
Psalm 68

Psalm 68:1–35

God and the Enemies of Israel/ David Transports the Ark of God

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An Introduction to Psalm 68

Introduction: Psalm 68 is one of the most difficult psalms to exegete. When it comes to understanding a psalm, organization is often quite helpful, and, most of the time, the *selah*’s in a psalm tell you how the psalm should be broken up. However, that is not the case with Psalm 68, where a musical interlude is thrown into the midst of a thought, which is clearly continued after the *selah*. Secondly, there are a number of words found in this psalm

which are found nowhere else; and other words found here which are relatively rare. Thirdly, there is at least one word which is translated very similarly by most translators, but in a way that we do not find elsewhere. Finally, some verses standing on their own do not seem to make sense (e.g., vv. 13, 21, 23, 27, and 30). In beginning this psalm, I must admit to feeling overwhelmed by it. Now that I have examined a couple dozen different translations, I feel a little less intimidated, although I would not be surprised if I am unable to explain some sections of this psalm.

To become oriented, there is a specific time and place and occasion for this psalm: David attempted to move the Ark of God previously, and, in doing so, one of the caretakers of the Ark was struck dead. David stopped the procession because he realized that he had screwed up. He spent a few months studying the Bible, and felt confident enough to attempt to move the Ark once again into Jerusalem, the new capital of Israel. The first verse of this psalm is taken from the word of Moses—it is what Moses would say every morning before breaking camp and moving forward, and these words were specifically tied to the moving of the Ark. Vv. 24–27 offer further evidence that we are speaking of a procession. Secondly, the first 18 verses of this psalm give us an historical perspective of Israel, from Egypt to Canaan, and their conquering of the Land of Promise. The final 17 verses are more difficult to classify. Are we speaking of Israel in the Tribulation? Are we examining a few doctrinal points about the relationship between God and Israel? Throughout portions of the latter half of this psalm, I was somewhat flummoxed.

However, I do think that I can give the big picture view of this psalm:

Psalm 68: the Big Picture		
Verses	Title	Commentary
vv. 1–14	God's Past Dealings with Israel	The past. David begins with Moses leading his people through the desert and culminates with the victories of Israel over the heathen of the land.
vv. 15–18	The Ark of God Comes to Rest in Mount Zion, just as God will Rule from Zion Eternally	The present. This section views parallel time periods: the Ark being taken into Jerusalem, which is symbolic of our Lord ruling forever from Mount Zion.
vv. 19–35	God's Future Dealings with Israel	The future. The previous few verses are transitional, connecting the symbols of Israel's present to Israel's true future under God.

Bear in mind that, even though this is the *big picture*, all the time David is mindful of the moving of the Ark into Jerusalem. Therefore, throughout this psalm, there will be continued references to the actual moving of the Ark (vv. 1, 17b, 24–25—a reference for each major section of this psalm).

At this point in time, I have almost completed this psalm, and I am reasonably satisfied with the results. However, for many of the individual verses, you may be asking out loud, *why didn't you just say this in the first place?* Quite frankly, much of the exegesis here is me thinking out loud and throwing in the comments of a dozen other commentators. Although the final explanation for this or that verse may seem fairly simple and on target, getting to that point was not easy.

When all is said and done, you will find that there are two verses for which I did not give a complete and reasonable explanation (vv. 13, 30).¹ With the help of a commentator (Barnes, I believe), that inability to understand and explain those verses actually had great meaning in and of itself (you'll see).

¹ This is a great improvement. When I had completed my first wave of exegesis, which involves the translation of the psalm, I was worried that I would not grasp half of what was here. If you don't believe me, just pick up any translation of this psalm, read it, and then try to explain each verse, and see how far you get.

There will be a few more verses where I believe that I have explained portions of them, or given the gist of their meanings, but was unable to fully and completely develop them.

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As you read this commentary, now and again you are going to feel as if you are slogging through knee-deep mud. This is how I felt throughout most of this psalm, although I must admit that, as I near the final week or two or working on it, that I am becoming more and more confident and comfortable with the results.

That being said, the NET Bible® probably gives us the most concise summary of this psalm: *The psalmist depicts God as a mighty warrior and celebrates the fact that God exerts his power on behalf of his people.*²

One of the most marvelous applications of this study is false concept that, the believer with the greatest faith can go sit on a park bench, and God will provide for him. Why isn't this God's plan for our lives? Why doesn't God expect us to reach a point of faith in our lives where we can simply open up our hands, and God will drop money into them? What is Christian growth if it is not aimed toward complete faith and dependence upon God? We'll cover this topic when we get to v. 28, and there are a number of concepts which will suddenly come together for you: faith, Christian growth, maturity, and how this all relates to us being shadow images of God.

Allow me to offer up, as is my tradition, an alternate outline for this chapter:

Barnes Outlines Psalm 68

- I. A prayer that God would arise and scatter all his enemies (Psalm 68:1–2).
- II. A call on the people to praise God, with reference to his greatness, and to his paternal character (Psalm 68:3–6).
- III. A reference to what he had done in former times for his people in conducting them from bondage to the promised land (Psalm 68:7–14).
- IV. A particular reference to the ark (Psalm 68:15–18). After it had been lying neglected, God had gone forth with it, and Zion had become distinguished above the hills; the chariots of God had been poured forth; victory had attended its movements; and God had gone up leading captivity captive.
- V. The anticipation of future triumphs – the confident expectation of future interposition – as derived from the history of the past (Psalm 68:19–23).
- VI. A description of the procession on the removing of the ark (Psalm 68:24–27).
- VII. The anticipation of future triumphs expressed in another form, not that of subjugation by mere power, but of a voluntary submission of kings and nations to God (Psalm 68:28–31). Kings would come with presents Psalm 68:29; nations – Egypt and Ethiopia – would stretch out their hands to God (Psalm 68:31).
- VIII. A call on all the nations, in view of these things, to ascribe praise to God (Psalm 68:32–35).

In comparing Barnes' organization to mine, there is very little difference. Barnes breaks the psalm into fewer parts, but divides them as I have, with the exception of the first section, which I end at v. 3 and he ends at v. 2.

Taken from Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68 introduction.

² *The Net Bible*®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 68:1.

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The NIV Study Bible has a pretty good outline as well, which they nail down based upon the 1st and 7th stanzas:

The NIV Study Bible Outlines Psalm 68	
Stanza	Incident
1 st Stanza	The beginning of the liturgical procession. vv. 1–3
2 nd Stanza	The benevolence of God's rule and a call for us to praise Him. vv. 4–6
3 rd Stanza	This stanza recalls the desert journey from Sinai to the promised land. vv. 7–10
4 th Stanza	Here, David recalls God's victories over the kings of Canaan. vv. 11–14
5 th Stanza	The fifth stanza marks that stage in which the Lord ascends Mount Zion. vv. 15–18
6 th Stanza	The sixth stanza speaks reassuringly of God's future victories. This is a joyous confession of hope that God's victorious campaigns will continue until the salvation of His people is complete. vv. 19–23
7 th Stanza	The seventh speaks expressly of the procession coming into view and entering the sanctuary. vv. 24–27
8 th Stanza	This stanza contains prayers that God may continue to muster His power to subdue the enemy as He had done before. vv. 28–31
9 th Stanza	The climax of the liturgical procession, where God is enthroned in His sanctuary. All kingdoms are called upon to praise the God of Israel as the God Who reigns in heaven and has established His earthly throne in the Temple of Jerusalem. vv. 32–35

The author of this footnote jumped around, naming the stanzas which seemed to be the most certain, and then he filled in with the others. The odd numbered stanzas appear to be the easiest to tie down to a particular topic or time frame; perhaps we should logically determine the even-numbered stanzas based upon their placement within this psalm? Or, perhaps these even-numbered stanzas could be removed from this psalm and be properly fitted together in another way. Bear in mind, David can sometimes be very complex in his compositions.

Each section was given more of an explanation in later footnotes in the NIV Study Bible, some of which is included here.

Taken from *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; pp. 846–8 (footnote; edited).

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One of the first steps in understanding a psalm is setting up a structure or an outline. Of course, I look at what others have done, but, from experience, I have found that David tends to have very carefully structured psalms which can be broken down into pieces, but which should be seen in a structural form as well. For instance, in this psalm, from looking at the first two sections of the psalm, it appears as though the first section matches the final section of this psalm, that the 2nd section matches the 2nd to the last section, etc. This is a structure which David has used before. Bear in mind, I come to this conclusion from just a superficial perusal of the psalm; when I begin to organize the psalm itself is what bears my theory out or not.

At this point, I have almost completed the exegesis of Psalm 68. Because this was a difficult psalm, I spend some time on the internet searching for whatever other nuggets of wisdom I might find. I came across a paper by Steve Puluka (<http://www.puluka.com/psalm68/default.asp>) which suggested the following organization of the psalm.

What I have done differently is actually write out the verses below, grouped as Puluka (or Fokkelman?) suggest (the combination of verses are *strophes*). Given David's highly organized nature with respect to literature, I thought I would lay this out and see if it works.

Another Way to Organize Psalm 68

Scripture	Stanza	Section
<p>God rises up [and] He scatters [or, <i>breaks into pieces</i>] His enemies; and those who hate Him flee from Him. Just as smoke is blown away, You dispel [them]; [and] just as wax is melted by fire, so the corrupt are destroyed because of Elohim [or, <i>before Elohim</i>]. The righteous will rejoice; they will exhibit [or, <i>feel</i>] joy before Elohim; they will leap with joy. (vv. 1–3)</p>	<p>As God leads Israel in the desert, He scatters His enemies.</p>	<p>God leads Israel from Egypt to the Land of Promise, defeating and scattering Israel's enemies and, at the same time, providing for Israel.</p>
<p>Sing unto Elohim, make music which praises His name. Construct [a highway] for the one riding in the [desert] Arabah. His name [is] in Yah, Rejoice before Him. Elohim [is] a Father to the fatherless and an advocate of the widows in His holy habitation. Elohim causes those who are solitary to live in a household; He leads captives [possibly, <i>slaves</i>] into freedom [or, <i>prosperity</i>]; but those who are wilful [and headstrong] have settled into a scorched region. (vv. 4–6)</p>	<p>This same God looks out for the widows and orphans.</p> <p>God leaves those who are headstrong and wilful to die in the desert wilderness.</p>	
<p>O Elohim, when You went forth before Your people; when You marched in the desert wasteland; [Musical] Pause [or, musical interlude; lit., <i>Selah</i>!] The earth quaked; furthermore, the heavens poured down [rain] from Elohim. This Sinai [quaked] because of Elohim, the Elohim of Israel. (vv. 7–8)</p>	<p>God caused both earthquakes and rains in order to bring Israel from Sinai into the Land of Promise. He used those rains and earthquakes against Israel's enemies and to sustain Israel.</p>	

Another Way to Organize Psalm 68

Scripture	Stanza	Section
<p>You have scattered rain freely [or, <i>in abundance</i>], O Elohim; You established Your inheritance, when it [the rain] was wearied. Your community lived in it [the land]; You, O Elohim, established the humble [or, possibly, <i>the grace oriented</i>] in Your goodness. (vv. 9–10)</p>		

Another Way to Organize Psalm 68

Scripture	Stanza	Section
<p>Adonai gives a promise [or, <i>mandate</i>]; those [women] who bring good news [or, <i>female messengers</i>] [are] a great army. Kings of armies flee—they flee; while [each] female inhabitant of a home divides up [her] recompense [or, <i>spoil</i>]. (vv. 11–13a)</p>	<p>God scatters opposing armies; Israel enjoys the spoils of victory.</p>	
<p>Though you lay between two stalls (?), the wings of a dove are overlaid with silver and her feathers with a yellowish gold. When the Almighty scatters kings in her [in the land]; He causes snow [to fall] in Zalmon. (vv. 13b–14)</p>		
<p>O mountain of Elohim, O mountain of Bashan, O mountain of [many] summits, O mountain of Bashan. Why do you look with envy, O mountains, O peaks, [at] the mountain Elohim desires for His dwelling place? Indeed, Y^ehowah will live there forever. (vv. 15–16)</p>		<p>The God of Mount Sinai is the God of Mount Zion. We will save those who are His and destroy His enemies.</p>
<p>The chariot of Elohim [leads] twenty thousand—a myriad of thousands [of angels]— my Adonai [is] among them, [as He was with them at] Sinai, [as He was with them] in the holy place. You have gone up on high [or, <i>to the Most High</i>]; You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts in the presence of mankind. And even [in the presence of] the rebellious; Yah Elohim lives [there]. (vv. 17–18)</p>	<p>God will make His Presence with Israel in Mount Zion</p>	

Another Way to Organize Psalm 68

Scripture	Stanza	Section
<p>Blessed is Adonai, day [after] day, God bears our deliverance [or, salvation] for us. [Musical] Pause [or, <i>musical interlude; lit., Selah!</i>] Our God [is] a God with respect to [His] acts of salvation; and to Y^ehowah Adonai, with respect to death, [there are] limits [or, <i>the Lord Jehovah is the end with respect to death</i>]. (vv. 19–20)</p>	<p>God will both save those who are His and destroy completely those who oppose Him</p>	
<p>Surely Elohim will shatter the head of His enemies; the crown of his head—[his] hair brisling up walking around [with evil intent] with his guilt [for wrongdoing]. Adonai has said, “I will bring [them] back from Bashan; I will bring [them] back from the depths of the seas so that you bathe your feet in blood [and] the tongue of your dogs [this blood] from [your] enemies [is] his portion.” (vv. 21–23)</p>		

Another Way to Organize Psalm 68

Scripture	Stanza	Section
<p>They have seen Your solemn processions, O Elohim; [they have seen] the processions of my God, my King, into the holy place.</p> <p>The singers are in front [lit., <i>preceded</i>]; [and] after [them], [are] those who play stringed instruments; in the midst of young women playing timbrels. (vv. 24–25)</p>	The procession of Israel with the Ark of God.	From the procession of the Ark to God's Millennial rule from Jerusalem.
<p>Bless Elohim in the assemblies, [and blessings to] Y^ehowah from the fountain of Israel. Then [or, <i>there</i>], insignificant Benjamin has dominion over them; the princes of Judah [are] their means of execution [or, <i>means of control</i>; or, <i>are in a group</i>], [along] the princes of Zebulun [and] the princes of Naphtali. (vv. 26–27)</p>		
<p>Your Elohim commands your strength [or, <i>protection</i>, <i>glory</i>] [possibly, <i>Summon Your strength, O God</i>]; make secure [or, <i>strong</i>], O Elohim, that which you have done for us. Because of Your Temple upon Jerusalem, [in a procession] kings bring presents [lit., <i>a present</i>] to You. (vv. 28–29)</p>	God makes His Temple in Jerusalem; kings from all over bring tribute to Him.	
<p>Castigate the community [or, <i>life, living thing, animal</i>] of stalks [or, <i>reeds</i>], the congregation of mighty ones, with calves of people trampling down [or, <i>prostrating themselves with</i>] bars of silver; scatter [these] people, [for] they delight in war [possibly, <i>He scatters (them)</i>; <i>the people desire to draw near</i>]. Ambassadors from Egypt come; His hands quickly bring Ethiopia unto Elohim. (vv. 30–31)</p>		
<p>Sing, you kingdoms of the earth, to Elohim; Sing praises [to] Adonai! [Musical Pause] [lit., <i>selah!</i>]. [Sing praises] to the Rider of the heavens, [those] ancient heavens; Listen, He sends forth [lit., gives] His voice, [His] mighty voice. (vv. 32–33)</p>	Sing praises to God.	
<p>Give glory [or, <i>praise</i>] to Elohim; His majesty and His strength [is] in the clouds over Israel. The God of Israel [is] a feared [and respected] Elohim [or, <i>is an awesome God</i>] [ruling] from Your sanctuary; He gives to the people blessed [by] Elohim strength and might [or, <i>He gives strength and might to the people</i>; <i>blessed [be] God</i>]. (vv. 34–35)</p>		

Puluka refers to some guy, Fokkelman, writing *An alternative view of the organization of Psalm 68 is the stress accent model of poetry. Here two or four stresses yield a colon, two to three colon yield a verse, two to three verses form a strophe and two to three strophe form a stanza.* [Fokkelman, J.P. *Reading biblical Poetry: An Introductory Guide.* Westminster Jon Knox Press, Louisville/London, 2001] *The stanzas can be further organized into sections in the longer Psalms, like Psalm 68.*

I had a mixed reaction to this organization. There were sections which were hard to organize under one title or under one theme. However, the sections seemed to be reasonably easy to classify.

The translation and the brief description of the stanzas and the sections are mine; the organization came from Puluka or from Fokkelman.

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There are times when someone really gets it wrong. When I pulled up this website, I did not pay much attention to who put it out. I just read a few lines into their commentary and I could tell, they simply got it wrong.

Psalm 68: Getting it Wrong

Their Comments	How They Got it Wrong
<i>Psalm 68 is extremely difficult because the Hebrew text is badly preserved and the ceremony that it describes is uncertain.</i>	<p>The Hebrew text itself is difficult, containing a number of words which are found nowhere else. This does not mean that it was <i>badly preserved</i>.</p> <p>The time and place of this psalm is pretty easy to ascertain. David wrote it for the 2nd attempt to move the Ark. We know this because, this psalm tells us that David wrote it; the first verse repeats what Moses would say when the Ark was moved during the 40 years in the desert wilderness. We know that David's problem the first time that he tried to move the Ark is, he did not have the Bible doctrine in his soul. The second time he moved the Ark, he knew the proper way to do it. This psalm reveals an understanding of the history of Israel and God's involvement in the history of Israel prior to David's time (vv. 1–17) and there is a clear reference to a procession in vv. 24–27.</p>
<i>The translation assumes the psalm accompanied the early autumn Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkoth), which included a procession of the tribes (Psalm 68:25-28).</i>	Although there is a procession in this psalm, there is nothing to indicate that there is any connection between this psalm and the Feast of Tabernacles.
<i>Israel was being oppressed by a foreign power, perhaps Egypt (Psalm 68:31-32)--unless Egypt stands for any oppressor.</i>	It appears as though Egypt is bringing tribute to Israel, which is pretty much the opposite of being oppressive.
<i>The psalm may have been composed from segments of ancient poems, which would explain why the transitions are implied rather than explicitly stated. At any rate, Psalm 68:2 is based on Numbers 10:35-36, and Psalm 68:8-9 are derived from Judges 5:4-5.</i>	Although this is possibly true, there are only 2 or 3 verses which were definitely taken from elsewhere. It is very likely that David, when studying the Old Testament to determine how to move the Ark of God, was inspired to continue reading God's Word. That he wrote a few verses in this psalm which parallel the Scripture which he studied is likely, since he does write a history of Israel from Sinai to his choice of Mount Zion for the location of the Ark.

For whatever reason, their verse allusions here to Psalm 68 are out of whack by one verse (I believe this is a Catholic translation and website).

The quotation on the left side came from <http://www.usccb.org/nab/bible/psalms/psalm68.htm>

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At this point, I have already broken the psalm up into sections, but I need to delve deeper than that. I will use the English Standard Version below and show you how my thought processes work to further organize this psalm in my own mind.

I will break the psalm down according to the chapter breakdown above:

My Thinking Process in Organizing Psalm 68

Psalm 68	Thinking Process Here
To the choirmaster. A Psalm of David. A Song.	I assume that David wrote this psalm and that it reflects incidents in his life and/or the history of Israel as he saw it.
God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered; and those who hate him shall flee before him! As smoke is driven away, so you shall drive them away; as wax melts before fire, so the wicked shall perish before God! But the <u>righteous</u> shall be glad; they shall <u>exult</u> before God; they shall be <u>jubilant</u> with <u>joy</u> !	Immediately, we find enemies and war here; so I note this with boldface where else this occurs. We also have them called <i>wicked</i> here. There is a clear contrast with the <u>righteous</u> , who exhibit <u>joy</u> .
<u>Sing</u> to God, <u>sing praises</u> to his name; <u>lift up a song</u> to him who rides through the deserts; his name is the LORD; exult before him! Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is <u>God in his holy habitation</u> . God settles the solitary in a home; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious dwell in a parched land.	Singing is often an indication of <u>joy</u> . <u>God's holy habitation</u> is mentioned here. God's provision and direct involvement in the lives of His people is clearly seen in the second portion of this stanza.
O God, when you went out before your people, when you marched through the wilderness, Selah the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain, before God, the One of <u>Sinai</u> , before God, the God of <u>Israel</u> . Rain in abundance, O God, you shed abroad; you restored your inheritance as it languished; your flock found a dwelling in it; in your goodness, O God, you provided for the needy.	<u>Sinai</u> is alluded to in this stanza. The nation <u>Israel</u> is named here, which is a culmination of God's moving Israel from Egypt to the Land of Promise. At this point, I see a parallel which I have missed before: much of this psalm speaks of God moving the Jews from Egypt to the Land of Promise; and this is a nice parallel to David moving the Ark from a place of inactivity to central Israel. God's provision and direct involvement in the lives of His people is clearly seen in the second portion of this stanza.

