

Psalm 73

Psalm 73:1–28

Job 21 Revisited—Why Does God Prosper the Infidel?

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Introduction: One of the very difficult things to do when determining how does one teach the Bible, is the order in which one chooses to teach it. J. Vernon McGee, when he was alive, taught a book or two from the Old Testament and then would teach a book from the New, following the traditional order of the KJV. If one chooses to teach the Bible in chronological order, one runs into several problems. First, some stories, e.g., the book of Ruth, should be covered in their entirety even if there are pivotal historical events recorded in Scripture which, from the perspective of time, belong inside the book of Ruth. That is, it would make little sense to study a couple chapters in the book of Ruth, break to teach a chapter or two from the book of the Judges, and then return to the book of Ruth (this would be assuming that we could actually place the book of Ruth correctly in time, which we cannot). Even more clearly difficult would be a genealogy—how would you teach the first couple chapters of I Chronicles, seeing that they individually span tens of generations? Another problem is, just what is really the chronological order? There are many psalms, genealogies, many historical events that we cannot place with absolute accuracy. Therefore, I have chosen to: (1) Teach the Old Testament in roughly chronological order; (2) maintain the continuity and cohesiveness of any given passage; and, (3) sprinkle the psalms throughout as seasoning, giving more weight to their subject matter than their historical context. Psalm 73 was written hundreds of years after the book of Job. We might place the book of Job in roughly 2300 B.C.; Psalm 73 was written around

1000 B.C. However, the subject matter is fairly similar. And since I do not want to teach all of the psalms together at one time, I will insert this particular psalm in the teaching of the book of Job. It is as though the author read Job 21 and thought, *That's my experience too. I believe I will also write about it.*

The author appears to be Asaph, who will be discussed in the exegesis of the inscription. However, I will use his name now and again in the introduction, so you need to know that I am speaking of the author.

The occasion of this psalm is quite obvious when the subject matter and vocabulary are examined—Asaph has just received teaching on Job 21 (and probably on several previous chapters) and the topic happened to be one which was near and dear to his own heart. In thinking about Job 21 and his own thoughts on the matter, Asaph then composed this psalm, which could certainly be entitled *Job 21 Revisited*.¹

In this psalm, Asaph has observed that there are unbelievers who are both anti-God, yet very prosperous, and this has caused him some problems. I have personally dealt with believers who have committed the most heinous, depraved sins (no, not the ones that you are thinking of). I have had believers consciously and systematically plot against me. I have been sued by other believers. I have been slandered and gossiped about by other believers. I have seen believers profess godliness (in their system of values, they very vocally placed God first), and then commit an act which daily placed them outside the will of God.² And then there are the unbelievers, who, although generally are not as vicious, still have their moments. In being sued by a believer, I came across a lawyer who, on the one hand, certainly looked back on the bullies of his grammar school life with disdain; yet, in his adult life, did exactly the same things that these bullies did. I wanted to see exactly what Asaph wants to see. I want to see the destruction of these apostate and acrimonious believers and degenerate, vicious unbelievers, and right now, frankly, would not be too soon. Asaph feels the same way, and he expresses it in this psalm. He knows way too many successful infidels and he would love to see God strike them with lightning, kick their butts, or perform some other clear action of retribution against these.

The reason for writing this psalm is that Asaph appears to have been reading the book of Job—he came to Job 21, and was thereby inspired to write this psalm. There are several words found in this chapter which are also found in Job 21, leading me to believe that Asaph was inspired by Job. Although this psalm fits in reasonably well into Asaph's time period in the nation Israel, it is much more universal and could be observed in any nation at any time. What he writes is based upon the fact that there are wicked men in any generation who are successful and relatively happy in this life. Some which I have known are lawyers. They make very good money at times, are successful in their profession, and are thoroughly horrible as human beings. Any real concept of what is right or wrong has been replaced with win or lose; morality and justice have been replaced by a judicial verdict. And those who are personal injury lawyers can make just about any accident preventable after the fact, owing to the fact that no workplace, no store, no car and no house is 100% safe. The law is such that it is often more expensive to fight a claim than it is to settle a claim, and there are those who make use of this fact to legally steal money from insurance companies, from businesses and from individuals. And lawyers who do this are often very self-righteous and many are very successful. And the source of their wealth boils down to legal stealing. And you may think that various laws are passed to allow the underdog and the underprivileged to sue their physicians, their medical plans, their HMO's; but these laws are designed to give lawyers just one more place to get money. Do not forget that it is lawyers who write these laws, not citizens; and the passage of such laws gives them more power and more wealth (as well as more opportunities for self righteousness). So just like Asaph, I observe in my own time immoral men around me who are engaged in immoral behavior, and they are rewarded greatly for it.

¹ For reasons which are not altogether clear to me, the NIV Study Bible associates this psalm closely with Psalm 49 and Barnes associates it with Psalm 37. Once you complete the study of this psalm, reread Job 21 and Psalms 37 and 49, and observe that this psalm truly is Asaph's observations which are akin to what Job has to say; and much more so than what we find in those two other psalms.

² I am specifically thinking of two young ladies whom I know who are believers and are living with men outside of divine institution of marriage. I also think of another Christian young lady who is having problems deciding whether sex outside of marriage is really wrong or right.

Asaph comes to the conclusion that the world we live in is not the world of appropriate retribution. We do not live in a world where there is justice. There are battles for truth and justice that we will lose. The good guys in the white hats lose more often than they win. Those who are evil often prosper. Those who do wrong are often free of the consequences. Therefore, if there is such a thing as justice, then we do not find it in this life. Barnes: *there is a future state where exact justice will be done, and where all the inequalities of the present system will be adjusted...The idea in the psalm is, that these things cannot be explained except on the supposition that there is a future state; and the psalm, therefore, is an argument for a future state of existence. The affairs of the earth cannot be explained, and the character of God cannot be vindicated, except on that supposition.*³

With this psalm, we begin book 3 of the Psalms. What exactly that means, I couldn't tell you at this time. The subject matter is varied in all the five books of the Psalms, as are the authors. My guess is that what differentiated these books was that the copyist came to the end of one roll, and had to begin writing on a new roll, and that this was the only cause for the division of the psalms into five books.⁴ The first book of psalms are all Davidic psalms. There are two (if memory serves) where he is not specifically named as the author, but they are psalms where one could make a reasonable argument for his authorship (which I will do when we get to Psalm 10, which comes up after this psalm). However, in the second book of psalms (Psalms 42–72), only about half of them are David psalms (they are mostly together in the second half of book 2, Psalms 51–70). Some psalms in there are by sons of Korah and by Asaph (a son of Korah). And, in the third book of the Psalms, there are psalms by David, Asaph and the sons of Korah (as well as others). Therefore, these psalms are not separated by author. Since they are not grouped by author, this means that they are not grouped chronologically. And, furthermore, there is no thematic commonality within these books. Messianic psalms are found scattered throughout, as are psalms of praise, imprecatory psalms, psalms of thanksgiving, etc.

I need to warn you up front that there are portions of this psalm which will be very difficult to translate and to understand. I don't know if the original text has been lost or whether I am just doing a crappy job translating and, therefore, interpreting the text. However, there are a few verses here and there which do not seem to flow easily within themselves or within their context. And, even the NRSV has three *Cn* references for this psalm (there is an average of maybe one, or fewer *Cn* references per psalm in the NRSV). A *Cn* reference, by the way, says, essentially, *we don't really have a good reason, based up the Hebrew or the Greek to translate is this way, but we can't come up with a decent translation unless we make this change*. This does not mean that they arbitrarily give a different meaning altogether to the verse (although it appears to be that way on occasion); but that what they give does not jive exactly with the original text.

However, this psalm is very carefully organized in some respects. What might help you to understand just who is who in this psalm, is to separate the number and person of the verbs and pronouns. I've done this in a chart below:

Who's Who in Psalm 73	
1 st person masculine singular	The writer, Asaph
2 nd person masculine singular	God (see vv. 17–18, 20)
3 rd person masculine plural	The infidels who seem to do well in this life
I realize that this chart may seem simplistic, but it will be an important key in interpreting and understanding this psalm.	

That all having been said, I need to warn you that some of the verses which follow are going to be among the most difficult verses we have ever exegeted, and the Hebrew will be quite tricky now and again. Sometimes, you are going to have to simply grit your teeth and dig in. You will notice in the **Chart Index** that there are several verses

³ Barnes' Notes; *Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 252.

⁴ McGee calls this third book of the Psalms the Leviticus of the Psalms, claiming that it emphasizes holiness and sacrifice.

that we examine from the less formal translations—this is an indicator that we are heading into rough waters. There will be some verses (v. 10, for instance), which will be easy to exegete in the Hebrew, but whose meaning is difficult, if not impossible, to ascertain. On the other hand, the general theme and gist of the psalm are fairly easy. Keeping the section headings in your mind will be very important when it comes to understanding this psalm. The first three sections below comprise the first half of the psalm: **I. Why do the wicked prosper?** Vv. 1–14. The next four sections make up the second half of the psalm: **II. The conclusion that Bible doctrine has taken Asaph to.** Vv. 15–28.

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Slavishly literal:

[A melody to Asaph:](#)

[A psalm of Asaph:](#)

Moderately literal:

[A song of Asaph:](#)

Psalm
73 inscription

First, what others have done with the inscription:

The Emphasized Bible	A melody of Asaph.
NASB	A Psalm of Asaph.
NJB	Psalm Of Asaph
Owen's Translation	A psalm to Asaph.
REB	A psalm; for Asaph.
Young's Literal Translation	A psalm of Asaph.

The first word is *miz^omôwr* (מִזְמוֹר) [pronounced *mizê-MOHR*], which means *melody, song, poem, psalm*. This is one of the three words for psalm and it is found a little less than a third of the time. Strong's #4210 BDB #274. The lâmed preposition—ל (which is often given with a short e)—generally means *to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to*. When attached to a psalm or a song, it generally has the meaning *belonging to, pertaining to, by*. In fact, it means almost the opposite of what we would suppose it would (this psalm is not written *for* or *to* Asaph, but *by* him. Now, how do we know this? Why would we so theorize this? Two reasons: (1) It is been most common for any man to list his name as the author of a piece of literature, a poem, a psalm, a piece of art, etc. Once and awhile, the author will dedicate his work to another person, but that is found less often. (2) There are several psalms which we connect to David and incidents in his life where, even if we lacked his name in the inscription, we would still attribute the psalm to him based upon the other information in the inscription. Therefore, if we find David's name appropriately attached to several psalms with a lâmed, where we would have assumed him to be the author anyway, then it is reasonable to assume that the first lâmed connects us to the author. Furthermore, our Lord, in several passages, quotes a David psalm, and calls David the author. Strong's #none BDB #510.

Asaph, the son of Berechiah, of the family of Gershom of the tribe of Levi, is probably one of the head musicians during the time of Kings David and Solomon (I Chron. 6:39 15:17 16:5 II Chron. 5:12). Asaph would be the leader of the choir, or the orchestra conductor. He both composed and performed music, and all that remains of his work are the words of the spiritual songs which he composed. The JEPD types refer to him as an *Elohists*; however, in this psalm, we also have the proper name of God (*Jehovah*) in v. 28. That theory is just so much crap, anyway.⁵

Now, on the one hand, we have Psalm 50, and then Psalms 73–83 which are all attributed to Asaph. This implies some organization in the psalms according to author. However, it is also suggested by many that there are two

⁵ I don't want to go into a lot of detail here. JEPD types are those who believe that Moses did not really write the Pentateuch, but that there were at least four different authors involved in four very different time periods, and that the final author wove the different accounts together into a cohesive whole. This is called Documentary Hypothesis and was covered in more detail in the introduction to Exodus. It is a theory which is corrupt and faulty at its very core.

Asaph's; we have the Asaph here who wrote Psalm 50, 73, 76 and 78 (and possibly 75, 77 and 82) during the reign of David; and another psalmist named *Asaph* penned Psalms 74, 79 and 83 at the time of the Babylonian exile (and probably Psalms 80–81). The most superficial glance at Psalm 74 and 79 seems to confirm that the date of their writing is more likely during the exile, as has been proposed, simply meaning that there were at least two *Asaph's* who wrote scripture—specifically psalms. To me, his mention of *sanctuaries* (plural) in this psalm, would indicate a time after the dispersion, making him the second *Asaph*. The reasons that we assume that the *Asaph* who wrote most of the psalms bearing his name dates back to the time of David are as follows: (1) Asaph dedicates a psalm to Jeduthun (Psalm 77), and they are both associated together with David in I Chron. 25:1 and with Solomon in II Chron. 5:1, 12. (2) Asaph's prominence in the choir under David and Solomon would make him a likely writer of nonsecular hymns. (3) Asaph's position and dedication would give credence to the acceptance of his psalms into the canon of Scripture. (4) It is clear that the *Asaph* from the time of David and Solomon wrote psalms that the Israelites sang (II Chron. 29:30). Although this evidence is not overwhelming, it is reasonable, and we would be hard-pressed to come up with any evidence that the only the Asaph of the deportation wrote psalms. It might be important to note that, apart from the name, *Asaph*, on those two or three psalms, we would know nothing of an *Asaph* from the exile. Now, it is also possible that Asaph ben Berechiah wrote those psalms prophetically, as he is retrospectively called a *seer* in Neh. 12:46. In other words, if an argument is made for there to only be one *Asaph*, a writer of psalms, then it would be more reasonable for him to be from the time of David and Solomon. He certainly could have written Psalms 74 and 79 prophetically, which confused his contemporaries; but Nehemiah, during and after the exile, read these psalms, understood them completely, and concluded that Asaph was a *seer*. Let's sum these up:

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Theories About Asaph

Theory	Discussion
<p>1. There is only one Asaph, Asaph ben Berechiah, who wrote the psalms. The psalms written after the exile were simply psalms that he wrote using his gift of prophecy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since Asaph dedicated a psalm to Jeduthun, and since Jeduthun and Asaph are both associated with David in I Chron. 25:1 and with Solomon in II Chron. 5:1, 12, this would support theories 1 & 2. • Since there is an <i>Asaph</i> mentioned prominently as the choir director during the time of Kings David and Solomon, his prominence would lend to his credence as a writer of Scripture. Theories 1 & 2.
<p>2. There are two Asaph's: (1) Asaph ben Berechiah, contemporary of David and Solomon, who wrote most of the psalms designated by <i>lâmed Asaph</i>; and there is (2) the Asaph who returned from the exile who wrote a couple of psalms about conditions then. He would likely be an ancestor of the first Asaph. Asaph ben Berechiah would have written Psalms 50, 73, 76 and 78. Post-exilic Asaph would have written Psalms 74 and 79. Either one may have written Psalm 75, 77 and 82.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asaph is called a <i>seer</i> in Neh. 12:46; this would support his writing Scripture and possibly even writing prophetic Scripture. Theories 1&2. • in this psalm, Asaph mentions <i>sanctuaries</i> (plural). This would suggest that this psalm was written after the establishment of the synagogue, which was probably during the exile. Theories 1&2.
<p>3. The latter <i>Asaph</i>, mentioned in the previous paragraph, is the only author of these psalms.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We do not have a post-exilic Asaph mentioned apart from the inscriptions in the psalms, making theory 2 unlikely, and theory 3 very unlikely. • It makes sense for most writers of Scripture to write about what is contemporary to them; or to write about that which has already occurred. This supports Theories 2 & 3.

Conclusion: For me, the most natural explanation is theory #2. Most prophecies are still related to the contemporary lives of the prophets, unless the prophecies are clearly stated as being prophetic. In other words, some prophecies have a contemporary and a prophetic application as well (Psalm 22, which deals with David's suffering as well as with the suffering of our Lord on the cross; Job 15–17 is another incredible Messianic passage which applied directly to Job's life as well). There is another type of prophecy where God promises through a prophet that such and such will come upon Israel, a leader of Israel or some other country which is in opposition to Israel (Lev. 26, Jer. 34 and the book of Nahum are examples of this latter type of prophecy). In these examples, it is clear that we are speaking of that which is prophetic and there is nothing which would allow for these prophecies to have some sort of a contemporary meaning (contemporary as to *when* they were written).

As a footnote, there were two other Asaph's in Scripture: (1) the father of Hezekiah's recorder (II Kings 18:18 Isa. 36:3, 22); and an officer under Artaxerxes Longimanus of Persia (464–445 B.C.); he is called the keeper of the king's forest in Palestine (Neh. 2:8). We find the name of *Asaph* in I Chron. 26:1, which is a Scribal error and should read *Ebiasaph* (I Chron. 9:9). Finally, the best Greek reading for Matt. 1:7 is *Asaph*, not *Asa*, in Matt. 1:7 (which is the genealogy of our Lord through Joseph). However, since *Asa* is undoubtedly the father of Jehoshaphat, this tells us that *Asaph* is simply an accepted Greek form of *Asa*.⁶

⁶ Taken from *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 345.

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Introduction to Asaph's problem

**Surely good to Israel, God
[and] to undefiled [ones] of heart.**

Psalm
73:1

**Certainly, God [is] good to the upright of God
[and] to [those] pure of heart.**

Most assuredly, God is good to His upright, as well as to those who are pure of heart.

Let's see how others have presented this verse:

JPS (Tanakh)	God is truly good to Israel, to those whose heart is pure.
NAB	How good God is to the upright, the Lord, to those who are clean of heart!
NASB	Surely God is good to Israel, To those who are pure in heart!
NJB	Indeed God is good to Israel, the Lord to those who are pure of heart.
NRSV	Truly God is good to the upright [or, <i>good to Israel</i>], to those who are pure in heart.
REB	Assuredly, God is good to the upright, to those who are pure in heart!
The Septuagint	How good the God to Israel, to [those] upright in heart.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Only—good to Israel <i>is</i> God, to the clean of heart.

This verse begins with the adverb ʾak^{e} (אָכ) [pronounced *ahk^e*], and it means *surely, certainly, no doubt, only, only this once*. Strong's #389 BDB #36. Then we have the masculine singular adjective $\text{tôw}^{\text{b}}\text{v}$ (טוֹב) [pronounced *toe^bv*], which means *pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good, better*. Strong's #2896 BDB #373. There is no verb in this verse. We then have *to Israel* (where the *lâmed* preposition means *to* or *for*). My intention is to be teaching this midway through the book of Job, which, in time, falls about midway through the book of Genesis. Therefore, at the time that I would present this, Israel may be a nebulous concept. However, God chose a people, based upon true regeneration (that is, they believed in Christ, the Messiah) to preserve His Word, and those people were called Israel. I am covering this psalm in this time frame because it is so closely related in subject matter to Job 21. Asaph is going to pose some questions and concerns that have been bothering him for some time and he states right off the bat that he knows that God is good towards the nation Israel. In other words, as a member of nation Israel, Asaph has no problems with God and His treatment of Israel. Literally, v. 1a reads: **Surely God [is] good to Israel.**

Several translations render this final word as *upright*, so we ought to take a look at that.⁷ *Israel*, in the Hebrew, is $\text{yis}^{\text{r}}\text{râ}^{\text{t}}\text{êl}$ (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced *yis-raw-ALE*], and it is obviously transliterated *Israel*. Strong's #3478 BDB #975. *Upright*, in the Hebrew, is yâshâr (יָשָׁר) [pronounced *yaw-SHAWR*], which means *right, correct, accurate, lacking in contradictions, upright, straight, uniform, having internal integrity, even*. Strong's #3477 BDB #449. One of the ways of spelling *God* in the Hebrew is ʾêl (אֵל) [pronounced *ayl*], which means *God*. Strong's #410 BDB #42. Except for the fact that the vowel points would be wrong, an alternate way of translating this would have been *the upright of God*. Let's sum this up below:

⁷ I am lucky to have two dozen translations. This thought would have never occurred to me had it not been for the NRSV, the REB and the NAB all agreeing that this should be rendered *upright*. Only the NAB and NJB account for the additional word *God* at the end of this first line. What is likely assumed is that the extra ʾêl did not belong in this verse and was a copyist's mistake.

Israel vs. the Upright of God in v. 1		
	Arguments For	Arguments Against
<i>Israel</i>	This is what we find in the Hebrew (it is properly pointed). Israel is God's nation and the author is simply stating a conclusion that God has been faithful to Israel and has blessed Israel—this is an observable fact during the lifetime of Asaph.	There is no real mention of Israel throughout this psalm, except for this verse (there might be a mention in v. 10, but that verse is messed up).
<i>the upright of God</i>	This is better suited to the context of the entire psalm. With respect to sounding stilted, the words for <i>God</i> are similar, but they are different words.	The word should have different vowel points Since <i>God</i> is found in this verse, why not <i>His upright</i> instead? This would give us <i>[the] upright of God, [is] God</i> at the end of v. 1, which is somewhat stilted.
Conclusion:	At this time, I don't know how to call this verse. I prefer <i>the upright of God</i> and can live with the objections; but I cannot unequivocally state that is how this verse should read.	

