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# Psalm 90

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## Psalm 90:1–17

### Outline of Chapter 90

	<b>Title and by line</b>
vv. 1–6	<b>The eternal God/temporal man</b>
vv. 7–12	<b>The severe discipline of God</b>
vv. 13–17	<b>Moses asks God to restore to Israel the blessings of their relationship</b>

### Charts and Maps

<b>Title/byline</b>	<b>Why the Author of Psalm 90 is Moses</b>
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**Introduction:** Psalm 90 is the only psalm which chronologically belongs with the books of Moses, as this is the only psalm written by Moses which is extant, other than the two found in the Pentateuch. It is interesting that this lone psalm is not found in the books of Moses; it was written during a time of great discipline, possibly at a time when Moses was not writing Scripture, but almost in a state of giving up. He knew that God was going to wipe out that generation, that evil gen X, and that they were only marking time in the desert, probably in Kadesh barnea, until God had finished with them. Thirty-eight years is a long time to be in neutral; it is a long time during which to spin one's wheels. It would be an easy time for Moses to become discouraged. We don't know when Moses wrote the Pentateuch, but it appears that most of it was written near the end of the forty years in the desert. However, why there would be one song written by Moses which got separated from the rest of his writings, for awhile, I could only speculate. I actually had two nagging questions in the back of my mind: why were there thirty-eight silent years and why is this psalm not found in the Pentateuch? Originally, my guess was that this psalm had been written apart from all his other writings, during the middle of their time in the desert or during the latter half. It did not, in the eyes of Moses, really fit into what he had written, so he never placed it as a part of Scripture. This, in part, is true. However, it is possible that Israel even sang this song, as several theologians have written a song or two (Martin Luther, Robert Thieme, Jr.). Given the genius of Moses, there is nothing which would preclude him from writing a song (obviously, since he had written two others). My second guess was that this song was not written during a time of *writing* for Moses. That is, probably years went by on both sides of this psalm when Moses did not write (I am of the opinion that Moses wrote the bulk of the Pentateuch near the end of their 38-year wait in the desert; perhaps during the last three years or so of it). Since this song was written at a time when it did not fit neatly into Scripture, Moses never therefore inserted into his writings. And that guess is partially correct, but it does not give us the whole story. There is a reason why this psalm was not included in the Pentateuch and that is the key as to why there are thirty-eight silent years—and we will discuss that in the context of this psalm. And to the best of my knowledge, no one has ever correctly and thoroughly explained why before.

Now, one of the most important points to grasp when examining this psalm is that Moses has a clearly defined purpose for writing it. I personally had the misconception that psalms were these meandering songs praising God—sort of like the devotional portion of the Bible. That is, to me, they were to the Bible what romance paperbacks are to literature. Still inspired, but somewhat pulpy, meandering and (dare I say it?) inconsequential. We begin our study of God's Word with all kinds of misconceptions, and this was one of my many mistaken impressions. This is because we have an old sin nature and we are filled with human viewpoint and we should expect our ideas of right and wrong to clash with God's. We should expect to have a lot of incorrect notions when examining God's Word. If anything, Moses meanders more and digresses more in Deuteronomy than he does in this psalm. Moses knows exactly what he wants to say and he doesn't get to that until v. 13. V. 13 is the cymbal crash of this psalm; it is the focal point; v. 13 is where Moses is going to. When Moses wrote this psalm, the first

thing that was in his head was v. 13, not v. 1. This understanding is key in grasping the purpose and thrust of this psalm, as well as answering the two questions which I hope should nag you—why are there thirty-eight silent years (with the exception of this psalm) and why is this psalm not found between Num. 19 and Num. 20, where it chronologically belongs?

I had an interesting personal experience with this psalm. It was not until I got about three-fourths of the way through the exegesis that I realized the full meaning and purpose and placement of this psalm. It all came together suddenly somewhere around vv. 13 and 14. I recall reading a rather long novel that, for hundred's of pages, seemed to be just okay, not particularly compelling; and then I suddenly realized that out of nowhere, this novel had a complete hold of me. I was hooked; I had to finish it, and I didn't really want the rest of life to interfere with finishing this novel. This psalm was similar; things were so-so; there were a few points of interest here and there, and then, suddenly it took a hold of me and I could grasp the why's and the wherefore's and this psalm became one of the most fascinating portions of Scripture that I ever exegeted.

I found the NIV Study Bible introduction to this psalm to be outstanding: *A prayer to the everlasting God to have compassion on his servants, who live their melancholy lives under the rod of divine wrath and under his sentence of death—a plea that God will yet show them his love, give them cause for joy and bless their labors with enduring worth. No other psalm depicts so poignantly the dismal state of man before the face of God, holy and eternal. Yet, there is neither defiance nor despair, honesty acknowledges guilt (God's anger is warranted), and faith knows of god's "unfailing love" (v. 14) to which appeal can confidently be made. That Israel's 40 years of enforced sojourn of the "vast and dreadful desert" (Dt. 8:1) on its pilgrimage to the promised land (see Nu. 14:16–35) should evoke such a prayer ought not be surprising.*<sup>1</sup>

From *Barnes' Notes*, Vol. IV, book 3, appendix, p. 347, where the sermons of the Archbishop of York is quoted in Perowne: *"This psalm is one of the oldest of the inspired utterances. It is the prayer which is read over the mortal dust of some hundreds of the children of men every week in London alone."*<sup>2</sup> *And so used, none of us finds it antiquated. The lapse of 3000 years has not made it necessary to discard this clause and that. Words that described the relation of the children of Israel to the eternal God, serve still to express the devotion of English hearts turning to God in their sorrow. As these grand words are uttered, the curtain that hangs round our life seems to draw back, and we see beyond depths that we dreamed not of From time and the minutes and the hours that seem so long and so many, we turn to God, whose eternal nature was as it now is even when the world was formed, and to whom a thousand years are no more than the middle watch of the night is to a sound sleeper. Nation that seem established for ever are carried off down the roaring cataract of time; men full of pride, and glory, and power, grow and perish like grass; and God alone remains unchangeable, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."*

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## Title and By Line

Literally:

**A prayer by Moses, a man of the God**  
**Y<sup>e</sup>howah:**

Smoother English rendering:

Psalm 90:intro **A prayer by Moses, the man of the God**  
**Y<sup>e</sup>howah:**

With respect to the book of Psalms, this was probably the first one written. We do have a few songs in the Bible written prior to this one (for instance, Ex. 15 and possibly Gen. 49). In the *title and by line*, we begin with the word t<sup>e</sup>phillâh (תְּפִלָּה) [pronounced t<sup>e</sup>-phil-LAWH], a word consistently rendered *prayer* in the Authorized Version. Surprisingly enough, although this word is found once in Job (Job 16:17), it is not found in the Pentateuch, or in Judges or Joshua; in fact, we first find it in II Sam. 7:27 (however, the verbal cognate is found several times in the books of Moses). BDB gives its meaning as *prayer*. However, Barnes notes that it means: (1) *intercession*,

<sup>1</sup> *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995; p. 875.

<sup>2</sup> This psalm is a part of the English Order for the Burial of the Dead.

*supplication for any one; (2) prayer or supplication in general; (3) a hymn or inspired song.*<sup>3</sup> So, *prayer* is quite an excellent rendering. Noun: Strong's #8605 BDB #813. As we get into the content of this psalm, it will be obvious that this is both a song and an earnest prayer to God from a man of God, Moses.

Insofar as I am aware, there are only a few objections to the authorship of Moses. In v. 1, the author speaks of Y<sup>e</sup>howah being the dwelling place for all generations whereas Moses led two generations out of Egypt. However, Y<sup>e</sup>howah has been their God from the time of the patriarchs until that time, which is well over 400 years; therefore the words *all generations* is appropriate. The second argument against Mosaic authorship is the use of the Piel of *sâ<sup>b</sup>va<sup>ç</sup>* (שׂוּבָה) [pronounced *saw<sup>b</sup>-VAHÇ*], which means *to satisfy, to fill*. The contention is that this should be in the Hiphil (the causative stem) rather than the Piel (the intensive stem). As we have seen, the use of the Piel extends back into the times of Moses; the use of the Piel with this verb is only found in one other place—in Ezra 7:19, but that does not automatically place these two sets of writings as contemporary with one another. Strong's #7646 BDB #959. Moses was a linguistic genius and even if the use of the Piel of this word was rare, Moses is writing poetry and the idea of putting together this word with the Piel stem is not outside his abilities. Such an argument against Mosaic authorship barely requires an answer. I list it so that you can see how weak the opposition to his authorship is.

There are always some detractors who do not like to believe that anything in the Bible is of the ancient origin that it is whatever it testifies itself as being; nor do they like the authors to be those stated. Some of these people teach in seminaries. This type of thinking, although possibly always around, seemed to have its greatest impact in the nineteenth century when some archaeologists indicated that there was no writing which went back as far as the time of Moses. Many theologians were then convinced that the Pentateuch could not be written by Moses. Then, since some theologians bought into that premise, they consequently had to deal with all these books which were *claimed* to be written by Moses. They came up with a great many elaborate theories which, on their face, almost sounded intellectually credible. Since that time, we have found that writing preceded the time of Moses by a millennium, if not more; however, the theories, which are based upon the idea that writing was more recent, still remain. The only real difficult question is why is this piece of Mosaic writing separate from the Pentateuch? This could bear upon authorship, but as we will see, it does not.

*The accuracy of this superscription is admitted by all the ancient versions, by Luther, Calvin,..., Delitzsch,...and by modern commentators generally. Even those who range themselves on the other side, such as Hupfield and Ewald, some to speak doubtfully, and admit that the internal evidence is of the strongest possible kind.*<sup>4</sup>

Let me give you a few points by Hengstenberg, a theologian quoted in *Barnes' Notes*, Vol. IV, book 3, the appendix, pp. 346–347: *The poem bears throughout the character of high antiquity; there is not other psalm which so decidedly conveys the impression of being the original expression of the feelings to which it gives utterance. There is, moreover, no other psalm which stands so much by itself, in regard to its fundamental tone and peculiarities, for which parallel passages furnish so little kindred matter in characteristic peculiarities. On the other hand, there occurs a series of striking allusions to the Pentateuch, especially to the poetical passages, and, above all others, to Deut. xxxii...allusions which are of another kind than those which occur in other passages in the Psalms, and which do not bear like them the character of borrowing. Luther [wrote]...“Just as Moses acts in teaching the law, so does he in this prayer. For he preaches death, sin, and condemnation, in order that he may alarm the proud who are secure in their sins, and that he may set before their eye their sin and evil, concealing, hiding nothing.” The strong prominence given to the doctrine of death as the wages of sin is especially characteristic, a doctrine which is not of frequent occurrence in Scripture, and especially not so in the Psalms, and which is proclaimed as distinctly and impressively as it is here only in the Pentateuch, Gen. ii. and iii., and in those ordinances of the ceremonial law which threaten death. The reasons which have been adduced against the composition of the psalm by Moses are of very little weight. The objection that ver. 10, where the length of human life is limited to seventy, or, at the most, eighty years, stands opposed to Moses...[reaching] the age of 120, is disposed of by the remark, that Moses, throughout the whole psalm, does not speak in his own name, but in that of the people. It is obvious from Deut. xiv. 22, 23, that among the Israelites at that time the exceptions to the general rule, as to the duration*

<sup>3</sup> *Barnes' Notes*, Vol. IV, book 3, p. 1 (Barnes gets this from Gesenius' *Lexicon*).

