaves believed in Christ Jesus in great numbers, as did many of their ancestors. One of the reasons that our nation has been so prosperous and preserved is that we have a large believing population and a small, but effective pivot of mature believers. Don't think for a moment that this pivot is made up of Anglo's only. We have a significant percentage of African Americans who are believers, and a significant number of them who are mature believers, and it is their progress toward spiritual maturity, as much as the progress of any other group, which has preserved and prospered this nation. In fact, percentage-wise, there are probably more African Americans who are believers and mature believers than we have in any other subgroup in the United States (including the Caucasians). My point in this application is that, during the fifth cycle of discipline, those who were killed and those who were hauled out of Israel into captivity were not done so randomly. The *we* to which the psalmist refers are the believers who were preserved and then removed from the Land of Promise (or, if this is prior to the dispersion, then those in the periphery of the psalmist). Those who did not make it were the unbelievers in Israel, those who brought the fifth cycle upon Israel to begin with.

Let me offer a (faulty) interpretation of this portion of this psalm—Keil and Delitzsch seem to indicate that the psalmist has misunderstood the situation, and that the people were not blameless. It is not God Who is unfaithful to Israel, but the psalmist should look more carefully into the congregation of Israel to discover where the fault lies.¹⁹ The problem is two-fold: (1) We do not get to judge a person or a nation based upon results. The book of Job should tell us that. Job was thought to be guilty of the most heinous sins, although no one could figure out just exactly what they were. This was the only way that they could explain Job's suffering. (2) Secondly, we have it recorded right here in the Word of God that Israel was, on the whole, faithful to God (Psalm 44:17–18). Now, either this is a true appraisal of the situation or the Holy Spirit is confused. I would go with choice A. Choice B calls into question the **Doctrine of the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit** (see Gen. 1 or Judges 18:introduction). I think that if we are to adhere to the Verbal Plenary Inspiration of the Holy Spirit, then we would have to accept the psalms as being doctrinally and historically accurate, and not simply just the opinion of some religious dude.

**Has not been turned back my heart
and so are [not] turned our steps from Your
way...**

Psalm
44:18

**Our heart has not been turned back
nor do our steps turn from Your way...**

¹⁹ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 5, p. 320.

**Our heart has not been turned away from You
nor have we moved away from Your Laws...**

Again, insofar as the psalmist knows, those who are around him are growing spiritually and have not moved away from God and His Word. However, just because there are healthy concentrations of believers in the palace, does not mean that we find the same concentrations among the general populace of Israel. Let' see what others have done with this verse:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Our heart had not drawn back, Nor had our goings swerved from thy path;..
JPS (Tanakh)	Our hearts have not gone astray, nor have our feet swerved from Your path.
NASB	Our heart has not turned back, And our steps have not deviated from Thy way.
REB	...our hearts have not been unfaithful, nor have our feet strayed from your path.
The Septuagint	And our heart has not gone back, but You have turned aside our paths from Your way.
TEV	We have not been disloyal to you; we have not disobeyed your commands.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	We turn not backward our heart, Nor turn aside doth our step from Thy path.

We begin with negative and the 3rd person masculine singular, Niphal perfect of çûwg (גוּו) [pronounced *soog*] is a verb which means *to move away, to backslide*; in the Niphal, it means *to turn oneself away, to turn back*. Strong's #5472 (& #5253 & #7734) BDB #690. Then we have the adverb `âchôwr (אַחֲוֹר) [pronounced *aw-KHOHR*] again (*the hinder side, the back part, backwards*). Strong's #268 BDB #30. This is followed by the subject of the verb, *our heart*, giving us: **Our heart has not been turned around backwards.**

The second line begins with a *wâw* consecutive and the 3rd person feminine singular, Qal imperfect of $\text{nâ\text{t}âh}$ (הַת) [pronounced *naw-TAWH*], which means *to stretch out, to spread out, to bow, to extend*. More precisely, it means ❶ *to stretch out, to extend, to stretch, to unfold, to spread something out* (e.g., the flocks over the land); ❷ *to incline, to bow*; ❸ *to turn, to turn away, to turn* (to one's side); ❹ *to go away*. I don't have much confidence in that last meaning. Strong's #5186 BDB #639. It appears as though our subject is a feminine plural noun (*our steps*), which is followed by *from Your way*. This gives us: **Our steps turn from Your way.** We now have two problems. First of all, the subject and the verb do not match. Apparently nine early printed editions has *step* or *going* in the singular; however, the bulk of the manuscripts along with pretty much every codex has the plural noun. Furthermore, this is pretty much the opposite of what the psalmist has been alleging, so either the negative was dropped out (and I am not aware of any evidence which would suggest this) or the *wâw* consecutive allows us to carry the negative over from the beginning of the verse, which is essentially what most translators did.

Now, you will note that the Septuagint has a different take on the second half of this verse than what is found in the Hebrew. I will have to assume that the verb means *You have turned aside* or *You have turned out* (I was unable to find it in any of my Lexicons).²⁰ Then we have *the steps of ours from Your way*. So, in the Septuagint, any deviation from the way was effected by God upon His followers. It is possible that the manuscript in the hands of those translating the Septuagint was different than what we have; it is also possible that they were trying to compensate for the lack of the negative in this verse, and this approach, blaming God for their deviation, seemed to work best. Interestingly enough, the REB, which is generally sympathetic towards the Greek version of the Bible, chose to follow the Hebrew. Ditto for Rotherham, who occasionally will entertain the version set forth by the Septuagint, but does not do so here. The reason for this is that God does not intentionally make us misstep. He does not cause us to turn aside our steps from His path. He does not lead us into temptation. We make these choices to take ourselves out of God's will. Therefore, what we find in the Hebrew, interpreting the previous negative to apply in the second line as well, would be the most reasonable way to translate this verse.

Apparently, during the time that this psalm was written, apostasy was not obvious and widespread. Degeneracy can be subtle, and that apparently was the problem here (I am assuming that this took place at the end of Josiah's reign). Josiah instituted reforms which obliterated idol worship, but such reforms can only change what is on the

²⁰ I would of course be basing this on the translation found in *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*; Sir Lancelot C.L. Brenton; Hendrickson Publishers; ©1992; p. 724.

outside. What the psalmist observed in his immediate periphery was genuine dedication to God; what *appeared* to be going on throughout the nation was the same dedication.