My Thinking Process in Organizing Psalm 68	
Psalm 68	Thinking Process Here
<p>The Lord gives the word; the women who announce the news are a great host: "The kings of the armies--they flee, they flee!" The women at home divide the spoil-- though you men lie among the sheepfolds-- the wings of a dove covered with silver, its pinions with shimmering gold. When the Almighty scatters kings there, let snow fall on Zalmon.</p>	<p>The kings of armies that flee make me think back to God's enemies mentioned at the beginning of this psalm.</p>
<p>O mountain of God, mountain of <u>Bashan</u>; O many-peaked mountain, mountain of <u>Bashan</u>! Why do you look with hatred, O many-peaked mountain, at the mount that God desired for his <u>abode</u>, yes, <u>where the LORD will dwell forever</u>?</p>	<p><u>Bashan</u> is named here, and the names of many countries will follow.</p> <p><i>Hatred</i> is used often to speak of an enemy of God.</p> <p>At the end of this stanza, <u>God's abode</u> is again mentioned.</p>
<p>The chariots of God are twice ten thousand, thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them; <u>Sinai</u> is now in the sanctuary. You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the <u>LORD God may dwell there</u>.</p>	<p><u>Sinai</u>, although not strictly a country, is another area which is named in this psalm.</p> <p><u>God's sanctuary</u> is mentioned again, along with a <u>place where the Lord God will dwell forever</u>.</p>
<p>Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; God is our salvation. Selah Our God is a God of salvation, and to GOD, the Lord, belong deliverances from death.</p>	<p>God's provision and direct involvement in the lives of His people is clearly seen in this stanza.</p>
<p>But God will strike the heads of his enemies, the hairy crown of him who walks in his guilty ways. The Lord said, "I will bring them back from <u>Bashan</u>, I will bring them back from the depths of the sea, that you may strike your feet in their blood, that the tongues of your dogs may have their portion from the foe."</p>	<p><u>Bashan</u> is named again in this verse.</p> <p>Here, God's clear victory over His enemies is noted.</p> <p>God's promise indicates His provision and direct involvement.</p>
<p>Your procession is seen, O God, the procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary-- the singers in front, the musicians last, between them virgins playing tambourines: "Bless God in the great congregation, the LORD, O you who are of <u>Israel's fountain</u>!" There is <u>Benjamin</u>, the least of them, in the lead, the princes of <u>Judah</u> in their throng, the princes of <u>Zebulun</u>, the princes of <u>Naphtali</u>.</p>	<p>We have a procession here with music, which is quite similar to the <u>righteous</u> and their <u>joy</u>.</p> <p>This joyous procession of course takes place in <u>Israel</u> and is celebrated by the tribes of <u>Israel</u>.</p>

My Thinking Process in Organizing Psalm 68

Psalm 68	Thinking Process Here
<p>Summon your power, O God, the power, O God, by which you have worked for us. Because of your temple at <u>Jerusalem</u> kings shall bear gifts to you. Rebuke the beasts that dwell among the reeds, the herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples. Trample underfoot those who lust after tribute; scatter the peoples who delight in war. Nobles shall come from <u>Egypt</u>; <u>Cush</u> shall hasten to stretch out her hands to God.</p>	<p>God speaks of <u>Jerusalem</u>. Both <u>Egypt</u> and <u>Cush</u> (<u>Ethiopia</u>) are named here.</p>
<p>O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God; sing praises to the Lord, Selah to him who <u>rides in the heavens</u>, the ancient heavens; behold, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice.</p>	<p>God riding in the heavens is spoken of here.</p>
<p>Ascribe power to God, whose majesty is over <u>Israel</u>, and whose <u>power is in the skies</u>. Awesome is <u>God from his sanctuary</u>; the God of <u>Israel</u>--he is the one who gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God!</p>	<p>Although God is not riding in the heavens here, per se, <u>His power is in the skies</u>. <u>God's sanctuary</u> is again mentioned. He is called the God of <u>Israel</u> here as well.</p>

As I study this, I note that I can, more or less, match up the first 3 stanzas with the final 3 stanzas, making me think that David set up this psalm to parallel itself.

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Now that it appears as though the beginning of this psalm should be matched with the end of the psalm, let me place them in parallel and comment:

I will use the Literal Translation of the Holy Bible (my choice of translations here is purely random, as I am not comfortable with my own translation).

Do We Find a Parallelism in Psalm 68?

Psalm 68 from the Beginning	Psalm 68 from the End
<p>God rises up and His enemies are scattered; and those who hate Him flee from His face. As smoke is driven away, You drive them away; as wax melts before the fire, the wicked perish in God's presence. But the righteous are glad; they shout for joy before God; yea, they exult with gladness.</p>	<p>Give might to God over Israel; His majesty and His strength in the clouds. O God, You are awesome out of Your holy places; the God of Israel is He who gives strength and power to the people. Blessed be God!</p>
<p>God rises up against His enemies; God reigns over Israel, and gives strength to His people, Israel. What they have in common is both of these begin with an imperative (the LTHB does not render it that way, obviously)</p>	

Do We Find a Parallelism in Psalm 68?

Psalm 68 from the Beginning	Psalm 68 from the End
<p>Sing to God, sing praise to His name; lift up a song for Him who rides in the deserts, by His name Jehovah; yea, exult in His presence. In His holy dwelling God is a father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows. God causes the lonely to live at home; He brings out those who are bound with chains, while the rebellious dwell in a dry land.</p>	<p>Sing to God, kingdoms of the earth, praises to the Lord. Selah. To Him who rides on the heavens of heavens of old; lo, He gives forth His voice, a mighty voice.</p>
<p>God is to be praised and we are called upon to sing to God. This is probably the clearest parallel, which suggested to me that perhaps David set these up as parallel stanzas.</p>	
<p>O God, when You marched before Your people, when You walked on through the wilderness. Selah. The earth shook, and the heavens dropped before God, this Sinai before God, the God of Israel. O God, You sent down a shower of plenty, by which You upheld Your inheritance when it was weary. Your flock lived in it. You, O God, have prepared for the poor in Your goodness.</p>	<p>Your God has commanded your strength; O God, be strong, in this that You have worked out for us. Because of Your temple over Jerusalem, kings shall bring a present to You. Rebuke the wild beasts of the reeds, the herd of bulls, with the calves of the peoples, trampling down with pieces of silver. He scatters the people who delight in war. Let nobles be brought out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall run up her hands to God.</p>
<p>Although I originally saw a parallel here, I don't any more.</p>	
<p>Jehovah gave the Word; the bearers of it were a great army. Kings of armies fled, they ran away; yea, she who stayed home has divided the plunder. When you lie among the sheepfolds, the wings of a dove are covered with silver, and its feathers with gleaming gold. When the Almighty scatters kings in it, it snows on Mount Salmon.</p>	<p>They have seen Your goings, O God, the goings of my God, my King, in the holy place. The singers went before, then the musicians came; among them were the virgins playing the timbrels. O bless God in the congregations, the Lord, from the fountain of Israel. There is little Benjamin ruling them; the leaders of Judah in their crowd, and the leaders of Zebulun, the leaders of Naphtali.</p>
<p>There might be a legitimate parallel here, where God scatters the armies of Israel's enemies on the one hand; and we have the orderly procession of God's people on the other hand.</p>	
<p>The mountain of Bashan is God's mountain; the Bashan range is a mountain of peaks. Why do you gaze in envy, O mountain range, at the mountain God desired for His dwelling? Yea, Jehovah will dwell in it forever.</p>	<p>Yea, God will crush the head of His enemies, the hairy crown of him who walks on in his guilt. The Lord said, I will bring back from Bashan; I will bring back My people from the depths of the sea; so that your foot may be dashed in the blood of your enemies, the tongue of your dogs in it.</p>
<p>Bashan is mentioned in these two possibly parallel stanzas, and we contrast the high mountains of Bashan with God bringing His people back from the depths of the seas.</p>	

Do We Find a Parallelism in Psalm 68?

Psalm 68 from the Beginning	Psalm 68 from the End
<p>The chariots of God are myriads, thousands of thousands, the Lord is among them, in Sinai, in the holy place.</p> <p>You have gone up on high; You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men; yea, to dwell among the rebellious, O Jehovah God.</p>	<p>Blessed be the Lord: day by day He carries a load for us, the God of our salvation. Selah.</p> <p>Our God is the God of salvation; and to Jehovah the Lord are the issues of death.</p>

These appear to be the most distinctly New Testament stanzas, as the first is quoted in the New Testament and the 2nd speaks of God as our salvation, Who bears our burdens for us. Although the latter stanza is not quoted in the New Testament, there are certainly a number of parallel New Testament verses.

I was hoping to conclude without question a set of parallel stanzas, which parallelism is more easily seen when these verses are laid down next to one another; unfortunately, although that appears to be the case in some places, in others, it is a stretch to make them parallel.

What is my point with these past two charts? First of all, for me, they are like scratch paper; you might see this as my scratch work in attempting to unearth the information of Psalm 68. Secondly, it is to point out that, not everything in Scripture comes easily to anyone with the gift of exegesis (which would include some who write commentaries and some pastor-teachers³). Now and again, when I examine this or that chapter of the Bible, I complete the task and am quite pleased with the results. For instance, when I figured out *why* God allowed Saul to speak to Samuel after Samuel had died, even though Samuel did not really give Saul any new information, I was pleased as peaches; particularly, because I had not seen this correctly explained elsewhere. When I understood the gist of 1Cor. 13:1–3, I was quite happy with that knowledge, as I don't believe that this passage was ever taught correctly. However, on the other hand, when I deal with a chapter like Psalm 68, I am humbled and taken aback. The more translations and the more scratch work that I do on this psalm, the more manageable it becomes, but, after first exegeting the Hebrew, I must confess, my mind was drawing quite a blank to begin with; and I still feel there are passages within this psalm which I may not be able to adequately explain.

One more important message to those who exegete the Scriptures: *do not become emotionally involved with any hypothesis that you may come up with!* Now and again, you are going to think you have a breakthrough; you are going to think that you see something that no one else has seen (and, in some cases, this will occur). Think it through; compare Scripture to Scripture; don't commit to it until you've slept on it for several evenings and have carefully examined the related Scriptures. None of us are going to come up with breakthroughs which turn Christianity on its side; but some of us will, now and again, come across an interpretation, a viewpoint, a rationale, which has not been proposed before, or completely exploited yet. When you come across something like that, do not become emotionally attached to it; you may find that, after a day or two of study, it turns out that your hypothesis does not hold water. Don't worry about that. It's no big deal. Just be humble enough to recognize, *I went down a blind alley; my hypothesis is just flat out wrong*; and then you just move on. Adjust your caffeine intake if necessary, and then go back to studying.

Personally, when it comes to interpreting a particular passage, I would rather admit that I have hit a wall and don't understand it, or offer up the explanations of others, which I may find to be inadequate, rather than to throw out some dogmatic assertion as to the meaning of the passage, when, in fact, I do not believe that interpretation is warranted. Since I am not a pastor, I can get away with this. I recognize that only a few people are going to actually read this, and I hope that they will respect my intellectual integrity when, at times, I don't claim to have the answer or the correct interpretation.

I think by the gist of the past few paragraphs, I may be revealing just how intimidating this psalm was to me.

³ I hope that it is clear that some commentators and some pastor-teachers should be doing something else entirely.

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On a personal note, David kept me in the Hebrew dictionary time after time after time for this psalm. There are several words found only in this psalm and there are several words whose meaning is clear by their cognates, but which are found only here and one or two other passages. Keil and Delitzsch tell us that there are 13 words in this psalm which are found nowhere else.⁴ Sometimes, we can go for several chapters before finding even a single word like that.

Keil and Delitzsch write: *But over and above all this, the language is so bold and so peculiarly its own, that we meet with no less than thirteen words that do not occur anywhere else. It is so distinctly Elohimic in its impress, that the simple Elohim occurs twenty-three times; but in addition to this, it is as though the whole cornucopia of divine names were poured out upon it: YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yohoh-WAH] in Psalm 68:16; ʾădônâi (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced uh-doh-NAY] six times; ʾêl (אֵל) [pronounced ALE] twice in Psalm 68:18; Shadday (שַׁדַּי) [pronounced shahd-DAH-ee] in Psalm 68:14; Yâh (יְהִי) [pronounced yaw] in Psalm 68:4; YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yohoh-WAH] ʾădônâi (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced uh-doh-NAY] in Psalm 68:20; Yâh (יְהִי) [pronounced yaw] ʾĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM] in Psalm 68:18; so that this Psalm among all the Elohimic Psalms is the most resplendent.*⁵

When investigating this psalm, I thought to myself, *what's wrong with me? Why don't I get this?* After completing the very frustrating exegesis from the Hebrew, I then read what Clarke wrote: *I know not how to undertake a comment on this Psalm: it is the most difficult in the whole Psalter; and I cannot help adopting the opinion of Simon De Muis: "In this Psalm there are as many precipices and labyrinths as there are verses or words. It may not be improperly termed, the torture of critics, and the reproach of commentators." To attempt any thing new on it would be dangerous; and to say what has been so often said would be unsatisfactory. I am truly afraid to fall over one of those precipices, or be endlessly entangled and lost in one of these labyrinths. There are customs here referred to which I do not fully understand; there are words whose meaning I cannot, to my own satisfaction, ascertain; and allusions which are to me inexplicable. Yet of the composition itself I have the highest opinion: it is sublime beyond all comparison; it is constructed with an art truly admirable; it possesses all the dignity of the sacred language; none but David could have composed it; and, at this lapse of time, it would require no small influence of the Spirit that was upon him, to give its true interpretation. I shall subjoin a few notes, chiefly philological; and beg leave to refer the reader to those who have written profusely and laboriously on this sublime Psalm, particularly Venema, Calmet, Dr. Chandler, and the writers in the Critici Sacr.*

Clarke isn't the only one to express such thoughts. Henry writes: *This is a most excellent psalm, but in many places the genuine sense is not easy to come at; for in this, as in some other scriptures, there are things dark and hard to be understood. It does not appear when, or upon what occasion, David penned this psalm; but probably it was when, God having given him rest from all his enemies round about, he brought the ark (which was both the token of God's presence and a type of Christ's mediation) from the house of Obed-edom to the tent he had pitched for it in Zion; for the first words are the prayer which Moses used at the removing of the ark, Num. 10:35.*⁶

Spurgeon offers up more of the same: *The Psalm is at once surpassingly excellent and difficult. Its darkness in some stanzas is utterly impenetrable. Well does a German critic speak of Psalm 68 as a Titan very hard to master. Our slender scholarship has utterly failed us, and we have had to follow a surer Guide.*⁷ After reading this and the previous comments, I don't feel nearly as bad as I did when

⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 68 introduction.

⁵ Ibid. I adjusted the verse numbers and included the full pronunciation of the names for God.

⁶ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68 introduction.

⁷ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 68 introduction.

I began this psalm; I feel just as confused at times, but at least I know that is how other commentators have felt over the centuries.

Steve Puluka writes: *The RSV translation below provides our base text for the discussion. For purposes of the analysis of Jewish and Christian usage and interpretation the reference text is sufficient. However, as noted by the Jewish Publication society translation “The coherence of this psalm and the meaning of many of its passages are uncertain.” Outlined below are the uncertain terms and divergences of the LXX for this text. None provide a point of theological or liturgical controversy in the use or interpretation of the Psalm between Christians and Jews.*⁸ What is most important in his statement is, *we might not understand all that is in this psalm; but we don’t find things which contradict Jewish or Christian doctrines.* This, by the way, is true of all of the passages which we do not understand. We may not be able to get a definite handle on them, but difficult passages do not rise to the level of teaching, for instance, *soul sleep or purgatory* (or, whatever). So I might not be able to tell you exactly what this or that verse means, but, you won’t read it and think that you have suddenly discovered new revelations on covenant theology.

Given the many difficulties associated with this psalm, the primary commentators all appear to be in agreement that this psalm was written by David to be sung when the Ark was moved to Jerusalem. Some of them do allude to other commentators—guys I have never heard of—for additional theories, most of which are pretty weird and find themselves at odds immediately with the inscription of this psalm.

Opinions as to the Occasion of Psalm 68

Commentator	Opinion/Comment
The Amplified Bible	<i>David sang of the ark of the covenant, which after a great victory was transferred or brought back to Zion. in this fact he sees the principle of the history of the kingdom of God, appearing in ever widening circles and nobler manner. the fact is to him a type of the method and course of the Messiah’s kingdom. so the Apostle Paul (in eph. 4:8) is perfectly justified in finding the psalmists’s eye directed toward Christ, and so interpreting it. The “on high” in the Psalm is first of all Mount Zion, but this is a type of Heaven, as Paul makes clear. (Lange’s Commentary)</i> ⁹
Barnes	<i>It is evidently, like the eighteenth psalm, a triumphal song designed to celebrate victories which had been achieved; but whether composed to celebrate some particular victory, or in view of all that had been done in subduing the enemies of the people of God, it is impossible now to determine. Prof. Alexander supposes that it was in reference to the victory recorded in 2Sam. 12:26–31, the last important victory of David’s reign. Venema supposes that it was composed on the occasion of removing the ark to Mount Zion, to the place which David had prepared for it. This also is the opinion of Rosenmüller. DeWette inclines to the opinion that it was written in view of the victory over the Ammonites and others, as recorded in 2 Sam. 8–12.</i> ¹⁰ Barnes has more to say on this, which I will give next.
Böttcher	<i>Böttcher, on the other hand, sees in it a festal hymn of triumph belonging to the time of Hezekiah, which was sung antiphonically at the great fraternizing Passover after the return home of the young king from one of his expeditions against the Assyrians, who had even at that time fortified themselves in the country east of the Jordan (Bashan).</i> ¹¹

⁸ Quoted from <http://www.puluka.com/psalm68/default.asp> and he quotes The Tanakh. Jewish Publication Society, 1985; p. 1182.

⁹ *The Amplified Bible*, The Lockman Foundation; ©1965 by Zondervan Publishing House; p. 653 (footnote).

¹⁰ Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68 introduction.

¹¹ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 68 introduction.

Opinions as to the Occasion of Psalm 68	
Commentator	Opinion/Comment
Gill	<p>The Targum makes the argument of this psalm to be the coming of the children of Israel out of Egypt, and the giving of the law on Mount Sinai; in which it is followed by many of the Jewish interpreters: but Aben Ezra rejects such an interpretation of it, and thinks that David composed it, concerning the war he had with the uncircumcised nations, the Philistines and others, 2Sam. 8:1, &c. And so the title of the Syriac version begins, "a psalm of David, when the kings prepared themselves to fight against him:" [my Syriac Bible does not have that].</p> <p>Kimchi says it was composed on account of Sennacherib's army coming against Jerusalem, in the times of Hezekiah, and so delivered by David, under a spirit of prophecy concerning that affair; though he owns that some of their writers interpret it of the war of Gog and Magog, in the times of the Messiah they yet expect. But they are much nearer the truth, who take it that it was written on occasion of the ark being brought to the city of David; seeing it begins with much the same words that Moses used when the ark set forward in his times, Num. 10:35; and the bringing of which was attended with great joy and gladness, 2Sam. 6:14; such as the righteous are called upon to express in this psalm, Psalm 68:3. And this being a type of Christ, and of his ascending the holy hill of God, may be allowed of; for certain it is that this psalm treats of the coming of Christ, and of blessings by him, and of victory over his enemies; and particularly of his ascension to heaven, as most evidently appears from Eph. 4:8; and from prophecies in it, concerning the calling of the Gentiles. Wherefore the latter part of the Syriac inscription of it is very pertinent; "also a prophecy concerning the dispensation of the Messiah, and concerning the calling of the Gentiles to the faith."¹²</p>
Keil and Delitzsch	<p>Although Keil and Delitzsch clearly apply this psalm to the moving of the Ark by David (at least, at first), they do list a number of other theories. Most of the other theories are ridiculous, and several are listed here. Refer to Keil and Delitzsch introduction to the exegesis of this psalm if you are interested in the more bizarre theories concerning Psalm 68.</p>
Kukis	<p>One clue that this psalm was written for the moving of the Ark of God is, back in Num. 10:34–36, when the Ark was about to be moved, Moses said a few word which David uses in the first verse of this Psalm: And the cloud of Jehovah was on them by day as they pulled up stakes from the camp. And it happened when the ark pulled out, Moses said, Rise, O Jehovah, and Your enemies shall be scattered, and those hating You shall flee from Your presence. And when it rested, he said, Return, O Jehovah, to the myriads of the thousands of Israel (Num. 10:34–36). The fact that David quotes Moses almost verbatim indicates that this psalm was written specifically for the moving of the Ark of God.</p> <p>As we proceed further along in this psalm, I will better tie the reason for David writing it.</p>

¹² Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68 introduction.

Opinions as to the Occasion of Psalm 68	
Commentator	Opinion/Comment
NIV Study Bible	<p><i>[Psalm 68 is] a recessional liturgy celebrating the glorious and triumphant rule of Israel's God... Verses 1–18 contain many clear references to God's triumphal march from Mount Sinai (in the days of Moses) to Mount Zion (in the days of David). The events at Mount Sinai marked the birth of the kingdom of God among His people; the establishing of the Ark of the Covenant, a symbol of God's thorne, in Jerusalem marked the establishment of God's redemptive kingdom in the earth, with Jerusalem as its royal city. The early church, taking its cue from Eph. 4:8–13, understood this psalm to foreshadow the resurrection, ascension and present rule of Christ and the final triumph of His church over the hostile world.¹³ The NIV Study Bible also suggests that this is the last psalm in a series of 4 psalms, all of which have similar themes. If this is the case, then this opens up a whole Pandora's Box of questions: Did David write these at the same time? Did he write them sequentially? Were all of these psalms a part of the moving of the Ark of God? Will understanding Psalms 65–67 provide the necessary keys for understanding Psalm 68? That we find ourselves being faced with a boat-load of questions is not a problem, but it does make me question whether I should have begun with Psalm 65, even if the previous 3 psalms may not be directly connected to the moving of the Ark.</i></p>
Reuss	<p><i>The Psalm is said, as Reuss ultimately decides, to have been written between the times of Alexander the Great and the Maccabees, and to give expression to the wish that the Israelites, many of whom were far removed from Palestine and scattered abroad in the wide earth, might soon be again united in their fatherland. But this apprehension rests entirely upon violence done to the exegesis, more particularly in the supposition that in v. 23 the exiles are the persons intended by those whom God will bring back. Reuss makes out those who are brought back out of Bashan to be the exiles in Syria, and those who are brought back out of the depths of the sea he makes out to be the exiles in Egypt. He knows nothing of the remarkable concurrence of the mention of the Northern tribes (including Benjamin) in Psalm 68:28 with the Asaphic Psalms: Judah and Benjamin, to his mind, is Judæa; and Zebulun and Naphtali, Galilee in the sense of the time after the return from exile. The "wild beast of the reed" he correctly takes to be an emblem of Egypt; but he makes use of violence in order to bring in a reference to Syria by the side of it. Nevertheless Olshausen praises the services Reuss has rendered with respect to this Psalm; but after incorporating two whole pages of the "Denkmal" in his commentary he cannot satisfy himself with the period between Alexander and the Maccabees, and by means of three considerations arrives, in this instance also, at the common refuge of the Maccabean period, which possesses such an irresistible attraction for him.¹⁴</i></p>
Thenius	<p><i>Thenius (following the example of Rödiger) holds a different view. He knows the situation so very definitely, that he thinks it high time that the discussion concerning this Psalm was brought to a close. It is a song composed to inspire the army in the presence of the battle which Josiah undertook against Necho, and the prominent, hateful character in Psalm 68:22 is Pharaoh with his lofty artificial adornment of hair upon his shaven head. It is, however, well known what a memorably tragical issue for Israel that battle had; the Psalm would therefore be a memorial of the most lamentable disappointment.¹⁵</i></p>

¹³ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 846 (footnote) (slightly edited).