<sup>4</sup> *Barnes' Notes*, Vol. IV, book 3, the Appendix, p. 345.

of human life, were much fewer than at ordinary times. Koester's assertion that ver. 15 supposes a long period of suffering, and scarcely applies to the Israelites in the wilderness, who rather beheld the glorious deeds of Jehovah, is disposed of as soon as we direct our attention to 'that terrible oath which God had flashed down upon them in Num. xiv.' Eight-and-thirty years spent amidst the gradual destruction of men lying under the curse, were well fitted to call forth the prayer, 'Make us glad according to the days in which thou hast afflicted us, the years during which we have seen evil;' they are sufficient to explain 'the melancholy view of life.'

Now let me give you several points why the author is Moses.

### Why the Author of Psalm 90 is Moses

1. The vocabulary is not dissimilar to the other writings of Moses.
2. There are no geological or personal references which fall outside the time of Moses.
3. The subject matter covered pertains specifically to his time period, with application outside that time frame (which is what we would expect from God's Word).
4. We have a song written by Moses in Ex. 15; we will study a song written by him in Deuteronomy; therefore, it is reasonable that the multi-talented and multi-faceted human genius, Moses, wrote this.
5. There appears to be nothing in this psalm which is intentionally lifted from the Pentateuch in order to make it sound like something Moses wrote.
6. This psalm has none of the personal markings of, say, David, whose psalms in general often deal more with his personal experiences rather than with the nation Israel as a whole.
7. Finally, and most importantly, the introduction is a part of inspired Scripture and it says that Moses was the author. Therefore, Moses was the author. Like anything else which bears the name of an accepted authority, like the writings of Moses or Paul; you cannot throw out the author without throwing out the entire writing as well.

Given all of this, there is no reason to assume that anyone other than Moses wrote this.

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The real reason why the given author is often disputed as being the true author of any portion of Scripture is a thinly veiled attack of Satan. All Satan needs is just one clear error of Scripture in order to dispute the veracity of God's Word. It doesn't matter where this error is found; just the Bible giving one author's name instead of the true author's name is enough to bring all of God's Word into question. Therefore, it is necessary for us to assume the role of the critic and detractor to better understand their arguments, as well as to better answer their criticisms.

I personally am a very linear person. I am chronological. I want to teach God's Word chronologically, in the same order as it was received. The errors which permeate our churches and seminaries are often errors which come from not knowing the whole Word of God. These are theological errors which creep in when a pastor or commentator does not fully examine all of Scripture, but has taken many things on faith which are written by someone else, or has accepted the creed of his church or denomination without examining it critically. A careful verse-by-verse approach, carefully noting the time period during which the Scripture was written, bringing into focus the purpose of the author, as well as the environment during which he wrote, is of utmost importance. However, the Bible is not arranged chronologically. Not even this one psalm, which is probably the first psalm written, is found in anywhere close to a chronological order. Barnes believes that Ezra arranged the psalms, separating the earlier psalms from the later psalms, and that he intentionally placed this psalm in the middle of this division as the heart of the psalms, *suggesting thoughts appropriate to the entire current of thought in this book.*<sup>5</sup>

The proper time period during which to place this psalm would be between Num. 19 and 20. This is our only surviving document from this time period. Israel had been in neutral for awhile, while God was killing off gen X, so that their sons could go into the land and take it without the horrible influence of their parents. I am personally a part

<sup>5</sup> Barnes' Notes, Vol. IV, book 3, p. 1.

of a generation of rebellious people who griped about the world that they were given, and then became probably some of the worst parents in the history of the United States. They were often drug addicts, they raised children who were drug addicts, they placed the care and raising of their children in the hands of their own parents, and less than half of my generation remained married, despite the fact that this would reek havoc upon their mutual children.

Moses did not refer to himself as *a man of God*; but Joshua did, which is why we believe that Joshua compiled the final few chapters of Deuteronomy using a song and last blessing and another piece of writing of Moses (see Deut. 33:1 Joshua 14:6). This does not mean that this song had been discovered by Joshua, although that is not out of the question. In fact, since this song does not fit neatly into the end of Moses' life, and since I am sure that Joshua would not insert this long of a song into the midst of the writings of Moses, he possibly added the by-line, set the psalm aside and it was later added to the collection of songs which we call Psalms. Another reasonable theory is that this writing had been preserved, attributed properly to Moses, and Ezra affixed this *by-line* to the psalm. His knowledge of Scripture, along with his reference to Moses as the man of God in Ezra 3:2, give credence to this position as well.<sup>6</sup>

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## The Eternal God/Temporal Man Under Discipline

**My Lords, You [even You] have been to us a dwelling place in a generation and a generation.**

Psalm 90:1

**My Lord, You have been our refuge in generation after generation.**

The first word in this psalm is not Y<sup>e</sup>howah but rather ʾādōwn (אָדוֹן) [pronounced *aw-DOHN*], the word we often know as *Adonai*; and this word means *lord, master, owner, sovereign*. It is a word used of both man and God; and here of God. Here, the word is in the plural with a first person singular suffix, making it ʾādōnây (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced *ah-doh-NI*]. 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.

We have the emphatic use of the personal pronoun along with the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular, Qal perfect of *hâyâh*, each one making the other superfluous. God has been the dwelling place, or a refuge, for generation X and for the Generation of Promise. Moses had used this same reference before in Deut. 33:27a: **"The eternal God is a dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms."** Barnes aptly describes this refuge: *a place to which one may come as to his home, as one does from a journey; from wandering; from toil; from danger;—a place...which he loves, and where he feels that he may rest secure.*<sup>7</sup> We have similar references to God in Psalm 71:3 91:1 Ezek. 11:16. Contrast that to today, when our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit and we have in us the indwelling of God the Father and God the Son (John 15:4 I Cor. 6:15–19 Eph. 2:19–22).

The last phrase, *a generation and a generation* had specific application in the time of Moses—to gen X and to the Generation of Promise; however, this is also a general phrase which can refer to any number of generations of believers. God remains a place of dwelling, a place of refuge, for all generations of believers.

One of the great themes of this psalm is the brevity of the life of man as compared to the eternal faithfulness of God. Our time here on earth is short in duration—nothing when compared to the eternity of God the Father—we are but a breath in a great wind, quickly dissipated.

<sup>6</sup> This title was not unique to Moses; see Judges 13:6, 8 I Sam. 2:27 9:6–8, for instance.

<sup>7</sup> *Barnes' Notes*, Vol. IV, book 3, p. 2.

**Before mountains were given birth to,  
then You writhed in travail with earth and  
the world  
and from everlasting as far as everlasting,  
You [are] God [or, You, O God].**

Psalm 90:2

**Before the mountains were brought forth  
then You writhed in travail with earth and  
the world  
and from eternity past to eternity future  
[or, from age to age], You [are] God.**

In order for the flood waters to have covered the entire earth, the mountains would have had to be lower than they are now. It is either that or the flood did not cover the entire earth, but only the populated earth.<sup>8</sup> However, the Bible is clear that there was a time prior to the civilization of man when there was something going on upon this earth. The verb associated with mountains is the Pual perfect of *yâlad* (יָלַד) [pronounced *yaw-LAHD*] and it means *to bear, to bring forth, to beget*. This is the word translated *beget, begot*. The Pual is the passive of the Piel (intensive) stem. Seeing as how the Pual is used continually for birth (Gen. 4:26 6:1 10:21 24:15 Psalm 87:4–6), the image conjured up here is one of great travail and violent contractions. Strong's #3205 BDB #408.

The next verb is the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Polel imperfect of *chûl* (חָוַל) [pronounced *khool*], a word which means *to dance, to whirl, to writhe*. This word can describe the *writhing and travailing of giving birth*. (Isa. 26:17 45:10 51:2). The indication is that there was pain and suffering and great upheaval in the earth prior to the existence of mountains; a guess of mine is that the world was less flat than Houston, but flatter than the costal ranges in California. Strong's #2342 BDB #296.

There are several views as to the past history of the earth. There are some theologians who believe that the earth was created in seven days, and a verse such as this one must be viewed as purely poetical (that is, meaningless). There are evolutionists who believe that the earth appeared one day, billions of years ago, and all that has occurred to it has been a result of slow and steady processes. They believe that there was no immediate creation; and the most theologically inclined of the evolutions believe in mediate creation; that God created the life force that began the evolutionary cycle; and, who knows, maybe even some believe that God created our apish ancestors immediately. A third view is that of the Gap Theory (or, the Gap Fact); wherein the world was created a long time ago, millions or billions of years ago, and was populated by angelic creation. When Satan fell and took with him a third of the angels, God packed the earth in ice. From its creation until restoration, the earth was possibly much flatter. With the activities of the six days of restoration, particularly that of the warming of the ice pack, there was likely more definition given to the face of the earth.

At this point, many great Bible commentators wouse out to the max. Barnes writes: *In the description of the creation it would be natural to represent the mountains as the first objects that appeared, as emerging from the waters; and, therefore, as the first or most ancient of created objects.*<sup>9</sup>

The implication here is that God created the mountains, but they did not *grow taller* so to speak. However, what is ignored is the verbs which are used. We have verbs which indicate difficult labor; we have verbs which indicates painful delivery. If these mountains were simply created whenever all the earth was created, then using such verbs would be meaningless. However, if the mountains changed shape, and if this were a result of a natural, but violent *geological* process, then the use of painful convulsions from giving birth is quite apropos and poetry suddenly becomes very clear in its description, even though the description is an analogy. And, it should make sense to you that at the time of the flood, there would have been tremendous upheavals caused by the flood waters which made the heights of the mountains much more pronounced, as they are today (however, relative to the area of surface of the earth, even our tallest mountains are relatively small). **He established the earth upon its foundations so that it would not totter forever and ever. You covered it with the deep as with a garment. The waters were standing above the mountains. At Your rebuke, they fled; at the sound of Your thunder, they hurried away. The mountains rose; the valleys [perhaps, ocean beds] sank down to the place which You had established for them. You set a boundary that they may not pass over, that they may not return to cover the earth** (Psalm 104:5–9). You will notice in this psalm that clear reference is made to the sinking of the valleys and the uplifting of the mountains. Certainly,

<sup>8</sup> I personally don't have a problem either way.