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In the second line, we expect a wâw conjunction, but there is none. We begin with the lamed preposition again followed by the masculine plural construct of bar (בַּר) [pronounced *bahr*], and it means *pure, clean* [often in a moral sense]. It means to be *free from impurities, free from stains, free from corruption*. As a masculine plural construct, it stands in for a noun, and means *those free from impurities; [those who are] pure, [those who are] undefiled*. Strong's #1249 BDB #141. The noun that this is affixed to is the Hebrew word for *heart*. This gives us: *...to [those] pure of heart*. or, less literally: *...to [the] pure of heart*. Knowing that our Lord said, “**Happy [or, blessed] are the pure in heart, for they will see God.**” (Matt. 5:8). So, who are the *pure of heart*? Whose heart (that is, whose soul and spirit) completely free from corruption and stain? I will guarantee you, not mine. Not in its natural state. I am prone to a myriad of mental attitude sins. There are things which can occur in my life that will set these off; and sometimes, without a good reason, I may set them off. What I depend upon is I John 1:9: **If we name our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.** I cannot claim to have this pure, cleansed heart 24 hours a day. John tells us that in I John 1:8, 10: **If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us...if we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.** Now, obviously, the first time that we are cleansed is when we believe in Jesus. After that point in time, we merely *cleanse our feet* when they come into contact with the earth (i.e., *sin*), in order to be completely clean. You may recall that Jesus taught this to His disciples when speaking to Peter, in John 13:10a: **Jesus said to him, “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet; and is completely clean. Furthermore, you are clean.”** So my own heart is pure eternally, because I have believed in Christ. My heart is pure on this earth at various points in time when I name my sins to Him. If you desire a passage where cleansing or purity is connected to faith, we can go to Peter speaking at the council of Jerusalem, discussing what, if any, burden should be placed upon the Gentiles who have believed. **“And God made no distinction between us [Jews] and them [Gentiles], cleansing their hearts by faith.”** (Acts 15:9).

Our final translation is: **Surely God [is] good to Israel, to [those] pure of heart; or Surely Elohim [is] good to [the] upright of God, to [those] pure of heart.** One of the parallel passages to this is Psalm 86:5: **For You, Lord, are good and ready to forgive, and abundant in graciousness to all who call upon You.**

Because of the subject matter of this psalm (the prosperity of the wicked), Asaph wants to get one thing out of the way immediately, and that is that he recognizes that God is good to the believer. He does not have any complaints

to lodge against God concerning God's treatment of him. The problem is that there are too many successful unbelievers out there and that is what disturbs him, and that is the theme of this psalm. What is being done here is also very common—the conclusion of the psalm is stated as an hypothesis. *Here is what I am going to show you is true: God is righteous; He is faithful to the upright.* And then, exploring the topic, the psalmist is able to come to that conclusion. A master's thesis or a doctoral dissertation is generally organized the same way.

**And me as almost turning away my feet
as nothing poured out my steps.**

Psalm
73:2

**And I nearly—my feet turned away;
my steps were [or, my direction in life was]
almost poured out.**

**And as for me, I nearly turned my feet away;
my steps almost slipping.**

Let's first see what others have done:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	But <as for me>— My feet had almost stumbled , My steps had well-nigh slipped ;
JPS (Tanakh)	As for me, my feet had almost strayed, my steps were nearly led off course,...
NASB	But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling; My steps had almost slipped.
NLT	But as for me, I came so close to the edge of the cliff! My feet were slipping and I was almost gone.
The Septuagint	But my feet were almost overthrown; my goings very nearly slipped;...
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	And I—as a little thing, My feet have been turned aside, As nothing, have my steps slipped.

The first line begins with the wâw conjunction and the 1st person personal pronoun = *and me* or *and I*. Often with the personal pronoun, the verb *to be* is intimated. Then we have the kaph preposition and the adverb m^e ʿaṭ (וּמֵעַט) [pronounced m^e-GAHT], which means *a little, fewness, few*. Strong's #4592 BDB #589. With a kaph prefix, it means *nearly, almost, within a little, shortly, quickly, suddenly, scarcely, very little*. Kaph = Strong's #none BDB #453.

Now let's talk about the verb: even though your translation probably has something about *his feet stumbling or slipping*; this is not what we have in the Hebrew. We have the Qal passive participle of nâṭâh (נָטָה) [pronounced naw-TAWH], which means *to stretch out, to spread out, to bow, to extend*. Actually, it has several related meanings. 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*. Strong's #5186 BDB #639. Then we have *my feet*. What Owen suggests is that the last two consonants of the verb should be transposed, which would make this a 3rd person, masculine plural Qal perfect instead. This gives us: **And I nearly—my feet had turned away**. Barnes: *the meaning is, "And I, who so confidently now trust in God, and believe that He is good, was formerly in a far different state of mind; I was so hesitating, so troubled, and so doubtful, that I had almost entirely lost confidence in him as a wise and just moral governor."*⁸

Since *my feet* was in the pausal form, the next line then begins. We begin with the kaph preposition plus the negative ʿayin (אֵין) [pronounced AH-yin], which means *naught, nothing*; or it can be used as a particle of negation; *no, not*. Strong's #369 BDB #34. With the kaph preposition, it means, literally, *as nothing, like nothing*; and together, they mean *almost nothing, almost, well nigh*. I am not 100% comfortable with this rendering, as this is the only place which is referenced by Gesenius. Kaph = Strong's #none BDB #453. Leaving this, we have the 3rd person plural, Pual perfect of shâphak^e (שָׁפַק) [pronounced shaw-FAHK^e], which means *to pour, to pour out, to shed*. In the Pual, it means *to be poured out*. As with the above verb, I double-checked, wondering if I had the correct verb here. Gesenius allows for it to mean *slipped* in this context. Given that this verb occurs about 150 times in Scripture, and that it can be taken to mean *to pour out* in all other contexts does pose no little difficulty. Furthermore, there are at least two other words in the Hebrew which mean *to slip*, which are not used (and they

⁸ Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 253.

are too different to be mistaken for this word). Strong's #8210 BDB #1049. The Pual is the passive of the Piel (intensive) stem and likewise emphasizes an accomplished state. The noun is the feminine plural of ʾāshûwr (אָשׁוּר) [pronounced *uh-SHOOR*], which means *steps, footsteps, goings, mode of life*. It can be used for walking in the footprints laid by God (Job 23:11). Strong's #838 & #839 BDB #81. Very literally, we have: **As nothing, my steps were poured out**. As you can well see, the literal meaning of this verse makes the interpretation rather difficult. This is why many of the translations chose to give several of these words unique translations in this verse.

Psalm 73:2b—the Unique Renderings of ʾāshûwr and shāphak^e

NEB	...my foothold had all but given way.
NIV	...I had nearly lost my foothold.
NLT	My feet were slipping, and I was almost gone.
TEV	...my faith was almost gone.

What happened is that most translators have gone with the very traditional *my foot steps were almost slipping*; which fits well with the context, but not at all with the Hebrew verb. My assumption here is that we should take ʾāshûwr in the more metaphorical sense, so it would mean *mode of life, direction of life, steps taken in one's life, the direction of one's life*. This is what was almost poured out like water for Asaph as he observed the prosperity of the wicked. **My direction [in life] was nearly poured out [like water]**.

The easiest thing for me to do by far is to simply ignore the Hebrew, show that a dozen translators rendered this *my feet nearly slipped*, and let it go at that. This is how most exegetes handle this verse, if they give it even that much thought. However, it is important, because this is the Word of God, to see what we have here. I don't know what the real thinking is here, but I felt as though I should take a stab at it. Barnes also made the same observations: *The expression rendered "well nigh" means "like nothing," or "as nothing"; that is, in reference to firmness it was as if there was "nothing" left. There was nothing which would keep him from slipping. The word rendered "slipped" means "poured out." That is, in his going he was like water poured out, instead of being like something solid and firm. The idea is, that his faith seemed to be all gone. He was like a falling man; a man who had no strength to walk.*¹

The idea is, that when pondering the questions which will be raised by this psalm; when observing wicked men prospering for their entire lives, it almost caused Asaph to get out of fellowship. It confused him spiritually. He almost lost the firmness of his faith in Jehovah. His direction in life was nearly poured out as water is poured out on the ground, and then travels the direction of least effort. One of the things which challenges us as believers is that what happens in this world occasionally causes us to question our faith and our beliefs. For me, one question I often ask myself: is there a better alternative? Is there something else out there which makes more sense? So, I certainly have questions; I am disappointed in others and in myself. I would certainly like to see the evil in others immediately dealt with (I am not similarly concerned with the evil in myself). However, I am unable to uncover a philosophy, a religion, or a faith which so carefully deals with all there is in this life. And when I consider the Bible—a book which is absolutely unique above all other books—I have no choice but to consider it the Word of God.

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Why Do the Wicked Prosper?

**For I was envious in the boasters;
prosperity of wicked ones I see.**

Psalm
73:3

**For I have been envious of the ones boasting;
I keep seeing the prosperity [or tranquility] of
lawless men.**

**For I have been envious of those who continually boast of their possessions;
and I keep observing the prosperity of men who are corrupt.**

Well, we can only hope for this to go easier than the previous verse. In this verse, we will see what caused Asaph to question his faith and his direction in life. Others have rendered this:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	For I was envious of the boasters, <at the prosperity of the lawless> used I to look.
JPS (Tanakh)	...for I envied the wanton; I saw the wicked at ease.
Keil and Delitzsch	For I was incensed at the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
KJV	For I was envious of the foolish, <i>when</i> I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
NASB	For I was envious of the arrogant [or, <i>boasters</i>], As I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
The Septuagint	For I was jealous of the transgressors, beholding the tranquillity of sinners.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	For I have been envious of the boastful, The peace of the wicked I see,...

So, now you see why we made this detour. Asaph has observed exactly what Job observed. There were vicious evil men who were prosperous in this life. Job used this as a defense against the attacks of his three companions; Asaph seems to indicate that this was an occasion to cause him to almost stumble.⁹

We begin with the conjunction *kîy* (כִּי) [pronounced *kee*], which means *when, that, for, because*. Strong's #3588 BDB #471. This is followed to the 1st person, Piel perfect of *qânâ* (קָנָה) [pronounced *kaw-NAW*], which means *to be jealous, to be envious, to become intensely red or black from dye*. It is found only in the Piel and Hiphil. Strong's #7065 BDB #888. This is followed by the *bêyth* preposition, which can mean *in, at, by, with, against*. No Strong's # BDB #88.

You will note that I have included the KJV as one of the translations. There are some who believe that the KJV is akin to the autographs (perfect copies of the original manuscripts). This is not true. Whereas, it is an excellent translation for its time, it has its problems. First of all, here, there word *foolish* is not *foolish*. We have the definite article and the masculine plural, Qal active participle of *hâlal* (הָלַל) [pronounced *haw-LAHL*], which means *to be boastful, to praise*. More precisely, it means *to be clear, to be brilliant*. As a masculine plural, Qal active participle, it means *the boasters, those boasting, those celebrating, the ones singing*. Strong's #1984 BDB #237. This gives us: **For I was envious against the boasters**. Imagine yourself at a party and everyone there is rich except for you. Everyone there is Godless except for you, and you listen to them continually boasting about their possessions—things that you will never have—and this is how Asaph felt. He felt as though God had given the greatest blessings to those who least deserved it, and it made him concerned, if not envious.

The second line is similar. We begin with the masculine singular construct of *shâlôwm* (שְׁלוֹמָא) [pronounced *shaw-LOHM*], which means *completeness, soundness, welfare, peace, safe, secure, tranquil, undisturbed, unagitated*. Thieme often rendered this *prosperous* or *prosperity*. Strong's #7965 BDB #1022. This is attached to the masculine plural adjective *râshâ* (רָשָׁע) [pronounced *raw-SHAWG*], which means *malevolent, lawless, corrupt, criminal*. You may recognize this adjective, as we had it twice in Job 20 and thrice in Job 21. As a masculine plural, it would act as a substantive and be reasonably rendered *wicked, wicked ones, malevolent ones, lawless ones, criminals, the corrupt*. Strong's #7563 BDB #957. This is followed by the 1st person Qal imperfect of *to see*. This gives us: **I see [the] prosperity [or tranquility] of [the] lawless**.

Now, I realize that the verb tenses pretty much go over most of your heads. However, *I was envious* or *I have been envious* is in the perfect tense, which refers to an accomplished state. Asaph has already felt envy. He obviously named this sin and moved on, but that put him out of fellowship momentarily, causing his feet to slip. This does not mean, however, that he continues to be envious. Here, the perfect tense acts pretty much like our past tense. The imperfect tense of the verb *to see* means that this continues to be Alpha's observation. The imperfect tense indicates an action which is incomplete or ongoing or is not viewed from its accomplished state but the process instead is examined. Here we have an ongoing state. Asaph, although back in fellowship, continues to see that there are corrupt men around him who are prosperous, and it is obvious. You may not grasp this, but there are some people who are prosperous and it is obvious and others who are prosperous and it is not obvious. I have met

⁹ I have mentioned Job 21 several times in the exegesis of this psalm; Scofield and my version of the NKJV both reference the bulk of Job 21 in relationship to this passage.

men who drove around in beat up pick up trucks with dirty and torn blue jeans and they were actually wealthy. Many of these men earned their own wealth. I have seen others who live in a house they can't afford, in a car they can't really afford, and they choose to do that to show off their wealth. Asaph, being in the palace, having a close relationship with both David and Solomon, also was in a position to observe the rich and successful; and this left him with a bad taste in his mouth. He could handle David and Solomon being wealthy. Both were spiritual men (most of the time). However, in politics, in the palace, there are going to be men who have access, who have the king's ear, who are wealthy and they are corrupt as well. Asaph saw these men all of the time and it irked him. I can think of two men right off the top of my head who are successful and who are absolute jerks; both are men whom I would love to see fall; however, it is not God's time nor is it a part of God's plan. And I, quite frankly, have no say in the matter. In fact, if I attempted in some way to cause either of their downfalls, I would be out of line and subject to discipline, as it is simply none of my damn business. God knows what He is doing, and I really and truly have my own hands full with my own life. There is no reason for me to make some attempt to mess up the life of anyone else, no matter how deserving.

There are several ways that we are caused to get off track in our spiritual lives, and often it is our focus in life. As Thieme used to put it, our focus should not be on the lives of others nor should the focus be on ourselves. The Bible clearly tells us to avoid concern when it comes to the successes of the morally bankrupt. Psalm 37:1, 7: [Do not fret because of those who do evil and don't be envious toward those who do wrong...rest in Jehovah and wait patiently for Him. Fret not yourself because of him who prospers in his way.](#) Prov. 23:17a: [Do not let your heart envy sinners.](#) Prov. 3:31: [Do not envy a man of violence, and do not choose any of his ways.](#) Prov. 24:1: [Do not be envious of evil men, nor desire to be with them.](#)

Finally, Barnes comments: *From all this, he [Asaph] was led for the moment to doubt whether there was any advantage in religion; whether God was just; and whether He befriended the righteous any more than He did the wicked.*¹⁰ And in making these observations, Asaph would be guilty of the two things that Thieme would warn him against. His eyes would be on others, causing him to be envious of the prosperous wicked; and his eyes would be on himself, wondering whether he is receiving enough compensation from God for his devotion. This may seem, on the surface, to be quite foolish, but don't think that this hasn't entered the minds of millions of believers. I could personally walk through my own neighborhood and find hundreds of men who are less righteous than I (in my opinion, of course) and who are also more prosperous. These are non-issues. In the several passages quoted, God warns us not to be focused on the tranquility and prosperity of the unrighteous.

Reasons Why the Unrighteous May Enjoy More Peace and Prosperity than We Do

1. As believers, we are sons of God. As sons of God, we are subject to the discipline of God. Unbelievers are not subject, generally speaking, to God's discipline (there are exceptions to this).
2. As believers, we occasionally find ourselves being tested. Given that we place our children in schools where they are constantly tested, we should not be upset with God that He does this. Our testing is generally a part of the angelic conflict. There is no reason for God to test the unbeliever.
3. All unbelievers will spend their eternity in the Lake of Fire. If you have dealings with an immoral, self-centered, arrogant unbeliever, when you look him face to face, realize that he is going to spend eternity burning in the Lake of Fire, enduring suffering, pain and regret unlike any that you have ever known or ever will know. So, if you have to have revenge upon this person, give it a few years; God will see to it that his death results in a burning, torturous hell. If this bothers you, then you may want to give them the gospel. You just might end up with a lifelong ally rather than a lifelong enemy.

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¹⁰ *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 254.

**For nothing of pains to deaths
and fat [is] their body.**

Psalm
73:4

**For nothing of bands to them [of] personal
integrity [or, For nothing ties them to personal
integrity]
and their body is well-fed.**

**For there is nothing which ties them to personal integrity
yet their body is well-fed.**

Poetry, in the Word of God, is often difficult, and here is one of those difficult verses. Others have rendered it:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	For they have no pangs in their death, And vigorous is their body;...
JPS (Tanakh)	Death has no pangs for them; their body is healthy.
KJV (Scofield)	For <i>there are</i> no pangs in their death; but their strength <i>is</i> firm. [the KJV has <i>bands</i> instead of <i>pangs</i>].
NASB	For there are no pains in their death; And their body is fat.
NKJV	For <i>there are</i> no pangs [or, <i>pains</i>] in their death, but their strength <i>is</i> firm.
Owen's Translation	For they have no pangs to them, are sound, and fat their bodies.
The Septuagint	For there is no sign of reluctance in their death; and firmness [is] under their affliction.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	That there are no bands at their death, And their might <i>is</i> firm.

Since I have quoted from approximately ten translation, you know that this verse is not going to be pleasant. You will note, in particular, significant differences between Owen, the NIV and the others. We begin with the preposition *kîy* (*for, when, that*) followed by the negative construct of *ʿayin* again. *ʿAyin* (אֵין) [pronounced *AH-yin*] means *naught, nothing*; or it can be used as a particle of negation; *no, not*. Strong's #369 BDB #34. This is followed by the feminine plural noun *charʿtsûbbôwth* (חַרְצוֹבּוֹת) [pronounced *khar-tzooB-BOHTH*], which means *bond, fetter, pang*. The problem with defining this word is that it only occurs in Psalm 73:4 and Isa. 58:6.* By the latter use, it appears as though it is some kind of a *band* or *restraining device*. There is an unused verb form which may mean *to bind, to twist powerfully* which appears to be its cognate. However, the key word is *unused*. We have no cognates nearby in BDB to help us out. However, Keil and Delitzsch tie its unused verb, *charʿtsôb* (חַרְצוּב) [pronounced *khahr-TZOH^BV*], to *chatstsôb* (חַצַּב) [pronounced *khahzt-TZOH^BV*], which they tie to its cognate, which means *pain* (*châtsa^bv* means *to hew, to cut into pieces*; and the cognate which they tie *chastsôb^v* to is *ʿâtsa^bv*, which means *pain*; anyway, it's a long way to Tipperary). According to Barnes, *charʿtsûbbôwth* means *bands tightly drawn*, which would result in pain. Apparently, the Latin used is *tormenta*, which is taken from *torquere*, two words that most of us probably recognize, and from that we can get the word *pain*. Strong's #2784 BDB #359. If this were not difficult enough, the next word (or words) is also a problem. In the Massoretic text, we have *lʾmôwthâm* (לְמוֹתָם) [pronounced *lʾ-moh-thawm*], which appears to be the *lâmed* preposition and the plural of *mâveth* (מוֹת) [pronounced *MAW-veh*], which means *death, death [as opposed to life], death by violence, a state of death, a place of death*. Strong's #4194 BDB #560. This would give us: **...that [there is] nothing of bands for deaths**. Obviously, this is somewhat cryptic. Or, this might be: **...that [there is] nothing of pains of deaths**. The latter meaning is less cryptic. It seems to indicate that they experience no real pain of death or perhaps fear of death? Barnes suggests: *The fact which is here referred to by the psalmist, and which gave him so much uneasiness, was that which so often occurs, that when thee wicked die, they do not seem to suffer in proportion to their wickedness; or there seem to be no especial marks of the Divine displeasure as they are about to leave the world. They have lived in prosperity, and they die in peace. There is no uncommon agony in death; there is no special alarm about the future world. They have enjoyed this world and a sinful life seems now to be followed by a peaceful death. They do not even suffer as much in death as good men often do;—what then is the advantage of piety? And how can we believe that God is just; or that He is the friend of the righteous; or even that there is a God? Of the fact here adverted to by the psalmist, that the wicked do thus live and die, there can be no doubt, and that fact has given perplexity to good men in all ages of the world.*¹¹ Now, the remarks of Barnes are accurate and would very likely reflect the attitude of the psalmist in this context; however, it is a minor stretch to apply it to the verse as properly translated. As has been mentioned, this follows Job 21, topically, so we should expect to find

¹¹ Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 254.

parallels in the book of Job as well. Job 21:23–24 reads: **This one dies in his complete prosperity; all of them [are] secure and content. His pails are filled with milk and the marrow of his bones is watered.**

Another option is to do as Owen suggests,¹² and assume that we actually have two words here: *lâmôw*, which is the *lâmed* preposition plus the masculine plural suffix, meaning *to them, for them*. This would be followed by the masculine singular adjective *tâm* (תַּם) [pronounced *tawm*], is an adjective and it refers to one who has *personal integrity*. Strong's #8535 BDB #1070. The difference is two vowel points, which were added thousands of years after the original text was written (there were no spaces between words). This would give us: **...that [there is] nothing of bands to them [of] personal integrity.** More freely, we might say: **...for there is nothing which ties them to personal integrity.**

The explanatory use of the conjunction *kîy* tells why Asaph was envious and, quite obviously, upset, with the prosperity of the wicked. They had prosperity and there was nothing which tied them to personal integrity. They were unencumbered by morality or right and wrong, except as it affected them personally. I had a tenant like this. In a rental contract, there are financial responsibilities that belong to the tenant and some which belong to the landlord. In opposition to the contract, rather than pay the first \$65 of all repairs, he would say that the replacement of a water heater was a replacement and not a repair; therefore, he owed nothing. When he had to have the house exterminated, he had the company send the bill to me, even though the contract clearly stated all exterminations were paid for by the tenant. He was not really tied to what was morally right or wrong; his position was based upon money. What put money in his pocket was right and what took money from his pocket was wrong. Now, I must admit to being shocked when a person turns out to be this way; however, Scripture tells me not to be shocked. Here, Asaph talks about that sort of person. If Asaph saw enough people like this to write a psalm about them, then we should expect them to be plentiful in our time as well.