Several times throughout this chapter, it is like reading the pleadings of Job.²¹ Job argued before his friends that he had not turned away from God. “My foot has held fast to His path; I have kept His way and I have not turned aside [from it].” (Job 23:11). Those mature believers on the death march (when the Jews were exiled from Judah) also made the same claims: The arrogant utterly deride me, yet I have not turned away from Your Law (Psalm 119:51). Many are my persecutors and my adversaries, yet I do not turn aside from Your testimonies (Psalm 119:157).

**...that You crushed us in a place of jackals
and so You have spread over us in death
shadow.**

Psalm 44:19 **...that You should crush us in a place of jackals
and then spread a death shadow over us.**

**...that You have crushed us in the place of the jackal
and then spread over us a death shadow.**

First, what others have done:

JPS (Tanakh)	...though You cast us, crushed, to where the sea monster is, and covered us over with deepest darkness.
KJV	Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death.
NASB	Yet Thou hast crushed us in a place of jackals, And covered us with the shadow of death.
NKJV	But You have severely broken us in the place of jackals, And covered us with the shadow of death.
The Septuagint	For You have laid us low in a place of affliction, and the shadow of death has covered us.
TEV	Yet you left us helpless among wild animals; you abandoned us in deepest darkness.
Young's Literal Translation	But Thou hast smitten us in a place of dragons, And does cover us over with death-shade.

This verse begins with the explanatory conjunction *kîy* (*for, that, because*) followed by 2nd person masculine singular, 1st person plural suffix, Piel perfect of *dâkâh* (דָּכָה) [pronounced *daw-KAW*], which means *to be crushed, to crouch, to be broken, to be contrite, to crush to pieces*. Strong's #1794 BDB #194. Then we have the *bêyth* preposition and the masculine singular construct of *mâqôwm* (מִקְוֹם) [pronounced *maw-KOHM*], which means *place*. Strong's #4725 BDB #879. This is followed by the masculine plural noun *tannîyn* (תַּנִּינִים) [pronounced *tahn-NEEM*], which could mean *dragon, serpent, sea monster*. Strong's #8577 BDB #1072. *Jackal*, in the Hebrew, is *tan* (תַּן) [pronounced *tahn*] or *tân* (תָּן) [pronounced *tawn*]. In the plural, this is *tannîym* (תַּנִּימִים) [pronounced *tah-NEEM*] or *tannîyn* (תַּנִּינִים) [pronounced *tah-NEEN*], the latter spelling is the same as what we have for the *serpent, dragon* or *sea monster*. Contextually speaking, what works here is *jackals*. Both Scofield and the NKJV concur. Strong's #8565 BDB #1072. I mention this so that you can understand the different renderings which are found here. This verse should be rendered: **...that You should crush us in a place of jackals**. The idea is that these Jews have been moved out of the Land of Promise into the land of the Gentiles, which is similar to being placed in a *place of jackals*.

The second line begins with the *wâw* consecutive followed by the 2nd person masculine singular, Piel imperfect of *kâçâh* (כָּסָה) [pronounced *kaw-SAWH*] again (*to cover, to clothe, to conceal*). The Piel meanings are *to cover,*

²¹ I originally thought that this observation was just me, as I recently completed exegeting a half-dozen chapters in the book of Job; however, Keil and Delitzsch recognize the same parallels between Israel here and Job's plight. Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 5, p. 320.

to clothe, to spread over, to overwhelm, to engulf. Strong's #3680 BDB #491. Then we have the ʿal preposition (upon, beyond, against) affixed to the 1st person plural suffix. Then we have the bêyth preposition followed by the masculine singular noun tzal^mmâveth (תַּלְמָוֶת) [pronounced *tzal-MAW-veh*], which means *deep darkness, death-shadow, deep shadow*. Strong's #6757 BDB #853. So we now have: **And then spread over us a death shadow.** Translating both prepositions in the English is awkward, but it works in the Hebrew. When Israel is removed from the land, it is as though God has spread the shadow of death over them. Israel has always been tied to the Land of Promise. Separating them from the land is spreading a death shadow over them. Furthermore, the *death shadow* is the antithesis of *light*, which is always used in relationship to God and His Word. The psalmist felt that God had removed Israel from its place of blessing.

Psalm 40:18–19 should be taken together: **Our heart has not been turned back nor do our steps turn from Your way that You should crush us in a place of jackals and then spread a death shadow over us.**

**If we had forgotten a name of our God
and so we spread out our palms to a god [who
is] strange,...**

Psalm
44:20

**If we had forgotten the name of our God
and spread open our palms to a strange god,...**

If we had forgotten the name of our God and opened up our palms toward a strange god,...

Again, we have a pair of verses which should not have been separated. This belongs with v. 21 and makes little sense apart from the next verse. First, what others have done:

JPS (Tanakh)

If we forgot the name of our God and spread forth our hands to a foreign god,...

NASB

If we had forgotten the name of our God, Or extended our hands to a strange god;...

The Septuagint

If we have forgotten the name of our God, and if we have spread out our hands to a strange god,...

TEV

If we had stopped worshipping our God and prayed to a foreign god,...

Young's Literal Translation

If we have forgotten the name of our God And spread our hands to a strange God,...

The psalmist sets up a scenario which would have brought upon them the wrath of God. The first line is: **If we had forgotten [Qal perfect] [the] name of our God...** This introduces the protasis of a conditional.

The wâw consecutive continues the protasis. We have the 1st person plural, Qal imperfect of phâras (פָּרַס) [pronounced *faw-RAHS*], which means *to spread out, to spread, to display*. Strong's #6566 BDB #831. Then we have the feminine plural noun kaph (כַּף) [pronounced *kaf*], which means *palm, hollow or flat of the hand, sole of the foot and even bowl*. Strong's #3709 BDB #496. Then we have *to a god* (singular), followed by the Qal active participle of zûwr (זָוַר) [pronounced *zoor*], which means *to be strange, to be foreign, to become estranged*. Strong's #2114 BDB #266. Here, it is used as an adjective. This gives us: **...and spread out [or, open] our palms to a strange god...** *Spreading out the hands toward a false god or opening the palms to a false god was a symbol of worship and obeisance* (see 1Kings 8:22 2Chron. 6:12–13).