<sup>9</sup> *Barnes' Notes*, Vol. IV, book 3, p. 3.

one could write that off as just the receding of the waters; however, notice the last sentence: **You set a boundary that they may not pass over, that they may not return to cover the earth** (Psalm 104:9). What is indicated here is that no matter what happened, the flood of Noah's time could not re-occur. **It is now a physical impossibility.** This has been discussed by a few brave Christian souls who have determined the amount of water that it would take to place all the world under water today, and it is phenomenal—beyond human imagination. However, what I have never yet seen researched is what if the mountains were considerably lower and what if the ocean floor was considerably higher; and if the underground waters were retrieved—then could the earth be covered? God's Word tells us that it was covered—at least the areas populated by man and beast. The flood is perplexing for those who don't give it as much thought as they should; but the Bible provides us with an explanation which is not outside the realm of human possibility. That is, there was no need for God to *create* an incredible amount of water and then to cause it to disappear. From what I have read and seen of God's plan as presented in the Bible, I would not at all be surprised if a majority (if not all) of the processes which took place during the flood were not natural processes, the same as what we see take place today. I don't know about you, but I am much more impressed when God, knowing everything that was and everything that will be, has designed actually within the earth, within its structure, within the weather patterns and within the wind tunnels the devices which would naturally result in a flood at just the exact time that one would be called for. That kind of a process I find to be much more mind-boggling than God miraculously producing a lot of rain out of thin air and then making it disappear (literally). Since God is God, it is easier for Him to perform a miracle than it would be to act within the natural laws established on this earth to accomplish the same act. I know that many of you are totally impressed by miracles and if God picked up the house that you are living in and transported it to a lot off the coast of California, you would be awfully impressed. However, it is more difficult (looking at this from a human view) or more complex for Him to do the same thing using natural processes to occur at the exact correct moment. What is nice about the flood is that God knew what kinds of questions some would be asking themselves and He provided those answers in His Word, the Bible.

This gap fact is in accordance with all Scripture which relates to creation and restoration. Furthermore, Scripture seems to support a time when the world was relatively flat. In this verse it reads: **before the mountains were brought forth [in great labor pains]**. Job 15:7: **"Were you the first man to be born; or were you brought forth before the hills?"** In Proverbs, when speaking of wisdom, it reads: **"From everlasting, I [Jesus Christ personified as divine wisdom] was established; from the beginning, from the earliest times of the earth. When there were no depths, I was brought forth. When there were no springs abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I was brought forth. While He had not yet made the earth and the fields, nor the first dust of the world. When He established the heavens, I was there. When He inscribed a ratio on the face of the deep; when He made firm the skies above; when the springs of the deep became fixed. When He set for the sea its boundary, so that the water should not transgress His command. When He marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside Him, a master workman; and I was daily a delight, rejoicing always before Him."** (Prov. 8:23–30).<sup>10</sup> Whether such a theory is geologically sound, whether there are any scientists who have data which would support such a theory, I don't know. You will notice that over and over again, there are indications that mountains were formed or mountains rose; or something occurred to make the mountains we see today much more pronounced than in past times. Certainly, in all of these cases we could *spiritualize* these passages and allow for a certain amount of poetic license, reducing them to meaningless passages, but when you find the same information in several different places in God's Word, it makes you think perhaps there is more than poetical symbology involved.

I don't know if anyone has actually spent any time researching these ideas from a scientific-geological standpoint because I have never heard them presented before. I don't say that I am the first to write about this; I just don't know of anyone else who has.

We then have the words *and from* or *and out from* and the noun **ʿôwlâm (עוֹלָם)** [pronounced *ʿo-LAWM*], the preposition *as far as*, and then **ʿôwlâm** is repeated. **ʿOwlâm** means *long duration, perpetuity, antiquity, futurity*. This would mean *and from everlasting to everlasting, from eternity past to eternity future* or *from antiquity to*

<sup>10</sup> Obviously, one could take all of this paragraph as being one grand, instantaneous creation, presented as separate and distinct events. However, I think that context and the use of some verbs which indicate various points of time that things occurred would view this as a series of separate events, some parallel and most as a series of occurrences.

*everlasting*. I wonder if a case could be made for *from age to age*. Strong #5769 (5957?) BDB #761. I like the idea *from age to age* as it indicates even more than just different dispensations, but totally different periods of time for the earth and totally different inhabitants. However, throughout all ages, God remains the same. **Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting** (Psalm 93:2). **“And You are the same. And Your years will not come to an end.”** (Psalm 102:27). God is the one place where we can go for constancy and security. *At any period in the past, during the existence of the earth, or the heavens, or before either was formed, he existed, with all the attributes essential to Deity; at any period in the future—during the existence of the earth and the heavens, or beyond—far as the mind can reach into the future, and even beyond that—he will still exist unchanged, with all the attributes of Deity. The creation of the universe made no change in him; its destruction would not vary the mode of his existence or make him in any respect a different being.*<sup>11</sup>

V. 3 stands in distinct contrast to the unchanging, eternal God. The psalmist speaks of man, whose life is short, whose existence at times seems no more important than the grass which grows and is soon cut down, or the flowers of grass which bloom in the morning and die out by evening. A thousand years, which is an eternity for individual man, is but a day to God.<sup>12</sup>

**You cause man to return even to  
pulverized [dust];  
and so You say, “Return, sons of men.”**

Psalm 90:3

**You cause man to return to dust;  
accordingly, You say, “Return to dust,  
sons of men.”**

This verse begins with the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular, Hiphil imperfect of *shûb* (שוב) [pronounced *shoo<sup>b</sup>v*]; and here it means *to be caused to return*. Strong's #7725 BDB #996. God causes man to return. This is followed by the same preposition which we found between the *eternity's* in the previous verse: *ʿad* (עד) [pronounced *gahd*] and it means *as far as, even to, up to, until, while*. Strong's #5704 BDB #723. What I might like to find here is the word for *dust* as found in Gen. 3:19, but what we have instead is the adjective (used as a substantive) *dakkâ* (דָּכָא) [pronounced *dahk-KAW*] and it means *crushed, contrite, pulverized*. This word refers to anything which is broken or beaten or pulverized into small particles—hence, it is often rendered *dust*. This word is only found in Psalm 34:19 90:3 Isa. 57:15, but its verb cognate is found much more often (e.g., Job 5:4 6:9 19:2 Isa. 53:5). In fact, interestingly enough, this verb is found only in poetry, the Psalms, Job, Jeremiah and Isaiah. Ditto for the adjective. Such a limited use may cause one to (1) doubt that Job was written prior to the book of Exodus; or, (2) doubt that Moses wrote this psalm. You see, when we find a word used in a specific time period and not outside that time period save for the exception of one book, we wonder if that book may belong in the same time period as those where that word is found. Or, we wonder if Moses only used that word here and it is not found in the Pentateuch, then maybe he didn't write this psalm. This is not conclusive proof from which we should doubt the authenticity of this psalm, but it gives us pause to think critically. However, Moses used the noun cognate in Deut. 23:1. Adjective: Strong's #1793 BDB #194. Noun: Strong's #1795 BDB #194. Verb: Strong's #1792 BDB #193. Barnes points out that in the Septuagint and the Latin Vulgate, this reads “You turn man into humiliation.” Whereas the translation is faulty, the theology is sound. Man, who sees himself as so marvelous, so attractive, so intelligent, will always find his end as mingled with the dust of the earth. No matter how much fame we have, no matter how much wealth we acquire, no matter how much power we wield in our lifetimes, we still face the humiliation of being placed into the earth and mingled with the common soil. *Nothing is more humbling than the grave.*<sup>13</sup> You might be a movie star with your beauty or visage of strength preserved on celluloid for *all time*. You may have spent your entire life acquiring great amounts of wealth, consuming complete companies and businesses, frittering away more money in a day than some people make in a lifetime. You may wield tremendous political power; your mere recommendation resulting in a complete restructuring of some level of bureaucracy. You may have great criminal power, a word from your mouth could result in the deaths of whole families. You may have a body like the statue of David or one similar to the body depicted in art of Aphrodite. You may be strong,

<sup>11</sup> Barnes' Notes, Vol. IV, book 3, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Okay, but just one more. A man is praying to God and he says, “What is a thousand years to you, O Lord?” And God replies, “It is but a second to Me.” “And what is a million dollars to you, O God?” “It is but a penny.” “Then, O God, I would like a penny.” “Certainly; in just a second.”

<sup>13</sup> Barnes' Notes, Vol. IV, book 3, p. 3.

vigorous, glamorous, beautiful. Your body will be still be placed into the ground and decay into its lifeless component parts, the only remaining life being the bacteria decomposing your body. Your body will become as *unhonoured, [as] undistinguished, and [as] undistinguishable [as] dust.*<sup>14</sup> That's a fact, Jack.

One of the most fascinating things to me is the creation of man from the chemicals of the earth. **Then Y<sup>e</sup>howah God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the sparks of lives; and man became a living soul** (Gen. 2:7). **“By the sweat of your face you will eat bread until you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust and to dust you will return.”** (Gen. 3:19). If I were an ancient writer of religious Scripture, I would think to write that man was formed out of the toe of God; or that a horse was caused to walk upright and that was man; but it would have never occurred to me to assert that man was made from the chemicals of the earth. Furthermore, it has taken science several millenniums since these passages were written to confirm that our bodies are formed out of the same chemicals as are found in the earth. God knew this because He made us and the Bible is His Word; however, as a point of apologetics, if this Bible is not God's Word, then this writer of Scripture made a hell of a good guess. And the teaching of Scripture is consistent on this point. **“If He should gather to Himself His spirit and His breath, then all flesh would perish together and man would return to dust.”** (Job 34:14b–15; also see Psalm 104:29). **The first man [Adam] is from the earth; earthy. The Second Man [Jesus Christ] is from heaven** (I Cor. 47). The consistency of Scripture on all of these points is mind-boggling. You know that in the real world we have so many cults and so many denominations and so many divisions; it is man's nature to try to put his own spin on that which is Truth. Look at the apostate theologians at the end of the nineteenth century—they sought to revised traditional thought when it came to many aspects of Scripture; they sought to bring contemporary theological thought into their new world, in the light of science and archeology. They came up with all of these theories which totally undermined the inspiration of God's Word. That is man's nature and the more religious man is, the more he is likely to insert his own thoughts and opinions. Conversely, it is man's nature to cut corners, to accept without question what has been delivered to him by his particular denomination or cult. How many ministers have been called to their place, accepting with very little question what their seminaries have taught them, what their denominations have as their creed, relying on a few *proof* texts—which texts, they sometimes don't even look up. It is man's nature to differ on all matters theological. However, all the writers of Scripture, whose very lives spanned over three or four millenniums,<sup>15</sup> did not. We have many different authors; Moses, a genius, a religious and political leader, writing from the wilderness area between Egypt and the Land of Promise while contending with two million recalcitrants; we have Job, a wealthy man struck by unprecedented personal tragedy in every area of his life; we have Paul, a former religious man, holding to the traditions of the rabbis, one who was dedicated to the destruction of Christianity—a genius, one obviously well-schooled in the logic of the Greeks; we have Luke, a physician who became an evangelist, who had a strong interest in recent history and presented it in a way that I like, logically and chronologically, writing as he traveled; we have Peter, a big, strong, impulsive but unschooled fisherman, a blue collar worker, with few other skills; we have prime ministers, kings, military leaders, tax collectors, shepherds—men from all walks of life—and each composes a book or two or three, or writes a few letters and somehow, miraculously these writings are combined to be a consistent whole, which we call the Bible, or the Book. The joke is—and I told this to my Rabbi instructor for one of the courses I took in “The Ages and Ideas of the Jewish People”—get two Rabbis to agree at any one time about any one thing and Messiah will come (he laughed). If I was David or Solomon, I certainly would have inserted into my own writings that there are times when having multiple wives can be a good thing. If I was Moses, I would have justified remarriage when one spouse deserts the other. If I was Peter, I wouldn't have kowtowed to Johnny-come-lately Paul; I would have spoke out that I began walking with Jesus Christ long before Paul had a correct theological idea in his head and that, while “I would admit he is a very bright man, what I am writing is closer to coming from the horse's mouth because I walked with Jesus.” My point is that it would have been human nature to revise or change altogether what had been Bible doctrine. The Talmud and the Mishna did just that. But the writers of Scripture did not; they remained true to God's Word, despite their own human failings; their divinely-inspired writings conformed to revealed truth, even if it stood in direct contrast to their own lifestyle or personal predilections.