The second line begins with the *wâw* conjunction and the masculine singular adjective *bârîy'* (בָּרִיאַ) [pronounced *baw-REE*], which means *fat, healthy, well-fed*. Strong's #1278 BDB #135. Then we have the 3rd person masculine plural suffix affixed to the masculine singular noun *ʿawl* (אוֹל) [pronounced *ool*], whose meaning is not so simple. First of all, the word is found only in II Kings 24:15 and Psalm 73:4; however, it is a part of several words which indicates strength, power and/or pre-eminence. Somehow, it is traced back to an unused root which means *to roll*. According to Gesenius, it is used in the singular to mean *body, belly, abdomen*; and in the plural to refer to *powerful ones, men of power, leaders*. BDB also assigns it two meanings for the two passages, indicating that in the instance of the Psalms, it actually means *their front, their prominent part*. Although I don't like rendering this *body* or *belly*, I will go with it, as I do not have a good alternative here. Strong's #193 BDB #17. The second line would be: **And their body [is] healthy [or, well-fed].** Barnes: *That is, they are not emaciated and weakened by disease, but they go down to death apparently from good health, and without wasting disease.*

I will be teaching this psalm and Psalm 10 together, and there are several parallels between the two psalms. This is not unlike Psalm 10:4a, which reads: **His ways are firm [and strong] [or, His ways are twisted] at all times. Your judicial verdicts [are] high outside of his sight.**

Because of the difficulty of this verse, we might do well to see what the less precise of the translations do:

¹² The NIV Study Bible also alludes to this in a text translation footnote *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 853.

Psalm 73:4—the Freer Renderings

Complete Jewish Bible	For when their death comes, it is painless; and meanwhile, their bodies are healthy;...
CEV	They never have to suffer [or, <i>they die a painless death</i>]; they stay healthy,...
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	They suffer no pain. Their bodies are healthy.
NAB	For they suffer no pain; their bodies are healthy and sleek.
NIV	They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong.
NJB	For them, no such thing as pain, untroubled, their comfortable portliness;...
NLT	They seem to live such a painless life; their bodies are so healthy and strong.
REB	No painful suffering for them! They are sleek and sound in body.

Given the difficulties of the translation, we cannot really fault them for their translations here. Personally, I like my final rendering: **For nothing ties them to personal integrity and their body is well-fed.**

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A third approach is to not separate the lines with the wâw conjunction but after char^etsûbbôwth. Such an approach is taken by Keil and Delitzsch, who render this: **For they suffer no pangs, Healthy and fat is their belly.** As I have exegeted this verse, we would have: **For [there is] nothing to them of restrains [or, *pains*]; strong and well-fed is their belly.** Our only problem here is the word *strong*, which is taken from *tâm*; that changes the meaning of *tâm* considerably.

The general idea, in any case, is that men who are corrupt and evil seem to lead lives which are full and prosperous. It might be too difficult to get much more specific than that, going by the most common translation. However, when this is translated as I have, then the meaning is much easier to grasp. **For nothing of bands to them [of] personal integrity [or, *For nothing ties them to personal integrity*] and their body is well-fed.** This tells us that they are not tied to personal integrity in any way, yet they are still well-fed; they are still prospered.

Now, this is one reason why I almost painfully exegete each and every verse and look at many of the nuances from the standpoint of the Hebrew. There is nothing in the other translations which even resembles my translation of Psalm 73:4a. The more lax renditions tended to stray much farther from the original text in order to give us a translation which is easily understood. With the detailed exegesis that I subjected you to, you are much more aware of all the issues and you have a better feel for why various translators translated this verse as they did; as well as understanding why I translated the verse as I did.

In exhausting toil of [common] man, [there is] nothing [to] them and with man, they are not stricken.

Psalm
73:5

[There is] nothing [to] them of the exhausting toil [and labor] of the common man; and among mankind, they are not stricken.

They are not faced with the exhausting labor of the common man; and, even in living among mankind, they are not struck down.

This verse appears as though it will be somewhat easier than the previous verse; and, given the parallelism that we would expect to find in a psalm, backs up many of the translations herein presented. First, let's see what others have done:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	<Of the toil of weak mortals> have they none, Nor <with the sons of earth> are they hard smitten.
God's Word™	They have no drudgery in their lives like ordinary people. They are not plagues [with problems] like others.
JPS (Tanakh)	They have no part in the travail of men; they are not afflicted like the rest of mankind.
NASB	They are not in trouble as <i>other</i> men [or <i>mortals</i>]; Nor are they plagued like mankind.

The Septuagint They are not in the troubles of men; and they are not scourged with men.
 Young's Literal Translation In the misery of mortals they are not, And with common men they are not plagued.

We begin with the bēyth preposition (*in, at, by, with, against*) followed by the masculine singular construct of ʿāmāl (אָמַל) [pronounced *aw-MAWL*], which means *intense labor, exhausting toil, exhaustion, miserable work, work and toil so tiring, you just want to cry*. ʿĀmāl is found sparingly in the Law (Gen. 41:51 Num. 23:21 Deut. 26:7 Judges 10:16) and it is rare in the prophetic books (Isa. 10:1 53:11 59:4 Jer. 20:18 Habbak. 1:3, 13); however, ʿāmāl is found quite often throughout the poetical books (Job through Ecclesiastes). Unfortunately, it is often mistranslated therein as *perverseness, toil, misery, wickedness, trouble, mischief, sorrow, travail, grievousness, grievances*. What seems to be more fitting is *wearisome labor* or *slave labor* or *complete exhaustion from life*. Context will decide whether this refers to *wearisome labor* or simple *exhausting misery* from living. Strong's #5999 (and #5998) BDB #765. This is followed by the masculine singular noun ʿēnōwsh (עֲנוּשׁ) [pronounced *en-OHSH*], which means *mortal, mortal man, mankind, peons, hoi polloi, the great unwashed*. Strong's #582 BDB #60. This is followed by the negative (*nothing, without, not*) which is affixed to the masculine plural suffix. This gives us: **In exhausting toil of [common] man, nothing [to] them**. Although not an easy line to translate, it is a piece of cake compared to the previous verse. Barnes explains: *They are exempt from the common burdens and troubles of humanity or those which pertain to man as man. There seems to be some special interposition in their favour to save them from the common calamities which come upon the race.*¹³

The second line begins with the wāw conjunction and the preposition ʿīm (עִם) [pronounced *geem*], which means *with, at, by near*. Strong's #5973 BDB #767. This is followed by another word for *man*; the masculine singular noun ʾādām (אָדָם) [pronounced *aw-DAWM*], which means *a man, a human being, mankind, Adam*. Strong's #120 BDB #9. This is followed by the negative particle lōʾ (לֹא) [pronounced *low*], which means *not, no*. This generally negates the word immediately following it. This word represents the absolute negation. Strong's #3808 BDB #518. The main verb is the 3rd person masculine plural, Pual imperfect of nāgaʿ (נָגַע) [pronounced *naw-GAHG*], which means *to touch, to reach out and touch*. The Pual is the passive of the Piel (intensive) stem. The Piel means *to strike, to strike down, to be stricken down [by God]*. The passive means *to be stricken down, to be beaten down, to be struck down by God*. Strong's #5060 BDB #619. This gives us: **And with mankind, they are not stricken**. Job 21:9 provides us with a parallel passage: **"Their houses are safe from fear, and the rod of God is not upon them."** Whereas, we would expect in a just world for judgment to fall upon those who are evil, it does not. Whereas, their fellow man appears to be struck with a variety of common problems, such nuisances do not seem to be a part of their lives. Having money appears to take care of some of the problems. They are sued, but they have lawyers to take care of that sort of thing; they give little thought to eating, drinking and sleeping—all of those things are taken care of.

In my generation, we have such men as Hugh Hefner or Bill Gates; two men that some would love to see struck down by God (personally, I am rather ambivalent about both men). However, they are the kind of men that Asaph is speaking about. Hugh Hefner lives a life of unbridled hedonism. He is rich and successful; he is able to see to his every personal pleasure. He can freely criticize fundamentalists and common morality, and he sounds just like the man in this verse. He does not seem to be faced, at least in recent memory, with the exhausting toil common to many men; he has not been beaten down, as we have observed with some men. God has allowed him to prosper and indulge himself, and Asaph is pretty pissed off about it. We have Bill Gates, who is first and foremost a businessman rather than a software engineer; and, in some business practices with regards to competition, he has been cutthroat about it. He has so much money that most of us could not fathom having a thousandth of his net worth. Yet, he does not appear to be exhausted by labor; he does not appear to be one whom God has beaten down. Asaph is not happy about that either. Here we have two men who are successful, self-indulgent (in very different ways), and, insofar as we know, Godless. God has allowed them to both prosper and to run their lives as they see fit. It's the kind of green light that many of us are envious of and will never receive. However, we will spend eternity in the presence of God and they will not (unless, of course, they believe in Christ Jesus). I have personally had dreams where I have accumulated wealth or possessions, and then woke up to have it all gone. This is what death will be to them. Life will have been but an instant to them; eternity will wax vast before them. Now, in Asaph's life, there are men like them; and men who have apparently pissed him off for one reason or

¹³ Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 254.

another (I can think of other personal acquaintances of mine like that). Asaph would like to see these men fall. He would like to see God put an end to their success. However—and let me be absolutely clear about this—it is not Asaph's place nor is it our place to do anything about it. He is making observations, and these observations have him pretty upset. However, that is as far as he can go with this. He can plead to God for their destruction, and there appears to be nothing wrong with that. He could go to God and pray for their salvation, which is probably nobler and not number 1 on his things to do. However, is there anything he can personally do to rectify this inequity that he perceives? No way! It is not our place to try to equal out anything or to mete out our own brand of justice to anyone (apart, of course, from jury duty). In other words, I don't want you to decide that there is someone in your periphery who needs to be taken down a notch, and that you are the person to do it. You are not. That is God's call and His prerogative. Anything that we do will simply bring divine judgment upon ourselves. And I guarantee you, no matter how low you want some other person to be brought, God will take you lower. The life of another, believer or unbeliever, is none of your business (apart from well-defined areas of authority, such as management over employees or parents over children; and let me add, very well-defined limits of authority—that is, a boss does not get to, in 99% of the cases, prescribe any course of morality for his underlings).

Now and again, I believe we should stop, regroup, and look at this psalm as a whole. When studying any passage of Scripture, it is imperative to examine it carefully. However, now and again, you lose sight of the forest for the trees. Therefore, let's look at the previous four verses:

The Complete Jewish Bible Translation of Psalm 73:2–5

But as for me, I lost my balance, my feet nearly slipped,
when I grew envious of the arrogant and saw how the wicked prosper.
For when their death comes, it is painless; and meanwhile, their bodies are healthy;
they don't have ordinary people's troubles, they aren't plagued like others.

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**For so, worn as their necklace pride;
covers a garment violence to them.**

Psalm 73:6 **That being so, pride is worn as their necklace;
a garment of violence envelops them.**

**That being so, they wear their pride as a necklace
and they envelop themselves with an overgarment of violence.**

Let's see what others have done first off:

CEV	Their pride is like a necklace, and they commit sin more often than they dress themselves.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	<For this cause> doth arrogance deck them as a neck-chain, And a garment of wrong is their attire;...
God's Word™	That is why they wear arrogance like a necklace and acts of violence like clothing.
JPS (Tanakh)	So pride adorns their necks, lawlessness enwraps them as a mantle.
NASB	Therefore pride is their necklace; The garment of violence covers them.
NKJV	Therefore pride serves as their necklace; Violence covers them <i>like</i> a garment.
The Septuagint	Therefore pride has possessed them; they have clothed themselves with their injustice and ungodliness.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Therefore hath pride encircled them, Violence covereth them as a dress.

We begin with the lâmed preposition followed by the adverb kên (כֵּן) [pronounced *kane*]; together, they mean *according to such conditions, that being so, therefore*; and possibly, *certainly, truly*. L^e = Strong's #none BDB #510. Kên = Strong's #3651 BDB #485. The main verb is the 3rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect, 3rd person masculine plural suffix, of 'ânaq (אָנַק) [pronounced *gaw-NAHK*], which means *to wear as a necklace, to serve as a necklace, to lay something upon the neck, to encircle the neck with a necklace*. It is found only here

and in Deut. 15:14. We could get away with *to adorn* as long as we understood it to go around the neck (the cognatic evidence for the meaning is strong). Strong's #6059 BDB #778. Then we have the subject of the verb, the feminine singular noun *ga'āvâh* (גַּאֲוָה) [pronounced *gah-uh-VAW*], which means *majesty, pride*. This is used mostly in a negative sense in the psalms (Psalm 10:2 31:19, 24 36:12); but occasionally in a positive sense (Psalm 68:35). Strong's #1346 BDB #144. This gives us: **That being so, pride is worn as their necklace.**

In the second line, we begin with the verb, which is the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of *ʿâṭaph* (אָטַף) [pronounced *gaw-TAHF*], which means *to envelop oneself*. This appears to be an Aramaism (there is an identical, but different Hebrew verb). Strong's #5848 BDB #742. We then have the masculine singular noun *shîyth* (שִׂיִּת) [pronounced *sheeth*], which means *garment*. Strong's #7897 BDB #1011. This is immediately followed by the masculine singular noun *châmâç* (חַמָּץ) [pronounced *khaw-MAWS*], which means *violence, wrong, cruelty*. This is the word that we find in Gen. 6 which prompts God to flood the earth. Strong's #2555 BDB #329. This is followed by *to [or, for] them*. This gives us: **A garment of violence envelops them.** The lamed preposition seems to indicate upon whom the verb's action is performed. BDB renders this: *they put on for themselves a garb of violence*. The problem with this is that the verb is a masculine singular and the subject cannot be the men of evil to whom Asaph is referring throughout this entire psalm. The NKJV (following the lead of the KJV) offers another reasonable rendering: **Therefore pride serves as their necklace; Violence covers them like a garment.** Their interpretation as to which is the subject appears just as valid as mind. I assume that *garment* acts like a masculine singular construct, where the entire phrase is the subject; the translators of the KJV interpret *violence* as the subject, and insert the kaph preposition, which I don't feel is correct, but the meaning of the verse is essentially the same; they wear their pride proudly, and violence is all around them. We have similar phrasing in Psalm 109:18a, 19: **But he clothed himself with cursing as with his garment...Let it be to him as a garment with which he covers himself, and a belt with which he constantly girds himself.** And this is the antithesis of Prov. 3:3, 21b–22: **Do not let kindness and truth leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. Keep sound wisdom and discretion, so they will be life to your soul and adornment to your neck.**

The idea is not that they wore actual clothes which reveal human pride, but their entire observable life is one which exudes pride, and, when necessary, violence. Certainly, what they wear can reveal their pride and willingness to do violence; but their entire external, observable lives is what we are speaking about. Barnes: *Pride surrounds them as with a neck-chain, or a collar for the neck. They wear it as an ornament. They make it conspicuous...Injustice or cruelty seems to be their very clothing. It is manifest in their whole gait and demeanour that they are men of haughtiness and pride; that they are destitute of tenderness, sympathy, sensibility.*¹⁴

Furthermore, the sins of pride and willingness to do violence are only examples of the sins these men are willing to tout. They will tout their lusts, their power, and their disregard for the welfare of others, as though those are pieces of clothing that they wear proudly.

He swells out from fatness their eyes; pass over imaginations of a heart.	Psalm 73:7	His unrighteousness goes out [before him] as [does] his fat [belly]; the imaginations of the heart pass over.
His unrighteousness goes out before him just as his fat stomach precedes him; whatever he thinks of doing, he does.		

This one looks rather difficult on the face of it. Let's see what others have done:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Their iniquity hath proceeded from fatness They have surpassed the imaginations of the heart;...
JPS (Tanakh)	Fat shuts out their eyes; their fancies are extravagant.
Keil and Delitzsch	Their eyes stand out with fat, The imaginations of the heart appear outwardly.
KJV	Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish.

¹⁴ Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 255.

NASB	Their eye bulges out from fatness, The imaginations of <i>their</i> heart run riot [lit., <i>overflow</i>].
NKJV	Their eyes bulge [or, <i>iniquity bulges</i>] with abundance; they have more than heart could wish.
Owen	Swell out with fatness their eyes overflow with follies their hearts.
Owen (as per his notes) ¹⁵	He swells out from fatness; their eyes; overflow follies a heart.
The Septuagint	Their injustice will go forth as out of fatness; they have fulfilled their intention.
Young's Literal Translation	Their eye hath come out from fat, The imaginations of the heart transgressed;...

If you focus on Owen, and the fact that I have given two different points of view on how he translates as versus how the translation appears to be on the surface, you can see there is going to be trouble. Our troubles include the fact that the verbs and nouns we want to match up, do not match up in number; another problem is that it is unclear where the two lines should be separated. What most have done is this verse begins with a verb, so they begin the second line at the second verb (which comes first in the Hebrew, but not in the English).

The first problem is that the first verb is a 3rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect and the subject aligned with the verb in most translations is a feminine dual of *eyes*. The verb is the very common verb *yâtsâ'* (יָצָא) [pronounced *yaw-TZAWH*], which means *to go out, to come out, to come forth*. Strong's #3318 BDB #422. There is nothing tricky about the form of this verb, as the vocabulary form of the verb is exactly what we find in the passage, which makes it a 3rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect. Generally speaking, feminine verbs will throw in a *hê* (ה); however, this is not what we find. What follows this verb is the *mîn* preposition and the masculine singular noun *chêle^{bv}* (חֵלֶב) [pronounced *KHAY-le^{bv}*], which simply means *fat*. Strong's #2459 BDB #316. Because of the preposition, *fat* cannot be the subject of the verb. This gives us: **He has gone out from fat**. Then we have *their eyes*. So, literally, in the first line, we have: **He has gone out from fat their eyes**. Obviously, this does not make a whole lot of sense. Even if you decide to ignore the gender and number and move things around, it is still pretty difficult to make sense of this first line.

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The Exegesis of Psalm 73:7a from the Greek Septuagint

The problems: My next option is going to the Greek, however my skills here are going to be considerably weaker than in the Hebrew because I have fewer ways to cheat. First of all, the Septuagint is not going to be in the Koine Greek, which is the Greek of the New Testament but it will be in the Classical Greek. Well, I quite frankly don't have a background in the classical Greek, nor do I have any decent resources to help me in this area. Next problem, even though there are some overlaps between Classical and Koine Greek, there just aren't enough. Therefore, the work that I will do on the translation of a translation will be weaker than my work in the Hebrew. The third problem may be the most elusive: perhaps those who translated this from the Hebrew into the Greek looked at the same Hebrew words that I am looking at and decided, *this doesn't make a lick of sense*; and they change a word here or there so that it makes sense (and there are areas in the Septuagint which make the TEV look like an ultra-literal word-for-word translation).

The exegesis: The big difference is that there is no word for *eyes* in the Septuagint. I could not find the first verb in my several Koine Greek lexicons; however, based upon my English translation of the Septuagint and the Hebrew, it probably means *to go out, to go forth*. Then we have the comparative particle *hôs* (ὡς) [pronounced *hohç*], which generally means *like, as*. Strong's #5613. This is followed by the preposition *ek* (ἐκ) [pronounced *ehk*], and it generally means *out of, out from, from, of*. This is the Greek equivalent of the *mîn* preposition. Strong's #1537. Then we have the Greek word for *fat*; *steatos* (στέατος) [pronounced *STEH-a-toss*]. Strong's #none. So far, we correspond fairly well with the Hebrew. Then we have *the unrighteousness of his* (which is, in the Greek, ἡ ἀδικία αὐτῶν—i.e., *his unrighteousness*). We have a similar rendering in the Vulgate and in the Syriac. The Aramaic paraphrase of the Old Testament has *face*. This gives us: **His unrighteousness**

¹⁵ This is what this translation appears to be, taking into account gender, number, etc. revealed in Owen's notes.

goes out as from fat. You may wonder why this translation does not match the one which I have listed under the Septuagint. I do not attempt a word-for-word translation of the Greek Septuagint, but rather base the English translation on Benton's English translation of the Greek, which is sometimes weak in itself. I think that we can give this two possible meanings: (1) the unrighteousness of the persons examined here sticks out like the fat on their filled bellies; (2) the unrighteousness of these men goes out or goes forth into the world just as their fat bellies precede them in their walk. *Fat*, again, refers to the prosperity of the rich. Because they are rich, they are fat. The poor are thin and well-tanned from working out in the sun and from not always having enough to eat. The prosperous are fatter and more pale in skin tone. Although I am personally pleased with the translation, using the Greek; bear in mind that translating from the translation is subject to the several flaws noted above.

The translation of Psalm 73:7a: His unrighteousness goes out [before him] as [does] his fat [belly]...

There is no way to figure out where the previous line ends and the second line begins. We have no pausal forms nor do we have any wāw conjunctions. We will reasonably guess that, since the first line began with the main verb, the second line will as well. It is the 3rd person plural, Qal perfect of ^עגַּוַּר (גַּוַּר) [pronounced *gaw^h-VAHR*], which means *to pass over, to pass through, to pass, to go over*. Strong's #5674 BDB #716. Again, as above, the verb is a very common, often-used verb in Scripture. It is quite unusual for the two verbs of this verse to be so simple and common, and yet have the verse still so difficult to translate. The likely subject for this verb comes next; it is the feminine plural noun mas^עkkîyth (מַשְׁכִּיִּת) [pronounced *mah-s'k-KEETH*] which is a difficult word to fix a meaning to. It is only found in only six passages (Lev. 26:1 Num. 33:52 Psalm 73:7 Prov. 18:11 25:11 Ezek. 8:12). BDB gives its meanings as *showpiece, figure, imagination*. In Lev. 26:1, it accompanies the word *stone*, perhaps indicating a stone cut according to one's imagination. In context, it obviously has something to do with idolatry and with stone. The use of this word in Psalm 73:7 and Prov. 18:11 seem to indicate that *thinking* or *imagination* are involved. My opinion is that this word refers to one's imagination.. Strong's #4906 BDB #967. Following this is the word *heart*, allowing us to render this *imaginations of [the] heart*. This gives us: **Imaginations of the heart pass over**. Although the second line makes some sense (more than the Hebrew of the first); and, although its translation is fairly simple and straightforward (comparatively speaking), its meaning is still rather difficult to discern. I got hung up on the 1st and 3rd Greek words, so the best I can offer is Brenton's alternate English translation: **...they have fulfilled their intention**. Perhaps the thinking here is that, whatever the rich and successful man imagines, he brings it to fruition. He thinks about it, he desires it, and he brings it to pass.