Moses warned against this: **“But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; You are grown fat, thick and sleek. Then he forsook God Who made him and he scorned the Rock of his salvation. They made Him jealous with strange gods and with abominations they provoked him to anger. They sacrificed to demons and not God; they sacrificed to gods they did not know, new gods who came in lately, whom your fathers did not dread. You neglected the Rock Who begot you and you forgot the God Who gave you birth.”** (Deut. 32:15–18). Throughout the book of Judges, we find the cycle where Israel would forget God and turn away from Him, and God would send them oppressors (e.g., Judges 3:7–8 6:1). However, from the standpoint of the psalmist, who wrote under the direction of the Holy Spirit, this was not the case.

The psalmist sets up the protasis of the conditional. He asks, *if we had forgotten Who our God was and had given respect to a foreign [or, demonic] god,...* We know from 2Chron. 34:33 that Josiah had instituted spiritual reforms in the land, which included removing religious abominations from the land. Therefore, the psalmist could look out

over the land of Judah and say that Israel was not pursuing a foreign god. There was no idol worship occurring at this time.

**Would not God search out this
for He keeps knowing hidden things of [the]
heart?**

Psalm
44:21

**wouldn't God search this out
because he knows the secrets of the heart?**

wouldn't God have discovered this, as He knows the secrets of man's heart?

First, what others have done:

JPS (Tanakh)

God would surely search it out, for He know the secrets of the heart.

NASB

Would not God find this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart.

The Septuagint

...shall not God search these things out? For he knows the secrets of the heart. [the Septuagint actually has the first sentence included with the previous verse].

Young's Literal Translation

Doth not God search out this? For He knoweth the secrets of the heart.

We begin the interrogative particle, a negative and the masculine plural noun *Elohim*, followed by the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of *châqar* (חָקַר) [pronounced *khaw-KAHR*], which means *to search out, to search for, to thoroughly investigate*. Strong's #2713 BDB #350. Then we have the feminine singular, demonstrative adjective, giving us: **Would not Elohim search out this?**

Then we have the explanatory conjunction *kîy* (*for, because, that*), followed by the 3rd person masculine pronoun, referring back to *Elohim*. You will note that *Elohim*, although plural, takes a masculine singular verb and the pronoun which refers back to it is a masculine singular as well. Then we have the Qal active participle of *to know* followed by the feminine plural construct of *ta'ălûwmâh* (תַּעֲלֹמָה) [pronounced *tah-ûh-loo-MAW*], which means *an hidden thing, something hidden, a secret*. It is only found in Job 11:6 28:11 and Psalm 44:21. Strong's #8587 BDB #761. This is affixed to the common word for *heart*, which gives us: **for He keeps knowing [the] hidden things of [the] heart**. One of the well-attested doctrines in Scripture is God's omniscience, found in 2Chron. 28:9 Psalm 139:1–2 Prov. 15:11 Jer. 12:3a 17:10 Rom. 8:27. Now, it is my own opinion that the hearts of the people of Israel were estranged from God, and He, of course, knew this (although the psalmist did not). This is based upon my interpretation of when this psalm took place and the circumstances of the time. It is not absolutely necessary that Israel be clearly apostate in order for these things to be befalling them. That just happens to be my take on this. Israel could have been, for all we know, in fellowship and growing as a whole, and that God did this to test them. There are times, as a believer, that you will face unwarranted attacks and pressures. God does that to test and prepare us.

Now let's put these two verses together:

Psalm 44:20–21

JPS (Tanakh)	If we forgot the name of our God and spread forth our hands to a foreign god, God would surely search it out, for He knows the secrets of the heart.
Kukis Literal	If we had forgotten the name of our God and spread open our palms to a strange god, wouldn't God search this out because he knows the secrets of the heart?
NASB	If we had forgotten the name of our God, Or extended our hands to a strange god; Would not God find this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart.
NIV	If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign god, would not God have discovered it, since he knows the secrets of the heart?
NLT	If we had turned away from worshiping our God or spread our hands in prayer to foreign gods, God would surely have known it, for he knows the secrets of every heart.

Had those in the pivot of Israel turned toward foreign gods and worshipped them, this would not be something that they could have kept hidden from God, as He is omniscient. As has been point out earlier, this would indicate that those who were taken into captivity were primarily believers who were mature.

What we have that is hidden from all mankind is our thoughts. Our physical appearance, our attractiveness or lack thereof, even our social status can often be determined by how we look. However, if we know how to play poker, no one can see into our thoughts. Our purposes, our motives, our feelings—in fact, that which makes us what we really are—these things are hidden from our fellow man, but available to God to examine.

One of the more humorous arguments given by the agnostic and the atheist is that, since they have never seen God, therefore He does not exist. You cannot see the soul of anyone. You cannot see their thoughts, dreams and aspirations; so if the greater part of man is immaterial—and that you cannot see—how can you expect to see God, Who has presented Himself as being immaterial? No one would deny that they were able to think, to imagine, to conceive, to dream—yet all of these things are absolutely immaterial. Furthermore, it would be difficult, if not foolish, to deny these things in others as well. If we cannot deny our immaterial existence and the immaterial existence of those around us, then how can we so blithely deny the immaterial existence of God?

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

The Pivot Calls to God to Raise Them out of the Dust

For concerning You, we are slain all the day. Psalm **For Your sake, we are killed all the day [long].**
We are regarded as a sheep of slaughtering. 44:22 **We are regarded as a sheep for slaughtering.**

We are killed all day long for Your sake.
We are seen as sheep to be slaughtered.

First, what others have done:

JPS (Tanakh)	It is for Your sake that we are slain all day long, that we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.
NASB	But for Thy sake we are killed all day long; We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.
The Septuagint <i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	For Your sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for slaughter. Surely, for Thy sake we have been slain all the day, Reckoned as sheep of the slaughter.

We begin this verse with the explanatory conjunction *kîy* (*that, for, because*) Strong's #3588 BDB #471; plus *ʿal* (לַעֲלֵי) [pronounced *ǰahl*], which means *upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside*. Strong's #5920, #5921 BDB #752. I cannot find these together in the lexicons, so the best I can do is offer the various translations given for *kîy ʿal*: *but for* (NASB); *surely, for* (Young); *yea, for* (KJV); *yet, for* (NKJV); *because* (NRSV). With the 2nd person masculine singular suffix, several render this *for Your sake* (Owen, REB, NAB, NJB). Most other translations are very close to that rendering (NASB, KJV, NKJV, NIV). Then we have the 1st person plural, Pual perfect of *to kill*. The Pual is the passive of the Piel (intensive) stem and emphasizes an accomplished state. Then we have *all the day*, giving us: [For Your sake, we are killed all the day \[long\]](#).