¹⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 68 introduction.

¹⁵ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 68 introduction.

I must admit that I had not the slightest clue that there would be so many differing opinions here. Barnes will clear this up for us in the next short doctrine.

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Barnes makes a very compelling argument for this psalm being written on the occasion of the moving of the Ark of God:

Albert Barnes: Why Psalm 68 was Written on the Occasion of Moving the Ark

	Reason/Rationale
1.	It is clear that it was not composed before the time of David, because before his time Jerusalem or Zion was not the seat of the royal authority, nor the place of divine worship, which it is evidently supposed to be in the psalm (Psalm 68:29— Because of Your temple over Jerusalem, kings shall bring a present to You).
2.	It was composed when the Hebrew nation was one, or before the separation of the ten tribes and the formation of the kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam, for Benjamin, Judah, Zebulun and Naphtali are especially mentioned as taking part in the solemnities referred to in the psalm (Psalm 68:27— There is little Benjamin ruling them; the leaders of Judah in their crowd, and the leaders of Zebulun, the leaders of Naphtali).
3.	It was consequently before the Babylonian captivity.
4.	It was composed on some occasion of bringing up the ark, and putting it in the place which had been prepared for it. Why do you gaze in envy, O mountain range, at the mountain God desired for His dwelling? Yea, Jehovah will dwell in it forever (Psalm 68:16). They have seen Your goings, O God, the goings of my God, my King, in the holy place. The singers went before, then the musicians came; among them were the virgins playing the timbrels (Psalm 68:24–25). These verses can be best explained on the supposition that the psalm was written on that occasion. Indeed they cannot well be explained on any other supposition.
5.	it was in view of past triumphs; of victories secured in former times; of what God had then done for his people, and especially of what he had done when the ark of the covenant had been placed at the head of the armies of Israel (Psalm 68:14— When the Almighty scatters kings in it, it snows on Mount Salmon). Compare Psalm 68:7–8 (O God, when You marched before Your people, when You walked on through the wilderness. Selah. The earth shook, and the heavens dropped before God, this Sinai before God, the God of Israel); Psalm 68:12 (Kings of armies fled, they ran away; yea, she who stayed home has divided the plunder); Psalm 68:17–18 (The chariots of God are myriads, thousands of thousands, the Lord is among them, in Sinai, in the holy place. You have gone up on high; You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men; yea, to dwell among the rebellious, O Jehovah God).
6.	it was in anticipation of future triumphs – the triumphs of the true religion; under the feeling and belief that Jerusalem would be the center from which wholesome influences would go out over the world; and that through the influences which would go out from Jerusalem the world would be subdued to God, Psalm 68:20–23; 29–31 (Our God is the God of salvation; and to Jehovah the Lord are the issues of death. Yea, God will crush the head of His enemies, the hairy crown of him who walks on in his guilt. The Lord said, I will bring back from Bashan; I will bring back My people from the depths of the sea; so that your foot may be dashed in the blood of your enemies, the tongue of your dogs in it...Because of Your temple over Jerusalem, kings shall bring a present to You. Rebuke the wild beasts of the reeds, the herd of bulls, with the calves of the peoples, trampling down with pieces of silver. He scatters the people who delight in war. Let nobles be brought out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall run up her hands to God). Compare Isa. 2:3 (And many people shall go and say, Come and let us go up to the mount of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob. And He will teach from His ways, and we will walk in His paths. For out of Zion the Law will go forth, and the Word of Jehovah from Jerusalem).

It's hard to argue with Barnes' logic here. He concludes: *The psalm was composed, therefore, I apprehend, when the ark was brought up from the house of Obed-edom, and placed in the city of David, in the tent or tabernacle which he had erected for it there: (2Sam. 6:12 1 Chr. 15). It is not improbable that other psalms, also, were composed for this occasion, as it was one of great solemnity.*¹⁶

The only surprising thing about Barnes' argument is, he does not mention that David quoted Moses in this psalm, word that Moses used anytime the Ark was moved (compare Psalm 68:1 and Num. 10:34–36).

From Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68 introduction.

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So, what do we know about this psalm? It appears to be an interpretation of God's involvement with Israel throughout history; and there are suggestions here and there that this psalm was mostly likely written by David specifically for the transportation of the Ark of God into Jerusalem. Let me remind you of this history. David and his army take Jerusalem, and David makes Jerusalem his capital city. David recognizes God's hand in all of this and he decides to bring the Ark of God to Jerusalem—which Ark had been in Kiriath-jearim in storage, and separated from the Tabernacle of God (which we hear very little about). Although this is never outright said, David either intends to bring the Tabernacle into Jerusalem or he thinks about building a Temple to God. We do know that David thought about building a Temple around this time period (2Sam. 7), and we may hypothesize that he did not bring the Tabernacle to Jerusalem knowing that he or his son Solomon would build this Temple.

David's first attempt to bring the Ark into Jerusalem ends with the death of one of the Ark's caretakers. The problem is, David did not know how to properly move the Ark, lacking that doctrine in his soul, and the Ark was simply placed into a cart (as the heathen Philistines had done) and brought toward Jerusalem. Before the Ark had traveled very far, it appeared that the Ark was going to fall out of the cart, and Uzzah reached out to steady the Ark, and God killed him immediately for touching the Ark. David then stopped the first procession, and the Ark was taken to the closest home, the home of Obed-edom, where it remained for 3 months. Obed-edom was so blessed that, men actually went to David within that 3 month period of time and told David how much God had done for Obed-edom. David, either on his own, or because God had blessed Obed-edom so much, began searching the Scriptures and reading about the Ark and, subsequently, about Israel's history. I think that there are a number of things which we will read in this psalm which are a clear result of David searching the Scriptures. We essentially have a history of God's dealings with Israel from the beginning, and the blessings which God had heaped upon Israel and the protection which God had afforded Israel from the outset. David then decided to move the Ark from the home of Obed-edom, having more confidence from Bible doctrine (he knew the correct mechanics for moving the Ark), and he determined that a great women's chorus would sing this psalm in the procession.

I think that if we bear in mind that David wrote this psalm for the moving of the Ark, and if we recognize that this psalm presents a poetic history of Israel, from Egypt to the Land of Promise, that this may help us to understand what some of the verses mean. At this point, given the discussion so far, you should be acutely aware that interpreting this psalm will be moderately difficult at times.

Since the Ark of God is in the Old Testament, many believers do not really understand what it is or what it represents.

The Importance of the Ark of God

1. At this point, you may want to examine the **Doctrine of the Ark of God**. However, in a nutshell, it is this:
 - a. God had certain men under the direction of Moses build the Tabernacle of God and the furniture for this Tabernacle.

¹⁶ All of these points were taken from Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68 introduction.

The Importance of the Ark of God

- b. One of these pieces of furniture, was a chest made out of acacia wood, overlaid with gold. This speaks of the humanity and the deity of Jesus Christ.
 - c. In the Ark of God were three items: the tablets of the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod which budded, and a pot of manna. These speak of the fundamental doctrines of our relationship with God. The tablets tell us that we have sinned and that we are unrighteous in the eyes of God. The pot of manna speaks of God's provision for us, which includes salvation and redemption. Aaron's rod that budded speaks of our resurrection from the dead.
 - d. The Ark had at the top, the Mercy Seat, with two angels on each side. This Mercy Seat is the place where we have contact with God, so to speak.
 - e. On top of the Ark were two angels (cherubim) who appear to be staring down at the Ark (at the Mercy Seat), which suggests angelic observation of our lives.
 - f. The most fascinating thing about the Ark (at least to me) is, no one saw the Ark but the High Priest, and He only had contact with the Ark once a year on the Day of Atonement, when he would enter into the Holy of Holies and sprinkle blood on the top of the Ark (on the Mercy Seat). The sprinkling of blood on the Mercy Seat, of course, refers to the blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ for our sins. Again, *no one saw this except for the High Priest!* Although Jesus Christ is revealed in the Old Testament, just as the nature of the Ark of God is revealed in the Old Testament, very few people ever came into contact with Jesus Christ in the Old Testament (these are the various physical manifestations of God in the Old Testament, e.g., the Burning Bush). Because the Ark of God was never seen by Israel during the Age of Israel, it was clear that their Savior had not yet come to them; it was clear that their Savior had not yet been revealed to them.
2. The Ark of God, although unseen, is the heart and soul of the Tabernacle of God. Despite the various foreshadowings of Jesus Christ, one might argue that the Tabernacle of God was empty without the Ark of God within its midst.
 3. The Ark, more than any other piece of furniture in or about the Tabernacle, spoke of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ and His sacrifice for us.
 4. David could look at the history of Israel and the Ark of God, and how, during the time that the Ark was not a part of the Tabernacle of God, the history of Israel was at a low point.
 - a. Let me caveat that by adding, much of Israel's history was a history of low points; however, parallel to these low points is the ignoring or non-function of the Tabernacle, the sacrificial system which God set up, or the absence of the Ark of God from the Tabernacle.
 - b. One might reasonably argue that, there are very few points in Israel's history when God's sacrifices or days are observed; and there are very few times in Israel's history when the Tabernacle is set up and functioning as God intended it to be. However, parallel to this is Israel's sorry spiritual state and, therefore, Israel's sorry place in history.
 5. David recognized that observing the rituals and holy days prescribed by God were an innate part of Israel, and that disregarding God's commands in any area was a mistake.
 6. We do not know just exactly how much God the Holy Spirit revealed to David or how well he was able to see into the future; David clearly believed in Jesus Christ and David clearly understood the importance of God's rituals, all of which spoke of Jesus Christ. Therefore, bringing the Ark of God into Jerusalem, the new capital city of Israel, was the only reasonable thing which David could do. However, so there is no misunderstanding here: this was a great desire of David's; it was not simply a fulfillment of religious duty.
 7. In this lifetime, we will never completely understand just how much David understood; however, it was clear to him that the Ark of God *must* be reintroduced to the Tabernacle of God, both of which should be located in the capital city of Jerusalem.
 8. So that you understand David's plans, his intention was to build a Temple for God—a permanent dwelling place—which would take the place of the Tabernacle. This is why David did not bring the Tabernacle into Jerusalem simultaneous to bringing the Ark into Jerusalem.

Now that we understand David's motivation, this helps to explain why this event was so important in the history of Israel.

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Psalm 68 Inscription

Slavishly literal:

To the preeminent one; to David; a psalm; a song.Psalm
68 inscription

Moderately literal:

To the preeminent one, of David; a psalm; a song.**For the choir director by David; a psalm to be put to music.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Dead Sea Scrolls

Although there are fragments of this psalm in the Dead Sea Scrolls, none of those fragments amount to enough to offer an alternative to the Masoretic text.

Latin Vulgate

Unto the end, a psalm of a canticle for David himself.

Masoretic Text

To the preeminent one; to David; a psalm; a song.

Septuagint

For the end, a Psalm of a Song by David.

Significant differences:

The LXX and the Vulgate change the order of the words and they both have *the end* instead of the more commonly found *preeminent one*.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV

(A psalm and a song by David for the music leader.)

EasyEnglish (Churchyard)¹⁷

(This is) for the music leader.

(It is) a psalm of David, a song.

NET Bible®

For the music director; by David, a psalm, a song.

Revised English Bible

For the leader; for David; a psalm; a song.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English

To the chief music-maker. Of David. A Psalm. A Song.

Complete Apostles' Bible

For the end, A Psalm of a Song by David.

HCSB

For the choir director. A Davidic psalm. A song.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

King James 2000 Version

[To the Chief Musician. A Psalm or Song of David.]

A Voice in the Wilderness

[To the chief Musician. A Psalm or Song of David.]

Young's Literal Translation

To the Overseer. --A Psalm, a song of David.

What is the gist of this verse? This psalm appears to be written by David and given to the choir leader/head musician. It appears to be a psalm put to music with the intention that it be sung.

¹⁷ This is taken from the website www.easyenglish.info. This is a new translation which I recently discovered on the Internet; their intent is to present the Bible to someone with a very limited vocabulary and their commentary attempts to reach those with a limited vocabulary as well.

Psalm 68 inscription a

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

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

Both the Greek and Latin have *to the end* instead.

Translation: [To the preeminent one](#);... As we have seen with the numerous translations above, no one is clear as to who this person is. This psalm could be dedicated to God, which is essentially how I have translated it; however, it could be designed to be conducted by the chief musician, which is how Rotherham understands it. Most translators assume that this is given over to the choir director or the conductor or the one in charge of those who sang.

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

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

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

The NIV Study Bible has its opinion on this matter: *[For the director of music is] probably a liturgical notation, indicating either that the psalm was to be added to the collection of works to be used by the director of music in Israel's worship services, or that when the psalm was used in the temple worship, it was to be spoke [or, sung?] by the leader of the Levitical choir—or by the choir itself (see 1Chron. 23:4–5, 30 [Of the overseers over the works of the house of the Lord there were twenty-four thousand, and there were six thousand scribes and judges; and four thousand gatekeepers, and four thousand to praise the Lord with instruments which he made to praise the Lord...to stand in the*

¹⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 4 introduction.

morning to praise and give thanks to the Lord, and so in the evening] 25 [assignments are given to the sons of Korah, among others]). In this liturgical activity the Levites functioned as representatives of the worshiping congregation. Following their lead the people probably responded with “Amen” and “Praise the LORD” (Hallelujah); see 1Chron. 16:36 Neh. 5:13; compare 1Cor. 14:16 Rev. 5:14 7:12 19:4.¹⁹

Psalm 68 inscription b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) [pronounced l ¹⁹]	to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
Dâvid (דָּוִד); also Dâviyd (דָּוִיִּד) [pronounced daw-VEED]	beloved and is transliterated David	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1732 BDB #187

Translation: ...of David;... For reasons which were never completely clear to me, this is also how we denote that David is the author.

We even know exactly when David wrote this psalm. He had attempted to move the Ark to Jerusalem, which resulted in the death of a priest who put his hand on the Ark. The procession was stopped and the Ark was taken to one of the nearest homes in the area, the home of Obed-edom. For 3 months, the Ark remained at this house, while David researched the Scriptures to determine what went wrong. Although we do not know all of the events which took place during this time, we know for a certainty that David examined the Scriptures available, found how the Ark was supposed to be moved, and then He wrote this psalm in anticipating of moving the Ark. The first line, as we will see, was taken directly from the words of Moses, which Moses would say whenever the Ark was picked up and moved. Although others have, at various times, attempted to assign this psalm to another author, to another point in time, and to other circumstances, there is really no reason to do so. The logic we are applying here is, *if it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, then it is probably a duck*. Any other approach requires us to ignore or to explain away various portions of the psalm (the inscription and the first verse), and then to offer up some convoluted explanation based upon a lot less evidence in order to assign this psalm to a different author and/or set of circumstances.

We do have a potential problem here. David is said to be the author, yet we find that kings would bring gifts to Jehovah because of His Temple in Jerusalem. There was no Temple in Jerusalem until Solomon, David's son, built it. However, as we find in 1Chron. 17, David had been thinking about building a permanent residence for the Ark of the Covenant. He believed it to be reasonable to build a Temple for God, as he, David, lived in a wonderful, permanent house. It did not seem right for him to live in a palace and for God to be in a tent (bear in mind, the Ark of God was not a object of idolatry nor did it portray the visage of God; the Ark did, however, represent God and God's relationship to mankind). So, because the Ark of God was the most holy thing on this earth, it seemed incongruous to David for him to live in a palace and for the Ark to be in a tent. Therefore, it is reasonable for David to have either planned to build a Temple in Jerusalem when writing this psalm; or, he knew that one of his descendants would build the Temple (1Chron. 17:3–12).

Clarke remarks about the authorship: *In the title of this Psalm there is nothing particular to be remarked. It is probable that this Psalm, or a part of it at least, might have been composed by Moses, to be recited when the Israelites journeyed. See Num. 10:35; and that David, on the same model,*

¹⁹ The NIV Study Bible; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 782 (footnote). Text slightly edited and some of the passages were included as well.

*constructed this Psalm. It might have been sung also in the ceremony of transporting the ark from Kirjath-jearim, to Jerusalem; or from the house of Obed-edom to the tabernacle erected at Sion.*²⁰

Num. 10:35 is the first line of this psalm, and it sets the time and place of this psalm. There is no indication from the book of Numbers that Moses wrote a psalm to be sung when the Ark is moved; but certain words were to be spoken when the Ark was moved. Although I admit that such a viewpoint is not out of the question, it seems like a rather convoluted explanation and one which obfuscates the more natural and reasonable explanation that, David examined the Scriptures to determine how the Ark should be transported (where he clearly did in 1Chron. 15:2, 12–13), and, understanding what a great celebration this was, he also wrote a psalm for it (probably several), including the lines which Moses said should be spoken when the Ark is moved. If I were to put a time and a scenario to this psalm, I would guess that, *after* David did his research, he was so inspired as to read more of the Law and to write this psalm in anticipation of successfully moving the Ark (recall that the first time that David tried to move the Ark, one of the priests lost his life).

Although portions of this inscription can be questioned, this portion cannot.

Psalm 68 inscription c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
miz ^e môwr (מִזְמוֹר) [pronounced mizê-MOHR]	<i>melody, song, poem, psalm</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #4210 BDB #274

Translation: ...a psalm;... There are three words translated *psalm*; this is one of them which is found a little less than a third of the time. I'm not yet ready to differentiate between these three words, nor am I confident that there is an important lesson hidden in differentiating them.

Psalm 68 inscription d			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shîyr (שִׁיר) [pronounced sheer]	<i>song, singing; music</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #7892 BDB #1010

Translation: ...a song. This psalm was written to be performed. It was written to be sung.

Barnes: *The word "song" in the titles to Psalms 30 45 48 65–68 75 76 83 87 88 92 108 120–134. Nothing seems to be indicated by it in regard to the nature and character of the psalms where it is found.*²¹ As above, I don't think that it is unreasonable to suppose that these psalms had been composed and arranged to be performed. What that would say about the other psalms, however, is not clear. The NIV Study Bible points out that these are psalms of praise (with the exception of Psalms 83 and 88). The final group of psalms (120–134) are *songs of ascents*.

We do not know with certainty the difference between a *psalm* and a *song* (and this psalm is both). Barnes suggests that a *psalm* is a poem or a composition and that a *song* is something composed with the idea of it being sung in public or sung as a part of public worship.²² Perhaps the idea is, a *psalm* has been composed possibly

²⁰ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68 introduction.

²¹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 46 introduction.

²² Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 65 introduction.

even with the knowledge that it is divinely inspired; and a *song* has music written with it. These are obviously guesses and we do not know without a doubt how to differentiate them.

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Let God arise against His Enemies

Slavishly literal:

Moderately literal:

**Rises up God;
He breaks [into pieces] His enemies;
and flee those hating Him from His faces.**

Psalm
68:1

**God rises up
[and] He scatters [or, *breaks into pieces*]
His enemies;
and those who hate Him flee from Him.**

**God rises up and He scatters His enemies;
those who Hate God flee from Him.**

Here is how others have handled this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	Rises up God; He breaks [into pieces] His enemies; and flee those hating Him from His faces. [This is v. 2 in the Hebrew].
Septuagint	Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered; and let them that hate him flee from before him.

Significant differences: The Latin, Syriac and Greek have a cohortative here rather than a simple imperfect tense. In the Hebrew, *God* scatters His enemies; in the Latin, Greek and Syriac, God's enemies *are scattered*.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	God will rise up and his enemies will move away in all directions. The people that hate him will quickly ride away from him.
<i>The Message</i> NET Bible®	Up with God! Down with his enemies! Adversaries, run for the hills! God springs into action! His enemies scatter; his adversaries run from him.
New Living Testament	Arise, O God, and scatter your enemies. Let those who hate God run for their lives.
Revised English Bible	May God arise and his enemies be scattered, and those hostile to him flee at his approach.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	Elohim arises, His enemies are scattered. And those who hate Him flee before Him!
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Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	God is [already] beginning to arise, and His enemies to scatter; let them also who hate Him flee before Him!
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LTHB	God rises up <i>and</i> His enemies are scattered; and those who hate Him flee from His face.
WEB	Let God arise! Let his enemies be scattered! Let them who hate him also flee before him.
Young's Updated LT	God rises—scattered are His enemies! And those hating Him flee from His face.

What is the gist of this verse? God rises up and His enemies scatter.

Psalm 68:1a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
qûwm (קוּם) [pronounced koom]	<i>to stand, to rise up, to get up; to establish, to establish a vow, to cause a vow to stand, to confirm or to fulfill a vow</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6965 BDB #877
The NET Bible® gives us the rendering <i>God springs into action</i> and then comments: <i>Or "rises up." The verb form is an imperfect, not a jussive. The psalmist is describing God's appearance in battle in a dramatic fashion.</i> ²³ Their point being, this is not a 3 rd person imperative, as some translators have supposed (<i>Let God arise...</i>).			
The 3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect is yâqûwm (יִקּוּם) [pronounced yaw-KOOM]; which is what we find here. The jussive is yâqôm (יִקּוֹם) [pronounced yaw-KOHM], which is not the form found in the Masoretic text.			
The Latin, Greek and Syriac all read <i>let God arise</i> .			
ʾĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Translation: *God rises up...* God is a spirit, so God does not *rise up*; however, this is an anthropomorphism to indicate that God is going to clearly act. The general concept here is also anthropomorphic. God is not at some dinner party, nor is He sitting down to a good book, when suddenly He hears a prayer from us, and He puts down His book and springs into action. God is ever-vigilant and God is always involved in our lives. He is both omnipresent and omnipotent. This does not mean that we are going to face pressures from all of our neighbors or all of our co-workers, and that God will suddenly wipe them out. However, God has made provision for us—which provision He made in eternity past—for everything that we might face.

Application: We do not always see God's hand in our lives. We get fired from this job, we have this or that person giving us grief, we have to move for financial reasons, we or someone close to us falls ill; and, when these problems or crises strike us, we don't always recognize God's hand in it. In fact, much of the time, when facing a crisis, we call upon God to rise up and remove the problem which is giving us grief. However, it is often these problems which are God's hand in our lives. Personally, I found myself moved halfway across the United States due to employment problems, and the end result was clearly, in retrospect, God's doing. Moving to Texas was a wonderful thing for me and exactly the thing which I needed to do.