Barnes offers his interpretation of the last line, which is strikingly similar: *Their thoughts, their plans, their purposes, pass freely along without any obstruction; their wishes are all gratified; their purposes are accomplished; they have all that they wish. Whatever comes into the mind as an object of desire is obtained without hindrance or trouble. They seem only to wish for a thing, or to think of a thing, and they have it.*¹⁶

Because this was a difficult verse, let's take a look at....

The Less Literal Translations of Psalm 73:7

CEV	Their eyes poke out with fat, and their minds are flooded with foolish thoughts.
God's Word™	Their eyes peer out from their fat faces, and their imaginations run wild.
NAB	Out of their stupidity comes sin; evil thoughts flood their hearts.
NIV	From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits.
NJB	From their fat oozes out malice, their hearts drip with cunning.
NLT	These fat cats have everything their hearts could ever wish for!
REB	Their eyes gleam through folds of fat, while vain fancies flit through their minds.
TEV	Their hearts pour out evil, and their minds are busy with wicked schemes.

¹⁶ Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 255.

The Less Literal Translations of Psalm 73:7

Given the difficulty of the passage, I can't really fault any of these translations. Hell, I can't even come up with a translation myself which is at once true to the Hebrew (or the Greek) and, at the same time, makes some sense (although I am comfortable with my rendering from the Greek for v. 7a). From the context, we know that Asaph is speaking of the rich, fat cats; and he doesn't like seeing them prosper. What most of these translators did was take that thought and run with it, occasionally inserting a word here or there which came from the Hebrew.

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<p style="text-align: center;">They mock and speak in evil; oppression from a height they speak.</p>	<p>Psalm 73:8</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">They mock and speak [vociferously] with malice; they threaten oppression [and exploitation] from [their] high [position].</p> <p style="text-align: center;">They mock and they speak with great malice against others; they threaten to oppress and exploit others from their position of power.</p>
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I can't imagine this being worse than the previous verse. Let's see what others have done first:

<p><i>The Emphasized Bible</i> JPS (Tanakh) Keil and Delitzsch (revised) NASB NEB The Septuagint <i>Young's Literal Translation</i></p>	<p>They mock, and wickedly command oppression, <From on high> they command;... They scoff and plan evil; from their eminence they plan wrongdoing. They mock and speak oppression in wickedness, They speak from on high. They mock, and wickedly speak of oppression; They speak from on high. Their talk is all sneers and malice; scornfully they spread their calumnies. They have taken counsel and spoken in wickedness; they have uttered unrighteousness loftily. They do corruptly, And they speak in the wickedness of oppression, From on high they speak.</p>
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We begin right off the bat with two 3rd person masculine plural verbs strung together with a wâw conjunction. First the Qal imperfect of mûwq (מִוֶּק) [pronounced *mook*], which means *to mock, to deride*. It is found only here and there are no cognates (I mention that in case your translation has something completely different). However, this is the word from which our word *mock* comes. Strong's #4167 BDB #558. The second verb is the Piel imperfect of the very common word dâ^bvar (דַּבַּר) [pronounced *daw^b-VAHR*], which means *to speak, to declare, to proclaim, to announce*. In the Piel, it is stronger and the intensification is dependent upon the context. it can be rendered *to promise, to propose [marriage], to speak kindly of, to plot against, to destroy*. Strong's #1696 BDB #180. Then we have the bêyth preposition (*in, by, with*) and the masculine singular noun ra^ʿ (רָע) [pronounced *rahg^ʿ*] and it means *evil, bad*. Rotherham suggests *calamitous* for Joshua 23:15. Strong's #7451 BDB #948. This gives us: **They mock and speak with evil**. Although the first verb is not absolutely definite in its meaning, the context pretty much allows for a verb like *to mock*; in this first line, the rich infidels say whatever they want to whomever they want; and evil permeates their speech. We are warned: **But now you also put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander and abusive language from your mouth** (Col. 3:8).

We reasonably guess that the next line begins after ra^ʿ. We begin with the masculine singular noun ʿôsheq (עֹשֶׂק) [pronounced *GOH-shek*], which means *oppression, exploitation, extortion*. Strong's #6233 BDB #799. This is followed by the mîn preposition (*from, off, away from*) and the masculine singular noun mârôm (מָרוֹם) [pronounced *maw-ROHM*], which means *height, that which is high*. It is used chiefly in poetry and has other related meanings as well. Strong's #4791 BDB #928. Then we have an unusual occurrence in Scripture; the verb dâbar is repeated with the same morphology. This gives us: **They speak [vociferously] exploitation from a height**. A more lax rendering might be: **They threaten oppression [and exploitation] from on high**. These men, by virtue of their wealth, have a higher position than the poor, and their power is greater. They can threaten to do many things. They

can dispossess the poor of their homes; they can exploit the work and the production of the poor. They are in a position to make the rules to favor themselves which rules also exploit and oppress the poor; and they do. In this verse, they threaten (or, promise) to do so. I have faced a lawyer without counsel and this describes him perfectly. Lawyers make the laws and know the laws. They will use the laws from their higher position to exploit, crush, and oppress the poor. For this particular lawyer, morality was getting the most money that he could for his client, which, of course, translated into more money for him. It did not matter how much harm, inconvenience or pain he inflicted nor did it matter upon whom it was inflicted.

I have personally worked where there were those who occupied a position of authority over me and they mocked me and spoke evil of me. They used their position to oppress me. One of the reasons I endured that, is that it would give me material to use in illustration. Most of the people in authority desire that position in order to exert their authority over others. They want to have that power. They want to make pronouncements and see their whims accomplished. A person in authority does lead and a person in authority does exert authority. However, this is only half of what they should be doing. A person in authority is responsible to those under their authority. A person in authority is to look out for those under them. They are to take care of those under them. Those under their authority are in their charge. One of the areas where corporate America went wrong is that there were many businesses who saw their workers as simply workers. They took no responsibility for them; they did not see to their welfare. They were interested only in their production but they took no interest in their personage. This is absolutely wrong and immoral. This does not apply to all businesses. There have been many fine businesses in the United States which sought to take care of their workers; which looked after their welfare, their health, their retirement, their security. They gave them a workplace which did not stifle them as human beings, but utilized their strengths, their creativity, their drive. When I first moved to Houston in the late 1970's, the remarkable thing which I observed is that all of the middle management in private enterprise that I came into contact with had no concept of what their authority was, and the end result was, their actions worked against their company. On the other hand, in the school where I first worked, for the first several years, those in mid-management knew exactly what their position was. Several times, these principals told us that they were there to make our jobs easier; they were there to make it possible for us to teach. That was their focus. However, from the mid-1980's and on, that focus was completely lost.

**They set in the [two] heavens their mouth
and their tongue walks in the earth.**

Psalm
73:9

**They have set their tongue in [and against]
the two heavens
and their tongue walks in the earth.**

**They have set their tongue against heaven
and their tongue struts throughout the earth.**

This is an easier verse, like the last one. The Hebrew should be easy, as should be the interpretation. First the other translations:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	They have set in the heavens their mouth, And their tongue marcheth through the earth.
God's Word™	They verbally attack heaven, and they order people around on earth.
JPS (Tanakh)	They set their mouths against heaven, and their tongues range over the earth.
Keil and Delitzsch (revised)	They set their mouth in the heavens, And their tongue stalks along upon the earth.
NASB	They have set their mouth against [or, in] the heavens, And their tongue parades [lit., walks] through the earth.
The Septuagint	They have set their mouth against heaven, and their tongue has gone through upon the earth.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	They have set in the heavens their mouth, And their tongue walketh in the earth.

We begin with the 3rd person plural, Qal perfect of shîyth (שׂיַת) [pronounced *sheeth*], which means, according to BDB, *to put, to set, to appoint, to station*. Although the KJV, in general, massacres this word, it is a fairly common one and easy to translate. Strong's #7896 BDB #1011. This is followed by the bêtth preposition, which can mean *in* or *against*. Gesenius says this preposition combined with the verb means *to place something in somewhere*.

However, I cannot completely disregard the JPS version, which, given the entire line, makes as much sense, and is not an affront to the Hebrew in any way. This is followed by *the [two] heavens*. Then, what is placed is mentioned: the masculine singular (with a 3rd person masculine plural suffix) of *peh* (פֶּה) [pronounced *peh*], which means *mouth*. Strong's #6310 BDB #804. This gives us: **They have placed their mouth in the heavens**; or, **They have placed their mouth against the heavens**. In the previous line, they have threatened exploitation from on high—that is, from their higher position in society. You want to threaten an individual who is lower than you on the social scale, one way to do so is to set the laws in such a way that they are subject to the exploitation of said laws. In this way, they have placed their mouth (i.e., their opinions, their declarations, their volition expressed) in the high places, in the heavens, and, simultaneously, against the heavens (i.e., against God's will). What they declare is like the declaration from heaven, even though what they declare is against God in heaven (this is called a metonymy, where *heavens* stands in for *God*). At the same time, they supplant God's authority with their own. Barnes concurs: *They speak as if they were in the heavens; as if they were clothed with all authority; as if they were superior beings, and had a right to command the universe.*¹⁷

In the second line, we have the *wāw* conjunction (which is usually the indicator of a break in the line), followed by *their tongue* (which is a feminine singular noun), followed by the 3rd person feminine singular, Qal imperfect of the very common verb *hālak*^e (הָלַךְ) [pronounced *haw-LAHK^e*], which means *to go, to come, to depart, to walk*. Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229. This is followed by *in the earth* or *in the land*. This simply gives us: **And their tongue walks in the earth [or, land]**. They have set the rules as if from the heavens (perfect tense, which is an accomplished state), and then they use these rules against everyone upon their earth (imperfect tense, which is an incomplete or ongoing action). This is known as a personification. That is, a thing (in this case, the *tongue*) represents a person. It reads: *their tongues walks through the earth*, but it means *it is the wicked who walk through the earth, using their tongues against God*.¹⁸

Again, I think of the lawyers. There are many laws which have been written in such a way as to encourage lawsuits. For instance, on an injury, a person may file a lawsuit even if their injury has been covered by medical insurance and there apparently are cases where they do not even have to reveal that payments for their medical treatment was covered. This allows the suit to be padded with additional costs from the defendant—costs which have already been paid. Their mouth is as if in heaven making the laws (which are to their favor) and their tongue is here on earth enforcing these laws.

McGee gives a slightly different slant to this verse—one which is reasonable: *My, listen to these rich people on television today. They are the ones who make the news. "Their tongue walketh through the earth," and I know of nothing that enables it to walk better than television.*¹⁹

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God's Own People Do Not Enjoy the Same Prosperity as the Wicked

**To now, return His people here
and waters of fulness are drained out for
them.**

Psalm
73:10

**That being so, His people return here
and waters of fulness are drained away with
respect to them.**

**That being so, His people turn to them
and are led astray by them.**

Although vv. 8–9 were fairly easy, v. 10 may require a little more work. The translations by others are as follows:

CEV

God will bring his people back, and they will drink the water he so freely gives.

¹⁷ *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 255.

¹⁸ *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 863.

¹⁹ J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Chapters 42–89*, ©1991 by J. Vernon McGee; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; p. 136.

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Therefore must his people return thither [or, <i>Therefore, He satisfies them with bread</i>], And the waters of abundance are drained by them;...
JPS (Tanakh)	So they pound His people again and again, until they are drained of their very last tear.
Keil and Delitzsch (revised)	Therefore their people turn hither, And water in abundance is swallowed down by them.
NAB	So my people turn to them and drink deeply of their words.
NASB	Therefore his [or, <i>His</i>] people return to this place; And waters of abundance are drunk [lit., <i>drained out</i>] by them.
NEB	And so my [so Sept.; Heb., <i>his</i>] people follow their lead [prob. rdg., Heb., <i>hither</i>] and find nothing to blame in them [prob. rdg.; Heb., <i>obscure</i>],...
NIV	Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. [footnote: <i>The meaning of the Hebrew for this verse is uncertain</i>]
NJB	That is why my people turn to them, and enjoy the waters of plenty.
NKJV	Therefore his people return here, And waters of a full cup are drained by them.
NRSV	Therefore the people turn and praise them [Heb., <i>his people return here</i>], and find no fault in them [Heb., <i>abundant waters are obtained by them</i>].
REB	So the people follow their lead and find in them nothing blameworthy.
The Septuagint	Therefore shall My people return here; and full days will be found in [or, <i>by</i>] them.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Therefore do His people return hither, And waters of fulness are wrung out of them.

V. 10 begins exactly like v. 6, so we have, literally, *for so*, which can more accurately be rendered, *that being so, therefore*. The main verb is next, which is the 3rd masculine singular, Qal imperfect of *shûwv* (שוב) [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*. Strong's #7725 BDB #996. Rotherham tells us that it is written *bring back*, but read *return*; however, in my Hebrew Bible, it is *return*.²⁰ Then we have *his people* (or, *His people*—which is a masculine singular noun) followed by the adverb *hâlôm* (הֵלֵם) [pronounced *huh-LOHM*], which means *here, hither*. Strong's #1988 BDB #240. This gives us: *Therefore, his [or, His] people will return here*. It is possible, but less likely, for this to read: *Therefore, He will return [or, He returns] His people here*.

Rotherham, in a footnote, then suggests that this entire line should read: *Therefore he satisfieth them with bread*; and he cites the Oxford Gesenius, p. 240 in support. Although I don't know the reason behind this point of view, it does seem to make somewhat more sense than what we have here.

The meaning of this line is hidden to me. In the previous verse, Asaph has spoken of the mouths of the wicked being in (and *against*) heaven, while their tongues walk through the earth. Now he says, *that being so, His people return here*. Now, interpreting this as *Israel* is reasonable, as Asaph mentioned *Israel* at the first verse of this psalm. However, I don't see the tie-in between the verses (or this verse and the context). We have a very easy verse to translate, but it is rather difficult to understand. Barnes suggests: *His people [refer to] the pious in the earth; Return hither [means to] return to this subject. In their musings—their meditations on Divine things—they come back to this inquiry. The subject occupies their minds, an they recur to it as a subject which perplexes them; as a thing that is incomprehensible. They think it over again and again, and are more and more perplexed... The difficulties which these facts suggest about God and His government are such that they cannot solve them.*²¹ Whereas, I don't know that I agree with Barnes, it is the only explanation that I have found that seems to make some sense. Because the wicked seem to prosper and because there seems to be no earthly retribution for the wrong that they have done, God's people return to these facts mentally, again and again, in order to understand *why*.

The second line begins with the wâw conjunction and the masculine plural construct of *mayim* (מַיִם) [pronounced *MAH-yim*] is the simple word for *water* found everywhere in the plural. Strong's #4325 BDB #565. It is closely associated with the masculine singular adjective (used as a noun) *mâlê* (מַלֵּא) [pronounced *maw-LAY*], which

²⁰ Rotherham also points out that it is written and read *return* in five early printed editions, as well as in the Aramaic, Septuagint, Syriac and Vulgate.

²¹ *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 256.

means *full, abundant*. Strong's #4392 BDB #570. Then we have the masculine plural, Niphal imperfect of the verb *mâtsâh* (מָצָה) [pronounced *maw-TSAW*], which means *to drain, to drain out*. The Niphal is the passive stem, so it means *to be drained, to be drained out*. It also means *to suck out, to press out moisture*. Strong's #4680 BDB #594. Finally, we have the *lâmed* preposition with the masculine plural suffix. This gives us: **And waters of fulness are drained out to [or, with respect] to them**. Again, the translation is fairly easy (except for the translation of the *lâmed*); but the meaning is difficult to ascertain. The second meaning of the verb, *to press out moisture* does not help us either. Barnes suggests this meaning: *the facts in this case, and the questions which arose in regard to those facts, and which so perplexed them, were like a bitter cup; a cup of poison, of an intoxicating cup which overpowered their faculties,—and that they, in their perplexities, exhausted the cup. They drank it all, even to the dregs...It was a subject full of perplexity; a subject that wholly overpowered all their faculties, and exhausted all their powers.*²²

The Chaldee renders this, *Many tears flow from them*. Both the Septuagint and the Vulgate render this, *And full days will be found by them*. Now, you may think, *well, that settles it, it means "And full days will be found by them."* However, since the verse in the Hebrew is difficult to understand, Jerome (who translated the Latin Vulgate) may have looked to the Septuagint for guidance. However, taking this as the correct understanding of this second line, the idea is that the wicked enjoy full and prosperous days. God's people tend to ruminate on these things and the wicked, meanwhile, enjoy full days of blessing.

Our problem is twofold: What does this verse mean and how is it tied to the previous verse? Let's see what the several translations have come up with, bearing in mind that the translation which I have given is fairly straightforward and comes from the Hebrew text.

Psalm 73:9–11

CEV

They dare to speak against God and to order others around.
God will bring his people back,
and they will drink the water he so freely gives.
Only evil people would say,
"God Most High cannot know everything!"

The Emphasized Bible
(alternate reading and updated)

They have set, in the heavens, their mouth,
And their tongue marches through the earth.
Therefore, He satisfies them with bread
and the waters of abundance are discovered by them.
And they say,
"How does God know?
And is there knowledge in the Most High?"

God's Word™

They verbally attack heaven
and they order people around on earth.
That is why God's people turn to wickedness
and swallow their words.
Then wicked people ask, "What does God know?"
"Does the Most High know anything?"

Kukis

They have set their tongue in [and *against*] the two heavens
and their tongue walks in the earth.
That being so, His people return here
and waters of fulness are drained away with respect to them.
And they say, "How would God know?
[Is] there knowledge in the Most high?"

²² Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 256.

Psalm 73:9–11

NAB

They set their mouths against the heavens,
 their tongues roam the earth.
 So my people turn to them
 and drink deeply of their words.
 They say, "Does God really know?"
 "Does the Most High have any knowledge?"

NJB

Their mouth claims heaven for themselves,
 and their tongue is never still on earth.
 That is why my people turn to them,
 and enjoy the waters of plenty,
 saying, 'How can God know'
 What knowledge can the Most High have?'

NLT

They boast against the very heavens,
 and their words strut throughout the earth.
 And so the people are dismayed and confused,
 drinking in all their words.
 "Does God realize what is going on?" they ask.
 "Is the Most High even aware of what is happening?"

NRSV

They set their mouths against heaven.
 and their tongues range over the earth.
 Therefore, the people turn and praise them.
 And find no fault in them.
 And they say, "How can God know?
 "Is there knowledge in the Most High?"

REB

Their slanders reach up to heaven,
 while their tongues are never still on earth.
 So the people follow their lead
 and find in them nothing blameworthy.
 They say, 'How does God know?
 Does the most High know or care?'

TEV

They speak evil of God in heaven
 and give arrogant orders to men on earth,
 so that even God's people turn to them
 and eagerly believe whatever they say.
 They say, "God will not know;
 the Most High will not find out."

So you notice in most cases, the less literal translations take *to them* and place it with the first line, so that we have: *That being so, His people return [or, turn] to them.* This would allow for the second line: *And waters of fulness are drained away.* Because of the authority of these wicked men, both seemingly from heaven, and certainly on earth, God's people are led astray by them, and therefore, God's blessings for His people are drained away. My point in this is that do not discount the less literal translations, as often they have a point of interpretation that can be lost in the more literal translations. On the other hand, of course, do not depend upon your less literal translation as the end-all and be-all of translations.

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There are two possible ways of interpreting this verse, and these two ways differ by way of the translation. (1) One reasonable understanding of this passage, is that, because of the influence that these evil men have on the earth, as well as their seemingly influence in heaven (or against heaven), the people of God turn to them, and the waters of fulness—God’s blessings to His people—are drained away from them (I have been inserting *from them*). (2) Another most reasonable approach, taken by many of the translations, is that the people listen to these infidels and are led astray because of that. I can give you a simple example from our lives: there are movie celebrities who make an obscene amount of money, and occasionally they vent over some pet view—and many others are led astray by their viewpoints, attributing to these celebrities wisdom and understanding because they are rich and successful. Such an interpretation (which, again, is not what we have in the Hebrew), ties vv. 9 and 10 together quite neatly, and v. 11 more or less falls into place. As you have no doubt noticed, these are not the only two interpretations; reading through the REB, the NJB or the NAB, we could add another three interpretations to this passage.

The difficulty, of course, is the translation itself, and is it the actual Hebrew text. However, we need not panic in such a situation. The two positions which I gave you, as well as the several slants on this verse given by others are, by and large, accurate truths.

Three Additional Interpretations of Psalm 73:10

For instance, the NAB reads: **So my people turn to them and drink deeply of their words.** This is the kind of influence a successful infidel can have. He is successful, he credits himself often, and when he speaks, others who desire to be successful are turned toward him and they drink his words deeply.