Barnes: *That is, we are continually or constantly subjected to these calamities. It is not a single defeat, but it is a continued slaughter. This verse contains, in the apprehension of the psalmist, the true cause of the calamities which had come upon the nation. The emphasis in the passage lies in the phrase, "for Your sake." The meaning is, It is on thy account; it is in Your cause; it is because we are Your friends, and because we worship You. It is not on account of our national sins; it is not because there is any prevalent idolatry, but it is because we are the worshipers of the true God, and we are, therefore, martyrs. All these calamities have come upon us in consequence of our attachment to thee. There is no evidence that there was any self-glorifying in this, or any intention to blame God as if He were unjust or severe, but it is the feeling of martyrs as suffering in the cause of religion. This passage is applied by the apostle Paul to Christians in his time, as fitly describing their sufferings, and the cause of the calamities which came upon them.*²²

I must admit that I have been fighting this interpretation of Barnes, but I must admit to its reasonableness, given the tenor of this entire psalm. My contention is that the pivot was small and existed primarily at the top of the political scale, at least during the reign of Josiah. Barnes makes the argument that these Jews are violated simply because they worship the True God. In the New Testament era, that is certainly true. My problem with his interpretation is not that it contradicts what we find in this psalm, because it does not, but that I am having a difficult time placing it in history. Or, perhaps the problem is that I have misinterpreted those ancient times. It is possible that under Josiah's reforms that Israel as a whole was responsive to God and did worship the true God. 2Chron. 35:1–19 clearly illustrates the national reinstatement of the Passover. We go directly from the Passover to the death of Josiah in battle (2Chron. 35:20–24). Josiah died in 609 B.C. Within ten years, Israel found itself under continual attack which continued until 539 B.C., when Nebuchadnezzar removed the Israelites from Judah. I must admit that I do not like the idea of God allowing Judah to be, for all intents and purposes, martyred. Judah's kings during this time were disobedient toward God (including Josiah—see 2Chron. 35:21–22 36:5, 9, 12). What this would tell us that the Jews, under Josiah's reforms, did turn toward God. However, at the end of his reign, Josiah disobeyed God and was killed in battle. The kings who ruled over Judah from thereon were also evil in God's sight, although we do not know about the people of Judah. I had always assumed that the people followed their leaders, but this psalmist indicates that they did not. In other words, what is suggested here is that the people of Southern Israel (the Northern Kingdom had already been deported) remained faithful to God after the death of Josiah, but that God allowed them to be subsequently martyred. It is clear that if Psalm 119 is the *death march of the Jews* under Sennacherib, that there were survivors who were spiritually mature.

In reexamining the final chapters of 2Kings and 2Chronicles, I must admit that there is nothing in those chapters which indicate that the Israelites were degenerate. We have only negative comments made about the final rulers of Judah. The exception is 2Chron. 36:13–16, which reads: [And Zedekiah \[the final king of Israel\] also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar who made him swear by God; but he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to Jehovah God of Israel. Furthermore, all the officials of the priests and the people were very unfaithful participating in all the abominations of the nations; and they defiled the house of Jehovah which He had sanctified in Jerusalem. And Jehovah, the God of their fathers, sent word to them again and again by His messengers, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place; but they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of Jehovah arose against His people until there was no remedy.](#) This could very well refer to the general state of Israel and Judah throughout the majority of the divided kingdom, rather than to that specific period of time.

²² Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 24 (slightly updated).

In the second line, we have the 1st person plural, Niphal perfect of *châsha^{bv}* (חָשַׁבְנוּ) [pronounced *khaw-SHAHBV*], which means *to think, to regard, to account, to count, to determine, to calculate*. The Niphal is simply the passive stem, so *châsha^{bv}* would be rendered *to be computed, to be reckoned, to be taken for*. When the Niphal is followed by the kaph preposition (as we have here), it can mean *to be taken for, to be made equal to someone*. Strong's #2803 BDB #362. After *kaph*, we have the feminine singular construct for *sheep* followed by the feminine singular noun *ṭî^{bv}châh* (טִבְּחָה) [pronounced *tî^{bv}-KHAW*], which means *a thing slaughtered, a slaughter, a slaughtered meat*. Strong's #2878 BDB #370. This gives us: **We are regarded as a sheep of slaughtering**. The psalmist shows great concern for the position he and the rest of Israel has been placed in. It appears to the psalmist as though God sees His people as nothing more than sheep to be offered for slaughtering.

The NIV Study Bible downplays this verse, saying essentially that Israel has been hated and persecuted by other nations since Egypt.²³ However, the tenor of this psalm makes it out to be more than just that. Israel is not simply persecuted by other nations; God appears to be ignoring Israel's pleas for help. Barnes interprets (we refers to the believing Jew): *It is not because we are guilty, but we are regarded and treated as innocent sheep who are driven to be slaughtered...Their attachment to the true religion—their devotion to Jehovah as the true God—was the secret cause of all the calamities which had come upon them. As a nation, they were His friends, and as such they were opposed by the worshipers of other gods.*²⁴

Paul also quotes this verse in Rom. 8:36; to integrate with the context, we will begin with the very well-known Rom. 8:28: **For we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to a pre-determined plan. For whom He foreknew, He also foreordained conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brothers. And whom He foreordained, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. Consequently, to what conclusion are we forced? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things? Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He Who died, yea, rather, Who was raised, Who is at the right hand of God, Who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword? For as it stands written: For Your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered. But in all these things, we overwhelmingly conquer through Him Who loved us** (Rom. 8:28–37). This indicates that there will be times of great persecution. The psalmist knew it and so did Paul. Therefore, we should not be surprised if believers in history are persecuted and slaughtered; nor should we be surprised if this occurs during our time (or, even if it occurs to us).

The Interpretation of Judah's History Part II

Assuming that this psalm was written during the last years of Judah, as mentioned before, there are two interpretations of Judah's history during her last days prior to the Assyrian invasion which eventuated in the deportation of most of Judah.

1. The point of view which I had personally adhered to was that both the kings of Judah and the people of Judah had reached such a level of degeneracy that God finally removed them from the land because of this intense degeneracy. This appears to be the interpretation of most Bible scholars, who would quote 2Chron. 36:13–16 to support this view.
2. The second interpretation is that Josiah's reforms were real; the people of Judah responded favorably toward his reforms. Furthermore, the people remained spiritually focused from the time of Josiah until their deportation, 70 years later, during which time they were martyred and then removed from the land. It was the leaders of Judah who rebelled against God (including even Josiah during the final days of his reign). One would support this view with Psalm 44 and 119.