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<sup>14</sup> Op. cit., p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> I believe Genesis was written originally by contemporaries of the events it records and not Moses through dictation, inspiration or from traditional thought.

I can't tell you how many times that I have personally been wronged where I want to go to that person and tell them that I am right and they are wrong (and, right or wrong, often I do just that). That is human nature to justify one's self and one's own position. And when we disagree with someone else's viewpoint, we want to let everyone know that we're right and the others are wrong. But we don't find that in Scripture. We have well over forty different writers who agree on all of these details, as well as on all of the major theological issues, something which we cannot achieve today even possessing the entire Word of God. This is such a tremendous testimony to the inspiration of Scripture.<sup>16</sup>

What follows is interesting. The wâw consecutive is followed by the Qal imperfect of *to say* followed by the Qal imperative of *shûb* (שוב) [pronounced *shoo<sup>b</sup>*]; **then [or, and so] You [God] will say, "Return, sons of men!"** For awhile, I had been of two minds on this last line of this verse. At first, I thought that God is calling for man's resurrection. Man returns to the dust from whence he first came (God created us out of the elements and chemicals which are found in the ground); and then God calls him back. However, given the tenor of this passage, I believe that this is just a parallel thought to that which preceded it. That is, our bodily resurrection is a true doctrine, but that is not what is being referred to here. The wâw consecutive is not necessarily an indication of chronological order, but it can refer to logical order or to a continued emphasis. We could read this as: **You cause man to return to pulverized dust; accordingly, You say, "Return, sons of men."** (Psalm 90:3).

**Because a thousand of years in Your eyes  
as a day of yesterday when it passes on;  
and [it is like] a watch in the night.**

Psalm 90:4

**Because a thousand years in Your eyes  
is as a day of yesterday when it is past;  
it is like a watch in the night.**

What we have set before us is a time period of a thousand years. To mankind at that time, a thousand years was difficult to conceive of; to us, it is still difficult to fathom; our world goes through innumerable changes over the period of a thousand years, including 30-40 generations of man (or more). However, to God, this is simply a day which has past. The reference to a thousand years as being a day which has passed is interesting. We have all, no doubt, experienced days which appeared to be long; ones which we thought would never come to an end. This is particularly true the younger a person is. However, as we view our days which have gone past, they appear to take up little or no space as compared to present time. So not only is a thousand years compared to a day, but it is compared to a day which has already passed, which appears to be much shorter by comparison than its present-time 24 or 16-hour equivalent. If we were to sit down and write what occurred to us during the entire day of a day last week, we would think for 15 minutes or a half hour and then write maybe ten sentences, if we have a vivid memory and an elaborate recollection. A day in the past is a very short period of time to us.

The other analogy is equally interesting; the thousand years is not expressed as an overnight rest for God, as God does not sleep, but as a watch in the night. First of all, then sense of comparison is a thousand years for God is like a portion of a day or a portion of the night for man. But secondly, the thousand years for God is expressed not just as a period of time in the evening, but as a watch. We don't have a god who set things in order and then walked away from creation, only to return a few thousand years later to see what was going on. The God of the Bible has always been different from man's created gods; they ate, slept, drank too much, chased women. The God of the Bible, from the book of Genesis to the book of Revelation is never portrayed as any different from eternal, unchangeable, omniscient and all-powerful; He is never thought of as anything but perfect, righteous and good. When it comes to the concept of time for God, Job expressed similar sentiments to Moses: **"Are Your days as the days of a mortal or Your years as a man's years [they are not]?"** (Job 10:5). David's thoughts on this subject: **My lifetime is as nothing in Your sight. Certainly every man at his best is a mere breath** (Psalm 39:5b). Even Peter, known for being impetuous, and was therefore impatient, wrote: **But do not let this one fact escape your notice,**

<sup>16</sup> One of the areas of study which fascinated me in my early Christian life (and still does) is the area of Christian apologetics. This is the study of the defense and *proof* of Christianity and the inspiration of Scripture. For those who have similar interests, allow me to strongly recommend any of Josh McDowell's writings. Geisler and Nix have also put together a book which I read for a course I took called *Introduction to the Bible*, which impressed me thoroughly. In fact, Geisler has written several books in conjunction with other authors which I use extensively as reference material. He is a man about whom I know nothing personally; however, it is obvious that he has marvelous spiritual gifts in the realm of writing, and the gathering and presentation of material, and I strongly recommend him as well.

beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow about His promises, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance (I Peter. 3:8–9). The fact that the longest recorded life span of a person was just short of a thousand years (Gen. 5:27) I think is more coincidental than intentional on the part of Moses in writing this passage. We will cover the watches of a night when we get to Judges 7:19.

Finally, the sense of this passage is not one of equivalency; that is, a day to God is exactly the same as a thousand years to man. The sense is that God is outside of time and time never has been and never will be an issue to God. We find ourselves in a linear arrangement, beginning with our first day on earth leading to our last day, with no days falling out of order. As I have mentioned, I tend to be more interested in a chronological exposition of God's Word as opposed to the order in which God's Word is found. The arrangement of the books in the Bible is not inspired, nor are the separation of the verses inspired, no more than the order in which you choose to read the Bible is inspired. Time is an invention of God, as is space and matter, and these are things to which God is not subject as we are. We cannot penetrate the corridors of time as God does. From the very instant of creation, God knew exactly what would occur down to the more minute detail, and He simultaneously knew every possibly variation on how history would play out. We can't remember yesterday as clearly as we would like, and God knows the end from the beginning, the future being as perspicuous to Him as the past. So the key to understanding what Moses is saying here is not by comparison, except perhaps as an anthropopathism, but a comparison which indicates that time is not an issue to God.

**You had inundated them [with rain];  
they are asleep;  
in the morning, like the grass passing  
through (or sprouting).**

Psalm 90:5

**You had washed them away them as with  
flood waters—  
they are in a state of sleep;  
in the morning, they are like the grass  
sprouting.**

The first verb in this verse is the 2<sup>nd</sup> masculine singular, Qal perfect of *zāram* (זָרַם) [pronounced *zaw-RAHM*], which means *to flood, to inundate with rain*. Barnes defined it as *to flow, to pour, to pour upon, to overwhelm, to wash away*.<sup>17</sup> It is found only in Psalm 77:17 (in the Poel) and in 90:5\* (in the Qal). Its noun cognate, *zerem* (זֶרֶם) [pronounced *ZEH-rem*] is found in Job 24:8 Isa. 4:6 25:4 28:2 30:30 32:2 Habak. 3:10.\* Verb: Strong's #2229 BDB #281. Noun: Strong's #2230 BDB #281. This verb has a masculine plural suffix, which refers back to *sons of men*; the most recent masculine plural (*years* is in the feminine). God had flooded man with rain.

This is not a reference back to the great flood. We are now dealing with the universality of death. Death washes every man away from this life, without regard for his rank, his station in life, his status, his financial portfolio, his intelligence, his age or his race. A flood spares no one in its wake and is a respecter of no one. God carries every man away in death. God carries away one generation as if by a flood and, in the morning, another generation sprouts up like grass from a rain. Moses was specifically referring to gen X and to the Generation of Promise, but this psalm of course has a universality which applies to all generations, one passing away and leaving another in its wake.

The construction of the next line is unusual. You would expect Moses to pen *they are asleep*; however, we have the noun for *sleep* and the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine plural, Qal imperfect of the verb *to be*. Originally, I was going to chalk this up to poetic license; however, God the Holy Spirit, via the doctrine of inspiration, can speak His exact words, even in poetry. This means that they continue to be in a *state* of sleep. That is, they aren't sleeping as we sleep, but they are in a state which is similar to sleep, inasmuch as they no longer interact with us who are awake. *Sleep* is Strong's #8142 & 8153 BDB #446. The reference here is to all mankind, believers and unbelievers alike, who are placed into this *state of sleep* until God raised both the believers and the unbelievers from death for the last judgment. Job said of death: "But man dies and lies prostrate; man expires and where is he? As water evaporates from the sea and a river becomes parched and dried up, so man lies down and does not rise until the heavens be no more. He will not awake nor will he be aroused out of his sleep." (Job 14:10–12).

<sup>17</sup> Barnes' Notes, Vol. IV, book 3, p. 4.

The final verb is the Qal imperfect of *châlah* (חָלַח) [pronounced *chaw-LAHF*], which means *to sprout up* (among other things). In the KJV, we have such Qal renderings as *stricken through* (Judges 5:26), *go on forward* (I Sam. 10:3), *groweth up* (Psalm 90:6), *is over* (SOS 2:11), *shall change* (Habak. 1:11), *shall be changed* (Psalm 102:26). BDB gives the meanings as *pass on, pass away, pass through, to come on anew, to sprout again* (the latter two dealing with grass). Strong's #2498 BDB #322.

We have to be careful in the interpretation of the next line. Moses is not speaking here of the resurrection of the men spoken of in the first portion of this verse, but he is speaking of mankind in general. A generation of man dies and God raises up another generation; the blossom of the grass dies out and in the morning, the grass is renewed. Comparing man to grass occurs throughout Scripture: *As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. When the wind has passed over it, it is no more; and its place acknowledges it no longer. But the grace of Y<sup>h</sup>owah is from everlasting to everlasting on those who fear Him and His righteousness to [his] children's children* (Psalm 103:15–17). *“All flesh is as grass and all its beauty is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of Y<sup>h</sup>owah blows upon it. Sure the people are grass.”* (Isa. 40:6b–8). *The rich man in his humiliation, because like flowering grass, he will pass away. For the sun rises with a scorching wind and withers the grass; and its flower falls off, and the beauty of its appearance is destroyed; so too the rich man in the midst of his pursuits will fade away* (James 1:10–11). *For, “All flesh is like grass. The grass withers, the flower falls off, but the Word of the Lord abides forever.” And this is the word which was preached to you* (I Peter 1:24–25 Isa. 40:6b, 8).