Or, the NJB reads: **That is why my people turn to them, and enjoy the waters of plenty,...** The idea expressed here is that the people of Israel are led astray by listening to those who are rich, successful and unrighteous, and, sometimes, they share, to some degree, in their prosperity. Do you need an example of this? Certainly—turn on your TV to almost any station after Saturday or Sunday midnight and there will be some successful real estate person who will guide you to a life in successful real estate deals. There are obviously some who listen to him who are financially blessed as a result. There are thousands and thousands who are not. But some who do listen to the rich infidel are blessed considerably.

Finally, the REB reads: **So the people follow their lead and find in them nothing blameworthy.** Again, like pretty much every translation, the people are led astray by the infidels; in the second line, the difference is that these people discern nothing wrong with the viewpoints of the infidels. As you will notice, all three of these translations make sense and are theologically sound.

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**And they say, “How does God know?
And [is] there knowledge in the Most High?”** Psalm 73:11

**And they say, “How would God know?
[Is] there knowledge in the Most high?”**

**And they say, “How would God know what is going on here?
Is there any reason to suppose the Most High has knowledge of all this?”**

This looks to be quite a bit simpler in terms of translation and interpretation; first some of the others:

JPS (Tanakh)	Then they say, “How could God know? Is there knowledge with the Most high?”
NASB	And they say, “How does God know? And is there knowledge with the Most High?”
The Septuagint	And they said, “How does God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?”
Young's Literal Translation	And they have said, ‘How hath God known? And is there knowledge in the Most High?’

We begin with *And they have said* (perfect tense) followed by the adverb *ʿēykâh* (עַיְכָא) [pronounced *ā-KAW*], which means *in what manner, how*. It can also be used as an exclamatory adverb (*how!*) Or as an interrogatory

adverb. Strong's #349 BDB #32. Then we have the Qal perfect of *to know* followed by *God* (ʿêl = לַאֱלֹהִים). This gives us: **And they have said, “How does God know?”** Or, **“In what way had God known?”** Barnes: *His people, as they return again and again to this subject,...are constrained to put this question. They are compelled by these facts to start such painful inquiries about God; and distressing as the inquiries are, and as are the doubts which they involve, these thoughts will pass through their mind.*²³

We sometimes have a difficult time grasping these questions, as we picture God, from creation to the incarnation of Jesus, as a God of millions of miracles and manifestations. In truth, there are a handful of times when God manifested Himself throughout history. Obviously, during the incarnation of our Lord, God bore witness of His Son through tremendous miracles over a period of about three years. When Israel left Egypt, God had caused several great acts of power (perhaps up to two dozen) over a period of about 40 years. Also, during that time period, God spoke to Moses (He first spoke to all Israel, who did not want to hear God's voice directly). Then there were a handful of miracles performed on a smaller scale during the time of Elijah. Apart from those three time periods, as well as an occasional miracle here or there, we do not have these miraculous manifestations of God going on nonstop. So, often in Israel's history, it would be reasonable to ask, “How does God know?” Or, “In what way has God known?” In other words, “Is God really involved with this world. Does He really have any idea what is going on here? Is He paying any real attention to this world?” The popular theological position for our founding fathers to take was that, God created this world, but then He walked away from it. God set everything in motion according to His laws, but, for whatever reason, He is not caught up in the day-to-day activity of the world. Here's the deal: when you have a mistaken impression of the Old Testament (i.e., that this was a time filled with miracles and divine manifestations), then you will tend to look upon your own time period as bereft of these things, causing you to conclude that perhaps God has simply lost interest in this world or maybe He is off involved in some other project. It is an easy step from a misunderstanding of the Old Testament to deism. The other route which believers take is that their church should be a three-ring circus every time they meet, with God's miracles being abundant and apparent to all (the holy roller approach). This is what these men of evil have done. They no longer see the continued manifestations of God (*no one* did, other than perhaps gen X of the exodus time period), so they ask, “Is God really a part of this life? Does He really know what is going on here?”

We have a parallel to v. 11a in Job 22; Job has just pointed out that the wealthy reprobates enjoy a great deal of success, and do not appear to be faced with evils falling upon them. Eliphaz comments, **“And you say, ‘What does God know? Can He judge through the thick darkness?’”** (Job 22:13).²⁴ We find a similar sentiment expressed in the parallel psalm, Psalm 10: **He {the successful infidel} says to himself, “God has forgotten; He has hidden His face; He will never see it.”** (Psalm 10:11). And Psalm 94:7: **And they have said, “Jehovah does not see, nor does the God of Jacob pay attention.”**

The second question (which we assume is a continuation of the interrogative in the first line) begins with the wâw conjunction and the substantive *there* (which often requires the insertion of a *to be*). This is followed by the feminine singular noun *da'ath* (דַּאֲת) [pronounced *DAH-g'ath*], which means *knowledge*. Strong's #1847 BDB #395. Like many of the words in this chapter, this is found both here and in Job 21. No doubt, Asaph was studying the book of Job, came to chapter 21, and was inspired to write this psalm. Then we have the bêt preposition and the masculine singular noun *el'gôwn* (עֲלֵי גֹוֹן) [pronounced *geh^l-YOHN*], which means *Highest, Most High*. Strong's #5945 BDB #751. This gives us: **“And [is] there knowledge in [or, with] [the] Most High?”**

Barnes: *How can these facts be reconciled with God's omniscience? How can it be that He sees all this, and yet suffers it to occur, or that He does not interpose to prevent it? Can it be explained, can it be believed, that God sees all this, and that He calmly looks on and does nothing to prevent it? If He sees it, why does He not interpose and put an end to it? These perplexities were not confined to the psalmist. They are such as have been felt by good men in all ages.*²⁵ You've heard variations of these questions for years: *Why did God let this happen to me? Or, How can God allow all the suffering in the world? How can God allow all the evil in the world?* These are questions that you may have asked yourself. This is what the psalmist is asking. He is stating the observable facts

²³ Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 256.

²⁴ Actually, Eliphaz has seemed to have missed Job's point altogether.

²⁵ Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 256.

and then asking, *Is God really aware of these things?* Barnes: *Are we not driven to the conclusion that He must be ignorant of them? For, if He knew them, would He not interpose to prevent them? How can it be consistent with the ideas that He knows them, and sees them, that He does not interpose, and that He suffers those things to take place without any attempt to check such evils?*²⁶

Without raising a question as to the existence of God, the vil men in question, question His knowledge of events here on this earth; and if not his knowledge, the question His involvement. *Does God really know about any of this?*, loosely translates to, *Does God really care about any of this?* A God Who does not care, a God Who is not involved, is really not any better than a God Who does not exist.

To sum up Psalm 73:9–11:

- These evil men have power which seems to come from heaven.
- Their power extends to this earth.
- They have caused God's people to turn away from God to them.
- They have caused the blessings of God to flow away from the people of God.
- In pulling Israel away from God, they question, "Does God know about what is occurring here on this earth? Does He care?"
- Asaph's implies concern is for Israel, as well as for himself; he is a man in a high position in Israel.

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Although, a good many of our founding fathers were believers in Christ Jesus, many were deists. They believed that God created this world and then picked up and walked off, for whatever reason. He set things in motion, and then left His creation. This is their explanation to these questions. God is no longer on the scene. There was a philosophical-religious movement which was famous years ago, which had the slogan, "God is dead." Such a philosophy is borne out of observing evil triumph and good go unrewarded. I have personally suffered at the hands of some wicked men (and women); and I fully realize that, if they have not believed in Jesus Christ, that they may not suffer retribution for what they have done in this life (God does avenge His own, but we are not guaranteed that will occur in our lifetime; nor are we guaranteed that we can watch).

Behold, these wicked [ones] and easy [and tranquil lives] of long duration; they increase [in] riches.

Psalm
73:12

Observe, these corrupt men at ease [for] a long time; they flourish [in ill-gotten] riches.

Observe these men who live long and quiet tranquil lives; they continue to flourish in their ill-gotten gains.

Our problem with this verse will not be so much in the translation as to where will be break from line one to line two. Even then the translation and interpretation will be relatively easy. First, the other translations:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Lo! these are the lawless [or, <i>such are the lawless</i>], Who are secure for an age [or, <i>for a lifetime</i>], They have attained unto wealth.
JPS (Tanakh)	Such are the wicked; ever tranquil, they amass wealth.
Keil and Delitzsch	Behold those are godless, And always reckless have they attained to great power!
NASB	Behold, these are the wicked; And always at ease, they have increased <i>in</i> wealth.
NEB	So wicked men talk, yet still they prosper, and rogues [prob. rdg., Heb., <i>those at ease for ever</i>] amass great wealth.
The Septuagint	Behold, these <i>are</i> the sinners, and they that prosper always: they have possessed wealth.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Lo, these <i>are</i> the wicked and easy ones of the age, They have increased strength.

²⁶ Barnes' Notes; *Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 256.

You will note that my three favorite translations all disagree as to where the break should be. Rotherham give this verse three lines, thus avoiding the problem altogether. Young does what I first thought to do; rather than break at the wâw conjunction (which is the most common way to approach any verse in poetry); he breaks after the next set of nouns, taking wâw as a continuance of the first line. NASB breaks this where we would most commonly insert a break—at the wâw. The interpretation is not changed radically, regardless of the approach that you take.

We begin with the demonstrative particle hinnêh (הִנֵּה) [pronounced *hin-NAY*], which means *lo, behold, or more freely, observe, look here, look, listen, pay attention, get this, check this out, holy crap*. Strong's #2009 (and #518, 2006) BDB #243. Then we have the plural demonstrative adjective *these*. Strong's #428 BDB #41. This is followed by the adjective found so often in Job 21—râshâ' (רָשָׁע) [pronounced *raw-SHAWG*], which means *malevolent, lawless, corrupt, criminal*. Here, it functions like a noun. Strong's #7563 BDB #957. We begin with: **Look, these corrupt men!** Not exactly a complete thought, which is why I would not yet separate this into its own line.

We then have the wâw conjunction and the masculine plural adjective construct of shâlêv (שָׁלוֹם) [pronounced *shaw-LAYV*], which means *safe, secure, living in tranquility and security, quiet, at ease*. Strong's #7961 BDB #1017. The noun that it is affixed to is the masculine singular noun 'ôwlâm (עוֹלָם) [pronounced *ô-LAWM*], a word indicating *long duration, perpetuity, antiquity, futurity*. Strong's #5769 (& #5865) BDB #761. This gives us: **Observe, these corrupt men and easy [and tranquil lives] of long duration.** We might loosen things up a bit with: **Look at these—corrupt men who live quiet, tranquil lives for a long period of time.** Asaph calls one's attention to these same men of whom Job spoke in Job 21.

Now we go to what should be noticed or observed. We have the 3rd person plural, Hiphil perfect of sâgâh (נָצַח) [pronounced *saw-GAW*], which means *to flourish, to multiply, to increase, to grow*. Strong's #7685 BDB #960. This is followed by the masculine singular noun, pausal form of chayil (חַיִל) [pronounced *CHAH-yil*]. It means *efficiency, army, strength, valour, power, might*; as well as that which is gotten through strength—i.e., *wealth, substance*. It is the perfect word to use, because these men have not acquired this wealth through solid business practices, but through deception, lying, questionable ethical practices, etc. Chayil is used here as a metonymy²⁷ for *wealth*, but wealth which is gotten through force. Strong's #2428 BDB #298. **They flourish [in ill-gotten] wealth.**

Asaph focuses the reader's attention on exactly the same group of men that Job was speaking of. There are these men who are prosperous in this life. They make so much money that we cannot even imagine. What we see of their lives is a life of ease with few real problems. They don't sweat getting up enough cash to pay for a traffic ticket; they are not concerned about having enough money to send their children to college. Whatever problem is seemingly solved by money is not in reality a problem to them. Asaph calls our attention to this same class of men. **His ways prosper at all times. He says to himself, "I will not be moved."** (Psalm 10:5a, 6a). **Why do the lawless [continue to] live? They advance [in years]; moreover, they have strengthened [themselves] in power. They complete their days in prosperity** (Job 21:7, 13a). Barnes: *These were men whose character for wickedness was well known, and yet they were permitted to live in peace and prosperity, as if they were the favourites of heaven...They know no changes; they see no reverses; they are the same through life. They are always tranquil, calm, happy, successful.*²⁸

**Certainly, [in] vanity I have kept clean my mind
and so I washed in innocence my hands,** Psalm
73:13

**No doubt [in] vain I kept my mind clean,
and then in innocence, I kept washing my
hands,...**

**Certainly, in vain I have kept my heart clean,
and I continued washing my hands in innocence,...**

In this verse, as Asaph did in the beginning, he begins to talk about himself again. First what others have done:

²⁷ A metonymy [pronounced *me-TON-i-mee*] is the exchange of one noun for a related noun.

²⁸ Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 257.

God's Word™	I've received no reward for keeping my life pure and washing my hands of any blame.
JPS (Tanakh)	It was for nothing that I kept my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence,...
NASB	Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure [or, <i>cleansed my heart</i>], And washed my hands in innocence.
The Septuagint	And I said, "Verily in vain I have I justified my heart, and washed my hands in innocence."
Young's Literal Translation	Only—a vain thing! I have purified my heart, And I wash in innocency my hands,...

This verse is part one of a two verse thought; vv. 13–14 should not have been separated, except that there are two lines, and the scribes pretty much kept to two lines per verse. We begin with the adverb *ʾak*^e (אָךְ) [pronounced *ahk*^e], and it means *surely, certainly, no doubt, only, only this once*. Strong's #389 BDB #36. This is followed by the masculine singular noun (used as an adverb, according to Owen) of *rîyq* (רִיַּץ) [pronounced *reek*], which means *emptiness, vanity*. Strong's #7385 BDB #938. Then we have the 1st person, Piel perfect of *zâkâh* (זָכַחַ) [pronounced *zaw-KAW*], which means *to be clear, to be clean, to be pure*. In the Piel, it means *to make pure, to make clean, to keep pure*. Strong's #2135 BDB #268. This is followed by the masculine singular noun *lê^bva^bv* (לֵבָב) [pronounced *lay^b-V^bAHV*], which means *mind, thinking, inner man, heart* (although this is not the principle word for *heart* in the Hebrew). Strong's #3824 BDB #523. This gives us: *Certainly [in] vain, I have kept my mind clean*. Asaph has not told us why he is saying this (that will be v. 14), but, by the gist of what he has said so far, we can no doubt determine why he says this—the rich infidel is successful and has a relatively stressless life (at least with respect to having enough money to do what they need to do); and here Asaph has kept his own thinking clean, he has avoided mental attitude sins; but he has not reaped the same rewards as the prosperous infidel of which he speaks. Job asks, "Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what do we gain if we appeal to Him?" (Job 21:15).

Barnes: *There is no advantage in all my efforts to become pure and holy. It does not assist me in obtaining the favour of God; and it would be just as well to live a sinful life,—to indulge in the pleasures of sense,—to make the world my portion. Nothing is to be gained by all my painful efforts at self-discipline; by all my endeavours to become righteous. It would have been as well for me—or better—if I had lived a life of sin like other men.*²⁹ Asaph observes that there appears to be no overt reason for serving God. His obedience to God appears to him to be in vain.

The second line begins with the *wâw* consecutive and the 1st person, Qal imperfect of *râchats* (רָחַץ) [pronounced *raw-KAHTS*], which means *to wash, to bathe, to wash off*. Strong's #7364 BDB #934. With this is the *bêyth* preposition and the masculine singular noun *niqqâyôwn* (נִקְיָיוֹן) [pronounced *nik-kaw-YOHN*], which means *innocence, innocency*. Strong's #5356 BDB #667. Then we have *my hands*, giving us: *and so I wash my hands in innocence*. One of the things taught throughout Scripture is that we are first saved and then we fall out of fellowship and get ourselves back into fellowship. The first act is complete and total and irrevocable. The second act is a continual process of falling out of fellowship and getting back in. This is exactly what we have here. Asaph *getting his thinking clean* is in the perfect tense, which is a completed action. He was saved. *Washing his hands* is in the imperfect tense, indicating an incomplete or ongoing action. Asaph continued to get back into fellowship when he fell out of fellowship.³⁰ "If I am determined to be wicked, why should I toil in vain? If I should wash myself with snow and cleanse my hands with soap, still You would plunge me into the pit." (Job 9:29–31a).

If you recall, this was one of the points made by Satan before God. However, he turned it around. Satan went to God, and God held up Job as an example of righteousness and dedication. Satan agreed that, sure, Job follows you—but he is well-rewarded for that. Take everything away from him and then watch him curse You. And so God did—He did take away all that Job had. Further, he allowed Satan to attack Job's physical body in any way that would be just short of death. Job remained faithful to God, although he certainly questioned what God had done to him (or, what God had allowed to be done to him). There are certain earthly benefits which can be reaped by believing in Christ—particularly if it turns you away from being an unbridled hedonist. However, we do not believe in Christ in order to achieve some level of wealth or prosperity. We cannot expect to go from the life of an infidel,

²⁹ Barnes' Notes; *Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 257.

³⁰ This is, of course, by naming your sins to God, and keeping short accounts.

to being a believer, to great material prosperity. Asaph tells us here that it is not going to happen that way. Once you become a believer, you no longer get to *fly under the radar*. Satan and his minions, prior to your conversion, may have ignored you. God did not discipline you. As an unbeliever, you participated less in the angelic conflict. When you believe in Jesus Christ, you are suddenly thrown into the middle of something which is millenniums old. There is a struggle between true good and true evil, and you will find yourself thrown in the midst of it. Satanic forces no longer ignore you; you are not exempt from God's discipline; and, further, there is no certain prosperity that will befall you.

**and so I am been stricken all the day
and my reproof to the mornings.**

Psalm
73:14

**for I have been stricken down all day [long]
and my chastening [continues] [every]
morning.**

**seeing as how I am stricken down continually
and my chastening comes every morning.**

Let's first see what others have done:

CEV <i>The Emphasized Bible</i> God's Word™	I am sick all day, and I am punished each morning. And yet been smitten all the day, And been rebuked morning by morning! I'm plagued [with problems] all day long, and every morning my punishment [begins again].
JPS (Tanakh)	...seeing that I have been constantly afflicted, that each morning brings new punishments.
Keil and Delitzsch (revised)	And yet was plagued all the day long, and my chastisement was present every morning.”.
NASB The Septuagint <i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	For I have been stricken all day long, And chastened every morning. For I was plagued all the day, and my reproof was every morning. And I am plagued all the day, And my reproof is every morning.

We begin with *and so I am* followed by the Qal passive participle of *nâga* (נָגַח) [pronounced *naw-GAHG*], which means *to touch, to reach out and touch*. This verb is very similar to another verb which means *to strike down, to kill*; this verb is not quite as strong, but there is a potential for harm indicated. Whereas the similar verb generally means *to strike someone down so that they die*; this can mean to simply *strike someone down*. Strong's #5060 BDB #619. This is followed by *all the day*, which has been taken idiomatically to stand for our English *all day long*. The figure of speech here is called a *synchodoche* [pronounced *sin-EK-doh-kee*]. It is where one idea is meant, but a different idea is used. It is similar to a metonymy, wherein one noun is used, when another similar noun is meant. Here, the exchange is between ideas. *All the day* simply means *continually*.³¹ This gives us: **And so I have been stricken down all the day long**. Bear in mind that this was connected to the previous verse, where Asaph wonders aloud whether he should have kept himself clean seeing that here, he is stricken down all day long. Most of the book of Job deals with this theme. Job was physically beat down almost to death, and he had all of his possessions taken from him. Satan's claim was that Job was faithful to God only because God financially rewarded him for his faithfulness. So Job, just like Asaph, had been stricken down all day long. Of course, you will recall that Job's pain is much worse than we can imagine.

In the second line, Asaph continues with the same thought. We have the *wâw* conjunction followed by the feminine singular noun *tôkachath* (תּוֹכַחַת) [pronounced *toh-KAH-khath*], which means *reasoning, argument, reproof, chastening*. Strong's #8433 BDB #407. This is affixed to a 1st person suffix. Then we have the *lâmed* preposition, the definite article and the masculine plural noun *bôqer* (בֹּקֶר) [pronounced *BOH-ker*], which means *morning*. Strong's #1242 BDB #133. This gives us: **And my reproof [or, chastening] [is] to the mornings**. As you have seen, most translators took the last couple words to mean *every morning*.

³¹ From *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; pp 613, 655.

There was obviously something occurring in Asaph's life at this time that we are not aware of, but my guess is some sort of illness that brought with it acute pain. He has believed in Jehovah God of Israel, he confesses his sins; and yet, it is though God continues to chasten him with this painful illness. When observing that there are others who glide through this life in a state of anti-God, and who have life much easier than he, he is upset.