²³ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 523.

²⁴ *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 24.

The Interpretation of Judah's History Part II

Arguments in favor of #1: The people are said to be degenerate in 2Chron. 36:13–16. This interpretation appears to be the one accepted by most scholars. Also, would God allow Judah to be plundered as she was if she were faithful?

Arguments in favor of #2: The psalmist in several places indicates that Israel had not turned away from God (vv. 17–18, 20). He indicates that they are being killed for God's sake (v. 22). If Psalm 119 is a recording of the famous death march, it had to be written by a mature believer who was among a group of mature believers. Continually in this psalm, we have positive volition toward God's Word expressed (vv. 15–16, 26–27, 31–35, 43–48, etc.). Paul quotes Psalm 44:22 to explain why believers during his time were being martyred. This would be a correct interpretation and application of this passage.

Arguments against #1: The supposed degeneracy of the people in 2Chron. 36:13–16 could refer to Judah and Israel's general history following the division of the country. [And Jehovah God of their ancestors sent His messengers to them again and again, because He had compassion on His people...but they continually mocked the messengers of God](#) (2Chron. 36:15a, 16a). This sounds much more like what occurred over a period of time rather than what occurred during the 70 years of Judah prior to the deportation. In the 200 years prior to the diaspora, God had sent Israel at least 9 prophets (that is, prophets whose messages are preserved in His Word), only two of which ministered during these final 70 years (Jeremiah and Habakkuk). The gist of 2Chron. 36:15–16 appears to be the more extended history of Judah and Israel and appears to include Israel as well as Judah.

Arguments against #2: Perhaps Psalms 44, 119 were not written during this time frame. The people are said to be degenerate in 2Chron. 36:13–16.

Conclusion: I must admit that, after exegeting this psalm, I am leaning more and more toward Barnes' interpretation, which is the second interpretation. Bear in mind that this presupposes that we have properly placed Psalm 44 in history.

Addendum: I should add to this that what we have here is more than a simple mental exercise. I must admit that there are times when I present various viewpoints in order to interpret a passage, even though there appears to be no real spiritual benefit in pursuing these viewpoints. When I began this examination, I did not really see a reason for arguing one way or the other. However, by application, it is important to recognize that, in the Old Testament as well as in the New, there were martyrs of the faith. There are times when you will be right, when you are following God, when you are persecuted or unfairly treated. There will be times in history when those who are absolutely faithful to God are martyred as well. When you signed on as a believer, obviously you did not realize what you had signed up for. However, it is time that you realize that life won't always be easy and this is not necessarily a reflection of you as a believer.

Application: We cannot be like the *friends* of Job and assume that when someone is under intense pressure that God is punishing them for their sins. The psalmist clearly indicates here, writing in the power of the Holy Spirit, that regardless of the time frame in which this psalm belongs, that some positive, growing believers are unfairly persecuted and even martyred.²⁵

[<<Return to Chapter Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

Can you image just how confused the psalmist was? God had delivered Israel in the past. Israel belonged to God—she was His beloved. And yet, God did not deliver her. [For Your sake, we are killed all the day long. We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.](#) Paul was able to take this and apply it to his day and time—believers during the early days of Christianity were martyred in great numbers, and they were martyred for His sake. Paul could look to this verse to perhaps not completely understand *why*, but to at least recognize that what was occurring

²⁵ Now, don't be stupid about this. There are times when believers are under pressure and *persecution* because they are out of fellowship and/or they are jerks who bring it on themselves.

was within God's plan. Furthermore, saints in the tribulation will be able to go to this verse and recognize this as being applicable to them as well. That many believers will die in the tribulation is a given. This is not a reason, however, to become disheartened or confused. As cruel as these times may have seemed to be, this recording of these circumstances helped to comfort Paul during incredibly difficult times. There are many believers throughout history who have suffered great persecution who can look to this and recognize that they are dying for God's sake, and that their death is not taken lightly by Him. This psalm will further comfort and guide those in the tribulation. So, initially, we may be put off by the circumstances described in this psalm—however, this is how it had to be, so that believers in later times would be able to shore up under the tremendous persecution that they faced as well.

Rouse Yourself—why do You sleep, O Lord?
Awake; do not cast off for ever.

Psalm
 44:23

Rouse Yourself—why are you sleeping, O Lord?
Wake up—do not reject [us] forever.

Wake up, O Lord—why are you sleeping?
Wake up! Don't loathe us forever.

First of all, we should get one thing straight—God does not sleep or slumber or lose track of what is going on here on earth. The verbiage that we find in this verse is simply expressive of the psalmist being concerned that God has abandoned Israel. Comparing what happened to Israel at her founding and what was happening then, it was as though God were asleep, in need of being awakened. Now, let's see what others have done with this verse:

JPS (Tanakh)
 NASB

Rouse Yourself; why do You sleep, O Lord? Awaken, do not reject us forever!
 Arouse Yourself, why dost Thou sleep, O Lord? Awake, do not reject us forever.

The Septuagint
 Young's Literal Translation

Awaken—why do You sleep, O Lord? Arise, and do not cast [us] off for ever.
 Stir up—why dost Thou sleep, O Lord? Awake, cast us not off for ever.

We begin this verse with the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative (with a voluntative *hê*) of עוּר (עור) [pronounced *goor*], and it means *to rouse oneself, to awake*. In the imperative, it means *Rouse yourself; arise!; wake up, you!* Strong's #5782 BDB #734. This is directed toward God. It appears to the psalmist as though God is not attentive at all to their plight.

Then we have the *lâmed* preposition and the interjection *mâh*; together, they mean *why*. Strong's #4100 BDB #552. Then we have the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of *yâshên* (ישן) [pronounced *yaw-SHAYN*], which means *to sleep*. Strong's #3462 BDB #445. Then we have the masculine plural noun *ʾădôwn* (אדון) [pronounced *aw-DOHN*], which means *lord, master, owner, superior, sovereign*. We transliterate it *Adonai*. The plural is *ʾădônây* (אדונאי) [pronounced *uh-doh-NAY*], which can be interpreted as referring to the Trinity or as an intensification of the noun. Strong's #113 BDB #10.²⁶ This gives us: **Rouse [Yourself]—why are you sleeping, O Lord?** To the psalmist, it appears as though God is not involved in his life or in the life of Israel.