God is always involved in the life of believers; He is always involved in His creation. When David speaks of God rising up, this does not mean that God is slumbering, and David is calling upon Him to solve a problem. This does not mean that God was ignoring David's life, and now, at David's behest, is getting back to work. God *rising up*

²³ The Net Bible®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 68:1.

looks at God from our perspective and it is applying actions to God which God does not actually do. God does not actually rise up in any way; however, to us, it may seem like that.

What is occurring simultaneously to the singing of this psalm is, the Ark is being lifted upon the shoulders of 4 Levites at the home of Obed-edom, and it will be carried to Jerusalem. So David, when he writes this psalm, envisions the Ark rising up; and, at the same time, in keeping with the theme of this psalm, sees God arising (anthropomorphically speaking) against His enemies.

Some see this as the 3rd person masculine singular, Qal imperative, and render it, *Let God arise*. Barnes comments: *This is a common mode of calling upon God in the Scriptures, as if He had been sitting still, or had been inactive. It is, of course, language taken from human conceptions, for in the intervals of active effort, in labor or in battle, we sit or lie down, and when we engage in toil we arise from our sitting or recumbent posture. So the mind accustoms itself to think of God. The idea is simply that David now calls upon God to interpose in his behalf and to deliver him.*²⁴

God rises up... This is a perfect introduction to his psalm, as the theme of the psalm is God's interaction with His people and with His earth. We find similar language used many times in Scripture (2Chron. 6:41 Psalm 7:6 44:26 132:8 Isa. 51:9).

Psalm 68:1b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
1 Early printed edition, the LXX, the Peshitta and the Vulgate all have a conjunction here.			
pûwts (פּוּטִים) [pronounced <i>poots</i>]	<i>to break, to dash into pieces; to disperse [sometimes, to disperse themselves; to be dispersed], to scatter; to overflow</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6327 BDB #806
ʾâyab (אֵיבָב) [pronounced <i>aw-YA^BV</i>]	<i>enemy, the one being at enmity with you; enmity, hostility</i>	masculine plural, Qal active participle with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #340 BDB #33

Translation:...[and] **He scatters** [or, *He breaks into pieces*] **His enemies**;... David is not necessarily at war with anyone at the time that he writes this psalm. He may have recently defeated the Jebusites; and, in the back of his mind, he might be thinking that it is time for the Philistines to overrun his country once more, but David is speaking in generalities here. When God decides to insert Himself into human history, His enemies, often the enemies of Israel, are scattered. No person with half a brain thinks that they can stand up to God and somehow oppose Him. No army thinks that, with all of its forces, that they have any chance of opposing God.

Application: As I live longer, I find more and more people who are angry with God; who hate God; who do everything in their power to remove Him from their periphery. All kinds of excuses are made. Most recently, there have been attacks by the ACLU against the holiday Christmas. Christmas hymns which were a part of my growing up—hymns which we sang every year at Christmas and sung during Christmas pageants—are absent from most public schools today. The ACLU, which is allegedly trying to enforce the Bill of Rights, finds small school districts and attacks these districts when they play Christmas songs or make reference to Christmas holidays (even though Christmas is a federal holiday and has been so for decades). One of the reasons why they attack the small districts is, legal defense costs a lot of money, and these small school districts generally have very tight budgets, so some of them will back down just to avoid the cost of a lawsuit. Furthermore, this is done piecemeal, so that, if any news source speaks of such an attack in a disparaging manner, liberals can marginalize their comments

²⁴ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 3:7.

by saying, “Look, that is just some little school district off in Podunk County; why make a big deal out of t?” Meanwhile, other school districts in the same area react by cancelling Christmas pageants, Christmas music, and some have even banned the use of the decorative colors red and green during that time frame. These various districts may have a tradition of Christmas celebration and music going back 30–50 years, but they cancel these events, fearing that their own funds will be taken from them in a lawsuit.

Just as *God rising up* is found many times in Scripture, so we also find that He scatters His enemies throughout His Word (Psalm 59:11 68:14, 30 89:10 Isa. 41:16 Ezek. 5:2 12:14–15).

Psalm 68:1c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
<p>The wâw conjunction is used as ❶ a simple copulative, used to connect words and sentences, in which case it is usually rendered <i>and</i>. ❷ It can be used to explain one noun or clarify one noun with another, in which case it is rendered <i>even</i> or <i>yea</i> (see Job 5:19 Dan. 4:10). ❸ The wâw conjunction can introduce two nouns, where the first is the genus and the second is the species; in which case, we would render it <i>and particularly, and specially, and namely, and specifically</i> (and it can be used the other way as well) (see 2Kings 23:2 Psalm 18:1 Isa. 1:1 2:1 Zech. 14:21). ❹ It can be prefixed to a verb also by way of explanation; it could be reasonably rendered as a relative pronoun (<i>who, which</i>) (see Gen. 49:25 Job 29:12 Isa. 13:14). ❺ It can be used to begin an apodosis (the <i>then</i> portion of an <i>if...then...</i> statement) (see Gen. 2:4, 5 40:9 48:7). ❻ It is used between words and sentences in order to compare them or to mark their resemblance (1Sam. 12:15 Job 5:7). ❼ When doubled, it can mean <i>both...and...</i> (Num. 9:14 Joshua 7:24 Psalm 76:7). ❽ It can be prefixed to adversative sentences or clauses and rendered <i>but, and yet, although, otherwise</i> (Gen. 2:17 15:2 17:20 Judges 16:15 Ruth 1:21 Job 15:5 6:14). ❾ And, what we were after, is the wâw conjunction can be used in disjunctive sentences; that is, it can be rendered <i>or</i> (which will help us to understand what Jephthah does) (Ex. 21:17 Lev. 5:3 Deut. 24:7). ❿ Finally, the wâw conjunction can be used before causal sentences and rendered <i>because, for, that, in that</i> (Gen. 18:32 30:27 Psalm 5:12 60:13); before conclusions or inferences, and therefore rendered <i>so that, therefore, wherefore</i> (2Kings 4:41 Isa. 3:14 Ezek. 18:32 Zech. 2:10); and before final and consecutive sentences, which mark an end or an object: <i>in order that</i> (Gen. 42:34 Job 20:10 Isa. 13:2). To paraphrase Gesenius, <i>frequently, it is put after verbs and sentences standing absolutely, especially those which imply time or condition</i> and is reasonably rendered <i>then</i>.²⁵</p>			
nûwç (נוּחַ) [pronounced <i>noose</i>]	<i>to flee, to flee from, to escape, to depart, to hasten quickly [away]</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5127 BDB #630
sânê` (סָנְא) [pronounced <i>saw-NAY</i>]	<i>hating ones, the ones hating, the haters; enemies</i>	masculine plural, Piel participle; with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #8130 BDB #971
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577

²⁵ H. W. F. Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*; ©1979 by Baker Books; p. 234. When I give a slightly different rendering to a word which I have, 99% of the time, been translating one way, I thought that I should include some documentation for a different usage.

Psalm 68:1c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
pânîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced paw-NEEM]	face, faces, countenance; presence	masculine plural noun (plural acts like English singular); with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6440 BDB #815

Together, min pânîym mean *from before the face of; out from before the face, from the presence of*. However, together, they can also be a reference to the cause, whether near or remote, and can therefore be rendered *because of, because that*.

Translation: *...and those who hate Him flee from Him.* This line parallels the one above; God scatters or disperses His enemies, so those who hate Him flee from Him.

David apparently took a portion of this psalm from the Pentateuch. We read in Num. 10:34–36: *And the cloud of Jehovah was on them by day as they pulled up stakes from the camp. And it happened when the Ark pulled out, Moses said, "Rise, O Jehovah, and Your enemies shall be scattered, and those hating You will flee from Your presence." And when it rested, he said, "Return, O Jehovah, to the myriads of the thousands of Israel."* This passage alone sets the time and place of this psalm: the moving of the Ark to Jerusalem. The Ark was moved by David on two occasions: first, unsuccessfully, and then, successfully. I place this psalm with the 2nd movement of the Ark because it is clear that David did some Biblical research for the 2nd movement (1Chron. 15:2, 12–15). Having done Biblical research, David would have come across these words of Moses. The first time that David attempted to move the Ark, it is clear that he had not done any research in that regard and one of the priests died as a result. Therefore, he would not have quoted Moses the first time the Ark was moved.

Here is how I see it (and this is partially conjecture): David, after his failure to move the Ark the first time, went to the Word of God to see what should have been done. He found what was supposed to be done in Num. 10, but he continued to read all the available material, which gave David a clear, historical perspective of God's involvement with Israel in time. He was inspired by knowledge of doctrine, by knowing how to correctly transport the Ark, and by the history of Israel, to write this particular psalm. This interpretation and understanding of Psalm 68 does absolutely no damage to any portion of the psalm, and is the most logical approach. Almost every major commentator agrees with this interpretation, although one of them was uncertain whether this psalm was sung at the first or second movement of the Ark.²⁶

Now we should determine more of *what* is being said, and I can offer up four interpretations/explanations: (1) The Pre-incarnate Lord goes with Israel, destroying Israel's enemies, sending them on the run. This could be seen as God being with Moses and the Exodus generation and this could be seen as God being with David as God saw that David's enemies were scattered. Furthermore, one might reasonably interpret this to stand for any point in history where God stood with Israel against her enemies. (2) David could be applying this to his day and time, as he was very successful in the military realm. Given the time frame, he would have just defeated the Jebusites, taking Jerusalem for his own. (3) We may reasonably understand this to apply to our Lord at His incarnation, when He came to us in the form of Jesus, subject to all that we are subject to (apart from the indwelling of the old sin nature), and how He is victorious over Satan and the cosmic system in His death, and victorious over sin in the world. (4) Certainly this can be applied to our Lord in the future, at the 2nd advent when He destroys the multitude of armies who converge upon Israel; and later, after the Millennium, to put down the Gog and Magog revolution. Rev. 6:15–17: *And the kings of the earth, and the great ones, and the rich ones, and the commanders,*

²⁶ As already pointed out, this had to be written for the second moving of the Ark by David, as this psalm reveals a clear understanding of Israel's history and God's involvement with the nation Israel. The first line of this psalm matches the very words which Moses used when moving the Ark, so it is clear that this psalm is appropriate to the second moving of the Ark, where David realized what he had done wrong the first time he attempted to move the Ark.

and the powerful ones, and every slave, and every freeman hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains. And "they said to the mountains" and to the rocks, "Fall on us," [Hosea 10:8b] and hide us from the face of the One sitting on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. because the great day of His wrath has come; and who is able to stand? I am not asking you to pick your favorite interpretation of these 4. The psalms are often written with multiple interpretations. Each one of these interpretations has merit and may be reasonably implied.

Let me propose something here. David has something in mind when he writes these lines (actually, when he *copies* these lines). He might be thinking the first two interpretations as he writes this. God the Holy Spirit is the divine author of Scripture and He might have all 4 meanings in mind. Let's take the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ and work backward. Jesus Christ is fully man and fully God. Sometimes his actions reveal just His humanity and sometimes his actions reveal just His Deity and sometimes His actions reveal his hypostatic union. Similarly, things which our Lord says could come from His humanity, His divinity or from His hypostatic union. For instance, when Jesus said, "I *thirst*," He was speaking from His humanity. When He said, "Before Abraham, I *existed eternally* [lit., *I am*]," He was speaking from His deity. When He said, "I *am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father but by Me*," He is speaking from His hypostatic union. So, when we examine Scripture, we must bear in mind that there is a human author and a divine author. Their purposes are never going to be in opposition to one another, but we may reasonably assert that the human author is thinking one thing and that God the Holy Spirit is thinking something different. The thrust of this or that verse can have several different meanings, depending upon whose perspective is in view.

The Ark of God, as previously discussed, is a symbol of our Lord—not an idol by any means—but the most holy piece of furniture associated with the Tabernacle of God which presented our Lord in shadow form. When the Levites hoisted the Ark of God upon their shoulders and moved out, Israel's enemies scattered, in a manner of speaking. However, the Ark of God was not to be used as a good luck charm to be taken with the army going into battle, as we saw in 1Sam. 4–5. In fact, the use of the Ark in this passage was idolatrous. Rather than understanding that the Ark represented God, Israel's army used the Ark as if it were God, as anyone would have used an idol in that day. Not understanding this distinction resulted in the defeat of Israel's army and the capture of the Ark.

Gill expresses essentially the same thoughts: *Let God arise,.... This is to be understood of the divine Person, Whose chariots the angels are; Who is said to be the "Adonai", or "Lord" in the midst of them; and of whom it is prophesied that he should ascend to heaven (Psalm 68:17—The chariots of God are myriads, thousands of thousands, the Lord is among them, in Sinai, in the holy place); even the Messiah, who is God over all. And this "arising," attributed to Him, may be interpreted either of His incarnation, His exhibition and manifestation in the flesh; which is sometimes called in Scripture a raising of Him up, as in Acts 3:26 (Having raised up His child Jesus, God sent Him first to you, blessing you in turning away each one from your iniquities); or of His resurrection from the dead, as it is interpreted by many of the ancients; which, as it was a certain thing, and previous to His ascension hereafter spoken of, so it was a proof of His deity; for though it was only the man that rose, who died and was buried, yet as in union with the Divine Person of the Son of God, and Who rose by virtue of that union; and thereby He was declared to be the Son of God with power. Or else rather this is to be understood of His arising and exerting His power as a man of war, as a mighty and victorious hero, on the behalf of His people, and against His enemies; as He did when He arose and met Satan, the prince of the world, and engaged with all the powers of darkness; see Psalm 45:3; and this sense is confirmed by what follows:*

...let his enemies be scattered; let them also that hate him flee before him: the sense of these two clauses is the same; His enemies, and those that hate Him, are the same persons; and to be scattered and flee express the same things; for enemies, being discomfited, flee and scatter. Some interpret this of the watch set to guard our Lord's sepulchre; who, upon His rising from the dead, were filled with great fear and dread, and scattered, and fled to the priests, to acquaint them with what was done: others, of the Jewish nation in general, who were enemies to Christ; and hated Him, and would not have Him to reign over them; against whom He rose up and exerted His great strength; came in

His kingdom and power against them; poured out His wrath upon them to the uttermost; which issued in the utter destruction of them, as a body politic; and in the entire dispersion of them in all countries, which remains until quite recently. Or rather the whole is to be applied to Satan, and to his principalities and powers; the professed enemies of Christ, personal and mystical; who, when He arose and exerted his mighty power in his conflict with them, in the garden and on the cross, were spoiled and dissipated, and obliged to fly before Him: and who at the same time overcame the world, made an end of sin, abolished death, as well as destroyed him which had the power of it.²⁷

I have warned you just how difficult this psalm is from the outset. Therefore, we must keep these interpretations in mind as we progress in the exegesis of this psalm. Understanding the meaning and application of David's first words of this psalm forms the foundation for our understanding throughout the psalm. I am expecting that, if we fall back on these interpretations when we face the more difficult verses, that we might be able to make at least some sense from them, in the light of these opening words, first spoken by Moses and then echoed by David.

<p>As is dispelled smoke, You dispel; as melts wax from faces of fire, perishes lawless ones from faces of Elohim.</p>	<p>Psalm 68:2</p>	<p>Just as smoke is blown away, You dispel [them]; [and] just as wax is melted by fire, so the corrupt are destroyed because of Elohim [or, before Elohim].</p>
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**Just as smoke is blown away, in the same manner, You dispel them;
and just as fire melts wax, in the same manner the corrupt are destroyed by God.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	As is dispelled smoke, You dispel; as melts wax from faces of fire, perishes lawless ones from faces of Elohim.
Septuagint	As smoke vanishes, let them vanish: as wax melts before the fire, so let the sinners perish from before God.
Significant differences:	In the Hebrew, <i>God</i> does the dispelling; in the Greek, Latin, and Syriac, it reads <i>let them be dispelled</i> . The final phrase is very similar in the Greek, Latin and Syriac, it reads <i>let the wicked perish</i> ; in the Hebrew, they simply perish.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	Scatter them like smoke! When you come near, make them melt like wax in a fire. (God), blow them away as you would blow smoke away. As butter becomes *oil in a fire, when the *godless see the face of God it will destroy them.
Good News Bible (TEV)	As smoke is blown away, so he drives them off; as wax melts in front of the fire, so do the wicked perish in God's presence.
The Message	Gone like a puff of smoke, like a blob of wax in the fire-- one look at God and the wicked vanish.
New American Bible	The wind will disperse them like smoke; as wax is melted by fire, so the wicked will perish before God.
New Jerusalem Bible	You disperse them like smoke; as wax melts in the presence of a fire,

²⁷ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:1. I edited the text somewhat.

New Living Testament so the wicked melt at the presence of God.
 Drive them off like smoke blown by the wind.
 Melt them like wax in fire
 Let the wicked perish in the presence of God.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English Let them be like smoke before the driving wind; as wax turning soft before the fire,
 so let them come to an end before the power of God.
 Complete Apostles' Bible As smoke vanishes, let them vanish: as wax melts before the fire, so let the sinners
 perish from before God.
 HCSB As smoke is blown away, so You blow *them* away. As wax melts before the fire, so
 the wicked are destroyed before God.
 NET Bible® As smoke is driven away by the wind, so you drive them away.
 As wax melts before fire,
 so the wicked are destroyed before God.
 The Scriptures 1998 As smoke is driven away, You drive them away; As wax melts before the fire, The
 wrong perish before Elohim.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

A Conservative Version As smoke is driven away, so drive them away. As wax melts before the fire, so let
 the wicked perish at the presence of God.
 Updated *Emphasized Bible* As smoke is driven about
 Let them be driven about, [so it should be, as per the Aramaic, Septuagint,
 Syriac and Vulgate]
 As wax is melted before a fire
 Let the lawless perish before God.
 English Standard Version As smoke is driven away, so you shall drive them away; as wax melts before fire,
 so the wicked shall perish before God!
 Young's Updated LT As the driving away of smoke You drive away, As the melting of wax before fire,
 The wicked perish at the presence of God.

What is the gist of this verse? In the previous verse, God rises up and his enemies are scattered; this verse presents an analogy to His enemies being scattered: they are scattered as one would blow smoke away. Furthermore, this verse first presents an analogy (*...as wax melts when near a fire...*) and then the reality: *...in this way, the wicked perish before God.*

Psalm 68:2a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kaph or k ^e (כ) [pronounced k ^e]	<i>like, as, just as; according to; about, approximately</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #453
nâdaph (נָדַף) [pronounced naw-DAHf]	<i>to be dispelled, to be driven away [about]; to be blown away; to be put to flight; to be conquered</i>	Niphal infinitive construct	Strong's #5086 BDB #623
ʿâshân (אָשָׁן) [pronounced ʿaw-SHAWN]	<i>smoke; vapor, dust; anger</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #6227 BDB #798

Psalm 68:2a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nâdaph (נָדַף) [pronounced naw-DAHF]	<i>to dispel, to drive, to drive away [about]; to blow away; to put to flight; to conquer</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5086 BDB #623

Translation: Just as smoke is blown away, You dispel [them];... There are two analogies in this verse; this is the first one. The object of this analogy refers back to those from v. 1—those who hate God, those who are enemies of God. It is nothing for God to dispel them, as one would wave his hand to dispel a little smoke. Psalm 1:4: *Not so are the wicked* [in contrast to the righteous, who are stable and produce fruit]: *but rather they are like chaff, which is blown away by the wind.* Psalm 37:20 reads: *But the wicked will perish, And the enemies of Yahweh will be as the fat of lambs: They will consume; in smoke they will consume away.*

Barnes aptly comments: *As smoke is driven away* - Smoke or vapor is easily disturbed and moved by the slightest breath of air; it represents an object of no stability, or having no power of resistance, and would thus represent the real weakness of the most mighty armies of men as opposed to God. *So You drive them away* - With the same ease with which smoke is driven by the slightest breeze, so do the enemies of God disappear before his power.²⁸

Spurgeon writes: *Easily the wind chases the smoke, completely it removes it, no trace is left; so, Lord, do to the foes of Your people. They fume in pride, they darken the sky with their malice, they mount higher and higher in arrogance, they defile wherever they prevail: Lord, let Your breath, Your Spirit, Your Providence, make them to vanish forever from the march of Your people.* He then adds: *Philosophic scepticism is as flimsy and as foul as smoke; may the Lord deliver His Church from the reek of it.*²⁹

Psalm 68:2b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kaph or k ^e (כ) [pronounced k ^e]	<i>like, as, just as; according to; about, approximately</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #453
mâçâh (מָצָה) [pronounced maw-SAWH]	<i>to be melted, to be flowing down [away]; to be dissolved, to become faint [with fear, terror, sorrow, grief]</i>	Niphal infinitive construct	Strong's #4529 BDB #587
dôwnâg (דֹּוּנָג) [pronounced doh-NAWG]	wax [as melting]	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1749 BDB #200
Also spelled dôwnag (דֹּוּנָג) [pronounced doh-NAHG].			
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577

²⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:2 (slightly edited).

²⁹ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 68:2 (edited somewhat to update the language).

Psalm 68:2b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
pânîym (פָּנִיִּם) [pronounced paw-NEEM]	face, faces, countenance; presence	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular)	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, min pânîym mean <i>from before the face of; out from before the face, from the presence of</i> . However, together, they can also be a reference to the cause, whether near or remote, and can therefore be rendered <i>because of, because that; by</i> .			
ʿesh (עֵשׂ) [pronounced aysh]	fire, lightning, supernatural fire; presence of Y ^e howah, the attendance of a theophany	feminine singular noun	Strong's #784 BDB #77

Translation:...[and] just as wax is melted by fire,... Another analogy is set up here—as wax is melted by fire. This parallels exactly the first half of this verse, but describes metaphorically v. 2c below.