In previous verses, I have spoken of the discipline of God, which is available to the believer but not to the unbeliever. This is found throughout Scripture: [Jehovah has disciplined me severely, but He has not given me over to death](#) (Psalm 118:18). Barnes wrote, speaking from the standpoint of Asaph: *So different is my lot from the lot of wicked men, who know nothing of this, and who are always prospered and happy.*³²

Keil and Delitzsch conclude these last two verses with: *How can God be said to be the omniscient Ruler of the world?—the ungodly in their carnal security become very powerful and mighty, but piety, very far from being rewarded, is joined with nothing but misfortune. My striving after sanctity,...my abstinence from all moral pollution...says he who has been led astray, has been absolutely in vain.*³³

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Asaph Comes to Understand this Through Being Taught Scripture

**If I had said, "I will recount as them";
Behold, a generation of Your sons, I have
been deceitful [to].**

Psalm
73:15

**If I had said, "Let me recount as they [do]";
then, I will have been deceitful [toward] a
generation of Your sons.**

**If I had expressed the viewpoint of the rich infidels,
then I would have been treating a generation of Your sons deceitfully.**

I've got to admit that on first read (which is Owen's translation), I am rather nonplused by this verse. So we leave comfort of easily translated and easily understood verses for v. 15. Here is what others have done with it:

Complete Jewish Bible <i>The Emphasized Bible</i> JPS (Tanakh)	If I had said, "I will talk like them," I would have betrayed a generation of your children. <If I had thought I will relate it thus> Lo! <the circle of the sons> Had I betrayed. ³⁴ Had I decided to say these things, I should have been false to the circle of Your disciples.
Keil and Delitzsch (revised)	Had I thought: I will speak thus, Behold, I should have dealt faithlessly with the generation of Thy children.
NASB	If I had said, "I will speak thus"; Behold, I should have betrayed the generation of Thy children.
NEB	Yet had I let myself talk on in this fashion, I should have betrayed the family of God [<i>the family of God; lit., thy family</i>].
NLT	If I had really spoken this way, I would have been a traitor to your people.
Owen's Translation	I had said, "I will speak thus"; behold, the generation of thy children—I would have been untrue.
The Septuagint	If I said, I will speak thus; behold, I have broken covenant with the generation of Your children.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	If I had said, 'I recount thus,' Lo, a generation of Thy sons I have deceived.

³² *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 257.

³³ Keil & Delitzsch's *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 5, p. 490.

³⁴ Rotherham tells us that this verse is untranslatable. Gesenius suggests that a *hēnnah* had been dropped out before the *hinnēh*, which would insert in that space (I assume?) above *the like of these things*. *Hinnēh*, by the way, is the *behold* in the second line.

This verse begins with *If I had said* followed by the 1st person, Piel imperfect (with a voluntative hê) of çâphar (פָּרַר) [pronounced *saw-FAHR*], which means, in the Piel, *to recount, to enumerate, to tell with praise, to celebrate, to recall, to declare, to narrate*. *Recount* is a good Piel rendering, as it means *to tell or declare something from memory, to declare the facts or particulars of, to tell in a specific order*. Strong's #5608 BDB #707. Then we have the kaph preposition (*as, like*) with a masculine plural suffix. Very literally, we have: **If I had said, "Let me recount as they."** Now, some take the last word as k^emô (מֹכֵם) [pronounced *k^emoh*] to mean *as, like* (the same as the kaph preposition) with the 3rd person masculine plural suffix; and others interpret this as a demonstrative adverb of quality, and be translated *thus, so*. Strong's #3644 BDB #455. There is really no way to distinguish between the two. This would give us: **If I had said, "Let me recount thus."** Given the fact that Asaph has recently quoted the verbiage of the infidel ("How does God know? Does the Most High have any knowledge of this?"); the interpretation *as they* seems most apt.

This thought continues in the next line with the demonstrative particle hinnêh (הִנֵּה) [pronounced *hin-NAY*] means *lo, behold, observe, look here, look, listen*. Strong's #2009 (and #518, 2006) BDB #243. This is a continuation of the thought above, where Asaph essentially is telling us what would happen if he chose to think about things as do these rich infidels. We then have the masculine singular construct of dôwr (דֹּוֹר) [pronounced *dohr*], which means *generation, age*. Strong's #1755 BDB #189. This is followed by *your sons*. The 1st person singular refers to Asaph; the 3rd person masculine plural speaks of the rich and successful infidels; and the 2nd person masculine singular refers to God. The final verb in this verse is the 1st person, Qal perfect pausal form of bâgad (בָּגַדְתִּי) [pronounced *baw-GAHD*], which means *to behave deceitfully, to act covertly, to act fraudulently, to act in bad faith, to behave faithlessly; to oppress, to afflict*. Strong's #898 BDB #93. This gives us: **Behold, I have behaved deceitfully [toward] a generation of Your sons**. The interpretation is, *If I choose to take the stand of these infidels, then I betray a generation of Your sons*. What is more important than self-interest is truth. Asaph stood for the truth and he was in a position as the writer of psalms and music to express the truth. He could have chosen to be a deist, particularly if it turned out to be in his best interest, but then he would have been deceiving a generation of God's sons.

**And so I would think to understand this,
a labor she in my eyes.**

Psalm
73:16

**And I would meditate upon this, to understand
[it];
[but] it [was] a tremendous labor in my sight.**

**And I thought and thought about this injustice,
but such thinking became a tremendous amount of work in my opinion.**

The general idea of this verse is fairly simple: Asaph thinks in great depth about these things and mentally, it was laborious. Let's see what others have done with this verse first:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	<When I reasoned that I might understand this> a vexation it was in mine eyes.
JPS (Tanakh)	So I applied myself to understand this, but it seemed a hopeless task.
Keil and Delitzsch (revised)	Yet when I mused in order to solve the riddle, It was too difficult in my eyes—
NASB	When I pondered to understand this, It was troublesome [lit., labor] in my sight..
The Septuagint	And I undertook to understand this, but it is too hard for me,...
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	And I think to know this, Perverseness it is in mine eyes.

We begin this verse with the wâw consecutive followed by the 1st person singular, Piel imperfect (with the voluntative hê) of châsha^{bv} (חָשַׁבְתִּי) [pronounced *khaw-SHAHBV*], which means *to think, to regard, to account, to count, to determine, to calculate*. In the Piel, it means *to compute, to reckon, to consider, to think about, to mediate upon*. Strong's #2803 BDB #362. This is followed by the lâmed prefixed preposition and the Qal infinitive construct of yâda^c (יָדַעְתִּי) [pronounced *yaw-DAHĠ*], which means *to know*. Strong's #3045 BDB #393. Then we have the feminine singular, demonstrative adjective *this*. This gives us: **And I would meditate upon this to understand [it],...** So Asaph thinks about these inequities in life and how removed they are from true spirituality.

In the second line, we have the masculine singular noun 'âmâl (עֲמַל) [pronounced *aw-MAWL*], which means *intense labor, exhausting toil, exhaustion*. Strong's #5999 (and #5998) BDB #765. Then we have the feminine

singular personal pronoun *hîy'* (הִיא)³⁵ [pronounced *hee*], which means *she, it*. Often, the verb *to be* can be implied by its use. Strong's #1931 BDB #214. This is followed by *in my [two] eyes*, giving us: *it [was] an intense labor in my eyes*. So Asaph gave a lot of thought to these inequities, and determined that it was too much of a mental gyration to completely understand it. When the phrase *in my eyes* is used, it means *in my opinion, to my way of thinking, as I see it*. *When I gave my heart to know wisdom and to see the task which has been done on the earth...and I saw every work of God, I concluded that man cannot discover the work which has been done under the sun. Even if man should seek this laboriously, he will not discover; and though the wise man should say, "I know," he cannot discover it* (Eccles. 8:16a, 17). Barnes: *[Asaph] thought on the subject, or meditated on it with a view to be able to understand it. He did not express his opinions and feelings to others, but he dwelt on them in his own mind...it was...that the question was a burden.*³⁶ Asaph concentrated on the fact that there did not seem to be additional blessings toward those who have believe in Christ, and it was difficult for him to come up with a solution to that.

J. Vernon McGee relates a story which caused him to ponder exactly these same questions. His firstborn was a daughter, who died in the hospital. *I only heard the cry of that little one. All she ever did in her life was cry. I shall never forget the day she died. Across the hall from where my wife was, there was a very wealthy couple who had a baby boy, and their rich friends came to celebrate with them. As I drove into the parking lot in my old beat-up Chevrolet, they all drove up in Cadillacs. They went into the hospital with their champagne and celebrated the birth of the little boy...They have money, and, boy, they lived it up! I have seen write-ups about them, and they have been in trouble several times...It was summertime, and I went out on a balcony that was there and cried out to God.*³⁷

**until I entered into sanctuaries of God;
I perceived to their end.**

Psalm
73:17

**until I went into the sanctuaries of God
[then] I understood their latter end.**

**until I went into the sanctuaries of God,
I then understood what their end would be.**

The psalmist is quite concerned about the lack of justice on this earth, and he is having trouble understanding why...until he goes into the sanctuary of God. First, what others have done:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Until I could enter the holy places of God,— Could give heed to their hereafter [or, future]: — ³⁸
God's Word™	Only when I came into God's holy place did I [finally] understand what would happen to them.
JPS (Tanakh)	...till I entered God's sanctuary and reflected on their fate.
NASB	Until I came unto the sanctuary of God; <i>Then</i> I perceived their end.
The Septuagint	...until I go into the sanctuary of God; <i>and so</i> understand the latter end.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Till I come in to the sanctuaries of God, I attend to their latter end.

This verse is a continuation of the previous one. He has been thinking and thinking about the successful infidels, and then we have the adverb *'ad* (עד) [pronounced *gahd*] which means *as far as, even to, up to, until*. Strong's #5704 BDB #723. Then we have the very common ver, the 1st person singular, Qal imperfect of *to go* followed by the preposition *into* (or, *unto*) and the masculine plural construct of *mîq^eddâsh* (מִקְדָּשׁ) [pronounced *mik-DAWSH*], which means *sanctuary, sacred place*. This is consistently rendered *sanctuary* in the KJV from Exodus to II Chronicles. Strong's #4720 BDB #874. The plural indicates that there was more than the Temple of Solomon (or, the Tabernacle of God) during the history of Israel. More importantly, this indicates that Asaph entered into these different sanctuaries on several occasions. He has been troubled by his thoughts in this psalm and what

³⁵ Actually, it is slightly different in Owen's, which I attribute to a typo.

³⁶ *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 258.

³⁷ J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Chapters 42–89*, ©1991 by J. Vernon McGee; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; p. 134.

³⁸ Is *I* the subject of the second sentence in Rotherham's translation?

he has observed, and now, after receiving teaching on several different occasions, understands. This is affixed to the noun *God* (לֵאלֹהִים). This gives us: [...until I entered into sanctuaries of God.](#)

There are several weirdo interpretations of this *sanctuary*, but Asaph simply received teaching on this matter in a place of God. This is not necessarily the Temple (which replaced the Tabernacle), but it can be anywhere where God's Word is taught.³⁹ It is not unusual to have a problem or a concern, and then to go to Bible class and have this cleared up by a passage of Scripture. I recall early on in my teaching career of struggling to determine whether I should remain where I was at particular school or move to where there might be less strife and difficulty. During the several weeks when I was pondering this decision, my pastor spoke to this matter directly. I do not recall his exact words; I simply recall that it was a Sunday. But, the gist of one of his points was that, you do not leave a job simply because there are problems. If God put you somewhere, that's where you stay. If God moves you, then you move. I believed that God led me to my job in the first place, although it was my third choice for a location (out of three choices) and it was my second choice of schools (the first didn't offer me a job). Furthermore, I did not believe God was calling on me to move from there. In retrospect, I believe that God guided my on both points: to that original location in the first place; and then to remain there in the second (I was there for 23 years). Now, I realize that my illustration was more on divine guidance, and Asaph's question was a doctrinal one. But the idea is the same. My guidance came from the teaching of God's Word; Asaph's problem with the lack of justice in the world was cleared up by the teaching of God's Word. This is your means of guidance, the way you understand the world in which you live, the stability of your soul, and your primary means of growth. Bible doctrine should be your life. Every believer requires Bible doctrine once a day.⁴⁰

In the second line, we have the 1st person singular, Qal imperfect (plus a voluntative hê) of *bîyn* (בִּיַן) [pronounced *bean*], which means *to discern, to perceive, to consider, to understand, to reconsider, to think something over carefully*. Strong's #995 BDB #106. This is followed by the lamed preposition and the feminine singular noun *ʿachărîyth* (אַחֲרַיִת) [pronounced *ahkh-ar-EETH*], which means *after-part, end, latter*. Strong's #319 BDB #31. This is affixed to a masculine plural suffix, giving us, quite literally: [I understand to their end](#). Several passages speak to the end of the unbeliever: [But the transgressors will be altogether destroyed. The posterity of the wicked will be cut off](#) (Psalm 37:38). [But, You, O God, will bring them down to the lowest pit; men of bloodshed and deceit will not live out half their days. However, I will trust in You](#) (Psalm 55:23). [The hope of the godless will perish](#) (Job 8:13b). [They are the enemies of the cross, whose end is destruction, whose god is appetite, and glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things](#) (Philip. 3:17b–18).

By entering into the sanctuaries of God, Asaph received some Biblical instruction, and he understood, after that instruction, as to what would happen to these men eventually. There is no pain or heartache on this earth which is vaguely comparable to eternity in the Lake of Fire. So, if you find yourself angry at some unbeliever, just point to him and say, "Lake of Fire for you, dude!" With all the resources of this earth, they could never make your life as miserable as their eternity will be. In subsequent verses, Asaph will go into more detail concerning the end of these infidels.

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³⁹ During the time of our Lord, of course, there were several synagogues, and both He, and later His disciples, taught in them. However, we do not know when the first synagogue was built. It appears to have occurred outside of Palestine during the dispersion of Judah. The Israelites still needed a place to gather and to worship God, and, since they were no longer in Jerusalem, they did so where they were. We can speculate as to their origins in Old Testament times; however, they appear to definitely have existed in the intertestamental period. We will cover this in much greater detail in the future and it is discussed in no little detail in *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 5, pp. 555–556.

⁴⁰ I should mention that Barnes puts a different spin on this psalm. Since *sanctuaries* is in the plural, he believes this to refer to *holy places*, and that Asaph is merely referring to times in which he reflected upon God and His character in personal study and reflection. *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 258–259. The idea is the same, except that Barnes seems to indicate that Asaph came up with this on his own. While not completely discounting Barnes' approach, I believe that we are referring here to the establishment of the various synagogues.

The Wicked to Have a Terrible End, of Which We Should Be Mindful

<p>Certainly in slippery places You place to them You cause to bring them down to ruins.</p>	<p>Psalm 73:18</p>	<p>Certainly, You set them in smooth [and slippery] places; You will cause them to be brought down to desolation.</p>
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**Obviously, You have placed them in precarious and slippery places
and You will cause them to be brought down into ruin and desolation.**

Let's see how others have rendered this:

<p>JPS (Tanakh) NASB</p>	<p>You surround them with flattery, You make them fall through blandishments. Surely Thou dost set them in slippery places; Thou dost cast them down to destruction.</p>
<p>The Septuagint</p>	<p>Surely You have appointed [judgements] to them because of their crafty dealings; You have cast them down when they were lifted up.</p>
<p><i>Young's Literal Translation</i></p>	<p>Only, in slippery places Thou dost set them, Thou hast caused them to fall to desolations.</p>

We begin this verse with `ak^{e} again; `Ak^{e} (אָכ) [pronounced *ahk*⁹] means *surely, certainly, no doubt, only, only this once*. Strong's #389 BDB #36. We have the *bêyth* preposition followed by the feminine plural noun *chel^oqâh* (חֶלְיָן) [pronounced *khe^o-KAW*], which means *smooth, slippery places; smooth part, smoothness, flattery*. Strong's #2513 BDB #325. This is followed by *You place* (or, *set*), which is followed by the untranslated *lâmed* preposition affixed to them masculine plural pronoun. Literally, we have: **Certainly, in smooth [and slippery] places you set to them**. Less word-for-word, we have: **Certainly, you place them in smooth [and slippery] places**. God has placed them in a precarious place—they may not recognize this; however, God knows and Asaph knows that their place of power and riches is a smooth and slippery place (it is plural in this verse to go with the plural object). One false move and they could tumble from grace. We find a parallel passage in Psalm 35:4–6: **Let those be ashamed and dishonored who seek my life; let those be turned back and humiliated who devise evil against me. Let them be like chaff before the wind. With the angel of Jehovah driving them on. Let their way be dark and slippery with the angel of Jehovah pursuing them.** And Deut. 32:35: **Vengeance is Mine, and retribution. In due time, their foot will slip, for the day of their calamity is near.**

Barnes: *[They are] not in a solid and permanent position; not where their foothold would be secure, but as on smooth and slippery rocks, where they would be liable any moment to fall into the foaming billows. However prosperous their condition may seem to be now, yet it is a condition of uncertainty and danger, from which they must soon fall into ruin. In their prosperity, there is nothing of permanence or stability.*⁴¹

The second line is only two words (plus a prefixed preposition). We begin with the 2nd person masculine singular, Hiphil perfect (with a 3rd person masculine plural suffix) of *nâphal* (נָפַל) [pronounced *naw-FAHL*], which means *to fall, to lie, to die a violent death, to be brought down, to settle, to sleep deeply*. In the Hiphil, this means *to cause to fall, to cause to be brought down*. Strong's #5307 BDB #656. We then have the *lâmed* preposition affixed to the feminine plural noun *m^oshôw^oâh* (מֹשׁוֹאָה) [pronounced *m^o-show-AW*], *ruin, desolation*. Job 30:3 38:27 Psalm 73:18 74:3 Zeph. 1:15.* Strong's assigns it a different number in the plural (#4876). BDB claims that there is a slight spelling error (the difference between the plural for this word and the word that we find in this context is a tiny dot inside the *shîyn*, which doubles the *sh* sound). The corresponding meaning for this word is *deceptions*, which is not apropos for either passage found in the psalms (the only two passages in question). Two other explanations: (1) That this was simply the spelling that the word acquired, and that it falls outside the normal Hebrew words for the spelling of the plural. (2) This is a slightly different word, correctly spelled in the psalms, and essentially meaning the same thing (meaning the BDB assigned and then rejected meaning is bogus from the get-go). Strong's #4875 BDB #996. These two words together mean: **You will cause to bring them down to desolation.**

⁴¹ *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 259.*

We continue with our parallel passage, Psalm 35:8: **Let destruction come upon him unawares; and let the net which he hid catch himself into that very destruction, let him fall.**

The idea is that they have not earned their place of prosperity, so to them, it is a slippery and precarious place. God will, in the end, bring them down into desolation and ruin, which does not refer to a point in time, but in eternity when they spend eternity in hell. You recall how Job appeared to actually discover the doctrine of eternal judgment; Asaph apparently learned that doctrine in church (v. 17).⁴²

Barnes: *They are placed, not in a permanent condition, but in a condition from which they will be cast down to destruction. Ruin is before them; and the end will demonstrate the justice of God. Nothing can be determined from their present condition as to the question which caused so much perplexity, but in order to a proper solution, we must wait to see the end.*⁴³

How they have been for destruction in a moment; they have ceased; they have finished out from terrors.	Psalm 73:19	How they have been [set up] for destruction in [just] a moment; they have come to an end; they have finished out from terrors.
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**They have been set up for destruction to occur suddenly;
they have come to their end, and their end is terror.**

Let's first see what others have done with this verse:

JPS (Tanakh)	How suddenly are they ruined, wholly swept away by terrors.
NASB	How they are destroyed in a moment! They are utterly swept away by sudden terrors!
The Septuagint	How have they become desolate! Suddenly they have failed; they have perished because of their iniquity.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	How have they become a desolation as in a moment, They have been ended—consumed from terrors.

We begin this verse with *ʿêyk* (עֵיךְ) [pronounced *ayche*], which means *how*. It can be used as an interrogative or as an exclamation. Strong's #349 BDB #32. Then we have the 3rd person plural, Qal perfect of *to be*, followed by the lamed preposition and the feminine singular noun *shammâh* (שָׁמָּה) [pronounced *shahm-MAWH*], which means *waste, devastation, horror*. Strong's #8047 BDB #1031. Then we have the *bêyth* preposition followed by the masculine singular noun *regaʿ* (רֵגַע) [pronounced *REH-gahg*], which means *moment*. Strong's #7281 BDB #921. We saw this used in Job 21:13: **They spend their days in prosperity and in a moment they go down to Sheol.** Here, the final translation would be: **How they have been for devastation in a moment!** Asaph simply describes how they are set up in this life. They are satiated in life, only to be on the precipice; a push and they find themselves falling into hell. Do not misinterpret this verse. It does not mean that their destruction and devastation will last for a moment. It means that it will come upon them in a moment. They will go from their successful life here on earth and suddenly, in a moment, find themselves under the wrath of God. **Their calamity will come upon them suddenly** (Prov. 24:22a). **But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up** (II Peter 3:10).

Now man—even the unbeliever—will complain to God, “You should not have made me this successful. You should have beat me until I came to You.” would be his one response. However, had he not been successful, but had God beat him down, he would have complained about that to God as well. So, God provides some infidels with great success and others with pain. During the time that I write this, the youth of this country have tremendous material blessings beyond what any prince of 200 years ago or more enjoyed. Their homes, their educational system, their

⁴² Yes, I know there were no *churches* in the Old Testament.

⁴³ *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 259.

possessions—no young prince could have imagined such incredible material blessings. Yet, a huge number of our youth enjoy these tremendous blessings. Are they thankful? Do they thank God for their blessings? Are they even happy with these blessings? For most kids, it is a resounding *no* to each of those questions.