**In a morning, it flourishes and passes  
through;  
in the evening, it is cut off and it withers.**

Psalm 90:6

**In a morning, it flourishes and grows;  
in the evening, it is cut down and it  
wITHERS.**

In this verse, we are still speaking of the grass and the analogy to mankind. The first verb means *to blossom, to flourish*. Strong's #6731 BDB #847. Then we have a repeat of the verb *châlah*, but this time in the Qal perfect. Growing is now observed as a process rather than an accomplished act (the imperfect as versus the perfect tense). This is interesting, because it reveals that Moses recognizes that the growth of grass is a hour to hour process, and not some sudden accomplished act at night.

The third verb is the Poel imperfect of *mâlah* (מָלַח) [pronounced *maw-LAHL*], which appears to be three different words in the Hebrew. This verb is used five times to mean *utter, speak* (Gen. 21:7 Job 8:2 33:3 Psalm 106:2 Prov. 6:13\*). BDB allows for the passage in Prov. 6:13 to mean *scrape, rub*. Strong's #4448 BDB #576. BDB gives a third meaning *languish, wither, fade*; but *cut off* seems to be a better rendering (Gen. 17:11 Job 14:2 18:16 24:24 Prov. 37:2\*). BDB lists the latter spelling as the same; the New Englishman's Concordance and Strong spell it as *nâmal* (נָמַל) [pronounced *naw-MAHL*]. Strong's #5243 BDB #576.

Our lives are compared to the grass when looked at from the grand scale of Jesus Christ. Our lives are short; we live here for a very short time. We are no different from the mowed grass; here one day, mowed down the next; with new blades coming up to take our place. *“Man, who is born of woman, is short-lived and full of turmoil. Like a flower he comes forth and withers. He also flees like a shadow and he does not remain.”* (Job 14:1–2). What separates us from the grass is our relationship to God. *“But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is today and tomorrow it is throw into the furnace—how much more will He do for you, O men of a little faith?”* (Matt. 6:30). *What was so green and flourishing in the morning, is, at the close of the day, dried up. Life has been arrested and death, with its consequences, has ensued. So with man. How often is this literally true, that those who are strong, healthy, vigorous, hopeful, in the morning, are at night pale, cold, and speechless in death! How striking is this as an emblem of man in general:—so soon cut down; so soon numbered with the dead.*<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Barnes' Notes, Vol. IV, book 3, p. 5.

## The Severe Discipline of God

**For we are consumed by Your anger  
and by Your wrath we are overwhelmed.**

Psalm 90:7

**For we are consumed by Your anger  
and by Your wrath we are overwhelmed.**

Moses has drawn an analogy between gen X and the generation which preceded the flood. He recognizes that they are on the receiving end of the wrath of God. The last verb is the Niphal perfect of *bâchal* (לָבַחַל) [pronounced *baw-KHAHL*], which means, in the Niphal, *dismayed, disquieted, disturbed, terrified*. The KJV gives the renderings *troubled {terrified}* (Gen. 45:3), *amazed* (Ex. 15:15), *afraid* (Job 21:6), *dismayed* (Isa. 21:3), *vexed* (Psalm 6:2), *hasteneth* (Prov. 28:22) and *speedily* (Zeph. 1:18). However, I am leaning toward a more all-purpose word, *overwhelmed*, used by Owens here. Strong's #926 BDB #96. *With reproofs, You chasten a man for iniquity. You consume what is precious to him as a moth. Surely every man is a mere breath* (Psalm 39:11). True death, which is separation from God, is a result of sin, and all men fall into this separation. *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...and the wages of sin is death* (Rom. 3:23 6:23a). God has perfect character and our innate as well as our actual rebellion against Him places us in direct opposition to His righteousness. His perfect justice therefore condemns us.

**You have placed our iniquities before  
You;  
our secret sins [are] to the light of Your  
face.**

Psalm 90:8

**You have placed our iniquities before  
You;  
and our secret sins are in the light of  
Your face.**

Everything which this generation did which was against God was fully visible to Him. *"For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity concealed from My eyes."* (Jer. 16:17). *And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do* (Heb. 4:13). God specifically placed their sins directly before His own eyes. *The conclusion: when all has been heard, fear God and keep His commandments, because this is to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil* (Eccl. 12:13–14). *So we have renounced the hidden things because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the Word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God* (II Cor. 4:2). And there is nothing that we can do about our own sin. *"Although you wash yourselves intensively with lye and you use much soap, the stain of your iniquity is before Me," declares Lord Y<sup>ehowah</sup>* (Jer. 2:22). Our only option with regards to sin is God's gracious love in the judgment of His Son on our behalf on the cross: *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Rom. 6:23).

**For all of our days turn away under Your  
wrath;  
we bring to an end our years like a  
rumbling.**

Psalm 90:9

**For all our days pass away under Your  
wrath;  
we end our years like a rumbling.**

The first verb is the Qal perfect of *pânâh* (פָּאַחַח) [pronounced *paw-NAWH*], which means *turn* (in the Qal stem). It can mean *to turn away from*, which is a type of abandonment (Deut. 30:17 Judges 18:20 II Kings 5:12). Strong's #6437 BDB #815.

The last portion of this verse is rendered variously:

*The Amplified Bible*

We spend our years as a tale that is told [for we adults know we are doomed to die soon, without reaching Canaan].

*The Emphasized Bible*

We end our years like a sigh.

KJV

...we spend our years as a tale *that is told*.

NASB

We have finished our years like a sigh.

NIV

...we finish our years with a moan.

NRSV ...our years come to an end like a sigh.  
 Septuagint ...our years have spun out their tale as a spider.<sup>19</sup>  
 Young's Lit. Translation We consumed our years as a meditation.

Obviously, we need to straighten this translation out. Pretty much everyone agrees on the word *years* and then seems to go rather free-form from there. The verb is the Piel perfect of *kālâh* (כָּלָה) [pronounced *kaw-LAWH*], which means *to complete, to bring an end to, to finish* (these are Piel meanings). Strong's #3615 BDB #477. Their years are brought to an end like a *hegeh* (הֶגֶה) [pronounced *HEH-geh*], which is often rendered *sigh* (Owen and Rotherham), but is a more disquieting sound, like a *rumbling, growling* or *moaning* (BDB). It is only found in Job 37:2 Psalm 90:9 Ezek. 2:10\*, but there is a verbal cognate. Noun: Strong's #1899 BDB #211. The end of their lives is not in some quiet room, with family, in the midst of prosperity, as they pine away with a sigh (as some translators imply), but their last few years are rough, filled with rumbling, growling and moaning. It is a disquieting end. *So He brought their days to an end in emptiness and their years in sudden terror* (Psalm 78:33). The key to understanding this verse is an accurate translation to begin with.

**Days of our years in them seventy years;  
 and if by reason of strength eighty years;  
 and their verbal defiance, labor, and  
 iniquity,  
 for it is grabbed up and swept away soon  
 and then we fly away.**

Psalm 90:10

**The days of our years are seventy;  
 and if we are strong, eighty;  
 and their verbal defiance, toil, and  
 trouble,  
 for their life is grabbed up and swept  
 away so that we may continue on our way.**

Moses gives the lifetime of a man at 70 years, or 80 if they are strong, despite the fact that he is probably a hundred years old at the writing of this psalm. We have come out of Genesis, when the age span of a man was several hundred years old, with a sharp decline and tapering off at the 70 year mark. Between Genesis and Exodus, we do not know what had happened to the life span of man. Moses indicates that it was 70 years, as it is today; and 80 years when someone is particularly strong, as it is today. There are a few exceptions, today as there were then.

Near the beginning of our lives, we think that seventy years is a long ways off. We have slogans like *live fast, die young and leave a good-looking corpse*. I recall a young friend of mine tell me that after the age of 30, he felt as though he would just be marking time. But in reality, our lives are very short and all of the things which we want to do during our lives and all of the things which we believe should be a part of our lives, will never fit in the time allotted us. *“Y<sup>h</sup>owah, make me to know my end and what is the extent of my days; let me know how transient I am. Observe, You have made my days as handbreadths and my lifetime as nothing in Your sight. Surely, every man at his best is a mere breath.”* (Psalm 39:4–5).

The first thing which passes away is their *rôha<sup>bv</sup>* (רָהַב) [pronounced *ROH-ha<sup>bv</sup>*], a word found only here. However, the verb means *to act boisterously, stormily, arrogantly*; and the adjective means *proud, defiant*. Therefore, the noun would mean *loud (or, verbal) defiance*. Noun: Strong's #7296 BDB #923 Psalm 90:10. Verb: Strong's #7292 BDB #923. Adjective: Strong's #7295 BDB #923. The last thing which has gone away is their *ʾâwen* (אַוֵּן) [pronounced *AW-wen*], means *iniquity* or *resulting misfortune because of iniquity*. Strong's #205 BDB #19. We have covered this word in great detail in Num. 23:21 Deut. 26:14.

The life of the unsaved person is described in three words: verbal defiance—in order to be an unbeliever, they must spend the entirety of their lives in opposition to God, pushing God away with both hands. Those people who claim that they do not believe in God because he has not come out of the sky and manifested Himself to them use that as an excuse. It is a conscious choice. Any person interested in taking the first step to getting to know God need only read the first five or ten chapters of the book of John. If he really has an interest in Who and What God is, then he will read those chapters in a prayerful, expectant way. However, most people do not. They might claim that they can't believe in something unless it something they can touch, see and smell, but our lives are filled with things that we believe in for which we have no real justification. Those millions of people who, in the past thirty and forty years,

<sup>19</sup> The Latin Vulgate, I understand, also reads *as a spider*.

committed adultery or left their spouses and children realized that without the foundation set by God, there is nothing to hold them to a marriage. If they think their true fulfillment outside of marriage and outside of the family they sired (or bore), then that is what they will choose. They were certainly give it a lot of thought, meaning they will think long and hard about what sort of rationalizations that they will give when asked. Our moral choices are strictly matters of faith and the rationalization that the actions which produce the greatest good for the greatest number are not valid in a structure based upon evolution—it should then be *survival of the fittest* (which it often is), which means the greatest good for those who are strong enough to take it. Besides, as any person who has given it any thought can tell you, just because it thunders and lightning strikes all around you and a voice speaks out of the sky to you, that does not in any way guarantee that it is God's voice. In the end times, there will be signs and wonders performed by those who are lost. It takes your volition to desire to have some sort of relationship with God; and if you choose not to, then you take the consequences.