Barnes comments: *As wax is melted down by fire - wax loses all its hardness, its firmness, its power of resistance, so must the most mighty armies melt away before God.*³⁰

Psalm 68:2c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿâbad (עָבַד) [pronounced aw ^b -VAHD]	to be lost, to lose oneself, to wander; to perish, to be destroyed; to be ready to perish, to be wretched [miserable or unfortunate]	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6 BDB #1
r ^e shâ'îym (רְשָׁעִים) [pronounced r ^e -shaw-GEEM]	malevolent ones, lawless ones, criminals, the corrupt; wicked, wicked ones	masculine plural adjective (here, it acts like a noun)	Strong's #7563 BDB #957
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
pânîym (פָּנִיִּם) [pronounced paw-NEEM]	face, faces, countenance; presence	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular)	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, min pânîym mean <i>from before the face of; out from before the face, from the presence of</i> . However, together, they can also be a reference to the cause, whether near or remote, and can therefore be rendered <i>because of, because that; by</i> .			

³⁰ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:2 (slightly edited).

Psalm 68:2c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>ʿĒlōhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]</p>	<p><i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i></p>	<p>masculine plural noun</p>	<p>Strong's #430 BDB #43</p>

Translation: ...[so] the corrupt are destroyed because of Elohim [or, before Elohim]. This time, we have a different verb. In the previous half of this verse, we had the Niphal and then the Qal of the same verb. However, here we have two different verbs—we have wax *melting* in the analogy, which is how the corrupt (or malevolent) *are destroyed* or how they *perish* before God. The idea is, God's enemies have no power against Him; they are unable to resist; they can no more resist God's power than wax can resist fire.

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Sing Praises to God

**And righteous ones rejoice;
they are joyful to faces of Elohim;
and they leap in joy.**

Psalm
68:3

**The righteous will rejoice;
they will exhibit [or, *feel*] joy before Elohim;
they will leap with joy.**

**The righteous will be glad and rejoice before God;
they will leap for joy.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	And righteous ones rejoice; they are joyful to faces of Elohim; and they leap in joy.
Septuagint	But let the righteous rejoice; let them exult before God: let them be delighted with joy.
Significant differences:	As has been the case throughout, we find the cohortative used again and again in the Greek, Latin and Syriac.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	But let your people be happy and celebrate because of you.
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	But the righteous will be happy. They will rejoice when they see the face of God. They will shout because they are so happy!
Good News Bible (TEV)	But the righteous are glad and rejoice in his presence; they are happy and shout for joy.
The Message	When the righteous see God in action they'll laugh, they'll sing, they'll laugh and sing for joy.
New American Bible	Then the just will be glad; they will rejoice before God;

they will celebrate with great joy.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English <i>God's Word™</i>	But let the upright be glad; let them have delight before God; let them be full of joy. But let righteous people rejoice. Let them celebrate in God's presence. Let them overflow with joy.
NET Bible®	But the godly are happy; they rejoice before God and are overcome with joy.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	But let the [uncompromisingly] righteous be glad; let them be in high spirits <i>and</i> glory before God, yes, let them [jubilantly] rejoice!
MKJV	But the righteous are glad; they rejoice before God. Yes, let them exceedingly rejoice.
WEB	But let the righteous be glad. Let them rejoice before God. Yes, let them rejoice with gladness.
Young's Updated LT	And the righteous are merry, they rejoice before God, And they leap with gladness.

What is the gist of this verse? The righteous will exhibit great joy before God (this is in contrast to the wicked being blown away like the wind).

Psalm 68:3a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wāw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
tsaddîyqîym (צַדִּיקִים) [pronounced <i>tsahd-dee-KEEM</i>]	<i>just ones, righteous ones, justified ones</i>	masculine plural adjective, often used as a substantive	Strong's #6662 BDB #843
sâmach (שָׂמַח) [pronounced <i>saw-MAHKH</i>]	<i>to rejoice, to be glad, to be joyful, to be merry</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #8055 BDB #970
Just as we found in the previous 2 verses, the Greek, Latin and Syriac use the cohortative here; the Hebrew is a simple imperfect. So throughout this verse.			

Translation: *The righteous will rejoice;...* It sounds as though the psalmist is saying the same thing 3 times in this psalm. I don't know if that is really the intention of the psalmist. 3 different verbs are used and they are associated with a variety of other words; but the verbs all mean roughly the same thing. In this portion of the verse, we speak of the *righteous*, which is another name for those who have believed in Jesus Christ.

Righteous does not refer to people who act really moral; nor does it apply to those who are self righteous in all of their actions. This is not about some prissy nice person who is so nice, you just can't stand them. This term *righteous* refers to those who have believed in Jesus Christ. From an eternal perspective, all believers in Jesus Christ will rejoice; when looking at believers in time, only a few of the mature believers will rejoice.

Psalm 68:3b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
5 early printed editions, the Aramaic, the Septuagint, and the Vulgate all have a conjunction here. ³¹			
ʿâlatš (עָלַתְּ) [pronounced ʿah-LAWTS]	to rejoice, to be joyful, to show [exhibit or feel] a triumphant [and lively] joy	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5970 BDB #763
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^e)	to, for, towards, in regards to	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
pânîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced paw-NEEM]	face, faces, countenance; presence	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular)	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, they mean upon the face of, before, before the face of, in the presence of, in the sight of, in front of. When used with God, it can take on the more figurative meaning in the judgment of. This can also mean forwards; the front part [or, the edge of a sword]. L ^e pânîym (לפני פָּנִים) can take on a temporal sense as well: before, of old, formerly, in the past, in past times.			
ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Translation: ...they will exhibit [or, feel] joy before Elohim;... This is not entirely clear as to whether we are speaking of being in the actual presence of God in heaven or on earth; however, in whichever case, great joy is involved. the verb here refers to showing joy or exhibiting joy.

You will recall that this psalm had several interpretations. In war, men will rejoice when God gives them victory over those who are evil. Whether this is Israel's army in the past or the United States' army in Iraq or in Europe during World War II; when victory is announced, there is great rejoicing.³² In the Millennium, when Jesus Christ rules over the world, those who go into the Millennium with Him will rejoice; those who are believers and who are resurrected on the last day will also rejoice.

We have several parallels here: the righteous will rejoice before God; and in the previous verse, the wicked perish from before God, just as wax melts before fire. In v. 2, the Hebrew reads mip^enêy ʿĒlôhîym (מִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced mihp-NAY el-o-HEEM]; in v. 3, the Hebrew reads lip^enêy ʿĒlôhîym (לִפְּנֵי אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced lihp-NAY el-o-HEEM]. We have a parallelism of type, the righteous being contrasted with the wicked.

Psalm 68:3c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced weh]	and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251

³¹ Joseph Bryant Rotherham's *The Emphasized Bible*; ©1971 by Kregel Publications; p. 562 (footnote).

³² However, it is questionable whether liberals would rejoice today at a clear-cut victory in Iraq as this would both vindicate President George W. Bush and might result in conservative victories in politics.

Psalm 68:3c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
sûs (שׁוּס) [pronounced soos]	<i>to leap, to spring [in joy], to jump [for joy]; to rejoice, to be glad, to display great happiness, to display joy</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7797 BDB #965
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
sim ^e châh (שִׂמְחָה) [pronounced sim ^e -KHAW],	<i>joy, gladness, mirth, great joy, rejoicing</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #8057 BDB #970

Translation: ...they will leap with joy. again, the word here is used for a very expressive joy and happiness.

Possibly, the idea here is stages of growth, similar to when Paul says, **And again I say, rejoice** (Philip. 4:4). We may be speaking of our three basic states as believers: (1) first, we are eternally saved, and we rejoice over our salvation; (2) we, as maturing believers, have wonderful lives, and we rejoice for that; and (3) in eternity, when this mortal life is behind us, we rejoice forever more. Whether David has this in mind or not, is unknown to us; however, these are legitimate stages of rejoicing: initial salvation, growth in the Christian life and eternity.

**Sing [you all] unto Elohim,
make music [you all] praising His name.
Lift up [you all] to the rider in the [desert] Arabah.
In Yah, His name
[you all] rejoice to His faces.**

Psalm
68:4

**Sing unto Elohim,
make music which praises His name.
Construct [a highway] for the one riding in the
[desert] Arabah.
His name [is] in Yah,
Rejoice before Him.**

**Sing unto God,
make music which praises His name.
Prepare the way for the one riding in the desert Arabah,
His name is in Jehovah,
Rejoice before Him.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate

Sing you to God, sing a psalm to his name, make a way for him who ascends upon the west: the Lord is his name. Rejoice you before him: but the wicked shall be troubled at his presence.

Masoretic Text

Sing [you all] unto Elohim,
make music [you all] praising His name.
Lift up [you all] to the rider in the [desert] Arabah.
In Yah, His name;
[you all] rejoice to His faces.

Peshitta

Sing unto God, sing praises to His name; extol him who rides upon the heavens; the LORD is His name, rejoice before Him.

Septuagint	Sing to God, sing praises to his name: make a way for him that rides upon the west (the Lord is his name) and exult before him. They shall be troubled before the face of him.
Targum	Extol him who sits on the throne of glory, in the ninth heaven; Yah is His name; and rejoice before Him.
Significant differences:	In the MT, <i>the One Who rides in the Arabah (the desert)</i> is extolled; in the Syriac, this is <i>the One riding in the heavens</i> ; in the Greek and Latin, <i>the One riding in the west</i> . In the Greek, the psalmist calls upon us to <i>make a way for Him</i> . The Latin and the Greek add an additional line to this psalm, which lines are different, but both seem to deal with the wicked.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Our God, you are the one who rides on the clouds, and we praise you. Your name is the LORD, and we celebrate as we worship you.
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	Sing to God, sing psalms to his name. Praise the One that Rides on the Clouds. His name is the *LORD! Shout for joy in front of him.
Good News Bible (TEV)	Sing to God, sing praises to his name; prepare a way for him who rides on the clouds. His name is the LORD ---be glad in his presence!
New Jerusalem Bible	Sing to God, play music to his name, build a road for the Rider of the Clouds, rejoice in Yahweh, dance before him.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	Make songs to God, make songs of praise to his name; make a way for him who comes through the waste lands; his name is Jah; be glad before him.
God's Word™	Sing to God; make music to praise his name. Make a highway for him to ride through the deserts. The LORD is his name. Celebrate in his presence.
HCSB	Sing to God! Sing praises to His name. Exalt Him who rides on the clouds--His name is Yahweh--and rejoice before Him.
NET Bible®	Sing to God! Sing praises to his name! Exalt the one who rides on the clouds! For the LORD is his name! Rejoice before him!.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Updated <i>Emphasized Bible</i>	Sing to God, Make music of His Name, Lift up (a song) [so the Oxford Gesenius; mos have "cast up a highway"] to Him who Rides through the waste places, Since Yah is His name, rejoice before Him.
English Standard Version	Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him who rides through the deserts; his name is the LORD; exult before him!.
MKJV	Sing to God, sing praises to His name; praise Him who rides on the heavens by His name JEHOVAH, and rejoice before Him.
New King James Version	Sing to God, sing praises to His name; Extol [or, <i>praise</i>] Him who rides on the clouds [Masoretic text: <i>deserts</i> ; Targum: <i>heavens</i>], By His name Yah, [this actually reads, <i>by Yah His name</i> in the Hebrew]

	And rejoice before Him.
NRSV	Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him who rises upon the clouds [or, <i>cast up a highway for him who rides through the deserts</i>]— his name is the LORD— be exultant before him.
A Voice in the Wilderness	Sing unto God, make music unto His name; exalt Him who rides in the wilderness by His name YAH, and rejoice before Him.
Young's Updated LT	Sing to God--praise His name, Raise up a highway for Him who is riding in deserts, In Jah is His name, and exult before Him.

There is one difficult verb in this verse and one place where the sentence structure is difficult. Therefore, the translation is going to be rather difficult to plow through.

As I have mentioned earlier, this psalm is quite difficult in parts, and this is the first line which will cause us some difficulties. The primary problems with this verse are (1) the ancient translations do not agree in part with the Hebrew in a moderately important place; and (2) the meaning of the Hebrew itself is fairly difficult to ascertain.

There are times when we can examine alternate readings and come to a reasonable conclusion—for instance, Saul, before a battle, appeared to call for the Ark of God, but it is really the Ephod of God which he called for. He was not taking it into battle, but he originally was going to ask for guidance (which he, incidentally, did not do). In that passage in 1Samuel, we may be reasonably assured that the correct reading is *Ephod of God* (this is 1Sam. 14:18, by the way). However, at the conclusion of this verse, I won't be able to be as dogmatic. For some of us, this is frustrating, to mine the Scriptures, but come up somewhat empty. Do not despair. There is a lot in the Word of God which we know: the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, and all doctrines pertinent to our salvation are clearly spelled out in Scripture, and have stood firm over centuries of time. However, we must realize that, time and again, we will come across a passage here or there where the meaning is not nearly as easy to ascertain. We may fail entirely in our endeavor to understand this or that passage. At this point in time, I do not have a theory as to why this is; but I know enough not to obsess over what God has revealed to us and what He has left as an enigma. We will try to understand as best we can, and not lose sleep over a passage which cannot be completely explained. I have gone off on this tangent specifically for this psalm, given that this will not be the only verse which gives us trouble; and it will not be, by any stretch of the imagination, the most difficult verse that we will face.

What I will be doing throughout this psalm, as I have done already at the beginning, is *thinking aloud*. I'll give you my reasoning process, the various alternate interpretations that I come up with, discuss them and how well they fit the verse itself, and, in the best case scenario, come up with an explanation which appears to fit well. Worse case scenario, there may be a lot of discussion, but no clear conclusions.

What is the gist of this verse? The psalmist is calling for great celebration and uses 4 imperatives in this verse. This appears to foreshadow the coming of John the Baptizer.

Psalm 68:4a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shîyr (שִׁיר) [pronounced sheer]	to sing	2 nd person masculine plural, Qal imperative	Strong's #7891 BDB #1010
ʿel (עַל) [pronounced e]	unto, in, into, toward, to, regarding, against	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39

Psalm 68:4a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Translation: [Sing unto Elohim](#),... The first two imperatives call for great celebration. Here, we are called upon to sing unto God. In the previous verse, 3 times we are told to rejoice before God; here, we express our inner joy in song.

By the way, there are well over a dozen Hebrew words which are translated *sing*.

Psalm 68:4b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
zâmar (זָמַר) [pronounced zaw-MAHR]	<i>to sing; to make music in praise of God, to make melody; properly to cut off (i.e., to divide up [a song] into its various parts)</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Piel imperative	Strong's #2167 & #2168 BDB #274
shêm (שֵׁם) [pronounced shame]	<i>name, reputation, character</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #8034 BDB #1027

Translation: [...make music which praises His name](#). I might have been able to reasonably shorten this second phrase to [Praise His name](#). However, this verb is closely related to making music, so God's character is celebrated with song here. When we have two verbs like this together, this indicates that something is coming which should cause man to greatly celebrate. Perhaps this emphasis upon celebration will help us understand the remainder of this verse.

Psalm 68:4c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
çâlal (çָלַל) [pronounced saw-LAHL]	<i>to lift up, to elevate, to exalt; to gather [up]; to cast up; to move to and fro, to waver</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Qal imperative	Strong's #5549 BDB #699
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^e)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
râkab (רָכַב) [pronounced raw-KAH ^B V]	<i>the one riding, rider</i>	Qal active participle with the definite article	Strong's #7392 BDB #938

Psalm 68:4c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
בֶּ (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
ʿārābāh (עֲרָבָה) [pronounced guh-row-VAW]	<i>plain; arid, sterile region; a desert; transliterated Arabah with the definite article</i>	feminine singular noun; with the definite article	Strong's #6160 BDB #787

With the definite article, ʿārābāh often refers to the valley which runs from the Sea of Chinnereth (the Sea of Galilee) down to the Gulf of Aqaba.

He is *ascending in the west* in the Greek and Latin; He is *riding in the heavens* in the Syriac. Many translations followed the Syriac here, and perhaps because there is a similar line in v. 33.

Barnes comments on this: *The word used here never means either heaven, or the clouds. It properly denotes an arid tract, a sterile region, a desert; and then, a plain. It is rendered desert in Isa. 35:1, 6 40:3 41:19 51:3 Jer. 2:6 17:6 50:12 Ezek. 47:8; and should have been so rendered here. So it is translated by DeWette, Prof. Alexander, and others. The Septuagint renders it, "Make way for him who is riding westward." So the Latin Vulgate. The Chaldee renders it, "Extol him who is seated upon the throne of his glory in the north heaven." The reference, doubtless, is to the passage through the desert over which the Hebrews wandered for forty years. The Hebrew word which is employed here is still applied by the Arabs to that region. The idea is that of Yahweh marching over those deserts at the head of his armies, and the call is to prepare a way for him on his march, compare Psalm 68:7–8 (O God, when You marched before Your people, when You walked through the wilderness; Selah. The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God; Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel).*³³

Some see the preposition and the noun ʿārābāh as being one word, and that meaning *heavens*. Clarke writes: *baaraboth, which we render in the high heavens, is here of doubtful signification. As it comes from the root ברע arab, to mingle, (hence ereb the evening or twilight, because it appears to be formed of an equal mixture of light and darkness; the Septuagint translate it dusmwn, the west, or setting of the sun; so does the Vulgate and others); probably it may mean the gloomy desert, through which God, in the chariot of his glory, led the Israelites. If this interpretation do not please, then let it be referred to the darkness in which God is said to dwell, through which the rays of his power and love, in the various dispensations of his power and mercy, shine forth for the comfort and instruction of mankind.*³⁴

Such an interpretation would be in line with Deut. 33:26: *There is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rides on the heaven to your help, and in His majesty on the clouds.* This would further agree with Matt. 26:64: *Jesus said, "You will see the Son of man sitting to the right of God. And He will come on the clouds in the sky."* It would also be in line with Psalm 68:33, which reads: *To Him who rides upon the highest heavens, which are from ancient times...*

³³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:4.

³⁴ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:4.

Psalm 68:4c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
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The NET Bible® writes: *Traditionally the Hebrew term ʿăṣābâh (עֲרָבָה) [pronounced guh-raw-VAW] is taken as “steppe-lands” (often rendered “deserts”), but here the form is probably a homonym meaning “clouds.” Verse 33, which depicts God as the one who “rides on the sky” strongly favors this (see as well Deut 33:26), as does the reference in v. 9 to God as the source of rain. The term עֲרָבָה (ʿaravah, “cloud”) is cognate with Akkadian urpatu/erpetu and with Ugaritic ʿrpt. The phrase rkb ʿrpt (“one who rides on the clouds”) appears in Ugaritic mythological texts as an epithet of the storm god Baal. The nonphonemic interchange of the bilabial consonants b and p is attested elsewhere in roots common to Hebrew and Ugaritic, though the phenomenon is relatively rare.*³⁵

I should add that, no such Hebrew word exists, insofar as I know. After reading the arguments above, and even though I would like this to refer to Jesus Christ as the *Rider of the Clouds*, I remain unconvinced. There is simply not enough evidence to change the meaning of a common Hebrew word. If *rider of the clouds* was found in the Greek, then I might be more easily convinced.

The closest Hebrew word to this is ʿāb (עָב) [pronounced ʿaw^b], and it is even a little closer in form when found in the plural construct, which is not how it is found here.

Now, you may think that I have gone overboard in this one word, and you may be wondering, *just what is the big deal?* The big deal is, we have a very common Hebrew word here which is found over 60 times in the Old Testament; yet we have translators who render this *clouds*, *heavens*, without good reason.

Puluka renders this *clouds*, with the short footnote *MT Hebrew term is hzbre, steppelands or desert but is emended to hbre, clouds in most translations given the context of verse 33 “to Him who rides the ancient highest heavens”*. NET Bible, p 978.³⁶ Now, someone who does not know the original languages at all, will see this footnote, conclude that the words are very similar, and possibly even think that this is one of the 18 (or so) emendations. These are not even the correct transliterated English letters in Puluka’s footnote. Now, I don’t know who Puluka is, and he is probably a very nice guy; but he has depended upon a footnote from the NET Bible® which sounds great and logical, but when you look at the actual word that is found here and compare that to any Hebrew word for *clouds* there is only a slight similarity, and not enough of one to suggest that a copyist screwed this up.

I want you to know that I am sitting here with the volumes of Gesenius and New Englishman’s Hebrew Concordance of the Old Testament before me, along with the various footnotes and translations which want to render this word *clouds* or *heavens* and I cannot come up with a single reason for taking that position, apart from the fact that we have a similar phrase later on in this psalm.

Finally, the verb used here (which I will cover in great detail below) makes a lot of sense when used with the word *desert*; it makes no sense if used with the word *clouds*.

Translation: Construct [a highway] for the one riding in the [desert] Arabah. This is a difficult verb. Therefore, we ought to pause for a moment and examine the verb çâlal.

This is the abbreviated version of the **Doctrine of Çâlal**. Çâlal is the word which I have rendered *construct [a highway]*.

³⁵ The Net Bible®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 68:3 (footnote).

³⁶ From <http://www.puluka.com/psalm68/default.asp> (footnote).