In the second line, we have the 3rd person plural, Qal perfect of *çûwph* (ç̣wph) [pronounced *soof*], which means *to come to an end, to cease*. Strong's #5486 BDB #692. Then we have the 3rd person plural, Qal perfect of *tâmam* (tâmam) [pronounced *taw-MAHM*] means *to completely use up, to complete, to finish, to consume, to exhaust, to accomplish, to spend, to be (spiritually) mature*. The meanings are all related, but it is difficult to come up with a word which can be used consistently. Obviously, this is a word which can be used in a positive or negative sense, depending upon the context. In this context, the sense is negative. Strong's #8552 BDB #1070. Then we have the *mîn* preposition followed by the feminine plural noun *ballâhâh* (bâlahâh) [pronounced *bahl-law-HAW*], which means *terror, dreadful event, calamity, destruction*. Strong's #1091 BDB #117. This gives us: **They have come to an end; they have finished out from terrors.** Throwing two verbs together like this is done for great emphasis. The indication is that this is the end of their life and what comes next holds innumerable terrors. It is by interpretation and the context of this passage that they have not come to the end of terrors (i.e., terrors are over for them) but that they have come to their end and terrors await them. Isa. 47:11; **“But evil will come on you which you will not know how to charm away; and disaster will fall on you for which you cannot atone. And destruction about which you do not know will come upon you suddenly.”**

What we have here is quite sobering, but it is something that any believer can take comfort in. If you are a believer, particularly a growing believer, you will be unjustly persecuted or unjustly treated by those who have power and authority; by those who have money and stature. You may want to lash out at these people, and, due to the unjustness of their actions, you may feel justified. God will take care of them. If not in this life, then in the next. He does not need our help to exact punishment upon a believer or unbeliever who has unfairly treated a believer. For the unbeliever, it is simple—no matter what happens to them in this life, they will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. Each moment of their eternal existence will be more painful and involve more conscious suffering than they ever put you through for your entire life. So, kick back, allow God to discipline the believer; and allow God to deal with the unbeliever as He sees fit and in His own time. If you are concerned, upset, and beside yourself because of the way an unbeliever has caused misery in your life, then go to this psalm for comfort. They will pay and God will see to it that they pay.

**As a dream from an awakening of my Lord
in an awakening their image You despise.**

Psalm
73:20

**Just as a dream from a waking up of my Lord
You despise their image in [their] awakening
[or, You despise their image upon awakening].**

**Just as it would be, waking up from a dream of my Lord,
You will despise their image when they awaken after death.**

This exact meaning and translation of this verse appears, at least upon first glance, that it will be difficult. Let's see what others have done to begin with:

CEV <i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	They will disappear, Lord, despised like a bad dream the morning after. <As the dream of him that taketh> O My Lord! <when rousing thyself up> <their shadowy being> [or, <i>semblance</i>] wilt thou despise.
God's Word™	As [someone] gets rid of a dream when he wakes up, so you, O Lord, get rid of the thought of them when you wake up.
JPS (Tanakh)	When You are aroused You despise their image, as one does a dream after waking, O Lord.
KJV (updated)	As a dream when <i>one</i> awakens; so, O Lord, when You awaken, You will despise their image.
NASB	Like a dream when one awakes, O Lord, when aroused, Thou wilt despise their form [or, <i>image</i>].
Owen's Translation The Septuagint	Like a dream when one awakes, Lord, on awaking their phantoms you despise. As the dream of one waking, O Lord, in Your city, You will despise their image.

Young's Literal Translation As a dream from waking, O Lord, In awaking, their image Thou despisest.

We begin this verse with the kaph preposition (*like, as*) followed by the masculine singular noun chālôwm (חַלּוֹם) [pronounced *khua-LOHM*], which means *dream*. Interestingly enough, this is a word which occurred 34 times in the book of Genesis (when dreams were a common way of God speaking to man) whereas this word is found but once in the book of Psalms—here (and, after the giving of the Law, it only occurs three more times in the remainder of the Law). Strong's #2472 BDB #321. Then we have the mîn preposition followed by the Hiphil infinitive construct of qîyts (קִיַּץ) [pronounced *keets*]⁴⁴, 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. This is followed by the masculine plural noun ʾâdôwn (אֲדוֹנַי) [pronounced *aw-DOHN*], the word we often know as *adonai*; and this word means *lord, master, owner, superior, sovereign*. It is a word used of both man and God; and here of God. Here, however, what you do not see in your translation, is that this word is in the plural with a first person singular suffix, making it ʾădônây (אֲדוֹנַי) [pronounced *uh-doh-NAY*]. When it comes to the plural, we can either interpret this as referring to the Trinity or as an intensification of the noun. Strong's #113 BDB #10. The construct would indicate that this should read: *Like a dream from an awakening of my Lords*; however, the other translations put this in the vocative form, giving us: *Like a dream from an awakening, my Lords...*

In the second line we have the bêyth preposition followed by the Hiphil infinitive construct of ʿûwr (עוּר) [pronounced *góor*], and it means *to rouse oneself, to awake*. The Hiphil means *to cause one to be awake, to cause one to be stirred up*. Strong's #5782 BDB #734. Then we have the masculine singular noun (with a 3rd person masculine plural suffix) tzelem (צֶלֶם) [pronounced *TSEH-lem*], which means *image*. Strong's #6754 BDB #853. The verse concludes with the main verb of the second line, the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect of bâzâh (בָּזָה) [pronounced *baw-ZAW*], which means *to despise*. The Niphal is given a different Strong's number (#5240). Strong's #959 BDB #102. *In awakening [or, in a stirring up], their image You despise.*

To 'splain what is occurring here, much like awakening from a deep, dream-drenched sleep, we awake from life to our eternal existence. It is like awakening from a dream. When the rich and successful infidel awakens, God despises their *image* (which is no longer in bodily form). The resurrection of the dead unbeliever is taught in the Old Testament as well as in the New. Now, to properly interpret this passage, we are not really speaking of the awakening of the unbeliever after, but of the *awakening* of God when judging the infidel. Now, God has not been asleep. It is not as though the unbeliever got in under the radar. The unbeliever did not commit some sins that God didn't have time to get to or just plain overlooked. This was a part of God's plan. He allowed the unbeliever to prosper. What we have here is an *anthropopathism*; God does not *wake up*. He does not hit the alarm and mutter, *Oh, hell, I wonder what happened while I was asleep*. God is ever vigilant, He is always awake, He doesn't miss anything, and He is omniscient. To the psalmist, when God chooses to judge the infidel in question, it is *as though* God suddenly woke up. This is the meaning of the first part of this verse. When God suddenly awakens, he looks upon this infidel and despises him. But note, the psalmist doesn't say that God despises the infidel, but rather *his image*.

Now, it is difficult from this verse to determine if the second *awakening* mentioned refers to God or to the resurrection of the unbeliever. There is no possessive pronoun; the verb is not in the perfect or imperfect (which would then require a number and gender), but it is in the Hiphil infinitive construct. Since an awakening is referenced in the previous line and since that awakening is that of the unbelieving infidels, it would seem that we could apply that as well to this second line. That is, that we are still speaking of the awakening after death of the unbeliever. Now, the KJV took this to refer to *God awakening*, which Zodhiates explains by saying that it only *appears* as though God is sleeping; the unbelieving infidel has led a life of unbridled sensuality mixed with material blessings, giving the impression that God is away elsewhere. However, at the end time, God will be stirred up and render what is deserved to this man.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ 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.

⁴⁵ This discussion was inspired by *The Complete Word Study Old Testament*; Dr. S. Zodhiates; ©1994 AMG Publishers; p. 1476.

Now, it is interesting that Asaph does not delve into the Lake of Fire, but simply indicates that a time of retribution will come upon the successful, but negative unbeliever here. There is no detail as to the afterlife for the reprobate, but the implication is, particularly from this verse, that it will be a conscious state. [Just as a dream from a waking up of my Lord You despise their image in \[their\] awakening \[or, You despise their image upon awakening\].](#)

As some of you realize, I am not the biggest fan of *thought-for-thought* translations, however, they do have their place. The New Living Translation advertises itself as being the Bible that you read and instantly understand what you have read. Although they sometimes sacrifice accuracy in order to make this true, it is essentially a true statement. Therefore, to help you from getting bogged down in this verse-by-verse examination, here is...

The New Living Translation of Psalm 73:15–20

If I had really spoken this way [i.e., sincerely questioning God's righteousness],
 I would have been a traitor to your people.
 So I tried to understand why the wicked prosper.
 But What a difficult task it is!
 Then one day I went into your sanctuary, O God,
 And I thought about the destiny of the wicked.
 Truly, you put them on a slippery path
 and send them sliding over the cliff to destruction.
 In an instant they are destroyed,
 swept away by terrors.
 Their present life is only a dream that is gone when they awake
 When you arise, O Lord,
 You will make them vanish from this life.

As you will note, while we did some serious word by word slugging it out, the NLT seemingly effortlessly gives us a rendering here which appears to say essentially what my interpretations have said. Asaph has not been asserting that there is a problem with God's righteousness, but he simply was trying to understand why the wicked prospered (which was a difficult task). When going into the sanctuary of God for Bible teaching, it became clear to him. The reprobate only enjoys this present life; when he awakens, all that he accumulated will be destroyed.

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God's Word Straightens out Asaph

**When leavens [itself] my mind
 and my kidneys, I sharpen.**

Psalm
 73:21

**When my mind ruminates
 then I sharpen my emotions.**

When my mind first considered this matter, then my emotions were stung.

Let's first see what others have done with this verse:

CEV	Once I was bitter and brokenhearted.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	But my heart had grown embittered [or, <i>embittered itself</i>], And <in my reins> [or, <i>inmost mind, affections</i>] had I received wounds;...
God's Word™	When my heart was filled with bitterness and my mind was seized [with envy].
JPS (Tanakh)	My mind was stripped of its reason, my feelings were numbed.
Keil and Delitzsch (revised)	If my heart should grow bitter, And I should be pricked in my reins:...
NASB	When my heart was embittered, And I was pierced within [lit., <i>in my kidneys</i>].
The Septuagint	For my heart has rejoiced, and my reins have been gladdened.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	For my heart doth show itself violent, And my reins pricked themselves.

As you might guess, this will be a tad bit more difficult than the previous verses. The translation will be fairly difficult, which will make the interpretation difficult as well. What I will end up with will be considerably different than what we have in the other translations. We begin with the conjunction *kîy* (כִּי) [pronounced *kee*], which means *when, that, for, because*. Strong's #3588 BDB #471. The verb is next, which is the 3rd person masculine singular, Hithpael imperfect of *châmêts* (חָמַץ) [pronounced *khaw-MAYTS*], which means *to leaven*. It is found this way in

Ex. 12:19–20, 34, 39 Hosea 7:4. It is also found in here, Psalm 71:4 (you couldn't even guess from your translation what word translates *châmêts*) and Isa. 63:1. Although we can't say much about the two passages in psalms, if *dyed* is the correct concept of this word in Isa. 63:1, and leavened is proper for the passages in the Law, then what we have here is a process, and a process which requires time for completion. The Hithpael is the reflexive of the Piel (which is generally the intensive stem). This is the only time this verb is found in the Hithpael stem. Strong's #2556 BDB #329. The subject of the verb is the masculine singular noun *lê^bva^bv* (לְבַבִּי) [pronounced *lay^b-V^bAHV*], which means *mind, inner man*. Strong's #3824 BDB #523. This gives us: **When my mind leavens itself...** My educated guess, given the reflexive nature of the verb and given the fact that this refers to some sort of an inner process, I would reasonably guess that this verb could mean *to ruminate*, giving us: **When my mind ruminates...** This is obviously what Asaph has been doing. He has been to Bible class and has heard expository teaching on this matter; he then wrote a psalm about it. Given the vocabulary and the subject matter, either he was taught the book of Job or he was simultaneously studying that as well.

The second line begins with the wâw conjunction, which could either continue the kîy conjunction or provide a time frame when the kîy conjunction is completed. Next we have the feminine plural noun *ki^lÿâh* (כִּילְיָאֵה) [pronounced *ki^l-YAWH*], which means *kidneys*. It is always in the plural and means *kidneys*. (See Ex. 29:13 Lev. 3:4, 10, 15). This word can generally be construed to mean *emotions*. Strong's #3629 BDB #480. We would expect this to be the subject of the verb; however, the verb is the 1st person singular, Hithpoel imperfect of *shânan* (שָׁנַן) [pronounced *shaw-NAHN*], which means *to whet, to sharpen*. Strong's #8150 BDB #1041. The Hithpoel is apparently another form of the intensive reflexive. So, Asaph is acting upon himself to sharpen or to whet his kidneys. How should you take this? Perhaps as he ruminates on these things that his emotions are sharpened—that is, his emotions were pricked or stung.

My guess for interpretation is that, the more that the more that Asaph ruminates on this matter, the more his emotions are caused to become hurt and angered. I can think of people who have purposely attacked and maligned me, and, you had better damn well bet that I would like God to deal with them, and quickly (and I would certainly like to watch). So, when I ruminate on the injustices which I have endured, my emotions are stung or pricked; and I believe that is how we should understand this verse.

This is one of the few parallels that we find between this and the Psalm 50, written by Asaph. Asaph, throughout much of this psalm, is concerned about the inaction of God. He wants to see God take His revenge out against the infidel. He is tired of seeing the infidel live successfully. In Psalm 50:21, it is God speaking, and he has observed various sins in Israel (vv. 16–20), and then he says, **“There things you have done, and I have kept silent. You thought that I was just like you. I will reprove you, and state [my case] before your eyes.”** (Psalm 50:21). There will be an eventual reckoning. There will be an settling of all accounts. So Asaph stated in this passage, as well as in the passage which follows (v. 27 specifically).

<p>And I [was] brutish and I did not know; [like] animals, I was with You.</p>	<p>Psalm 73:22</p>	<p>Furthermore, I was thoughtless and I did not know; I was like an animal [in my thinking] toward You.</p>
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**Furthermore, I was acting without thinking and without an understanding of Your plan;
I behaved like an animal in my thinking toward You.**

In this verse, Asaph catches himself. He has been ruminating on these matters; he is upset, and he realizes that his feelings actually concern God directly and that he is reproaching God's justice and righteousness, and he upbraids himself at this point. Now the various translations:

JPS (Tanakh)	I was a dolt, without knowledge, I was brutish toward You.
NASB	Then I was senseless and ignorant; I was <i>like</i> a beast before Thee.
Owen's Translation	I was stupid and I did not know; like beasts, I was toward Thee.
The Septuagint	But I [was] vile and I knew not; I became brutish before You.
Young's Literal Translation	And I am brutish, and do not know. A beast I have been with Thee.

We begin this verse with the 1st person, personal pronoun (which often implies the verb *to be*); this is followed by the masculine singular noun *bazar* (בַּזָּר) [pronounced *BAH-ǵahr*], which means *brutishness, animal-like in one's thinking, stupid, ignorant*. It is only found in poetry. Its cognates are related to animals. The idea is that the thinking of an animal is limited; it is completely self-serving; and it is over-bearing. Strong's #1198 BDB #129. This line does not end prior to the *wâw* conjunction which comes next, as the verb will be in the pausal form. What we have is the negative and then the 1st person singular, Qal imperfect of *to know*. This gives us: **I [was] brutish and I did not know**. Throughout this psalm, Asaph has made some true observations—that there are some men who are very rich and successful and yet absolutely godless. This observation has caused Asaph to question God and His judgment. Asaph here recognizes just how stupid that is. God (1) knows all the facts, and (2) is the epitome of perfect justice. Therefore, His treatment of anyone is the result of his perfect justice and omniscience. Now, if you, in your prayers, ask God to kick someone butt, for whatever reason; that is generally okay (unless your request is based upon mental attitude sins). However, if He chooses not to, then we do not need to question His judgment in this matter.

In the second line, we begin with the feminine plural noun *b^hêmâh* (בְּהֵמָה) [pronounced *b^hhay-MAW*], which means *mammal, beast, animal, cattle*. It is an onomatopoeic word, imitating the braying of a mule. Strong's #929 BDB #96. This is followed by the 1st person singular, Qal perfect of *to be* followed by the preposition *im* (עִם) [pronounced *ǵeem*], which means *with, at, by near*. Strong's #5973 BDB #767. With this preposition is the 2nd person masculine singular suffix. This gives us: **Animals, I have been with You**. We could reasonably get away with inserting *like* at the beginning of this line, giving us: **[Like] animals, I have been with You**. Another way to understand this is as we would a singular use of that noun. This would give us: **I was a beast with You**. We are simply talking about Asaph's reasoning and thinking relative to God. His thoughts all centered on himself. He was jealous of these men; they had perhaps treated him badly; and he simply wanted God to smash them, and he wanted to watch. He recognizes that his thinking is completely self-serving and does not capture the entire picture. If a dog were to reason with us why he should eat a raw piece of steak, his arguments to us would sound like our arguments to God. God knows the end from the beginning. Certainly, we will, as believers, be misunderstood, under appreciated, maligned and slandered (and there are many times when we will, to a certain degree, earn this treatment). God know what end He has planned for us. Regardless of the circumstances, we simply need to trust God with the outcomes. We do not need mental attitude sins, we do not need to question God, we do not need to sue anybody, we do not need to verbally attack or slander anyone else. In these actions, we behave like stupid animals before God and God has given us enough wisdom in His word to grasp what it is we need to know.

**And I [am] continually with You;
You have held with a hand of my right.**

Psalm
73:23

**Yet I [am] continually with You;
You have held onto my right hand.**

**Yet, I have continually been with You
and you have held onto my right hand.**

Asaph has spent much of this chapter complaining about God blessing infidels. However, in the previous verse and in this one, Asaph begins to realize that God knows what He is doing. Furthermore, what Asaph has enjoyed that the men of whom he complained did not, was that God guided him by the hand through life. God, the God Who created the universe, had a personal relationship to Asaph, which was far superior to anything that these men could imagine. First the other translations:

JPS (Tanakh)

Yet I was always with You, You held my right hand.

NASB

Nevertheless, I am continually with Thee; Thou hast taken hold of my right hand.

The Septuagint

Yet I am continually with You; You have held my right hand.

Young's Literal Translation

And I am continually with Thee, Thou hast laid hold on my right hand.

This verse begins with the simple connective and the 1st person personal pronoun followed by the adverb *tâmîyd* (תָּמִיד) [pronounced *taw-MEED*], which means *continuously, continuity*. Strong's #8548 BDB #556. This is followed by *with You*, giving us: **And I [was] continuously with You...** He has complained about God treating these infidels too graciously when Asaph realizes that, all during this time, God has been with him. How can one complain if the Creative God of the Universe is with you at all times? This shows absolute graciousness from at

least two angles: (1) Asaph does not deserve God's graciousness. Furthermore, he is complaining about God's justice with regards to a certain class of men; yet God remains with him. (2) Secondly, how can Asaph complain about anything, when God is always with him? God is not with these unbelieving men. God does not bless them personally. God will not bring them into eternity. Asaph has all these things, so he has no reason to complain. It is like a billionaire complaining because he just doesn't like the shade of green used on money.

As Barnes puts this: *I am kept by You in the land of the living; I am permitted to abide in Your presence; I am allowed to hope in Your mercy. Notwithstanding, my low and unworthy views, notwithstanding my doubts about the justice of the Divine administration, notwithstanding my envy at the prosperity of the wicked, and my spirit of complaining against God, I am not driven away from God; I am not banished from His presence, or cut off from His favour. Well may we marvel when we reflect on our thoughts about God, that He has not risen in His anger, and banished us from His presence for ever and ever.*⁴⁶

In the second line (*with You* is in its pausal form), we have the 2nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect of *ʾâchaz* (אָחַז) [pronounced *aw-KHAHZ*], which means *to grasp, to take hold of, to take possession of*. Strong's #270 BDB #28. This was one of the many verbs also found in Job 21. This is followed by *in a hand of* (the *bêyth* preposition is often used with this verb to indicate the object of the verb). Then we have the feminine singular noun (with a 1st person singular suffix) *yâmîyn* (יָמִיַן) [pronounced *yaw-MEEN*], which means *the right hand, the right side*. Strong's #3225 BDB #411. This gives us: **You have taken hold of my right hand**. The idea is simple: Asaph has been complaining about God's gracious treatment of the infidel, and then he suddenly realizes how God has blessed and kept him as well. God's taking of Asaph's right hand provides him with guidance, protection and assurance. No unbeliever has this. Barnes: *You have been to me as a Protector and Friend. You have not been angry at my unkind and ungrateful thoughts; You have not banished me eternally from Your presence.*⁴⁷

**In Your counsel You lead me
and afterward [in] honor, You will take me.**

Psalm
73:24

**With Your counsel [wisdom and purpose], You
lead me [into a path of blessing];
and afterward You will receive me [in] honor.**

**With Your counsel and wisdom, You lead me onto a path of blessing in this life
and then You receive me in great honor in eternity.**

First, what others have done:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	<By thy counsel> wilt thou guide me, And afterwards <unto glory> wilt thou stake me [or, <i>And afterwards shalt thou gloriously take me</i>].
JPS (Tanakh)	You guided me by Your counsel and led me toward honor [others, <i>and afterward receive me with glory</i>].
Keil and Delitzsch (revised) NASB	According to Thy counsel wilt Thou lead me, And afterward receive me to honour. With Thy counsel Thou wilt guide me, And afterward receive me to glory [or, <i>with honor</i>].
NRSV	You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will receive me with honor [or, <i>to glory</i>].
The Septuagint <i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	You have guided me by Your counsel, and You have taken me to Yourself with glory. With Thy counsel Thou dost lead me, And after honour dost receive me.

We begin with the *bêyth* preposition and the feminine singular noun *ʿêtsâh* (אֶצֶחַ) [pronounced *gay-TZAW*], which means *counsel, advice, wisdom, purpose*. Strong's #6098 BDB #420. Affixed to this is the 2nd person masculine singular suffix. The main verb is the 2nd person masculine singular (1st person singular suffix), Hiphil imperfect of *nâchâh* (נָחַח) [pronounced *naw-KHAH*], which means *to lead, to guide, to lead into a path of blessing*. Strong's #5148 BDB #634. This gives us: **In (or, with) Your counsel (or, wisdom and purpose) You lead me [into a path of blessing]**.

⁴⁶ Slightly updated from *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 261.

⁴⁷ Slightly updated from *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 261.