In this parallel second line, we have the 2nd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperative (with a voluntative *hê*) of *qîyts* (קִיץ) [pronounced *keets*]²⁷, which means *to be aroused out of sleep, to be aroused from the slumber of death, to be awakened*. This verb is found only in the Hiphil. Strong's #6974 BDB #884. Then we have the negative followed by the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative of *zânach* (זנח) [pronounced *zaw-NAHKH*], which means *to stink, to be rancid, to be corrupt*; metaphorically, it means *to be abominable*, and therefore, transitively, *to loath, to spit out, to reject, to spurn*. Context determines the shade of meaning which we adopt. Strong's #2186 BDB #276. This definition probably feels like *deja vu* to you. We had it back in v. 9. We would expect a 1st person

²⁶ Two things should be noted here: first of all, Although Owen says that affixed to this is the 1st person singular suffix, this is not the case (nor does he translate it as if it were). Secondly, two early printed editions have O Y^ehowah here instead of *ʾădônây*.

²⁷ This is spelled differently in the *New Englishman's Concordance* and by Gesenius; and it is spelled like this in Owens, BDB and by Langenscheidt.

plural suffix, but it is not to be found here. We also have a repeat of the masculine noun *nêtsach* (נָצַח) [pronounced *NAY-tzahkh*], which means *eminence, enduring, everlastingness, perpetuity*; and is generally rendered *forever*. Here, it is preceded by the *lâmed* preposition. Strong's #5331 BDB #664. This gives us: **Wake up—do not spit out [Israel] forever.**

The psalmist simply asks for God not to completely and totally reject Israel. Barnes: *[God] had seemed to have cast them off; to have forgotten them; to have forsaken them utterly, and the psalmist, in the name of the people, calls on Him not entirely to abandon them.*²⁸

During the time of the Maccabees, in between the testaments, there were Levites known as *wakers*—their Hebrew name was *m^eôwrêrîym* (מְעוֹרְרִים) [pronounced *m^e-ôhr-REEM*]²⁹—and they would ascend to the pulpit every day and cry in prayer, “Awake, why do You sleep, O Lord?” The High Priest, John Hyrcanus (137–107 B.C.), put an end to this, by saying, “Does Deity sleep? Does not the Scripture say, ‘Listen, the Keeper of Israel slumbers not and sleeps not?’” (Psalm 121:4).²⁹

Why Your faces do You hide? You forget our affliction and our oppression.	Psalm 44:24	Why do You hide Your face? [Why] do You forget our humiliation and our distress?
--	----------------	---

**Why do You hide Your face from us?
Why have You seemingly forgotten our humiliation and distress?**

First, what others have done:

JPS (Tanakh)	Why do You hide Your face, ignoring our affliction and distress?
NASB	Why does Thou hide Thy face, And forget our affliction and our oppression?
NLT	Why do you look the other way? Why do you ignore our suffering and oppression?
The Septuagint	Why do You turn Your face away and forget our poverty and our affliction?
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Why Thy face hidest Thou? Thou forget test our afflictions and our oppression,...

We have the same interrogative that we had in v. 23, which means *why*. Then we have *Your faces* followed by the 2nd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect *çâthar* (חָתַר) [pronounced *saw-THAHR*] and it means *to hide, to conceal*. The Hiphil does not appear to be much different; it is often used in conjunction with hiding one's face. Strong's #5641 BDB #711. This gives us: **Why do You hide Your face?** I have mentioned that this psalm often parallels the book of Job; in Job 13:24, we have: “**Why do You hide Your face and why do you consider me Your enemy?**” Another psalm of the sons of Korah asks a similar question: **But I, O Jehovah, have cried out to You for help and in the morning my prayer comes before You. O Jehovah, why do You reject my soul? Why do You hide Your face from me?** (Psalm 88:13–14).

In the second line, we have the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of *shâkach* (שָׁכַח) [pronounced *shaw-KAHKH*], which means *to forget; to forget and leave*. Strong's #7911 BDB #1013. As you have noticed in the translations above, some continued the question of the previous line, and others did not. *ônîy* (אֲנִי) [pronounced *ônon-EE*], which means *affliction, poverty, humility, humiliation*. Strong's #6040 BDB #777. We then have the *wâw* conjunction and the masculine singular noun *lachats* (לַחַט) [pronounced *LAH-khahtz*], which means *oppression, distress*. Strong's #3906 BDB #537. The 1st person plural suffix is attached to both nouns. This gives us: **You forget our affliction and our distress.** Or, we can continue the question of this verse: **Why do you forget our affliction and our distress?** We have a parallel passage in Job 42:9, in another psalm of the sons of Korah: **I will say to God, my Rock, “Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?”** (Psalm 42:9). Jeremiah, a prophet whose ministry was during this time period, wrote: **Why do You forget us forever? Why do You forsake us so long?** (Lam. 5:20). David under discipline, called out to God: **How long, O**

²⁸ Barnes' Notes; *Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 25.

²⁹ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 5, p. 318.

Jehovah? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me? (Psalm 13:1). I quote these verses because the Christian life is not all happy bells, smiles and ice cream.

*Barnes: These are earnest appeals. They are the pleadings of the oppressed and the wronged. The language is such as man would use in addressing his fellow-men; and, when applied to God, it must be understood as such language. As used in the Psalms, it denotes earnestness, but not irreverence; it is solemn petition, not dictation; it is affectionate pleading, not complaint. It indicates depth of suffering and distress, and is the strongest language which could be employed to denote entire helplessness and dependence. At the same time, it is language which implies that the cause for which they suffered was the cause of God, and that they might properly call on him to interfere in behalf of his own friends.*³⁰

Let me see if I can set up an analogous situation, at least for a parent. There are times when your child stores up a great deal of discipline for himself. He keeps pushing his luck, and pushing his luck, until finally he has done enough to receive great discipline. Now he may plead for forgiveness and he may be scared enough to be good for a week—however, he has just stored up so much punishment, that it is time to let loose on the young man. This is Israel (in this context, I use *Israel* to refer to the Southern Kingdom). Israel, apart from some periods of time of obedience, has stored up great discipline for herself and it is now time to pay. It is not unlikely that the general population was turned toward God. It is not unlikely as Sennacherib became more and more aggressive that the people turned more toward God—however, Israel had stored up years of punishment for herself. Israel was supposed to have observed the Sabbath Year (every seventh year). She did not. She was supposed to have observed the Year of Jubilee (every 49th year). We have no evidence that she did. This, along with years of idolatry, had brought God to a point where Israel had to be dealt with. So, what we have are a couple generations of leaders who disobey God; the priesthood has become terribly corrupt; and we possibly have a generation of common folk who are turned toward God. However, the discipline has been stored up over centuries and God unleashes this upon Judah, which is what we find in this psalm.