Çâlal	
Headline	Commentary/Explanation
Pronunciation and spelling	çâlal (ç_â_lal) [pronounced saw-L AHL].
Suggested meanings from BDB, Gesenius, etc.	<p>BDB translations: 1) <i>to lift up, cast up, exalt</i>; 1a) (Qal); 1a1) <i>to cast up a highway</i>; 1a2) <i>to cast up a way</i>; 1a3) <i>to lift up (of song)</i>; 1b) (Pilpel) <i>to exalt, esteem highly, prize</i>; 1c) (Hithpoel) <i>to exalt oneself</i>. BDB #699.</p> <p>Gesenius translations: Qal: <i>to lift up, to elevate, to exalt, to gather, to cast up [into a heap]; to make a level way by casting up a bank, to embank</i>. From the notion of <i>being exalted, lofty</i>, has sprung the meanings <i>to move to and fro, to waver</i>; used of things that are lofty, tall and slender, which are easily shaken (e.g., boughs and twigs of trees, such as willows and palms. Somehow, Gesenius extends this to baskets and brooms made of these items, although it is not clear in Gesenius if this verb is actually involved in the action. BDB lists <i>to plait, to curl, to weave</i> [?] as the meanings of a verb which is spelled the same, but has its own cognates. Pilpel: <i>to lift up, to elevate, to exalt</i>; metaphorical use: <i>exalt her [wisdom] [with praises]</i>. Hithpoel: <i>to oppose oneself as a mound, to resist</i>.</p>
Passages	Ex. 9:17 Psalm 68:4 Prov. 4:8 15:19 Isa. 57:14 62:10 Jer. 18:15 30:12 50:26
Concluding points	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The cognates (<i>mound, highway</i>) seem to give the general sense that this word is related to the building of a highway or thoroughfare. 2. Most of the time when we build a road in the mountains, we cut a path into the dirt; in the ancient world, as this seems to suggest, stones and dirt and debris were piled up or put into a mound in order to flatten out a road for use. The modern equivalent of this is <i>to lay asphalt; to lay a road of concrete</i>. 3. The only place where we seem to have the idea of elevating, exalting or lifting up something is in our passage, Psalm 68:4, and that, only because there are other verbs which mean that in the same verse. 4. I think that the most likely meaning that we can take from this is <i>to construct [a road, a highway]; to mound up [dirt, debris] to make [a road, highway]</i>. The NIV Study Bible suggests <i>prepare the way for Him Who rides through the deserts</i>.³⁷ 5. There seems to be an unused verb which yields a whole other set of meanings, which has two cognates found in Scripture, the masculine and feminine nouns for basket (Strong's #5552 & #5536).
Barnes comments	<p>The word here rendered “extol”—çâlal (ç_â_lal) [pronounced saw-L AHL]—means <i>to lift up, to raise, to raise up, as into a heap or mound; and especially to cast up and prepare a way, or to make a way level before an army by casting up earth; that is, to prepare a way for an army</i>. See the notes at Isa. 40:3. Compare also Isa. 57:14 62:10; Job. 19:12 30:12 Prov. 15:19 (margin) Jer. 18:15. This is evidently the idea here. It is not to “extol” God in the sense of praising him; it is to prepare the way before him, as of one marching at the head of his armies, or as a leader of his hosts. The allusion is to God as passing before his people in the march to the promised land; and the call is to make ready the way before him – that is, to remove all obstructions out of his path and to make the road smooth and level.³⁸</p>

³⁷ The NIV Study Bible; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 846 (footnote).

³⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:4.

I believe that we may reasonably conclude that the idea of this verb is *to build up [a highway]; to construct [a road]*. Every occasion of its use is found in the complete **Doctrine of Çâlal**.

Given the reasonable meaning of this word, it seems more apropos for God to be a *rider in the desert*, as that is where a road might be constructed.

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Now, typically, roads are constructed so that larger forms of transportation can move along the road—carriages, wagons, people on quadrupeds. Here, the psalmist calls for a road to be constructed so that the rider of the Arabah, the desert, can ride along the newly constructed road. What I am doing here, quite frankly, is thinking out loud. Since we are moderately certain of the meaning of the verb here, it makes less sense for this rider to be in the heavens or in the clouds. So, in this way, we can have more faith in the Masoretic text and not have to look to other ancient texts to understand this verse.

This is an odd statement to be made here, and I find it to be parallel to the coming of John the Baptizer, who said: **"The voice of the one crying in the wilderness, make ready the way of the Lord; make His paths straight!"** (Matt. 3:3b Isa. 40:3). We find similar statements made throughout the Old and New Testaments. Perhaps what we are looking at here is a prophecy of John the Baptizer; or, at the very least, a wink by God the Holy Spirit, Who could see down the corridors of time. However, bear in mind, for most prophecies, there is an alternate understanding or an alternate meaning that we ought to be aware of. Since much of this psalm appears to be an historic appraisal of Israel's history, it is more likely that David is alluding to God being with Israel and riding along with them through the desert. However, this does not preclude God the Holy Spirit speaking to us about our Lord coming in time to His people.

Prior to our Lord's formal ministry, He was preceded by John the Baptizer, who proclaimed, **"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight."** (Matt. 3:3b Isa. 40:3). Although the language here is not exactly the same as we find in our passage, perhaps the general idea is the same—the psalmist is proclaiming the coming of our Lord, as a road built in the desert proclaims the coming of people and goods being transported across the desert. Such a road promises trade throughout the desert region, a bringing of foods and supplies from one place to another, so perhaps that is the concept here.

The problem with applying this verse to John the Baptizer is, there are several masculine singular suffixes in this verse which cannot logically be applied to John the Baptizer—previously, we are enjoined to *sing praises to His name*, which could only logically be applied to God. Immediately after, we will have the phrase *in Yah [is] His name*. It would not be logical to first be speaking of God's name and then to suddenly shift to John the Baptizer's name. Finally, at the end of this verse, we are commanded to *rejoice before Him*. Again, this is reasonably applied to God, but not reasonably applied to John the Baptizer. We don't want to become involved in anything which even approximates the adoration of Mary, as is found in Romanism—that's just wrong; and context seems to reasonably be that we are speaking of God; we are speaking of Jesus Christ.

Now, let's look back on what John the Baptizer said, **"The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight."** (Matt. 3:3b Isa. 40:3). He is the voice crying in the wilderness; what he cries out is **"Prepare the way of the Lord, make His paths straight."** John is not speaking of himself; the paths are not being made straight for him; nor is he even the one preparing the way of the Lord. My point is, the psalmist can be saying essentially the same thing that John the Baptizer is saying, yet not alluding to John the Baptizer, as John did not speak of himself.

Quite frankly, I do not know why our Lord is referred to as *a rider in the desert*; at least, not in His incarnation. However, we might more reasonably apply this to our Lord traveling with the Exodus generation in the desert, as He rode above them in the skies as a cloud by day. Barnes suggests that our Lord is riding at the front of a great army, as a commander would do in the ancient world. In this regard, we have Israel making a pathway or highway through the land east of the Jordan, with God guiding and leading them, as a general or king might do.

Constructing a road or a highway in the desert perhaps refers to them preparing a way for our Lord in the desert wilderness of their hearts. In terms of putting any sort of meaning to this phrase, this is the best I can come up with, which is not an illogical explanation. They are called upon to make a highway through the desert, ostensibly to them, and the reasons why our Lord is worthy follow in the next few verses. May I add that, when our Lord first came to the Jews in His 1st Advent, some had prepared the way for Him and some (the religious types) had not.

However, the sense may be, prepare a way for the Lord as He leads His great army through the desert, which could simply be the image of Jesus Christ leading the Exodus generation through the desert. This appears to be confirmed by Psalm 68:7–8: *O God, when You marched before Your people, when You walked through the wilderness; Selah. The earth shook, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God; Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.* Although Old Testament saints did not necessarily differentiate between the members of the Trinity, the Bible clearly did. This could be a call to God the Father to prepare a path—in this case, a highway—for Jesus Christ to lead His people, the children of Israel. The idea is, God the Father planned this and His Son executes the plan, leading all Israel. I believe that this is the most accurate understanding of this verse so far.

I should add a few comments as to the other translations (our Lord *riding the heavens* or *riding through the west*): this would take a commonly used preposition and noun—*in the desert wilderness*—and make it into a word which is not found in BDB's lexicon nor does it have any clear cognates in his lexicon (Clarke's example seems to be quite a stretch to me). This interpretation seems to be build upon Deut. 33:26, whereas, we ought to be more concerned with this verse being in line with vv. 7–8 of this psalm rather than with a passage elsewhere. For these reasons, the more common reading, *the One riding in [through] the desert* is the more likely translation. The strongest argument in favor of this *riding the heavens* rendering is Psalm 68:33, which speaks of our Lord *riding upon the high heavens*. I think the idea here is a progression, from *riding in the desert with Israel* to *riding upon the heavens*. My opinion is, some translators read our passage, which troubled them, read v. 33, which seems to parallel this verse, and then simply suggested that *in the desert* must mean *the heavens* instead. However, given the context of this verse and the meaning of the verb found here, we may reasonably assume that God is spoken of here as a *rider of the desert wilderness*, as He is down with Israel, guiding, leading and, at times, righting for Israel. That God would later be seen as among the clouds reasonably refers to His resurrection and ascension.

Because there is so much confusion about this passage, primarily due to the translation of the KJV, let me suggest the **Doctrine of the Arabah** to you (**PDF version**).

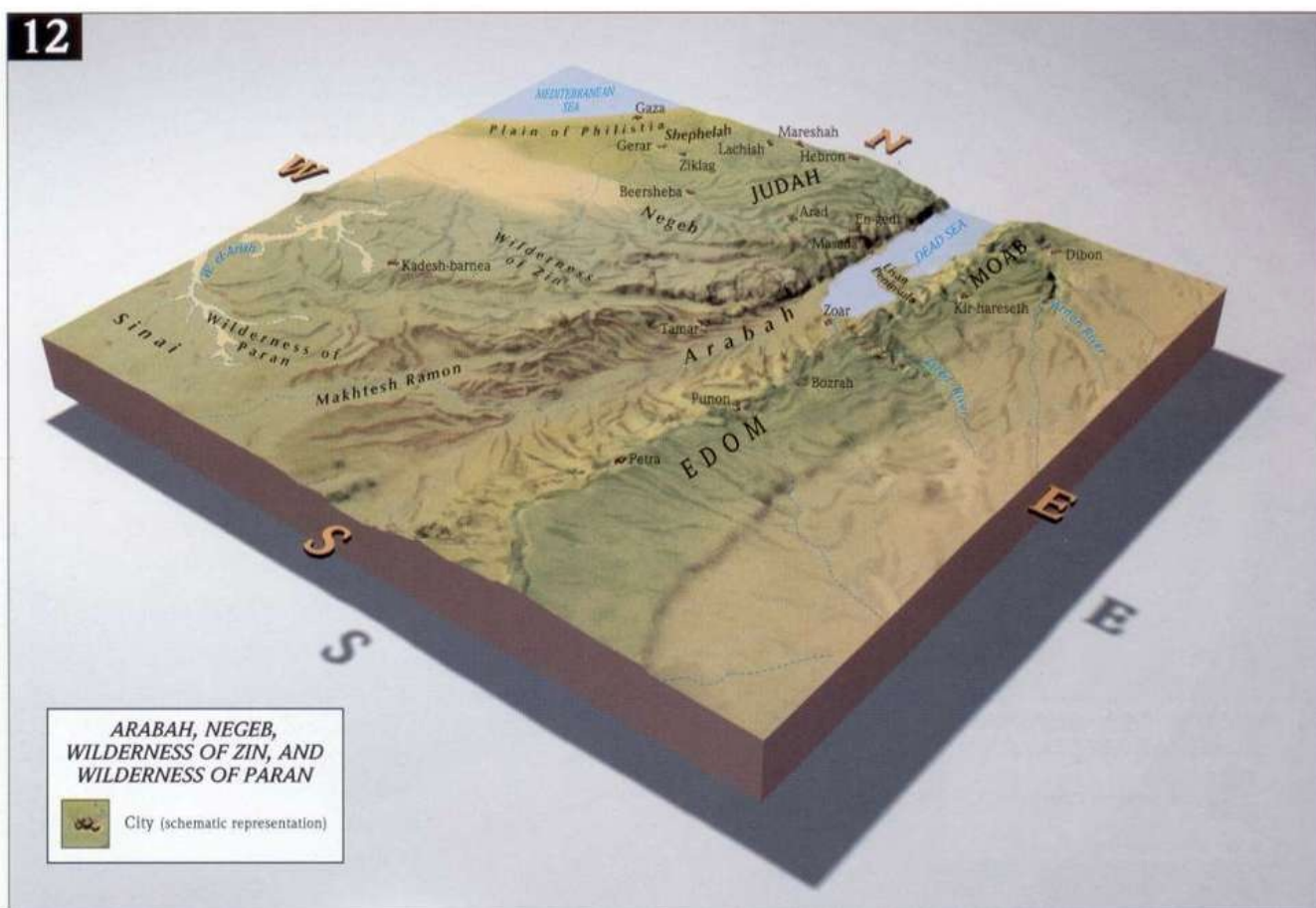
Since brevity is the soul of wit, let me reduce this doctrine in size.

A Summary of the Doctrine of the Arabah

1. 'Ārâbâh (עֲרַבְיָה) [pronounced *guh-raw^b-VAW*] is transliterated *arabah*. In general, the *Arabah* is the unpopulated and desert area extending up from the northeastern tip of the Red Sea, on up along the eastern site of the Dead Sea on up to the Sea of Galilee. This also takes in the area around the Jordan River and some portions in southern Judæa. The first 6 or 7 uses below are subsets of that land mass. The context of the passage will indicate just exactly what portion is being referred to.
2. *Arabah* is found 61 times in the Old Testament, but only translated *Arabah* twice in the KJV. In the KJV, this word is translated 9 different ways (3 of which are quite different from what we would expect—*champaign, evenings, and heavens*).
3. The meanings given this word:
 - a. BDB: *desert plain, steppe, desert, wilderness*.
 - b. Gesenius: *an arid, sterile region, a desert*. With the definite article, this refers to that low region into which the valley of the Jordan runs near Jericho, and which extends as far as the Ælantic gulf. It is also used to refer to a city in Benjamin (Beth Arabah).
 - c. Strong's: From H6150 (in the sense of sterility); *a desert*; especially (with the article prefixed) the (generally) sterile valley of the Jordan and its continuation to the Red Sea. Strong's #6160 BDB #787.

A Summary of the Doctrine of the Arabah

- d. ISBE: *This word indicates in general a barren district, but is specifically applied in whole or in part to the depression of the Jordan valley, extending from Mount Hermon to the Gulf of Aqaba.*¹
4. The root word is 'ārab (עֲרַב) [pronounced gaw-RAH^BV], which means *to be arid, to be sterile* (we recognize this word as *Arab*). This verb form and meaning is not found in the Old Testament (there are 4 verbs wit this same spelling, some which are used and some which are not). You may recognize the transliteration of this word and its substantive cognate as *Arab*. Strong's #none (related to #6152) BDB #787.
5. One possible key appears to be the use of the definite article in front of this word; then it seems to signify a particular area. Without that definite article, it appears to designate an area with those same characteristics (this is a theory; I have not examined all of the passages yet). In the plural construct, it is generally associated with Moab or Jericho (as in, *the plains of Moab*).



Although this map seems to indicate that the Arabah is only south of the Dead Sea, it takes in much of the area around the Dead Sea on up along the River Jericho to the Sea of Galilee. From <http://www.seektheoldpaths.com/Maps/012.jpg>

Although the graphic above only has the section between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba denoted as the Arabah, this actually extends further north, all the way up the Jordan River to the southern tip of the Sea of Galilee (neither of which is shown on this map).

A Summary of the Doctrine of the Arabah

6. ISBE's description: *The southern portion, which still retains the name of Arabah, is included in the wilderness of Zin (Num. 34:3). According to the survey of Lord Kitchener and George Armstrong made in 1883, under the auspices of the Palestine Exploration Fund, its length from the head of the Gulf of Akabah to the Dead Sea is 112 miles. The lowest point of the watershed is 45 miles from Akabah, and 660 feet above tide (1,952 above the Dead Sea). The average width of the valley up to this point is about 6 miles, but here a series of low limestone ridges (called Er Risheh) rising 150 feet above the plain runs obliquely across it for a distance of 10 miles, narrowing it up to a breadth of about one-half mile. North of this point, opposite Mount Hor, the valley widens out to 13 miles and then gradually narrows to 6 miles at the south end of the Dead Sea. At Ain Abu Werideh, 29 miles north of the watershed, the valley is at the sea-level – 1,292 feet above that of the Dead Sea. North of the watershed, the main line of drainage is the Wady el-Jeib, which everywhere keeps pretty close to the west side of the valley. At Ain Abu Werideh it is joined by numerous wadies descending from the Edomite mountains on the east, which altogether water an oasis of considerable extent, covered with a thicket of young palms, tamarisks, willows and reeds. Twenty-four miles farther north the Arabah breaks down suddenly into the valley of the Dead Sea, or the Ghôr, as it is technically called. Lord Kitchener's report is here so vivid as to be worthy of literal reproduction. "The descent to the Ghôr was down a sandy slope of 300 feet, and the change of climate was most marked, from the sandy desert to masses of tangled vegetation with streams of water running in all directions, birds fluttering from every tree, the whole country alive with life; nowhere have I seen so great and sudden a contrast" (Mount Seir, 214). The descent here described was on the eastern side of the semicircular line of cliffs formed of sand, gravel, and marl which enclose the Ghôr at the south end, and which are probably what are referred to in Joshua 15:3 as the "ascent of Akrabbim." The ordinary route, however, leading to the plain of the Arabah from the Dead Sea is up the trough worn by the Wady el-Jeib along the west side of the valley. But this route would be impracticable during the rainy season after the cloudbursts which occasionally visit this region, when torrents of water pour down it, sufficient to roll boulders of considerable size and to transport an immense amount of coarse sediment. South of the Dead Sea a muddy plain, known as the Sebkah, extends 6 miles, filling about one-half of the width of the Ghôr. During most of the year the mud over this area is so thin and deep that it is impossible to cross it near its northern end. This whole area between the "ascent of Akrabbim" and the Dead Sea has evidently been greatly transformed by the sedimentary deposits which have been brought in by the numerous tributary wadies during the last 4,000 years, the coarser material having encroached upon it from either side, and the fine material having been deposited over the middle portion, furnishing the clay which is so embarrassing to travelers³⁹.*
7. Even though we are going to find this word used in several different ways, the various writers of Scripture clearly had these uses separate in their minds when they wrote.
8. ZPEB⁴⁰ breaks the Arabah into 3 geographical regions: the Jordan Valley, the Dead Sea region and the area south of the Dead Sea down to the Gulf of Aqaba (the latter of which is called *Arabah* on the map above).
9. We have one possible passage which takes in most of this area. The psalmist calls for the reader to **Sing to God, sing praise to His name; lift up a song for Him who rides in the arabah's, by His name Jehovah; yea, exult in His presence** in Psalm 68:4. The plural use of *arabah* may purposely include the various regions which are given that name. This, at first, can be a very difficult passage to interpret, mostly because of the KJV's poor translation here (they translate *arabah* as *heavens* here). Because of this, many other translations follow suit. The exegesis of **Psalm 68** is found here: <http://kukis.org/Psalms/Psalm068.htm>

³⁹ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Arabah.

⁴⁰ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 1, p. 234.

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10. We find it used several times to refer to the *plains* of Moab in Num. 22:1 26:3, 63 31:12 33:48–50 35:1 36:13 Deut. 2:8 34:1 Joshua 13:32. In most of these passages, the Jews had moved northward parallel to the Dead Sea on its east side. We seem to have a more generic use of the word *Arabah* here, which indicates that they are in an arid, unpopulated area in Moab, which is in stark contrast to the Land of Promise, which is a land flowing with milk and honey.
11. Arabah came to be used of the area east of the Dead Sea (which is mostly equivalent to the *plains of Moab*) and northward to take in the area east of the Jordan. This described, in part, the land given over to the tribe of Reuben (this would have been pastures, primarily). Deut. 1:1–2 3:17, 20, 25 4:49 34:1, 8
12. The arabah is the valley area around the Jordan River. 2Sam. 2:29 4:7 2Kings 25:4–5 Jer. 39:4–5 52:7–8 Amos 6:14
13. The southern Judæan desert area.
 - a. When David was looking to get away from Saul, he moved into southern Judæa, which is called the Arabah in 1Sam. 23:24. This would be west of the Salt Sea in southern Judah.
 - b. In the Millennium, the waters of the Arabah will flow eastward into the Salt Sea, which will become a vibrant sea filled with fish. Flowing eastward indicates that we are talking about the Judæan area. Ezek. 47:6–10 (compare Zech. 14:8)
14. The *Sea of the Arabah* is another name for the *Salt Sea* (the Dead Sea). Deut. 3:17 4:49 Joshua 3:16 12:3 2Kings 14:25 The equivalence is made clear in Deut. 3:17 Joshua 12:3.
15. The *way of the Arabah* or the *Arabah Road* is found in 3 passages: Deut. 2:8 2Sam. 4:7 2Kings 25:4
 - a. I have checked several maps, and very few actually show where this is. Of the two which I found, both place the Way of the Arabah in the southern Arabah (south of the Dead Sea); but one has it going north-south (which was the intuitive location for me) but the MacMillan Bible Atlas has it going east-west.
 - b. Deut. 2:8 reads: *So we passed by from our brothers the sons of Esau, who dwell in Seir, from the way of the Arabah from Elath and from Ezion Geber. We turned and passed by the way of the wilderness of Moab.* Moses first mentions the sons of Esau, who would be directly below the Dead Sea. The Jews got to here by the Arabah Road from Elath and Ezion-Geber. These cities are on the northern tip of the Red Sea, which, if the Jews are traveling in a direct route, would be moving from south to north, making the connecting road (the way of the Arabah) north-south.
 - c. 2Sam. 4:7–8 reads: *Now when they came into the house, as he lay on his bed in his bedchamber, they struck him, and killed him, and beheaded him, and took his head, and went by the way of the Arabah all night. They brought the head of Ish-bosheth to David to Hebron, and said to the king, Behold, the head of Ish-bosheth, the son of Saul, your enemy, who sought your life; and Yahweh has avenged my lord the king this day of Saul, and of his seed.* Hebron is about 25 miles south of Jerusalem. Ishbosheth is probably up in the area of Benjamin, so the Way of the Arabah in this passage would have been a north-south route, along the west side of the Dead Sea,
 - d. 2Kings 25:4–5 reads: *Then a breach was made in the city, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden (now the Chaldeans were against the city round about); and the king went by the way of the Arabah. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him.* So here, we are at Jerusalem, the Israeli army escapes going due north, where they are finally caught up in Jericho. So, this route is in keeping with the route named above.
 - e. What would seem to be the case is, the *Way of the Arabah* starts down at the northern tip of the Red Sea and then moves northward to Edom, and continues to move northward west of the Dead Sea. This is the most logical approach to me.