The second word which describes the life of the unbeliever is *toil* (or, *labor*). This is for believer and unbeliever alike. I personally had assumed (although I did not give this a great deal of thought) that I would spend my forties taking it easier than I did in my thirties, insofar as work is concerned. However, even though I work less hours than I did, the net effect is that I am every bit as tired as I was ten years ago. For believers and unbelievers alike, this world will be one of work. You might be a criminal and you think that you have beaten the system by stealing from others, but guaranteed, you will pay for your crime and you will be placed in jail and you will toil; or perform the physical equivalent.

The last word of these three is *iniquity*, also rendered vanity or emptiness in other places. This perfectly describes the remainder of our lives; we toil, we stand in utter opposition to God, and we wallow in the mire of our empty iniquities. It doesn't matter if your weakness is drunkenness, drugs, illicit sex or a lust for money or power; no matter how much you get, you will desire more. Bill Gates personally has more money than we can imagine. Still he drives Microsoft in such a way as to eliminate or minimize his competition so that he can sell more Microsoft products. And this is not a simple matter of pride in one's own product, as most people who have tried various OS's prefer OS-2 or a Macintosh over Windows; they prefer Word Perfect over Word; they prefer Lotus 1-2-3 over Excel. His lust for money and power consumes him not to be the best in quality but to be the best in sales; and he is one of the greatest men of marketing that we have ever seen in this century. He knew right where to strike. This is our life as an unbeliever: one of verbal defiance, toil and labor, and iniquity. And in all that, we die.

The next two verbs are difficult, primarily because of the interpretation of this psalm. The first of those verbs is the 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular, Qal perfect of *gûwz* (גוז) [pronounced *gooz*], and this word is found only here and in Num. 11:31. I am going to break tradition and render this *grabbed up and swept away*. This allows us to be consistent in the rendering of this word, rather than *brought and cut off* (KJV), *brought and is gone* (NASB), *cut off and passed quickly* (Rotherham); only Young was consistent (*cut off*). Strong's #1468 BDB #156. The subject of this sentence has to be inferred—it is the life of these reversionists which is grabbed up and swept away.

The last verb follows the *wâw* consecutive and is the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural, Qal imperfect of the onomatopoeic *ʿûph* (עוף) [pronounced *ʿoof*], which means *to fly away*. Strong's #5774 BDB #733. The Israelites who are positive toward God's Word have been trapped in the desert because of these reversionists. As soon as God grabs up their lives and sweeps them away, then the remnant can escape; fly away.

**Who knows the power of Your anger?  
And according to the fear of You, Your  
wrath.**

Psalm 90:11

**Who knows the power of Your anger?  
In fact, Your wrath is in accordance with  
the correct fear-respect of You.**

Those who stood in opposition to God had no concept as to His great anger (this is an anthropopathism). Perhaps an analogy might help: those of us who have worked with children understand that many of them have a reckless abandon when it comes to their own morality, even though young people die all of the time. Generally speaking, for those who are otherwise law-abiding, they drive their car like it was a toy so they can show off, or they drive after drinking, or they have indiscriminate sex (which is any sex outside of marriage). Those who disobey the law more flagrantly set themselves up for even more times wherein their lives are in danger. The young person gives this

little or no thought, just as those who oppose God give little or no thought to His wrath. When it comes to our relationship with God, some of us behave as though we were irresponsible young person with no thoughts as to the consequences. We adults can look at their lives and think *tsk tsk*, but we also set ourselves up for much greater consequences when we defy the Living God. Some of us live as *arrogant fools, with no thought of our mortality or of our accountability to God.*<sup>20</sup>

We have plenty of examples and plenty of reasons why we should fear God. The entire gen X, those twenty and older, were removed from this life in very painful means—two million people who were believers—because they believed not in God and His provision. We have entire nations and entire groups of people removed from this earth—the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Babylonians—so completely removed, that for the longest time, even the very existence of the Hittite was brought into question. We have seen groups of people under the most severe discipline—the Jews themselves in the past few centuries—incurring indignities and pain and suffering beyond human imagination (as much of it was demonically inspired). How can man measure that kind of wrath or how can man fully understand that kind of wrath? There were many occasions when the Israelites were told to wipe out a group of people—every man, woman and child—their livestock as well as their royalty. Only a fool intentionally sets himself up to be on the receiving end of God’s wrath.

For the unbeliever who chooses to live his life totally apart from God; and for the believer out of fellowship, God has reserved this great wrath. **You, even You, are to be feared. And who may stand in Your presence once You have become angry?** (Psalm 76:7). When we, as believers, stand in defiance of the righteousness of God, we set ourselves up for tremendous discipline. To explain this in such a way that we might understand it, the Bible uses the term *wrath*. This doctrine was covered back in Deut. 9:8 and might be well worth your while to review it.

The second line tells us that the fear and respect of God is reasonable and in accordance with His great wrath. **God is a righteous judge and a God Who has indignation every day** (Psalm 7:11).

**To a numbering of our days so you  
instruct  
and we may carry a heart of wisdom.**

Psalm 90:12

**Teach us to number our days  
so that we may carry with us a heart of  
wisdom.**

This verse is a bit difficult, so we will see what others have done:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	So teach us to number our days that we may get us a heart of wisdom.
Barnes’ literal Translation <sup>21</sup>	To number our days make us know, and we may bring a heart of wisdom.
<i>The Emphasized Bible</i>	How to number our days so grant us to know that we may win us a heart that hath wisdom.
KJV	So teach <i>us</i> to number our days, that we may apply <i>our</i> hearts unto wisdom.
NASB	So teach us to number our days, That we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom.
NIV	Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.
Owen's Translation	To number our days so teach us that we may get a heart of wisdom.
<i>Young's Lit. Translation</i>	To number our days aright let <i>us</i> know, And we bring the heart to wisdom.

This verse begins with the Qal infinitive construct of *number*; followed by *our days*; so this should read: **to a counting of our days**. Obviously, Moses is not suggesting that the Israelites start counting the days of their lives one by one nor are they (or we) to started guessing how long we have to live and then to determine what we should do each day. That is not the point. What he is drawing the reader’s attention to is the importance of each and every day. When we have placed before us ten years, twenty or more, we often waste our individual days away in worthless activity—doing things which have no positive eternal consequences. Each day should have a time wherein we learn God’s Word. We spend between 14–20 hours every days being exposed to the thinking of the

<sup>20</sup> *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995; p. 876.

<sup>21</sup> Barnes does not have a separate, literal translation of Scripture. However, in his notes, since he deals with the Authorized Version, he will occasionally give a more literal rendering of a particular verse.

world. Sometimes it is subtle and sometimes it is obvious (the more we know about God's Word, the more we recognize how hostile the world is toward His Word). So we need some time of re-orientation. This is not prayer, this is not singing, this is not having a quiet time to reflect with an empty mind about God's love; this is a time when we are pointed toward God's plan and His expectations. This is a time when we get a clearer picture of what is right and what is wrong. This is a time where we better clarify our place in the world. We are constantly faced with circumstances demanding that we compromise ourselves and our beliefs; it is only through His Word that we are able to clearly establish for ourselves what God's plan is for our lives—this plan which He devised for us in eternity past. [Your eyes have seen my unformed substance and in Your book they were all written the days that were ordained, when as yet there was not one of them](#) (Psalm 139:16).

Then we have the adverb *so* and the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Hiphil imperative of *yâda* (יָדָא) [pronounced *yaw-DAHG*], which, in the Hiphil, means *cause to know, to teach*. Strong's #3045 BDB #393.

The second verb is the Hiphil imperfect of *bô* (בֹּ) [pronounced *boh*], a word which means *to come in, to come, to go in, to go*. It means *to bring something, to carry* when found in the Hiphil. Strong's #935 BDB #97. Once generation X dies out, then the Israelites will carry their belongings into the Land of Promise. However, of much greater importance is that they carry with them a heart of wisdom. [My son, if you will receive my sayings and treasure my commandments within you. Make your ear attentive to wisdom; incline your heart to understanding. For if you cry for discernment, let your voice for understanding. If you seek her as silver and search for her as for hidden treasures, then you will discern the fear-respect of Y<sup>e</sup>howah and discover the knowledge of God. For Y<sup>e</sup>howah give wisdom; from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding. He stores up sound wisdom for the upright](#) (Prov. 2:1–7a).

Now let's place these last two verses together: [Who knows the power of Your anger? And according to the fear of You, Your wrath. Teach us to number our days so that we may carry with us a heart of wisdom](#) (Psalm 90:11–12). The sentiment expressed here has been echoed many times since by other writers of Scripture: [The reverential-fear of Y<sup>e</sup>howah is the beginning of wisdom](#) (Psalm 111:10a Prov. 1:7a 9:10a). ["Observe, the reverential-fear of Y<sup>e</sup>howah, that is wisdom."](#) (Job 28:28b).

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### **Moses Asks God to Restore to Israel the Blessings of Their Relationship**

**Return, O Y<sup>e</sup>howah—how long?  
Have compassion upon your servants.**

Psalm 90:13

**Return, O Y<sup>e</sup>howah—how long?  
Have compassion upon your servants.**

The first verb is the Qal imperative of *shûb* (שׁוּב) [pronounced *shoo<sup>b</sup>*], which means, as we have seen, *to turn back, to return*. Strong's #7725 BDB #996. God has poured out terrible wrath upon the Israelites. Moses is begging God to turn back His anger and wrath. This is all very elliptical. Even though Moses is not under discipline, all he sees around him is pain and suffering and death. He is begging for this to be removed. [O God of armies, return now, we ask of You. Look down from heaven and see and take care of this vine](#) (Psalm 80:14). [My soul is greatly dismayed. And You, O Y<sup>e</sup>howah, how long? Return O Y<sup>e</sup>howah, rescue my soul; save me because of Your grace](#) (Psalm 6:3–4).

Then Moses cries out, in pain of soul, *how long?* He is in the midst of observing thirty-eight years of the sin unto death, with all of the accompanying suffering and pain. It doesn't matter how degenerate and how negative some people are—you cannot help but feel badly when they are going through the horrible suffering which they sometimes go through. You are without natural compassion if you see a person who is eaten up with cancer, even if they have pushed God away all of their lives. For the unbeliever, intense suffering to be followed soon by death is God's last call—whatever it takes to turn this person toward Himself. For the believer, it is the last call to a life of fellowship with God.