Some parallel passages would include Psalm 32:8: *I will instruct you and teach you in the way which you should go; I will counsel [and guide] you with My eye upon you.* Psalm 48:14: *For such is God, our God forever and ever; He will guide us until death.* Isa. 58:11: *“And Jehovah will continually guide you and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; and you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail.”*

Barnes comments: *With Your advice, with Your teaching...implies two things: (a) his belief that God would do this, notwithstanding his folly; and (b) his purpose that God should be his guide now. He would no longer murmur or complain, but would entrust all to God, and allow himself to be led as God should be pleased to direct him.*⁴⁸

The second line begins with the wâw conjunction and the adverb ʿachar (אָחַר) [pronounced *ah-KHAHR*], which means *behind, afterwards*. Strong's #310 BDB #29. Then we have the word kâ^bvôwd (כְּבוֹד) [pronounced *kaw^b-VODE*] and it refers to *glory, abundance, or honor*. Strong's #3519 BDB #458. We would really expect to see this preceded with a preposition in this context, but it is not in the Hebrew (it is, however, preceded by the preposition *with* [μετὰ] in the Greek). The main verb is the 2nd person masculine singular, 1st person singular suffix, Qal imperfect of lâqach (לָקַח) [pronounced *law-KAHKH*] which means *to take, to take from, to take in marriage, to seize*. Strong's #3947 BDB #542. This gives us: *And afterwards, [with] honor You will take me.*

Barnes: *And You have led me along the path of the present life in the way in which You would have me to go, You will then receive me to Yourself in heaven—to a world where all will be clear; where I will never have any doubts in regard to Your being, to the justice of Your dispensations, or to the principles of Your government.*⁴⁹ You really cannot beat what Asaph has. God guides him on a daily basis, taking his hand, protecting him and steadying him; then, God will take Asaph into eternity. The unbeliever or unbelievers about whom he complains has none of this.

We have the final resolution of all things here: Asaph is received by God into glory (or, *with honor*); for the infidel, the opposite is the case. How can Asaph object to this? He is facing eternal riches, glory and honor, while the infidels of whom he speaks will face the Lake of Fire for their eternal reward.

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God Evens out Everything in the End and Asaph Boasts of His Works

Who [is there] to me in the heavens and with You, I do not desire in the earth.	Psalm 73:25	Who [is there] for me in the heavens [but You]? And with You, I do not desire [anything] in the earth.
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**Who is in the heavens for me but You?
And with You, I do not desire anything else in this earth.**

The idea behind this verse is quite simple: Asaph's eternal reward awaits him in heaven; God awaits him in the afterlife. What occurs here on earth is inconsequential by comparison (however, it is not inconsequential in importance). First, what others have done:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Whom have I in the heavens? And <compared with thee> there is nothing I desire on earth.
JPS (Tanakh)	Whom else have I in heaven? And having You, I want no one on earth.
Keil and Delitzsch (revised)	Whom have I in the heavens? And if You are mine, the earth does not delight me!
NASB	Whom have I in heaven <i>but Thee</i> ? And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth.

⁴⁸ Slightly updated from *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 261.

⁴⁹ Slightly updated from *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 261.

The Septuagint For what have I in heaven [but You]? And what have I desired upon the earth beside You?

Young's Literal Translation Whom have I in the heavens? And with Thee none I have desired in earth.

This verse begins with the interrogative particle *mîy* (מִי) [pronounced *mee*], which is generally translated *who* (or, *whom*). Strong's #4310 BDB #566. This is followed by *to me in the heavens*. This gives us: **Who [is there] to me in the heavens?** This figure of speech is called an affirmative negation. It demands a negative response. The reader should be thinking, *no one*.⁵⁰

The next couple words are difficult. I want to place them with both the previous line and the one to come. Because we have no pausal forms in this verse, the *wâw* conjunction here generally would mark the beginning of the second line. We have the *wâw* conjunction (of course) and Asaph's favorite preposition *ʿîm* (עִם) [pronounced *geem*], which means *with, at, by, near*. Strong's #5973 BDB #767. Affixed to the preposition is 2nd person masculine singular suffix, so we have, so far, *and with You*.⁵¹ What, of course, we would like to see is a translation such as: **Whom [is there] for me in the heavens [but You]?** We go to John 6:67–68 for a parallel passage: **Jesus said therefore to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" [referring to disciples who deserted Him]. Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life."** Psalm 16:2: **I said to Jehovah, "You are my Lord; I have no good besides You."**

We continue with the negative particle and the 1st person singular, Qal perfect of *châphêts* (חָפֵּץ) [pronounced *khaw-FATES*], which means *to will, to desire, to take pleasure in, to long to, to be inclined to*. This is another of the words found in both Job 21 and Psalm 73. Strong's #2654 BDB #342. Then we have *in the earth* (or, *in the land*). Literally, we have: **And with You, I do not desire (or, take pleasure) in the earth (or, land)**. We might get away with: **And with You, I desire nothing in the earth**. This rendering makes a bit more sense to us. The negative is *lôʿ* (לֹא) [pronounced *low*], which means *not, no*. This generally negates the word immediately following it. *Lôʿ* is the absolute negation. Whereas, *ʿal* (עַל) might be dehortative,⁵² *lôʿ* is prohibitive. What we do not have is this word used as a substantive, meaning *none*. Strong's #3808 BDB #518. Given this information, it may be more accurate to render this second line as: **And with You, I do not desire [anything] in the earth**.

Barnes: *You are all-sufficient; You meet and satisfy the wants of my nature. All my happiness is in You; no one on earth could be substituted in Your place, or be to me what You are as God.*⁵³

The general meaning of the verse fits in well with the context. Asaph is taking the overall look on this situation, realizing that, with God, he would take no pleasure in the things of the earth. Obviously a radical concept, but it makes me think of a radio show this morning where two sisters are driving their kids through the mountains or woods, and the one sister, whose SUV it is, asks the other to drive. She does, and a deer darts out in front of her, causing her to crash and total the vehicle (the women and the children were safe, however). A police officer surveyed the accident, and confirmed that it was an unavoidable accident. Sometime later, the sister whose SUV it was, wanted money from the first sister to replace the SUV (she apparently did not want to risk her own insurance rates by contacting her own insurance company). Obviously, the end result is a division between the two families, and it is simply over money—it is over the goods and material things of this life. How excellent it would have been for the first sister to adopt the philosophy of this verse: **And with You, God, I do not desire [anything] from this world**. God protected them and their children, but He also provided them with a test; a test that the first sister obvious failed miserably. You must decide whom you will serve—God or money.

**Consumed, my flesh and my mind
a rock of my mind and my portion [of] God [is]
forever.**

Psalm
73:26

**My flesh and my mind have perished;
[but] the rock [or, stability] of my mind and my
portion [from] God [are] forever.**

⁵⁰ *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 949.

⁵¹ Also, in this particular case, this could also be translation *and Your people* (the difference is a simple vowel point).

⁵² *Dehort* means *to dissuade, to persuade against*.

⁵³ Slightly updated from *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 261.

**Both my flesh and my mind will be used up;
but the stability of my mind and my portion from God is forever.**

First, here's what others have done with this:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	Failed have my flesh and my heart, <The rock of my heart—and my portion> is God unto times age-abiding.
JPS (Tanakh)	My body and mind fail; but God is the stay [lit., <i>rock</i>] of my mind, my portion forever.
Keil and Delitzsch (revised)	My flesh and my heart may fail— The refuge of my heart and my portion is Elohim forever.
NASB	My flesh and my heart may fail; But God is the strength [lit., <i>rock</i>] of my heart and my portion forever.
NEB	Though heart and body fail [so one manuscript; others add <i>the rock of my heart</i>], yet God is my possession for ever.
NRSV	My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength [Heb., <i>rock</i>] of my heart and my portion forever.
REB	Though heart and body fail, yet God is the rock of my heart, my portion for ever.
The Septuagint	My heart and my flesh have failed; <i>but</i> God [is] of my heart and God is my portion forever.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Consumed hath been my flesh and my heart, The rock of my heart and my portion is God to the age.

The first word is the verb, which is not unusual. It is the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect of *kâlâh* (כָּלָה) [pronounced *kaw-LAWH*], which means *to complete, to finish, to accomplish, to be fulfilled* (Ex. 39:32 1 Kings 6:38 Job 21:13 Daniel 12:7). This can take on the meaning, a derivative of the previous meanings, *to be made prepared, to be made ready for someone* (Prov. 22:8). It means *to be past, to have gone by* (Gen. 41:53 Isa. 24:13). It also means *to be consumed, to be spent, to be wasted, to be destroyed, to perish, to waste away* (Gen. 21:15 1 Kings 17:16 Jer. 16:4 Ezek. 5:13). The latter set of meanings appear to be applicable when the subject is *soul, spirit, eyes or reins*, which is the case before us. It is important to establish this use because this same verb is found in Job 21; and we would expect the verb to be used in a similar way in these parallel passages. However, the meanings are different in the two passages. Strong's #3615 BDB #477. Now, in the English, when we have two singular nouns hooked together by a conjunction and used as the subject of a sentence, the verb is then in the plural form, because there are two or more things. However, in the Hebrew, the verb will be in the singular form (as we have here). The subjects are: (1) the masculine singular nouns *sh^eēr* (שֵׁׁר) [pronounced *sh^eair*], which means *flesh, meat, kin*. Strong's #7607 BDB #984. And, (2) the masculine singular noun *lê^bva^bv* (לֵבַב) [pronounced *lay^b-V^BAHV*], which means *mind, inner man*. Strong's #3824 BDB #523. Both of these have 1st person singular suffixes. This gives us: **My flesh and my mind have been spent (or, have perished)**. Asaph appears to be speaking of the end of his life on this earth. There are parts of us which just do not go on to the next life. The word for *flesh* here is also used of the *meat* of animals (Ex. 21:10 Psalm 78:20, 27). The vision given us here is one where the meat of are bones are left behind; there are portions of our mind which are left behind when we go into the eternal state.

We string two subjects together in the second line as well; however, there is no verb. We begin with the masculine singular construct of *tsûwr* (צוּר) [pronounced *tzoor*] means *rock, cliff*. Strong's #6697 BDB #849. This is followed by the masculine singular noun *lê^bva^bv*, again, which means *mind, inner man*. Strong's #3824 BDB #523. Then we have the *wâw* conjunction and the masculine singular noun *chêleq* (חֵלֶק) [pronounced *KHAY-lek*], which means *portion, tract, territory, share, allotment*. Although this generally refers to a *land* allotment, particularly in the book of Joshua, this is not always the case. Strong's #2506 (and #2511) BDB #324. Affixed to both nouns is the 1st person singular suffix. This is followed by *Elohim* and the *lâmed* preposition and the masculine singular noun *ôwlâm* (עוֹלָם) [pronounced *ô-LAWM*], which means *long duration, perpetuity, antiquity, futurity*. With the *lâmed*, it means *forever*. Strong's #5769 (& #5865) BDB #761. This gives us: **A rock of my mind and my portion [or, allotment] [of] God [are] forever**. We might go with: **The stability of my mind and my allotment [is with] God forever**. There are parts of us which are left behind when we go to the eternal state and parts of us which go on forever.

Here, in this verse, Asaph distinguishes between them. He also confirms our eternal reward from God. There is a stable portion of our minds, our spirit, if you will, which will remain with God forever. We have an allotment from God. These things far exceed anything that we could have here on earth.

Again, the New Living Translation gives us a very satisfying rendering of this passage. The CEV, also a *thought-for-thought* translation, is not nearly as smooth.

Two *Thought-for-Thought* Translations of Psalm 73:21–26

NLT	CEV
<p>Then I realized how bitter I had become, how pained I had been by all I had seen. I was so foolish and ignorant— I must have seemed like a senseless animal to you. Yet I still belong to you; you are holding my right hand. You will keep on guiding me with your counsel, leading me to a glorious destiny. Whom have I in heaven but you? I desire you more than anything on earth. My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; he is mine forever.</p>	<p>Once I was bitter and brokenhearted. I was stupid and ignorant, and I treated you as a wild animal would. But I never really left you, and you hold my right hand. Your advice has been my guide, and later you will welcome me in glory. In heaven I have only you, and on this earth you are all I want. My body and mind may fail, but you are my strength and my choice forever.</p>

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**For, behold, Your far ones will perish;
 You cause extermination to all committing
 adultery away from You.**

Psalm
73:27

**Because, indeed, those far from You will
 perish;
 You exterminate all [those] fornicators away
 from You.**

**Listen—those who choose to remain distant from You will perish;
 You will cause the extermination of those who fornicate against You.**

Asaph continues to focus on eternity with this verse; he looks at those who are lost, those of whom he was previously jealous. First, what others have written:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	For lo! They who are far from thee shall perish, Thou hast put an end to every one who wandered unchastely from thee.
God's Word™	Without a doubt, those who are far from you will die. You destroy all who are unfaithful to you.
JPS (Tanakh)	Those who keep far from You perish; You annihilate all who are untrue to You.
Keil and Delitzsch (revised)	For, lo, those who are estranged from You will perish; You destroy all those who wantonly forsake You.
NASB	For, behold, those who are far from Thee will perish; Thou hast destroyed all those who are unfaithful to Thee.
NKJV	For indeed, those who are far from You shall perish; You have destroyed all those who desert You [or, are unfaithful to You] for harlotry.
The Septuagint	For, behold, they that remove themselves far from You will perish; You have destroyed everyone that goes a whoring from You.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	For, lo, those far from Thee do perish, Thou hast cut off every one, Who is going a whoring from Thee.

The general idea looks fairly simple: these are those who are the unsaved, the lost, the fallen—those who have chosen to remain apart from God. We begin with the explanatory conjunction *kîy* and the demonstrative particle *hên*, which I would think would be idiomatic for something, but as you see from the translations above, the translators went with the strictly literal rendering. Then we have the masculine plural adjective *râchôq* (רַחֵק) [pronounced *raw-KHOHK*], which means *distant, far*. Here, when used as a substantive with the 2nd person masculine suffix, it means *Your far-away ones*; Owen renders this one word *those who are far from thee*. I'm not making fun of Owen, as the Greek uses six words to render this one Hebrew word as well. Strong's #7350 BDB #935. Then we have the main verb, which is the 3rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect of *ʾâḇad* (אָבַד) [pronounced *aw^p-VAHD*], which means *to perish*. Strong's #6 BDB #1. This gives us: **For, behold, Your far ones will perish**. Interestingly enough, those who are far from God are called *Your far ones*; but, after all, God is the Creator of all. In this sense, we belong to Him and are beholden to Him; and some have chosen to remain afar off. They will perish. Psalm 37:20: **But the reprobates will perish; and the enemies of Jehovah will be like the glory of the pastures. They vanish—like smoke, they vanish away.**

The second line begins with the 2nd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect of *tsâmath* (תָּמַח) [pronounced *tsaw-MAHTH*], which means *to put an end to, to exterminate*. The Hiphil is the causative stem. Strong's #6789 BDB #856. Then we have the masculine singular construct of *all* followed by the Qal active participle of *zânâh* (זָנָה) [pronounced *zaw-NAW*], which means *to commit adultery, to fornicate, to [sexually] pursue*. Strong's #2181 BDB #275. This is followed by the *mîn* preposition and the 2nd person masculine singular suffix. This gives us: **You will cause extermination of all committing adultery away from you**. The idea is that these are men who operate outside of God's will and His plan. They pursue other gods, they pursue their own pleasures. For those who have so chosen to be separate from God, God will cause their final extermination.

**And me, near of God,
for me good
I have made in my Lords Y^howah my refuge
to tell all Your works.**

Psalm
73:28

**And I [am] near of God, [which is] good for me;
I have placed my refuge in my Lord Y^howah
[and I] recount all Your works.**

**And I draw near to God, which is the good.
I have placed myself in Lord Jehovah, Who is my refuge.
I recount to others all Your works.**

Let's see what others have done with this final verse:

<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	But <as for me> the drawing near of God is my blessedness,— I have made of My Lord Yahweh my refuge,— That I may recount all thy works.
God's Word™	Being united with God is my highest good. I have made the Almighty LORD my refuge so that I may report everything that he has done.
JPS (Tanakh)	As for me, nearness to God is good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, that I may recount all Your works.
Keil and Delitzsch (revised)	But as for me—to be united to Elohim is my happiness, I made in the Lord, Jahve, my refuge, That I may declare all Your works.
NASB	But as for me, the nearness of God <i>is</i> my good; I have made the Lord GOD my refuge, That I may tell of all Thy works.
NKJV	But <i>it is</i> good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, That I may declare all Your works.
The Septuagint	But it is good for me to adhere to God, to put my trust in the Lord; that I may proclaim all Your praises in the gates of the daughter of Zion.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	And I—nearness of God to me <i>is</i> good, I have placed in the Lord Jehovah my refuge, To recount all Thy works.

We begin this psalm with the *wâw* conjunction and the 1st person personal pronoun. Often this word is understood to be followed by the absolute status quo verb *to be*. Then we have the feminine singular noun construct of *q^râbâh* (קָרְבָּה) [pronounced *k^raw^b-VAW*], *approach, drawing near*. Strong's #7132 BDB #898. This is closely associated

with the noun Elohim. It is difficult to determine where one line ends and another begins in this verse, as there are no pausal forms and no conjunctions. We could stop here and have: [And I \[am\] drawing near of God.](#)

The short phrase that follows is difficult to place—would it go with the previous or the next line? Literally, it is *to me, good*. This could possibly give us: [And I \[am\] drawing near of God \[which is\] to me good.](#) And this short phrase could belong on line two. James tells us: [Draw near to God and He will draw near to you](#) (James 4:8a). David tells us: [How happy is the one whom You choose and bring near to dwell in Your courts](#) (Psalm 65:4a).

In the next line, we have the 1st person, Qal perfect of shîyth (שׂיַת) [pronounced *sheeth*], which means, according to BDB, *to put, to set, to appoint, to station*. Strong's #7896 BDB #1011. This is followed by the bêyth preposition and the masculine plural noun ʾādôwn (אֲדוֹנַי) [pronounced *aw-DOHN*], which means *lord, master, owner, superior, sovereign*. Strong's #113 BDB #10. This appears to be a title in this verse, as what follows is the proper, but unspoken noun YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation *unknown*], but this is rendered variously as *Jehovah, Yahweh, Yehowah*. The problem is that there are no vowel points in the original Hebrew, those being added to the Massoretic text almost a millennium after the incarnation of our Lord. Strong's #3068 Strong's #3069 BDB #217. This is followed by the masculine singular noun (with a 1st person suffix) mach^oçeh (מַחְצֵה) [pronounced *makhk-SEH*], which means *refuge, shelter*. Strong's #4268 BDB #340. This gives us: [I have placed my refuge in the Lords Jehovah.](#) Or: [To me, good, \[that\] I have placed my refuge in the Lords Jehovah.](#) One of the many parallel verses would be Psalm 9:9: [Jehovah also will be a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble.](#)

Barnes comments: *Or, "I have truly confided in Him; He is my portion and the sole ground of my reliance." The doubts which Asaph had had were not, after all, real doubts about the claim of God to confidence. There was always an underlying trust in God in the midst of all this. Asaph had not desired to cherish such doubts; he did, no the most calm reflection, still trust in God.*⁵⁴

For the final line, we begin with the lâmed preposition and the Piel infinitive construct of çâphar (סַפֵּר) [pronounced *saw-FAHR*], which means, in the Qal, *to number*. In the Piel, this verb means *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*. Strong's #5608 BDB #707. Then we have the masculine singular construct *all* followed by the feminine plural noun m^elâ`kâh (מְלָכָה) [pronounced *m^elaw-KAWH*], which means *work, occupation, labor, workmanship*. Strong's #4399 & 4397 BDB #521. Affixed to this noun is the 2nd person masculine singular suffix, giving us: [To recount Your Works.](#) This appears to be clearly attached to the previous sentence, giving us: [I have placed my refuge in the Lord Jehovah, to recount Your works.](#) Often, purpose is stated with a lâmed preposition and an infinitive, which would give us: [I have placed my refuge in the Lord Jehovah, so that I may recount Your works.](#)

You will note that the repeating of the verb *to tell, to recount* (it was also in v. 15) sets up a contrast to v. 15. In v. 15, Asaph said that he *could recount* (or, *declare*) as do the unbelievers, but that, in doing so, he betrays his generation (called *the generation of Your children*). Here, Asaph chooses instead to *recount* or *declare* the works of God, as his refuge is in Him. One of the reasons Asaph chose to write this psalm, as well as others, was to declare God's works to man.

Barnes [speaking for Asaph]: *"I have desired rightly to understand You and Your government, that I might vindicate Your name, and assert Your claim to the love and confidence of mankind." Asaph's doubts and perplexities had not really been because he was an enemy of God, or because he desired to cherish doubts in regard to him, but because, when appearances were against the equity of the Divine government, he wished to see how the things which occurred could be explained consistently with a proper belief in the goodness and justice of God, in order that he might go and explain the matter to his fellow-men. Such perplexities and doubts, therefore, are not really inconsistent with true love for God and genuine confidence in Him; and it is well when such doubts are made the*

⁵⁴ Quoted and paraphrased from *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; pp. 262–263.

*means of enabling us more clearly to explain Divine dealings, —it is well when, under all such doubts and difficulties, we can still find evidence that we truly love God.*⁵⁵

Let me give you something that we can get out of Asaph's psalm: it is okay to wonder about God's justice and will. It is okay to discuss and ruminant on these things. All of us have faced situations in life or have observed things in life which cause us to doubt God's perfect character. God does not forbid us to think these thoughts. This is an entire psalm dedicated to the discussion of God's perfect justice and whether or not it is perfect. Most of the book of Job is a discussion about God's attributes and actions. It is these discussions and speculations which help us to gain a more perfect understanding of God's will and plan.

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1. *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 253–254.

⁵⁵ Slightly paraphrased from *Barnes' Notes; Psalms, Volume 2*; F. C. Cook, editor; reprinted 1996 by Baker Books; p. 263.