Let's look at some application. In the United States, we live in a very blessed nation. It is clear that God has poured great blessing upon us all. Even our moderately poor have great access to material things (I have known people on assisted housing programs who have big screen TV's, cable television, cell phones, computers, etc.). Our children have a tremendous amount of material possessions and wealth, more than any generation before in any nation. We have a veritable plethora of churches which we can attend. We are a blessed nation. However, it is clear that we are degenerate in these United States and have been so for some time. Significant numbers of us pursue pleasures for a majority of our lives; a significant number of us do not have any spiritual life; a significant number of parents give their children no spiritual upbringing. We are blessed but we are storing up discipline for ourselves and there will come a point, just as happened to the Northern Kingdom, just as happened to the Southern Kingdom, where it will appear as though God has turned His countenance away from the United States. This psalm tells us that there will come a point in time at which there is no turning back; there will be no placating God, even with a generation of sincere believers.

What about one generation not being held accountable for the sins of a previous generation? This is true. God kept much of Judah alive and their children returned to Israel to rebuild it. There are natural consequences to what a generation does which affect the next generation. We have several generations in the United States who have passed legislation and who have awarded the courts so much power that it is typical for a person or business with any sort of wealth to be sued, to be taken to court. This will be with us for a long time. We have a court system where believers routinely sue other believers. This was years in the making and it will take a long time for it to be undone. We have a national debt passed on from one generation to the next. This was years in the making and will take a long time for it to be undone. We have a billion dollar porn industry which corrupts lives on both sides; it will take a long time to undo this. We have set incredible materialistic standards which were unheard of in previous generations, leaving generations insatiable for material things. While one generation does not pay for the sins of another, there are things which are set in motion by a previous generation which will affect many generations hence. God preserved some believers; he allowed others to die martyrs' deaths; and none of them received the great wealth of their nation. There just comes a point at which previous generations have set too much in motion

³⁰ *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 25.*

for their descendants and natural consequences result. It is also clear from the reading of the last few chapters of Kings and Chronicles that the rulers of Judah made decisions for their country which affected the entire population. What we find in this psalm and in those final chapters of Kings and Chronicles is sobering indeed.

**For has sunk down to the dust our soul;
adheres to the earth our stomach.** Psalm 44:25 **For our soul has sunk down into the dust;
our appetite clings to the ground.**

**For our soul has sunk down into the dust
and we lie prone on the ground.**

First, what others have done:

JPS (Tanakh)	We lie prostrate in the dust, our body clings to the ground.
NAB	We are bowed down to the ground; our bodies are pressed to the earth.
NASB	For our soul has sunk down into the dust; Our body cleaves to the earth.
NKJV	For our soul is bowed down to the dust [or, <i>ground</i> in humiliation]; Our body clings to the ground.
NLT	We collapse in the dust, lying face down in the dirt.
The Septuagint	For our soul has been brought down to the dust; our belly has cleaved to the earth.
Young's Literal Translation	For bowed to the dust hath our soul, Cleaved to the earth hath our belly.

We begin with the explanatory conjunction followed by the 3rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect of *shûwach* (שׁוּ) [pronounced *shoo-AHKH*], which means *to sink down*. Strong's #7743 BDB #1001. Then we have *to the ʿâphâr* (אֶפְרַיִם) [pronounced *gaw-FAWR*], which means *dry earth, dust*. Strong's #6083 BDB #779. The subject of the verb is *our soul*, giving us: **For our soul has sunk down into the dust**. Like several other verses in this psalm, this has a parallel verse in Psalm 119: **My soul clings to the dust; revive me according to Your Word** (Psalm 119:25).

The second line begins with the 3rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect of *dâ^bvaq* (דָּבַח) [pronounced *daw^b-VAHK*], which means *to cling, to cleave, to hold close, to keep close, to adhere*. Strong's #1692 BDB #179. We then have *to the earth* [or, *ground*] followed by the feminine singular noun *beṭen* (בֶּטֶן) [pronounced *BEH-ten*] primarily means *womb*. When in reference to a man, *beṭen* (בֶּטֶן) [pronounced *BEH-ten*], should be rendered *belly, stomach* (Judges 3:21 Job 15:2 20:15, 20 32:19) or a woman who is not pregnant (Num. 5:21–22). Metaphorically, *been* can refer to the *inside of someone* (Job 32:18) or refer to one's *appetite* or *craving* (Prov. 13:25 18:20). Strong's #990 BDB #105. Affixed to *beṭen* is the 1st person plural suffix, giving us: **Our appetite [or, belly] clings to the ground**.

The picture is of a group of men who have been brought down to the ground and is possibly near death. They have suffered every indignity and they lay prostrate on the ground in degradation. The second line gives us two visuals: the first is one of these men lying on the ground face-down; and the second, with their appetites and cravings brought to a point of no longer wanting or craving anything (it is possible to see this as simply lying prostrate on the ground; but I believe it is more than that). They felt so defeated, so brought down, so abandoned by God, that they no longer even felt normal cravings or desires. They have been reduced to absolutely nothing in the way of normal human desire.

**Stand—help for us
and ransom us on account of your grace.** Psalm 44:26 **Take a stand—[be] a help for us
and ransom us on account of Your grace.**

**Rise up and help us
and pay our ransom from Your graciousness.**

The final line of this psalm has been variously rendered:

CEV	Do something! Help us! Show how kind you are and come to our rescue.
JPS (Tanakh)	Arise and help us, redeem us, so befits Your faithfulness.

NASB Rise up, be our help, And redeem us for the sake of Thy lovingkindness.
 Owen Rise up, help for us and deliver us for the sake of thy steadfast love.
 The Septuagint Arise, O Lord, help us, and redeem us for Your name's sake.
 Young's Literal Translation Arise, a help to us, And ransom us for thy kindness' sake.