We completely lose track of the time in our reading and studying but time was very real to Moses and to the two generations of believers with whom he worked. They had seen tremendous works and they had direct contact with God. But then we have thirty-eight almost silent years and I suddenly realized why Moses did not write about anything during that time—He had no direct, face to face contact with God. What he recorded in Scripture was all of the direct contact with God which he and the people had. All that they had was the Ten Commandments and the manna from heaven, which they took for granted. There were thirty-eight years when Moses did not speak directly to God. It wasn't Moses who was silent for thirty-eight years, it was God Who was silent for thirty-eight years. Moses offered sacrifices, he prayed, and he even wrote this psalm. But it was as though God had forgotten about them. This is why Moses calls out to God in prayer: *“Return, O Y<sup>e</sup>howah, how long? Have compassion for your servants!”* This also explains why Moses did not include this psalm with the rest of the Pentateuch. The four books of Moses, Exodus through Deuteronomy, record God's direct intervention in the lives of the Israelites. However, for thirty-eight years, there was no visible intervention of God into their lives. Moses judged, he taught, he prayed and they offered sacrifices; but God did not speak to him. So he had nothing to record. Since he did not fully grasp the power and involvement of the Holy Spirit (until the last year of his life), Moses did not even realize that this psalm was inspired by God and that it was to be a part of Scripture. You see, we take a canon of Scripture for granted and rarely do we grasp that revelation was gradual and progressive. There was no canon of Scripture for Moses. He had Genesis, which perhaps he assembled from diverse documents (although, I personally see the book of Genesis as on several scrolls where one author continued right where the other left off). And, although Moses learned quickly not to doubt God, he did doubt himself. He doubted that he should be the one to speak to Pharaoh and here he doubted that this psalm belonged with the rest of his writings (which, at that point, were Exodus through a portion of Numbers). It was not until the book of Deuteronomy that Moses began to grasp how fully inspired his writings were. You see, he recorded for two and a half books the interaction between God and man. God had stepped into the life of Israel and God took Israel out of Egypt and He guided her to the Land of Promise. In this psalm, Moses is not, in his own mind, recording the words of God, but it is a plaintive cry from himself to God to return to Israel in the way that He led them in the past. Let me speak clearly—Moses did not know he was writing Scripture, and he had no clue as to how prophetic this psalm would be, falling into this period of thirty-eight silent years. This psalm to Moses just seemed to be in a different class of writings than Exodus through Numbers 19 because those books recorded the very words of God and the direct intervention of God on behalf of His people. This is a cry for God to return to Israel as He had been during the exodus. God inspired Moses through the Holy Spirit and God knew this was Scripture and God preserved this psalm for us. This also tells us that man, when recording God's Word, did not always realize that they were writing God's Word.

This being understood, then you might grasp that these thirty-eight silent years, with only this one lone psalm to break the silence, are a shadow of what was to come. Just as these thirty-eight years must have seemed like forever to Moses and his people, so have the past two thousand years to the Jewish people. Any religious Jew who is intellectually honest asks, *Where is God? Where is the God of my fathers, the God of Scripture? Will Y<sup>e</sup>howah reject forever and will He never be gracious again? Has His grace ceased forever? Has His promise come to an end forever? Has God forgotten to be gracious? Or has He in anger withdrawn His compassion? Then I said, “It is my grief, that the right hand of the Most High has changed.”* (Psalm 77:7–10). This psalm should be the cry of every Israelites during the time of the Church Age, during this great time of silence, during this time when God is not working through Israel. Covenant theologians don't realize that God has His people, the Hebrews, just as He has us, His church and they lose the beauty, the foreshadowing and the full meaning of portions of Scripture like this. This psalm is the cry of the nation Israel, in the wilderness, in a period of spinning their wheels, calling for Y<sup>e</sup>howah to return to them as He had been to them in the past. This psalm is Israel's cry to God today.

Some people are confused about Christian service and their life in God's plan. After all, if everything has been worked out to the last detail and if all of our future is known, why do anything? If you are suffering the sin unto death, why not just grit it out, bear it, die, and spend eternity with God? There are several reasons for us to get into fellowship, to learn God's Word and therefore, learn His plan, and then to participate in His plan for our lives. 1.

If only for self-interest; when we participate in God's plan for our lives, we are laying up gold and silver for eternity. It is just like getting up in the morning and going to work. You don't get paid right then and there, but you do get paid and that affects your lifestyle here on earth. God has work for us to do. We don't have to quit our present job in order to serve Him (unless we are a manager of a porn book store or something like that); God has everything mapped out for us to do and we participate first through learning His Word. Okay, we

may feel that self-interest just isn't right and perhaps we shouldn't be motivated by that at all. Fine; your participation in God's plan glorifies God. We are witnesses before millions of angels. Each work that we do while filled with the Spirit, while motivated by Bible doctrine in our souls glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for our sins. I need to introduce the next point with a story. In junior high and in high school P.E., I was pretty much worthless. I grew at that time in height only and never in girth. At one time I was 6'3" and I weighed 130 lbs. (I eventually filled out to 135 lbs. in high school). Furthermore, I was uncoordinated. I still recall a P.E. football game that I played in seventh grade when the captain Ed Nagle told me to go across the line and he would throw me a pass overwhelmed me, as I was typically last or second to the last person picked. I did, he threw me the pass, I caught it, and it is one of the childhood memories I still recall. I probably never significantly participated in a football game since then, but I still recall that afternoon decades later, because I was allowed to really participate and it was marvelous to do that. God offers us the same opportunity, except in play after play. We may correctly realize that as believers in Jesus Christ, we are the dregs. In full honesty, we might point to a hundred other people in our periphery and realize that they are growing, they are involved and they appear to have a ministry far greater than anything that we will ever have. That doesn't matter, God is still looking to throw us that pass for a touchdown—and we will catch it. God has offered us a chance to participate meaningfully in His plan. We can do more than just observe; we are given the chance by Him, no matter who we are, to significantly participate in His game plan. Man may or may not observe us, but millions of angels standing on the side lines will. We ought to be a part of God's plan because this is our happiness and human fulfillment in life. As anyone who is honest can tell you, there is no fulfillment in taking drugs, in drinking to excess, to chasing skirts, etc. These are all frantic searches for happiness. Even legitimate searches for happiness, through the arts and literature, marriage and family, although much less destructive to our lives—if this is all our lives consist of, then they bring no fulfillment either. Our lives are not fulfilled unless we participate in God's plan. Some people are under the mistaken impression that if we begin taking in doctrine and confessing our sins that God will immediately find the thing that we least want to do and expect us to do it. It's just like we know that broccoli is good for us but we still don't want to eat it. Like broccoli, your reasonable Christian service is an acquired taste. When I first began to gain too much weight, I had to cut back significantly on fried foods and begin to eat more fresh vegetables and fruits. For the first year or so, I would feel like fried foods, but I would choose the fruits and veggies instead. Then I noticed one day, that my preference was for the fruits and veggies. It just took some time. Taking an active part in the Christian life is sometimes an acquired taste as well. You are not hereby ordered to go out and witness to the first ten people you meet; you are not hereby ordered to learn some native language and spend the rest of your years in poverty teaching God's Word to fifteen people in some third world country. You are ordered to take in God's Word and you are ordered to be filled with the Spirit through rebound. What exactly we will do in God's plan is an individual thing. We might be expected to pray, to give, to become missionaries, to visit the sick, to write and visit those in prison, to participate in shelter programs, to witness, to study and teach God's Word. God will call on us for any number of things. Being the custodian for a church can be a calling of God. We are to get the Word into our souls and then God will direct us from there. But don't worry—God has not sought out the furthest thing from what we want to do and then has condemned us to do that for the rest of our lives. That concept is Satan's lie. Finally, let me offer you one last reason to participate in the plan which God has mapped out for us; and it is something I learned from my Ethics teacher back in college: we should participate in His plan because it is the right thing to do. No matter what arguments that we can think of for and against our participating in His plan, it will always be the right thing to do.

The next verb is the Niphal imperative of *nâcham* (נָחַם) [pronounced *naw-KHAHM*] and it means *to be sorry, to be moved to pity, to have compassion, to be sorry, to suffer grief*. The KJV often translates this *repent* (Gen. 6:7 Ex. 32:12 I Sam. 15:11), but the meaning gets lost with that Old English word. In the imperative, this should be rendered, *have compassion*. Strong's #5162 BDB #636. Recall one of the earliest prayers of Moses during the exodus: [Then Moses entreated Y<sup>e</sup>howah his God, and said, "O Y<sup>e</sup>howah, why does Your anger burn against Your people whom You have brought out from the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? Why should the Egyptians speak, saying, 'With evil intent He brought them out to kill them in the mountains and to destroy them from the face of the earth'? Turn from Your burning anger and change Your mind about doing harm to Your people."](#) (Ex. 32:11–12).

**Satisfy us in the morning—Your grace  
and we may cry out [in joy]  
and we may be glad in all of our days.**

Psalm 90:14

**Satisfy us in the morning with Your grace  
that we may cry out in joy  
and so that we may be filled with  
happiness throughout all our days.**

Moses knows how good life can be, if only in theory. He has seen God's hand and God's involvement in the lives of the Israelites. In every translation which I looked at, *Your grace* is placed as part of a prepositional phrase, generally using the word *with*; *with* is not found in the original text.

The second verb is the voluntative Piel imperfect of *rānan* (רָנַן) [pronounced *raw-NAHN*], which means *to give a ringing cry*. Strong's #7442 BDB #943. The next verb is the voluntative Qal imperfect of *sāmach* (נָחַץ) [pronounced *saw-MAHKH*], and it means *to rejoice, to be glad*. Strong's #8055 BDB #970. Notice that participation in the plan of God is connected directly to happiness. **How happy is the one whom You have chosen and have brought near to dwell in Your courts. We will be satisfied with the goodness of Your house, Your holy temple** (Psalm 65:4). **"And I will fill the soul of the priest with abundance and My people will be satisfied with My goodness," declares Y<sup>e</sup>howah** (Jer. 31:14). **I will rejoice and I will be glad in Your grace, because You have seen my affliction and You have known the troubles of my soul** (Psalm 31:7).

There has been a long night without direct contact from God. Moses is out in the desert, camped, in neutral, with a bunch of whiny, rank amateurs, watching them die day in and day out. It is a long night of suffering and despair for the Jewish people and a long night of difficulty for Moses, who naturally empathizes with his people, despite their revolutions. He calls out for God's grace in the morning, to deliver them from this long night of wrath and anger, which were, apart from the daily manna, the only visible signs of God's involvement in their lives. Moses knows that God will hear their prayer: **He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him. He will also hear their cry and He will deliver them** (Psalm 145:19).

Let me dwell on this word *morning*, if I may. After years of study, I have come to the conclusion that just about the best time to take in God's Word is when you are fresh, early in the morning. It sets the tenor for the whole day. **Let me hear of Your grace in the morning, for I trust in You. Teach me the way in which I should walk, for to You I lift up my soul...Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God. Let Your good Spirit lead me on level ground** (Psalm 142:8, 10). We face human viewpoint and the doctrine of demons all day long. Every commercial, every conversation, every television program and most of our education is geared to human viewpoint and to the stance Satan wants us to take. God's Word in the morning cleanses our souls and guides our feet throughout the day. It stands in direct opposition to all of the falsehoods that we will face throughout our day.

**Make us glad, as days you have afflicted  
us;  
years of evil we have seen.**

Psalm 90:15

**Make us glad, as days you have afflicted  
us;  
we have seen years of evil.**

Moses repeats the verb *sāmach* (נָחַץ) [pronounced *saw-MAHKH*] (*to rejoice, to be glad*) in the Piel imperative; Moses is calling upon God to make them happy with even greater intensity. His rationale is that the Israelites have faced days of affliction. Asking God to give us happiness is not unheard of in Scripture: **Make glad the soul of Your servant, for to You, O Y<sup>e</sup>howah, I lift up my soul** (David after being severely disciplined in Psalm 86:4).