A Summary of the Doctrine of the Arabah

16. The word *arabah* simply means *plains, wilderness, desert, unpopulated area* (Joshua 4:13 5:10 8:14 11:2 Isa. 33:9 Jer. 5:6). It is also used in a metaphorical sense, which matches the desert wilderness of the land with the condition of men's souls and motivations (Isa. 51:3).
- a. In Job 39:6, this is the area where the wild ass lives.
 - b. *Arabah* seems to just indicate a *type* of geographical area in Joshua 12:7–8.
 - c. In Isa. 35:1–2, we see a changing of the desert wilderness area into great beauty, which is a description of the land of promise and how it changes in the Millennium. See also Isa. 35:6–7 41:19. God will take the barrenness of the Land of Promise in the future (future to Isaiah) and transform it.
 - d. Jesus will come to a world which is a metaphorical desert wilderness in Isa. 40 (*arabah* is found in 40:3).
 - e. Jeremiah uses *arabah* in a metaphorical way in Jer. 17:5–7 Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD. He is like a shrub in the arabah, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land. "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD.
 - f. God blasts Israel for its unfaithfulness and promises that Babylon would come and destroy them, but then warns Babylon of its eventual desolation as a nation in Jer. 50:11–13 ("Though you [Babylon] rejoice, though you exult, O plunderers of My heritage [Israel], though you frolic like a heifer in the pasture, and neigh like stallions, your mother shall be utterly shamed, and she who bore you shall be disgraced. Behold, she shall be the last of the nations, a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert [= arabah]. Because of the wrath of the LORD she shall not be inhabited but shall be an utter desolation; everyone who passes by Babylon shall be appalled, and hiss because of all her wounds."). Babylon is situated in modern-day Iraq. We find this same theme in Jer. 51:41–43 "How Babylon is taken, the praise of the whole earth seized! How Babylon has become a horror among the nations! The sea has come up on Babylon; she is covered with its tumultuous waves. Her cities have become a horror, a land of drought and a desert [= arabah], a land in which no one dwells, and through which no son of man passes."
17. Miscellaneous uses:
- a. *Arabah* is also given to name the area west of the Jordan where the Canaanites live. Deut. 11:30
 - b. *Arabah* is used in an interesting way in Joshua 11:16. All of the areas which Joshua has conquered is listed in Joshua 11:16–17, which includes *the Arabah*, which would reasonably understood as taking the land east of the Jordan, which was then given to Reuben.
18. There is a city in northern Judah called Beth-Arabah, which is on the border of Judæa and Benjamin. It has this name, more than likely, because of its proximity to the Arabah around the Jordan River. Joshua 15:6 18:18



Here is a photo which seems to convey the idea of the Arabah; it is taken from www.bible.ca

<http://www.bible.ca/archeology/wilderness-of-zin-ascent-of-akrabbi-m-arabah-valley-west2.jpg>

The complete doctrine can be found at: <http://kukis.org/Doctrines/Arabah.htm> and the pdf version is at <http://kukis.org/Doctrines/Arabah.pdf>.

Psalm 68:4d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
The NET Bible® suggests that the preposition here should be:			
kîy (כִּי) [pronounced kee]	<i>for, that, because; when, at that time, which, what time</i>	explanatory or temporal conjunction; preposition	Strong's #3588 BDB #471
Yâh (יָהּ) [pronounced yaw]	an abbreviated form of YHWH, the proper name for God in the Old Testament	proper masculine noun	Strong's #3050 BDB #219
Clarke writes: <i>Yah, probably a contraction of the word יהוה (Yehovah), at least so the ancient Versions understood it. It is used but in a few places in the sacred writings. It might be translated The Self existent.</i> ⁴¹			
shêm (שֵׁם) [pronounced shame]	<i>name, reputation, character</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #8034 BDB #1027

There will be a great deal of discussion on this text below. The NET Bible® suggests: *Heb "in the Lord his name." If the MT is retained, the preposition -בֵּי (bet) is introducing the predicate (the so-called bet of identity), "the Lord is his name." However, some prefer to emend the text to כִּי יָהּ שֵׁם (ki yah shÿmo, "for Yah is his name"). This emendation, reflected in the present translation, assumes a confusion of bet (ב) and kaf (כ) and haplography of yod (י). And, in case you did not get that, they are simply suggesting that this should have a kaph (כ) here rather than a beyth (ב). Let me add that, in the original, pre-Masoretic text, there were no vowels, so they would not play a part here. If this confounding did occur, this would properly read as *Jah [is] His name*. The easy way out is to accept that there was a confounding of the letters; and the easier way out is to ignore the preposition altogether.*

Translation: *His name [is] in Yah,...* We are to *sing to God, praising His name, and His name is Yah*. Again and again, God is called *Jehovah* or, in this case, *Yah*. The idea is, the one riding in the desert is said to be *with Yah* or *by Yah*. The addition of the preposition here means that "his name is *not* Yah" but *associated with Yah*. My thinking is, this is associated with the Trinity, and that we are speaking of Jesus Christ, Who is in the Father and the Father is in Him (John 17:21).

With regards to the name *Yah*, the Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge says: *JAH, is an abbreviation of יהוה, JEHOVAH and signifies self-existence. - He who derives his being from none, but gives being to all.*⁴²

Now, I have inserted the verb *to be* here, and was uncertain how to deal with this phrase.

⁴¹ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:4.

⁴² *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, Psalm 68:4.

Alternate Ways of Organizing Psalm 68:4		
The Most Common	Alternate #1	Alternate #2
<p>Sing unto Elohim, make music which praises His name.</p> <p>Construct [a highway] for the one riding in the [desert] Arabah. His name [is] in Yah, Rejoice before Him.</p>	<p>Sing unto Elohim, make music which praises His name.</p> <p>Construct [a highway] for the one riding in the [desert] Arabah by means of [or, in, with, before] Yah.</p> <p>Rejoice [in] His name before Him.</p>	<p>Sing unto Elohim, make music which praises His name.</p> <p>Construct [a highway] for the one riding in the [desert] Arabah in [or, by means of, with, before] Yah, His name; Rejoice before Him.</p>
<p>We have the additional statement that <i>His name is in Yah</i>.</p>	<p>An additional word must be added (<i>in</i>), in order for the verb to sound right (which may not actually be an issue in the Hebrew).</p>	<p>This could be similarly understood as alternate #2—that construction of the highway is by means of Yah—and we simply add, this is <i>His name</i>.</p>
<p>This is probably the easiest and least complex way to understand this verse. Jesus Christ is in the Father and the Father is in Him (John 17:21).</p> <p>My <i>only</i> problem with this interpretation is, Church Age doctrine is not generally covered in the Old Testament; we find clear references to the 1st Advent in Old Testament prophecies, but we do not find, for the most part, Church Age doctrines. Now, although the Trinity is a part of all dispensations and taught in all dispensations, that we are in Christ and Christ is in the Father is not something I recall from the Old Testament, apart from this particular passage.</p>	<p>Here, the one riding in the desert is <i>in</i> or <i>with</i> Yah, which is perfectly acceptable, as the Trinity is taught in the Old Testament.</p> <p>The phrase, <i>rejoice [in] His name before Him</i> is somewhat clunky and I don't believe it to be accurate.</p>	<p>In this interpretation, we are simply saying that <i>Yah</i> is His name. It does seem to just hang there, almost without purpose, however.</p> <p>The one riding in the desert would be Jesus Christ, who does so <i>before</i> God or <i>by means of</i> God the Father.</p>
<p>In any of these approaches, we are speaking of the Trinity.</p>		
<p>The KJV and the NKJV, among others, have <i>by His name Yah</i>. This makes much better English sense, and still appears to allude to the Trinity. On the other hand, this does not exactly match the wording of the Hebrew, which is <i>by Yah His name</i>. The options I gave above were those which remained faithful to the Hebrew.</p>		

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In dealing with this tiny bêyth preposition, I probably caused more confusion than I solved here. My point was to give you several reasonable alternatives. I want you to notice that, no matte what alternate reading/understanding that you choose, the meaning does not conflict with accepted doctrine. We run into difficult readings throughout Scripture, and fairly often in this particular psalm. What I find amazing is, no matter which approach we take to these difficult passages, this does not open up the door to some weird doctrine. You simply cannot take all these questionable passages as a group, give them whatever reasonable spin that you want to give them, and end up

with a whole new set of doctrines which contradict that faith that has been handed down to us. For instance, there is a way to interpret this verse which suggests that two members of the Trinity are found here. What we do not have here is, a negation of the Trinity or proof that the Trinity should be 4 members. My point is, despite the many difficulties that we have with specific passages, none of these difficulties will take us outside the realm of accepted doctrines.

However (and I am on a tangent now), we can take the accepted and accurate rendering of verses and twist them to mean something outside the realm of accepted doctrine, as long as we ignore a boatload of verses elsewhere. Let me just take an example: a person believes in Jesus Christ and they become a new creation. Catholics and Pentecostals understand this to mean, we become better persons. Grace is seen as being *infused* into our souls so that, as Christians, we end up being much nicer and better people. Reform theology tells us that, we now have a human spirit which is capable of fellowship with God and capable of storing spiritual information. We may act better and we may not. This is one of the reasons that we find biographies of so many men in Scripture: Jacob, David, Solomon, Paul, Mark, Timothy—men who are spoken of favorably in Scripture, men who are definitely believers in Jesus Christ, and men who had some spectacular failures. With Jacob, it is hard to find many instances in his life where he did anything right; and if you set him toe to toe with Esau, his twin brother, Esau seems to win out almost every time. But, Jacob believed in Jesus Christ and Esau did not. Jacob is the line of regeneration and Esau is not. When you examine the lives and particularly the failures of these believers, it becomes clear that we do not have some sort of infused grace which makes us automatically behave more righteously. These men did not automatically act more righteously; often times, their sins and failures were so great that they are often used by unbelievers as examples of Christian hypocrisy. *David is a man after God's own heart? Are we talking about the same David who commits adultery and then has the woman's husband killed? If that is Christianity, then give me atheism any time.* Since the Bible never speaks of *re-dedicating our lives to Christ*; nor does it ever speak of being *born-again, again*, we have a number of options here: (1) those believers already named were regenerated, and some still made tremendous mistakes with their lives; (2) they had head beliefs to begin with and eventually developed a heart belief (which means that spiritual life of these believers did not mean anything prior to their failures, as they weren't really believers then); (3) they were saved, lost their salvation, got saved again, lost their salvation, got saved again (which position does not find any support in Scripture—not even a verse of support).

What is often missing in the variety of theologies found out there is simple, deductive logic. You believe thus and so; what logically does that lead us to? For instance, it is reasonable to suppose that Mary, the mother of the humanity of Jesus, was something special, as God chose her to bear our Lord. Furthermore, we find no indication of any failures on her part in Scripture. Now, we take this hypothesis further: how would Mary be different from you or I, apart from possibly leading a better life than you or I have? Is she so different as to be worshiped? Suddenly, our hypothesis has led us into some very problematic territory. We have an instance of angels refusing to be worshiped, even though we may reasonably assume that these are elect angels being used by God. We have no indication anywhere in Scripture that any human being is to be worshiped, and when that occurs, we are dealing with evil. So our hypothesis that Mary is just a cut above the rest of us leads us into doctrines which are logically indefensible. Now was her experiential life better than mine? Probably and she will probably receive greater rewards in heaven than I will. But, Mary was born with a sin nature just like me; she had free will, just like me. She made bad decisions now and again, just like me. Furthermore, Mary *has to be* 100% fully human in all respects; otherwise, Jesus Christ is not fully man. Jesus Christ can only die for our sins if He is fully man, as well as a man without sin.

Now, to try to bring this back to where I started: good men of sound doctrine can take this verse and possibly interpret it in several different ways (I offered 3 alternatives). If those men have the fundamentals of doctrine in their souls then, the implication of this verse with respect to accepted theology is, it will fit into a reasonable, theological framework. God the Holy Spirit may have meant for this verse to be understood in one way, and yet, a man with a good, solid foundation, understands it in a different way. Still, that is not going to conflict with the fundamentals of the faith. Only when someone gives a spin to a verse which results in a doctrine which falls outside reform theology should we become concerned.

Psalm 68:4e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿālaz (עָלַז) [pronounced ġaw-LAHZ]	<i>to exult, to rejoice; to triumph</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Qal imperative	Strong's #5937 BDB #759
lāmed (ל) (pronounced l ^e)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
pānîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced paw-NEEM]	<i>face, faces countenance; presence</i>	masculine plural noun (plural acts like English singular); with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6440 BDB #815

Together, they mean *before him, before his face, in his presence, in his sight, in front of him.*

Translation: ...[Rejoice before Him](#). This verse calls upon us to *sing unto God* and to *rejoice before Him*.

Psalm 68:4 reads:

[Sing unto Elohim,](#)
[make music which praises His name.](#)
[Construct \[a highway\] for the one riding in the \[desert\] Arabah in \[or, by means of, with, before\] Yah, His](#)
[name;](#)
[Rejoice before Him.](#)

Concluding Remarks about Psalm 68:4

1. In v. 3, we have 3 different ways of saying that we ought to rejoice before God. Here, twice we are called upon to sing to God, and, at the end, to rejoice before Him.
2. I believe the first two portions of this verse refer to singing to God and then the making of music before Him as well. This is pretty much a guess on my part, as there are over a dozen Hebrew words which are translated *to sing*.
3. God the Father is called upon to make a way for our Lord leading the Exodus generation through the desert in the third line. This is done *by Yah*, Who is God the Father.
4. The idea is, God the Father planned the movement of the Exodus generation, just as He has a plan for each and every one of us. God the Son executed this plan by leading Israel, as a general on horseback leads His army.
5. We might also see this as a call for those in the Exodus generation (and all succeeding generations) to prepare their own hearts to be guided and led by our Lord. The ability to open oneself up to the guidance of God is done *by means of Yah*, which would refer to God the Holy Spirit.
6. Finally, because we are singing and making music to Him, and because He leads us through the desert, we are enjoined to rejoice before Him.

I think that these remarks reasonably present what we are supposed to understand from v. 4.

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[A Father of fatherless](#)
[and a defender of widows \[is\] Elohim](#)
[in a habitation of His holiness.](#)

Psalm
68:5

[Elohim \[is\] a Father to the fatherless](#)
[and an advocate of the widows](#)
[in His holy habitation.](#)

**God is the Father of the fatherless and
He is an advocate for the widows
in His holy palace.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	A Father of fatherless and a defender of widows [is] Elohim in a habitation of His holiness.
Septuagint	... <i>who is</i> the father of the orphans, and judge of the widows: <i>such is</i> God in his holy place..
Significant differences:	No significant differences.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Our God, from your sacred home you take care of orphans and protect widows.
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	God is the father of those that have no father. He gives help to women whose husbands have died. (He does this) from the *holy place where he lives.
Good News Bible (TEV)	God, who lives in his sacred Temple, cares for orphans and protects widows.
New American Bible	Father of the fatherless, defender of widows — this is the God whose abode is holy.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	A father to those who have no father, a judge of the widows, is God in his holy place.
Complete Apostles' Bible	... <i>who is</i> the Father of the orphans, and Judge of the widows; such is God in His holy place.
God's Word™	The God who is in his holy dwelling place is the father of the fatherless and the defender of widows.
HCSB	A father of the fatherless and a champion of widows is God in His holy dwelling.
NET Bible®	He is a father to the fatherless and an advocate for widows. God rules from his holy palace.
The Scriptures 1998	Father of the fatherless, And Right-ruler of widows, Is Elohim in His set-apart dwelling.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Updated <i>Emphasized Bible</i>	The father of the fatherless, And the advocate of the widows Is God in His holy habitation.
A Voice in the Wilderness	In His holy dwelling God is a father to the fatherless, and a judge for the widows.
Young's Literal Translation	Father of the fatherless, and judge of the widows, <i>Is</i> God in His holy habitation.

What is the gist of this verse? In the previous verse, we are called upon to sing to God and to rejoice before Him; here, we are told *why* we should do these things: God is a father to orphans and an advocate of widows, even from His holy place.

Psalm 68:5a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾâb (אָב) [pronounced aw ^b v]	<i>father</i> , both as the head of a household, clan or tribe	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1 BDB #3
yâthôwm (יָתוֹם) [pronounced yaw-THOM]	<i>orphan; fatherless</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #3490 BDB #450

Translation: [Elohim \[is\] a Father to the fatherless...](#) The name *Elohim* actually occurs with the next portion of this verse, but seems to fit better up front, as we would say it in English. God is a Father to those without fathers. Psalm 10:14, 17–18: [But You Yourself have seen trouble and grief, observing it in order to take the matter into Your hands. The helpless entrusts himself to You; You are a helper of the fatherless. LORD, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will strengthen their hearts. You will listen carefully, doing justice for the fatherless and the oppressed, so that men of the earth may terrify them no more.](#)

Throughout Scripture, God is seen as a Father to believers, and is so spoken of by Jesus Christ on many occasions.

Psalm 68:5b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וְ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
dayyân (דַּיָּאן) [pronounced dahy-YAWN]	<i>judge, defender, advocate</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #1781 BDB #193
ʾalmânâh (אַלְמָנָה) [pronounced al ^e -maw-NAW]	<i>widow; desolate house, desolate place</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #490 BDB #48
The spelling in this case would be: ʾalmânôwth (אַלְמָנוֹת) [pronounced al ^e -maw-NÔHTH].			
ʾĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Although the Hebrew places the subject of these phrases at the end of this phrase, we would naturally place it at the beginning of the first two phrases, which is what I did in my translation.

Translation: [...and an advocate of the widows...](#) God cares for the helpless; in this case, He defends and protects the widow. In both cases, the father is gone or the husband has died, and God stands in for them. Human nature is to take advantage of the helpless, which some would do with a widow; and God is the advocate of widows. Jer. 49:11 reads: [\[If you\] Abandon your orphans; I will preserve them; let your widows trust in Me.](#)

Recall that in the previous verse, we are called upon to sing to God and to rejoice before Him; some of the reasons that we should do so is, [God is a father to orphans and He is an advocate of widows.](#)

Barnes writes: *[God] will see justice done them; he will save them from oppression and wrong. No persons are more liable to be oppressed and wronged than widows. They are regarded as incapable of defending or vindicating their own rights, and are likely to be deceived and betrayed by those to whom their property and rights may be entrusted. Hence, the care which God manifests for them; hence, his solemn charges, so often made to those who are in authority, and who are entrusted with power, to respect their rights; hence, his frequent and solemn rebukes to those who violate their rights.*⁴³

From the very beginning, God required honest and just treatment to those who were less able to fend for themselves: Ex. 22:22–24: "You must not mistreat any widow or fatherless child. If you do mistreat them, they will no doubt cry to Me, and I will certainly hear their cry. My anger will burn, and I will kill you with the sword; then your wives will be widows and your children fatherless." Deut. 10:17–18: For the LORD your God is the God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, mighty, and awesome God, showing no partiality and taking no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreign resident, giving him food and clothing. Deut. 14:29: Then the Levite, who has no portion or inheritance among you, the foreign resident, fatherless, and widow within your gates may come, eat, and be satisfied. And the LORD your God will bless you in all the work of your hands that you do. Deut. 24:17: Do not deny justice to a foreign resident or fatherless child, and do not take a widow's garment as security. Here, the idea is, a widow has nothing which is an asset that she can give as collateral for a loan, and God warns not to take her clothing as collateral. See also Job 24:3, 21 Psalm 10:14, 18 82:3–4 146:7–9 147:6 Isa. 1:17 Jer. 7:6 Mal. 3:5 James 1:27. Again, the idea is, you take care of the helpless (the passages from the Law were God's instructions to a theocratic nation).

I want you to notice the stark contrast between this and the previous verse. In the previous verse, God is spoken of as the Leader of the people of Israel, an impression one must take away from reading almost any portion of the Old Testament. Here, God is seen as the One Who protects the helpless, Whose concern is as much with those who have not as it is with those who have. The God of the Bible is always presented as being simultaneously powerful and yet concerned with the lowest and weakest of His people.

Application: As you have no doubt understood from some of the things that I write, I have conservative values. This does not mean that I am opposed to welfare nor does this mean that I believe that government should not be in the business of helping the helpless. As is clearly seen above, in a theocracy, God demanded fair treatment for orphans and widows. There were circumstances under the Law where the poor were allowed to glean produce from private fields and orchards, where a portion of the produce was to be left behind on the trees. So, you will notice, there is an exchange here. God did not require a farmer to pick the produce and give it to the poor; but they were allowed to come and work somewhat in order to take the produce from his land. They did not actually work for the landowner; nor did he simply cut them a check. When it comes to someone being helpless, God had a provisions for them, so that society did not neglect them. Now, if God required that system in a theocracy, should not our nation, with Christian values, do essentially the same? Some provision should be made for those who are helpless. Personally, I have no problem with a check being written to those in dire situations, e.g., the abandoned mother with cancer and 4 children. On the other hand, I am less inclined to approve a simply writing a check to a single mother with 4 children, which is exactly what our welfare system does. She should certainly spend some time in the field, so to speak. For instance, I know of a mother and a daughter who live together, and the daughter is unmarried with 2 or 3 children. It is debatable whether the mother is able to hold a job, but the daughter is young and reasonably intelligent. Welfare should not simply cut them a check—the mother is physically capable of watching her grandchildren and the daughter is capable of working. We have to have a balance here. Furthermore, this is important to the mental health of the daughter. A person whose primary function in life is to get up in the morning and sit down in front of the television is going to be an unfulfilled, unhappy individual. We are made in the image of God, a God Who creates; and it is our desire to create as well. This sort of thing is satisfying and work for most people is satisfying and fulfilling.

Application: One of the great problems of our welfare system is, women are paid to have children and to remain single. Worse case scenario is, the government is going to pick up their tab and give them just enough

⁴³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:5.

sustenance to keep them in poverty. One political party is seen as the champion of the poor in this way, so their goal is to maintain people in poverty. A single mother is far more likely to remain in poverty for most of her life; and her children are likely to be poverty stricken as well. These are votes for liberals and liberals therefore must keep them in this situation. Government also attempts to pick up the slack here when it comes to raising the child, the same liberal party asking to get into the education of children at an earlier and earlier age. One politician wrote the book *It Takes a Village (to raise a child)*. It doesn't take a village—optimal condition is one woman and one man. Our society is based upon this, and deviating from this model, even if unintentionally, is a bad idea. If the government is going to do any social engineering at all, it should be to encourage nuclear families and to encourage productivity. Instead, our government encourages fatherless families and women who will not work.

Application: In the same vein, our government appears to do this for one particular group of people (or, that is how things are in Texas, where I encounter this). During the time that I have been associated with the welfare system and non-nuclear families, I have come across 1 Hispanic single mother with children, 1 white single mother with children and hundreds of Black single mother families, many with 3 or more children, and virtually all of those with a variety of last names. Anyone apart from an ideologue will realize that when you perpetuate single-mother households with a handful of children, there are going to be difficulties much greater than those faced by the traditional nuclear family, and these problems will be disproportionate to whichever group the government appears to favor and to perpetuate.