We begin with the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative (with a voluntative *hê*), of *qûwm* (קום) [pronounced *koom*], which means *to stand, to rise up*. David uses the same verb and the same morphology to call upon God to rise up to attack his enemies in Psalm 7:6. Strong's #6965 BDB #877. Obviously, the Greek adds *O Lord* to this verse. I did not come across another translation which did this, although it is not out of place here. It is obvious that it is God to Whom the psalmist pleads. There is no conjunction. We then have the feminine singular noun *ʿezrâh* (עזרה) [pronounced *ʿez-RAW*], which means *help*. Strong's #5833 BDB #740. This is followed by *for us* or *to us*. Our first line is: **Stand, a help for us!**

Well, Owen gets *and* and *us* right in the second line. We begin with the *wâw* conjunction and the 2nd person masculine singular, 1st person plural suffix, Qal imperative of *pâdâh* (פדה) [pronounced *paw-DAWH*], which means *to ransom, to purchase, to redeem*. Strong's #6299 BDB #804. Then we have *l'ma'an* (למען) [pronounced *l'-MAH-ghan*], which means *for the sake of, on account of, to the intent of, to the intent that, to the purpose that, in order that*. Strong's #4616 BDB #775. This is followed by the masculine singular noun *cheçed* (חסד) [pronounced *KHEH-sed*], which means *grace, benevolence, mercy, kindness*. Strong's #2617 BDB #338. With this is the 2nd person masculine singular suffix, giving us: **And ransom us on account of Your grace**. Although the psalmist protests the religious leanings of his comrades, claiming that they have not fallen away from the faith, he still asks God to ransom them on the basis of grace. Man did not earn salvation in the Old Testament any more than he did in the New. **Deliver me because of Your grace** (Psalm 6:4b). **You will arise and You will have compassion upon Zion, for it is time to be gracious to her, for the appointed time has come** (Psalm 102:13). Barnes: *It was not primarily or mainly on their own account that the psalmist urges this prayer; it was that the character of God might be made known, or that it might be seen that He was a merciful Being.*³¹

What the psalmist is asking for is the same as what Moses expected from God. **"Rise up, O Jehovah! Let Your enemies be scattered and let those who hate You flee from You!"** (Num. 10:35). Now, let me give you the depressing news: we do not know that this psalmist was answered by God as he wanted to be answered. If this psalm was written at the end of Josiah's reign, then we know that Israel faced an attack from without, as well as dispersion from the Land of Promise. In other words, things went from bad to much worse. What does this tell us? Even though there are times when we believe that God should answer our prayers the way we expect Him to—there are going to be times when He doesn't. God knows all the facts and He knows the end from the beginning. What He chooses to do is a part of His perfect plan. Just be aware that there will be times when our expectations of God will not be met by Him. In eternity future, everything is going to be fine. God even promised Israel: **"For I will set My eyes on them for good, and I will bring them again to this land, and I will build them up and I will not overthrow them. I will plant them and not pluck them up."** (Jer. 24:6). Or Amos 9:15: **"I will also plant them on their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given to them,"** says Jehovah, your God. Tomorrow, however, may seem like another story.

What you need to focus on is eternity. Now, I realize that is difficult to do. However, there are painful and unpleasant circumstances that we endure, with the idea that the end product will be what we desire. Let me give you a lame example: I had two eye operations. Now, surprisingly enough, I did not like the idea of someone cutting into my eye and putting stuff into my eye. However, throughout the ordeal (which was relatively minor, truth be told), I looked forward to the results of the operations. In retrospect, I cannot imagine not having had those operations and I will probably never be grateful enough, giving the fact that these operations allowed me to see better than I have ever seen in my life. But the key to getting through the queasiness of the pre-operation jitters was looking forward to the results. There are times when you must focus on God's character and eternity in order to endure what God has for you today in your life. You have to realize that God knows what He is doing, that He loves you, and that He has sacrificed far more on our behalf than we could ever hope to fully understand. Add to this His perfect character and there is no reason that we should ever fret about our present circumstances.

³¹ Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 25.

You must recognize that all of what occurs falls into God's perfect plan, which is executed according to His perfect character. We will not necessarily understand each and every twist and turn in our lives nor will we necessarily understand our death or the deaths of those around us. The proper focus is God's perfect plan and His perfect character. *The welfare of the universe depends upon that.*³² Recognize that the soul reason for our salvation is His mercy and His grace. If He is to deliver us in time, then the basis of this deliverance will be His mercy and His grace. If He chooses to remove us from this life, realize that He does it in His perfect time. We will all die—on that we may rest assured. Also recognize that when God takes us out of this life, He removes us at the perfect time by the perfect means. Barnes concludes with: *From the beginning of the world—from the time when man apostatized from God—through all dispensations, and in all ages and lands, the only hope of men for salvation has been the fact that God is a merciful Being; the true ground of successful appeal to him has been, is, and ever will be, that His own name might be glorified and honoured in the salvation of lost and ruined sinners—in the display of His mercy.*³³

Finally, the key to understanding this psalm and understanding why God did not intervene and deliver the Jew: this is a prophetic psalm. During the tribulation, believers will turn to this psalm, read it, and understand, *this is now!* Except, during the great tribulation, they will pray to God for His deliverance and their prayers will be answered, on the basis of His grace and His mercy.³⁴

On a personal note, as I write this, I also realize that some of these applications are fully applicable to my life right now. It would not surprise me that you would gain immeasurably by this application as well.

[<<Return to Outline>>](#)

[<<Return to the Chart Index>>](#)

[<<Site Map>>](#)

[<<Return to the Psalms Homepage>>](#)

[<<Return to Beginning of this Chapter>>](#)

³² Paraphrased from *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 25.

³³ *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 25–26.

³⁴ I recall with a smile the friend of mine who, after hearing McGee for 30 seconds indicated that I needed to turn him off, no doubt because he sounded too down home and ignorant. One might read a portion of one of his books and think that he is too simplistic or (in the case of the commentary sitting before me) that the type is too big and it looks childish. Au contraire, my friend—McGee's genius is his ability to take some of the most complex doctrines of Scripture and explain them in simple terms, making them understandable to all. There is certainly a lot of tripe on Christian radio stations today; some of the best material is mediocre. However, McGee's ministry has gone on long past his death, because he taught the Word of God, and taught it as it should be taught. Nowhere else can a believer be properly taught every book of the Bible in 5 years time, along with the most important Bible doctrines for us to know.