The sentence structure for the second line is a bit more difficult. *Years* is in the construct, meaning it should be rendered *years of*; however, rather than following this with a noun (in this case, the noun *evil*), it is followed by the verb *to see*. Literally, this is: **years of we have seen evil**. This describes those thirty-eight years. **"Now the time that it took for us to come from Kadesh barnea until we crossed over the brook Zered, was thirty-eight years; until all the generation of the men of war perished from within the camp, as Y<sup>e</sup>howah had sworn to them. Furthermore, the hand of Y<sup>e</sup>howah was against them, to destroy them from within the camp, until they all perished. So it came to pass when all the men of war had finally perished among the people that Y<sup>e</sup>howah spoke to me."** (Deut. 2:14–17).

What Moses is asking for in this verse is for the happiness to be in accordance with the pain and suffering which the Israelites have faced.

**Manifest to Your servants Your work  
and [manifest] Your splendor upon their  
children.**

Psalm 90:16

**Manifest Your works to Your servants  
and place Your splendor upon their  
children.**

Moses asks for God to manifest even more works to the children of Israel. At the beginning, God had performed a superabundance of miracles on their behalf; now they are spinning their wheels in no man's land, in a desert area, living in tents, not really too far from the Land of Promise. God has not spoken to them, God has not performed any miracles on their behalf (other than the manna, which they now take for granted). Moses knows that God is there and knows that they are under His guidance, but for whatever portion of that thirty-eight years have gone by before Moses wrote this psalm, God has not had any direct contact with His people. Moses is asking for God to perform his mighty works on their behalf again.

We need to examine motivation and pull much of this psalm together. Moses is requesting God to manifest His mighty works to Israel once again. He is not asking out of unbelief. Moses is not asking God to prove His existence or His dedication to the nation Israel. That God exists is clearly testified to in the first few verses (vv. 1–2). Also, Moses knows that he must be patient when it comes to God's timing, as a thousand years to God is like yesterday to us. The point being that we have a much different concept of time than God does. Moses knows that Israel does not deserve this, as they are under the discipline of God (v. 11). My feeling is that Moses had it in the back of his mind all along that he was going to ask for God to manifest Himself to Israel as in previous times—this was the purpose of this psalm. You see, when someone goes to write something, they often have an idea as to what they want to say and many times they have a main point. We are at the focal point of this psalm. Moses is calling for God to return to Israel, to satisfy them with His grace, to bless them and to make manifest His work and His majesty to Israel. This is what Moses desires. They have gone for perhaps twenty or thirty years where God has not even spoken to Moses; where their only contact with God has been the unending death of gen X and the daily provision of manna. So, for Moses to express his desire properly, he had to preface it. Moses was not asking for God's *interactive* presence out of unbelief, impatience, and certainly not because Israel deserved it. In the first twelve verses, Moses states clearly that he knows Who and What God is and that he is not asking for God to manifest Himself for the wrong reasons. You see, we stupidly think sometimes that an author just picks up a pen and starts writing, particularly a psalmist, and just writes, *God is really great—I mean that; His works are the bomb*; etc. etc. Moses has a clear purpose in writing this. He longs to speak with God, he longs to take his people into the land; he wants God to return in a visible way to Israel. Vv. 13–17 is what Moses desires. These verses are the focal point of the psalm. Moses is not asking for God to manifest Himself because Moses is suffering from unbelief or impatience; nor does Moses need to be titillated by a miracle or two. God told Moses that Israel would be under discipline, that He would kill off gen X, and that they would go into the land with the children of gen X, the generation of promise. I am hoping that you are following this. Most commentaries focus upon how this psalm speaks to generation after generation, but they completely lose track that Moses wrote this psalm during that spiritually dry, thirty-eight year period of time, probably near the end of it, out of a desire for God to manifest Himself to Israel as He had during the exodus. God has not spoken directly to Moses for decades now and Moses desires that direct contact; and not for himself, but for Israel, for the servants of God, so that all the work that they have done up until that time—so that all of their traveling out of Egypt to Mount Sinai and to the Land of Promise, will be confirmed to them as a part of God's plan. He asks for God to do this out of grace.

The second thing which Moses asks God to manifest to the younger generation is *hādār* (הָדָר) [pronounced *haw-DAWR*], a word rendered variously as *goodly, honour, beauty, majesty, glorious, excellency, comeliness* and *glory* in the KJV, although it occurs only 30 times. Although it does occur in the Law twice (Lev. 23:40 Deut. 33:17), in I Chron. 16:27, it is primarily found in poetry, chiefly in the Psalms and in Isaiah (Psalm 8:5 21:5 29:4 45:3 etc. Isa. 2:10, 19, 21 5:14 35:2 53:2). I think that we can safely render this as ***majesty, splendor***. Strong's #1926 BDB #214. In God is the essence of true royalty and splendor; since so many people look upon royalty under the concept of self-gratification and power and their concept of splendor is narrowly perceived as lavishness or extravagance; however, it is a term which implies both dignity and wealth and true royalty. Take a child out of a

gang and clean him up and set him next to a person who has been brought up in royalty, with the concept of service to his country and no matter how you dress the two up, the royalty and majesty of they young person with training will shine through. It will be his majesty and royalty and splendor which will be manifest, despite the different ways of dressing them up. Israel is God's and God is true royalty and majesty. Moses is asking for this to be manifested toward God's own, so that they bear the same splendor and dignity found in royalty. Included in this splendor is, certainly, wealth; and Moses is asking God to share with His Own people some of His wealth.

**The delightfulness of Y<sup>e</sup>howah our God  
be upon us  
and a work of our [two] hands establish  
upon us;  
and establish it—a work of our [two]  
hands.**

Psalms 90:17

**Let the delightfulness of Y<sup>e</sup>howah our  
God be upon us  
and You establish the work of our hands  
upon us;  
and You establish the work of our hands.**

The noun at the beginning of this verse is *nô'âm* (נֹאֵם) [pronounced *NOH-ahm* or *NOH-gahm*] and it is defined in BDB as *pleasantness, delightfulness*. The former strikes me as being too meaningless. The KJV primarily goes with *beauty* (Palm 27:4 90:17 Zech. 11:7, 10) or some form of *pleasantness* (Prov. 3:17 15:26 16:24). Let me temporarily go with *delightfulness* until a better rendering strikes me. Strong's #5278 BDB #653.

The verb found twice here is *kûwn* (קוּן) [pronounced *koon*] and it means *erect (to stand up perpendicular)* and by application, *to establish, to prepare, to be stabilized*. Strong's #3559 BDB #465. It is first found in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, voluntative Polel imperative and secondly in the 2<sup>nd</sup> person masculine singular, Polel imperative with a 3<sup>rd</sup> person masculine singular suffix. The Polel is essentially the same as the Piel (intensive) stem.

One of the things which I mentioned which would hopefully guide us into our reasonable spiritual service is the chance to participate in the marvelous, eternal plan of God. It's like catching the touchdown pass as opposed to sitting in the end zone and seeing the touchdown pass being caught. They are both great experiences in their own right, but they cannot be compared. Moses asks for God to prosper and establish the work of the hands of the generation of promise. Moses is praying for their *labors to be effective and enduring*, even though their lives are transient.<sup>22</sup> Like the unbeliever and the degenerate believer, they work day in and day out, but all their labors are spent on things which do not last. As we have seen, labor is a part of your life—no matter who you are. Moses is asking that if they are going to toil, that this toil count for something. **Commit your works to Y<sup>e</sup>howah and your plans will be established** (Prov. 16:3).

For all intents and purposes, it appeared as though the entire population of Israel would just waste away in the desert. Thirty-eight years is a lot of time to spin your wheels and watch hundreds of people die every single day. Moses, if he were a normal man, would have been profoundly disturbed and despondent by so long a wait. After all, his time of action was a relatively short time. His intense involvement with the Israelites, bringing them out of Egypt, to Mount Sinai and then to the Land of Promise was an excursion which took less than two years. Now it appears as though their lives are on hold.

As a believer or as an unbeliever, I know that most of you have experienced the fact of working incredibly hard and yet you appear to have little or nothing to show for it. It didn't seem to matter how hard you worked, you still just barely got by. This is what we are talking about here. Israel day in and day out is working just to survive. An entire generation is being wiped out by God. Don't think that they are on vacation; it takes every bit of their time, even with the provision of the manna, to get by, to survive in that desert. Moses would like for all the effort and the work of their hands to stand for something; to mean something. He asks God to do something with their works.

One of the aspects of the ministry of Noah and Moses which is particularly striking is the long periods of little or no movement or little or no results. Noah built a huge ark, something which had never been done before, and evangelized those in his periphery for 120 years and his only converts were his immediate family and their wives.

<sup>22</sup> *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995; p. 877.

I don't know about you, but if I saw those kinds of results, I would have re-evaluated my life and concluded that I was in the wrong thing in the wrong place. I would equate results with my effort and I would see my effort as worthless if I could not see results. Not Noah, however. For 120 years, he was faithful to God and he saw little in the way of results. When the rain came, he was certainly vindicated; but prior to that, he saw little which meant anything to come from the work of his hands.

Moses, although he has taken his people out of Egypt and has presented the Law to them at Mount Sinai, actually has seen a relatively short period of time where there appeared to be any results from his efforts. At the time of writing this psalm, all he saw was his people barely getting by, dying off in droves, and going nowhere. He was busy, he worked; they all worked just to survive, but they were going nowhere. Maybe a normal man with great integrity could have waited this out for five—who knows, maybe even ten—years; but Moses sat in one place, spinning his wheels, as it were, for 38 long years. To me, that is almost inconceivable. We don't know how often he taught; we don't know how many people came to him for teaching. He would certainly be involved in the political aspects of their lives (judgment for offenses and the settling of disputes). But Israel as a whole was going nowhere at all. However, the impact of Moses and this generation has been phenomenal, lasting for hundreds upon hundreds of generations. The Scripture which Moses produced has sustained millions of people in times of heartache and crisis. You cannot underestimate the power and direction of God. As Zechariah said, "Who has despised the day of small things?"

Let me end this as I began, with a quote from the NIV Study Bible: *A prayer to the everlasting God to have compassion on his servants, who live their melancholy lives under the rod of divine wrath and under his sentence of death—a plea that God will yet show them his love, give them cause for joy and bless their labors with enduring worth. No other psalm depicts so poignantly the dismal state of man before the face of God, holy and eternal. Yet, there is neither defiance nor despair, honesty acknowledges guilt (God's anger is warranted), and faith knows of god's "unfailing love" (v. 14) to which appeal can confidently be made. That Israel's 40 years of enforced sojourn of the "vast and dreadful desert"...on its pilgrimage to the promised land...should evoke such a prayer ought not be surprising.*<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995; p. 875.