Psalm 68:5c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
mâ'ôwn (מְאוֹן) [pronounced maw- OHN]	<i>dwelling, habitation; refuge</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #4583 BDB #732
qôdesh (קֹדֶשׁ) [pronounced koh-DESH]	<i>holiness, sacredness, apartness, that which is holy, holy things</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6944 BDB #871

Translation: *...in His holy habitation.* This is an interesting addition to this verse, and cannot be understood as God being a protector and defender of widows and orphans in heaven; nor do we have the preposition *from* to indicate that God does this *from heaven*. I believe the idea is, when God's Word is obeyed, the helpless are taken care of. In the Mosaic Law, we find instance after instance where the Law is written to protect those who cannot protect themselves.

Barnes has an interesting take on this, saying that a man's character is better known within his own home, and that God's character—that He is concerned with the widows and the orphans—reveals essential elements of His character which may not be known outside of His holy habitation. That is, the outside world knows of whirlwinds and storms, but does not necessarily perceive of God as a Helper to the helpless. The entire quote is: *The design of the psalmist seems to be to take us at once up to God; to let us see what he is in his holy home; to conduct us into his very presence, that we may see him as he is. What a man is we see in his own home - when we get near to him; when we look upon him, not on great or state occasions, when he is abroad, and assumes appearances befitting his rank and office, but in his own house; as he is constantly. This is the idea here, that if we approach God most nearly, if we look upon him, not merely in the splendor and magnificence in which he appears in governing the worlds, in his judgments, in storm and tempest, riding on the clouds and*

*controlling the ocean, but, as it were, in his own dwelling, his quiet heavens - if we look most closely at his character, we shall find that character best represented by the kind and benignant traits of a father - in his care for widows and orphans. In other words, the more we see of God - the more we become intimately acquainted with his real nature - the more evidence we shall find that he is benevolent and kind.*⁴⁴

I believe that part of what is being conveyed is, God is presented as the Rider in the desert wilderness, as One Who leads all of the Exodus generation; however, even as their great leader, He still looks out for the widows and orphans, as the many passages which I have already quoted from the Law so indicate.

The NET Bible® simply says, *He occupies His throne, and [from there He] carries out His royal responsibilities.*⁴⁵ These royal responsibilities would include being a Father to the orphans and an advocate of the oppressed widow.

Application: I believe that some nations are judged according to how they deal with the helpless in that nation. However, lest we become too fatheaded, our system of welfare has become a system to buy votes for one particular party while many people who are nearly helpless or totally helpless are left out of the system. I have known of many families who could have taken care of themselves; who could have pulled together and made things work, but, because of welfare and government assistance, did nothing but sit around and take money. Furthermore, this robs people of their dignity and their desire to work. On the other hand, I knew one woman who had 4 children, she was diagnosed with cancer, and her husband left her—she is a woman who needed help, and she got very little help from our government. Obviously, no system will ever be 100% fair; however, easily half of those whom I know have received governmental assistance could have made it without the assistance.

Application: When governmental assistance has the hidden agenda to purchase votes for one party or the other, there are a number of negative results—in the case of African-Americans, welfare has destroyed the Black family, where $\frac{3}{4}$ ^{ths} of the African-American children born today are born into either a single-mother home or to a couple who are not married (if memory serves, in the 60's, 3% of children were born out of wedlock). The foundation and stability of our society is the family, and that has been destroyed for the Black race.⁴⁶ Remove the father from the home and you remove the child's great stabilizing and guiding factor. And all of the marching in the world is not going to solve this problem; it is both based upon individual choices as well as imposed by a mis-guided government (I am giving government the benefit of the doubt here). As long as single Black women are rewarded and taken care of by our government, that model of a Black family will be the dominant form.

Application: Again, this does not mean that we should remove all governmental programs nor is it a complete, all-out indictment of welfare; where God's Word is taught, there should be protection afforded to the helpless.

Elohim [is] a Father to the fatherless
and an advocate of the widows
in His holy habitation.

Psalm 68:5 Summarized

1. In the previous verse, we are called upon to sing to God and to exalt Him. In this verse, we are told of His character—essentially telling us *why* we ought to sing praises to Him.
2. God is a Father to the orphans. God, in His provisions to Israel, a theocracy, He protects the helpless.
3. God is an advocate of the widows. Women in a society are often taken advantage of, and God required of Israel to avoid that sort of behavior; God required that widows be treated fairly. We today are, as

⁴⁴ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:5.

⁴⁵ *The Net Bible*®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 68:5.

⁴⁶ I realize that this is an imprecise term. I should add that this is predominant among African-Americans born in the US; but this is not true of Blacks who have moved here from other countries .

Psalm 68:5 Summarized

- believers and as representatives, to be honest and we are to take care of the helpless. This is an individual responsibility, to be done as an individual and through private organizations.
4. This does not mean we should develop a welfare system in our government which makes parasites out of those in need.
 5. Furthermore, this does not mean that we reach into the pockets of others, through our vote, and require them to pay for the social programs which we deem important. It is not charity to give away someone else's money.
 6. This does not mean that we should not support a government-run welfare system; however, this welfare should help the helpless; and enable those in temporary need to receive some temporary help. In all cases where it is possible, work should be exchanged for welfare.
 7. Finally, God is said to be in His holy habitation, which is generally interpreted as being heaven, from which He dispenses grace and justice. This does not negate God being omnipresent. Apparently, God establishes a special presence in various places, and one of those places is the 3rd heaven.

All things require some sort of balance; obeying God's requirements for dealing with the helpless requires some careful balance as well. That is, we don't simply dole out money, particularly the money which others have worked hard to earn. That the United States has a welfare system is a good thing; that this system is more apt to make people more and more dependent upon the government is a very evil thing.

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Elohim causes to dwell solitary ones house-ward;

He is leading out prisoners into prosperity [or, freedom];
but stubborn ones have tabernacled in a parched region.

Psalm
68:6

Elohim causes those who are solitary to live in a household;

He leads captives [possibly, slaves] into freedom [or, prosperity];
but those who are willful [and headstrong] have settled into a scorched region.

God takes those who are alone and places them into households;
God leads those who are enslaved into freedom and prosperity;
however, those who are willful and headstrong choose to live in scorched regions.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	God who makes men of one manner to dwell in a house: Who brings out them that were bound in strength; in like manner them that provoke, that dwell in sepulchers.
Masoretic Text	Elohim causes to dwell solitary ones house-ward; He is leading out prisoners into prosperity [or, freedom]; but stubborn ones have tabernacled in a parched region.
Peshitta	God sets the solitary child in families; He triumphantly releases those who are bound with chains; but the rebellious dwell in waste places.
Septuagint	God settles the solitary in a house; leading forth prisoners mightily, also them that act provokingly, even them that dwell in tombs.

Significant differences: In the Hebrew, Greek and Latin, *solitary ones* are made to live in a *house*; in the Syriac, *solitary children* are placed into *families*. In the Hebrew, God leads out prisoners to *freedom*. In the Latin and Greek, this is related to *strength*; possibly by *means of strength*. In the Syriac, they are bound *with chains*. The problem here is

the Hebrew word is found nowhere else, so its definition is difficult to ascertain. We will say more about that in the exegesis of this verse.

In the Hebrew and Syriac, stubborn ones dwell in a *parched region* or in *waste places*; the Latin and Greek have them dwelling in *tombs* or *sepulchers*. Furthermore, it is not apparent that God makes them live in tombs in the Greek and Latin.

We've done a lot of work in the book of Samuel, where there were considerable differences in the ancient texts. In most cases, the differences meant very little when the verse was understood in context; here, where interpreting the psalm is so difficult to begin with, these changes could greatly affect the understanding of each verse.

We should recognize that, when a text is translated, often there is an attempt to make the text understandable, if the translator is confused as to its meaning. Our paraphrased Bibles do this constantly. Therefore, this must be kept in mind when reviewing the ancient translations. However, also bear in mind, if an ancient text is just as difficult to figure out as the Masoretic text (which is certainly the case in the final phrase of this verse), then it is less likely that an ancient translator got creative or interpretive with the Hebrew text, and more likely that he simply translated the Hebrew text before him, which differs from our Hebrew text. Again, this compounds the difficulty of understanding the meaning of each phrase.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	You find families for those who are lonely. You set prisoners free and let them prosper, but all who rebel will live in a scorching desert.
EasyEnglish *Churchyard)	God gives a home to lonely people. He leads people out of prison (and they hear) music. But people that do not obey (God) will continue to live in a land where the hot sun burns the ground.
Good News Bible (TEV)	He gives the lonely a home to live in and leads prisoners out into happy freedom, but rebels will have to live in a desolate land.
<i>The Message</i>	God makes homes for the homeless, leads prisoners to freedom, but leaves rebels to rot in hell.
New American Bible	Who gives a home to the forsaken, who leads prisoners out to prosperity, while rebels live in the desert.
Revised English Bible	God gives the friendless a home and leads the prisoner out in all safety, but rebels must remain in the scorching desert.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	Those who are without friends, God puts in families; he makes free those who are in chains; but those who are turned away from him are given a dry land.
Complete Apostles' Bible	God settles the solitary in a house; leading forth prisoners mightily, also them that act provokingly, even them that dwell in tombs.
<i>God's Word</i> ™	God places lonely people in families. He leads prisoners out of prison into productive lives, but rebellious people must live in an unproductive land.
HCSB	God provides homes for those who are deserted. He leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious live in a scorched land.
NET Bible®	God settles those who have been deserted in their own homes;

	he frees prisoners and grants them prosperity. But sinful rebels live in the desert.
New International Version	God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.
The Scriptures 1998	Elohim makes a home for the lonely; He brings out into prosperity Those who are bound with chains; Only the rebellious shall dwell in a dry land.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Updated <i>Emphasized Bible</i>	God is He who causes the solitary to live in a home [Ginsburg thinks this should be "...who brings absent ones home"] Who brings out prisoners into prosperity, But [so 3 early printed editions; but the Septuagint, Syriac and Vulgate all have <i>moreover</i> or <i>yea</i>] the rebellious have made their homes in a sunburnt land.
Hebrew Names Version	God sets the lonely in families. He brings out the prisoners with singing, but the rebellious dwell in a sun-scorched land.
New King James Version	God sets the solitary in families; He brings out those who are bound into prosperity; But the rebellious dwell in a dry <i>land</i> .
NRSV	God gives the desolate a home to live in; he leads out the prisoners to prosperity, but the rebellious live in a parched land.
Updated Bible Version 2.11	God sets the solitary in families: He brings out the prisoners into prosperity; But the rebellious stay in a parched land.
A Voice in the Wilderness	God causes those who are alone to live in households; He delivers those who are bound into prosperity; but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.
Young's Literal Translation	God--causing the lonely to dwell at home, Bringing out bound ones into prosperity, Only--the refractory have inhabited a dry place.

What is the gist of this verse? God takes the child who is alone and places that child in a home; God takes captives (from war) and brings them into prosperity; but the rebellious choose to live in a parched, dry land.

Psalm 68:6a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43
yâshab (יָשָׁב) [pronounced <i>yaw-SHAH^bV</i>]	<i>to cause to remain [stay, inhabit, sit, dwell]; to cause [a woman] to live [with someone]; to cause [a land] to be inhabited</i>	Hiphil participle	Strong's #3427 BDB #442
yâchîd (יָחִיד) [pronounced <i>yaw-KHEED</i>]	<i>single, solitary, only one [as in only-begotten, only child]</i>	masculine plural adjective/substantive	Strong's #3173 BDB #402
bayith (בַּיִת) [pronounced <i>BAH-yith</i>]	<i>house, household, habitation as well as inward</i>	masculine singular noun with the directional hê	Strong's #1004 BDB #108

Translation: Elohim causes those who are solitary to live in a household;... God takes those who are alone and He places them into households. One might interpret that God gives them a family (which might be why the Syriac text says that God places *the solitary child into families*. This phrase should be seen as an extension of what God does, and why we ought to praise Him. Previously, He is said to be *a father to orphans* and *an advocate of widows*; here, God takes those who are *solitary* (one might reasonably understand these to be *orphans*), and God places them into families.

We are not given any mechanics here, so let me suggest that God cuts off the womb of some women who desire children, in order that they may adopt a child. God works in complicated ways, and I don't mean to suggest that, every now and then, God looks down, and chooses a hundred thousand women that He makes childless. God set this earth in motion, with a myriad of events, which continue to affect all that occurs today; still respecting man's volition.

Application: When a couple appears to be unable to have children, this may indicate that they ought to adopt. Whereas, I do recognize that science can step in at this point, and, for a considerable sum of money, possibly cause parents to have children; some of their methods could be questionable (harvesting and freezing eggs; fertilizing eggs outside the womb and implanting them, etc.). I've got nothing against science; but when fertilization results in embryos which are experimented on (and often, when a couple is childless, and a set of methods do not work, then several eggs are fertilized), then we are entering into an area where we are experimenting with life. I have no problems if that is done with animals; I am concerned when this is done with human embryos. At the very least, this cheapens life, which is the exact opposite of what the parents intend to happen.

Application: Life continually throws a person curves; there are times when we are to resist the changes, and there are definitely times that we should adapt to the changes which we face. I've faced a number of life-changing events; and I had one, where I was asked to leave a job, where I faced it one way at one point in my life, and another way at another point in my life. In retrospect, I believe that I responded correctly in both cases, even though my response was different. In the first instance, I fought to retain my job, which ended up being very rewarding; and in the latter, I walked away from the job, which also ended up being very rewarding. Let me suggest that, if you are childless couple and you want children, then you ought to consider adoption as a viable alternative, rather than creating viable life which may end up getting experimented on. I realize, there are a lot of steps between infertility and creating viable life outside the womb; but, sometimes, God nudges us in this or that direction, and we ought to go in this or that direction. Parents have had wonderful families with adopted children; and God has even, under certain circumstances, made a previously infertile couple fertile. My application here is, if God seems to be nudging you in any direction, then that ought to be the direction in which you go. Obviously, the more doctrine that is in your soul, the easier it is for God to guide you.

Application: Let me take this tangent one more step. As I have testified to in other chapters of exegesis, one of the easiest things in the Christian life is divine guidance. It may appear to be obscure and difficult to nail down, but let me assure you that, God has a plan for your life; this plan involves changes now and again; and God can lead you in the way you ought to go. The more your mind is tuned to divine viewpoint, the easier it is for God to guide you. In the context of our psalm, God is guiding solitary children into families by working in the hearts and lives of a number of people (more than just the lives of the principals involved). Furthermore, God has reasons from moving a child from family A to family B. These are not simply arbitrary actions. God is not arbitrary; God's plan has purpose. Again, when God throws you a curve, then you adapt to that curve.

Psalm 68:6b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yâtsâ' (יָצַא) [pronounced yaw-TZAWH]	<i>to cause to go out, to lead out, to bring out, to carry out, to draw out, to take out; [of money:] to put forth, to lay out, to exact; to promulgate; to produce</i>	Hiphil participle	Strong's #3318 BDB #422
ʾâçîyr (אֲחִיר) [pronounced aw-SEER]	<i>prisoner, captive, bondman</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #615 BDB #64
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
kôwshârâh (כּוֹשָׁרָה) [pronounced koh-shaw-RAW]	<i>prosperity; freedom (?); singing (?)</i>	feminine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #3574 BDB #507

In the Greek and Latin, God leads the captives *by might* or *in strength*.

Part of the problem is, this feminine plural noun occurs only here. Its verbal cognate means *to be advantageous, to be proper, to succeed*. A masculine noun cognate for the verb means *skill, success*. Therefore, interpreting this noun to mean *prosperity* or even *freedom* is more likely than *strength*.

If we look at this portion of v. 6 as being somewhat parallel with the previous portion of v. 6, then my translation has the most to recommend it. We are going from one status to another essentially opposite status in both cases; therefore, God's ability is not being highlighted (i.e., *His strength*), but what He does is being highlighted (taking a captive and making them prosperous).

Translation: ...He leads captives [possibly, slaves] into freedom [or, prosperity];... Those who are taken prisoner in war often became slaves; God leads these into freedom and prosperity.

In these past two phrases, we are speaking of changes which God causes in the life of another. In the previous phrase, God places an orphan (by interpretation) into a family. In this phrase, God leads a captive into freedom. First off, we should recognize that a captive or a prisoner in the ancient world was not always the result of criminal behavior; in fact, most of the time, a captive had not committed a crime, but was on the losing side of a war. So, when we speak of captives or prisoners in the Scriptures, recognize that we are referring to those who have been enslaved in warfare. So we are speaking of God bringing an enslaved person into freedom here; He is not letting some criminal loose early.

Application: Again, we are dealing with a person in a difficult circumstance, and God changes that person's status. Nothing could be worse than to be taken as a slave in warfare, and then treated as a possession. In time, God has led many slaves into freedom. Through the United States, many nations whose people were enslaved to a doctrine, to the very nation in which they were born, many of these were set free. Through our efforts throughout the world, even places where we should have had a better showing, even those places have developed some freedom—e.g., Vietnam, where Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) is a bastion of free enterprise. We left prematurely, and millions of people died because of our lack of resolve; but, free enterprise remained simply because we had been there. Greater freedoms would have result and fewer would have died, had we stayed and defeated the North Vietnamese; but God still took these circumstances and worked them for good.

We have a Scriptural example of this. Joseph, a strong believer in Jehovah Elohim, was sold into slavery by his brothers, and he ended up in Egypt. God not only worked this for the good of Joseph, but for the good of those who had sold him into slavery. Furthermore, Joseph revealed no bitterness or anger over what had happened, a testimony to the grace in his soul.

Now, bear in mind, God does not do this for every person taken into captivity. This is not a promise that God will set all captives free; this tells us that God can and does move those who are captive into prosperity, as in the case of Joseph.

Let's go back to the author and the time that this psalm was written. Recall that David tried unsuccessfully to move the Ark and this resulted in the death of one of the Ark's caretakers. David stopped that procession, but, 3 months later, David moves the Ark again. As we have studied, David learned some doctrine since then. He studied the Scriptures and found how to move the Ark. I think what we have here is, David, in reading the Scriptures, wrote this psalm as a result, quoting things which God had done. So here, David is very likely thinking about Joseph, whom he had read about, and about how God led this captive Joseph into great prosperity. Or David may have been thinking of Israel, taken out of Egypt, taken out of slavery, and brought into [a land flowing with milk and honey](#), so that they might enjoy [houses which they did not build and wells which they had not dug](#).

Spurgeon also applies this to the Exodus generation: *"God places the solitary in families." The people had been sundered and scattered over Egypt; family ties had been disregarded, and affections crushed; but when the people escaped from Pharaoh they came together again, and all the fond associations of household life were restored, This was a great joy. "He brings out those which are bound with chains." The most oppressed in Egypt were chained and imprisoned, but the divine Emancipator brought them all forth into perfect liberty. He who did this of old continues His gracious work. The solitary heart, convinced of sin and made to pine alone, is admitted into the family of the First-born; the fettered spirit is set free, and its prison broken down, when sin is forgiven; and for all this, God is to be greatly extolled, for He has done it, and magnified the glory of his grade.⁴⁷*

We have ample parallel verses as well: Psalm 107:10–14: [Those who live in the darkness, and in the shadow of death, being prisoners in affliction and iron, because they rebelled against the Words of God, and despised the counsel of the Most High; and He humbled their heart by toil; they stumbled, and none were helping; and they cried to Jehovah in their distress; He saved them out of their distresses; He brought them out from darkness and the shadow of death; and He broke their bonds apart.](#) Psalm 146:5–7: [Blessed is he who has the God of Jacob in his help; his hope is on Jehovah his God, who made the heavens and the earth, the seas and all that is in them; who keeps truth forever; who executes judgment for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry; Jehovah sets free the prisoners.](#) Luke 4:17–21 (Isa. 61:1–2): [And the scroll of Isaiah the prophet was handed to Him. And unrolling the book, He found the place where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me. Because of this He anointed Me to proclaim the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim remission to captives, and to the blind to see again, to send away the ones being crushed, in remission, to preach an acceptable year of the Lord." And rolling up the scroll, returning it to the attendant, He sat down. And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your ears.](#)

One might also interpret these words *spiritually*, if you will. The solitary one, the one without, is the unbeliever who turns to God; he is without God, and he turns to God. God blesses him with a house or a household. Furthermore, in eternity, God blesses him with a place in heaven. John 14:2: ["In My Father's house are many dwelling places. But if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you!"](#) On this earth, we are *subject* to our sin nature. We are tempted to do wrong and we often give in to the temptation. We are, in this way, enslaved to sin. God will lead us from temptation on earth, and He will remove the sin nature from us in eternity.

⁴⁷ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 68:6.

Psalm 68:6c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾak ^e (אֲכָ) [pronounced <i>ahk^e</i>]	<i>surely, certainly, no doubt, only, but; only now, just now, scarcely; only this once; nothing but, merely</i> [before a substantive]; <i>quite, altogether</i> [before an adjective]	adverb of restriction, contrast, time, limitation, and exception. Also used as an affirmative particle. Expanded meanings given here.	Strong's #389 BDB #36
ṣârar (צָרָר) [pronounced <i>saw-RAHR</i>]	<i>stubborn, rebellious, willful, headstrong</i> [and uncontrollable]	masculine plural, Qal active participle	Strong's #5637 BDB #710
shâkan (שָׁכַן) [pronounced <i>shaw-KAHN</i>]	<i>to tabernacle, to pitch a tent; to dwell, to reside, to live in, to domicile at, to settle, to settle down, to encamp</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #7931 BDB #1014
ts ^e chîychâh (צִחִיחָה) [pronounced <i>ts^eh-khee-KHAW</i>]	<i>scorched</i> [parched] <i>land, an arid region</i> [area]	feminine singular noun	Strong's #6707 BDB #850

The Greek and Latin have even *to those who dwell in tombs* at the end here, which makes little sense.

Translation: *...but those who are willful [and headstrong] have settled into a scorched region.* This is the contrasting line to the previous two. There are those who are headstrong, willful, stubborn and uncontrollable. This indicates that we are speaking of unbelievers here. One important difference between this and the previous two lines is, here we have the Qal, and in the previous two lines, we have the Hiphil (the causal stem). In the previous two lines, God caused things to happen for those who are solitary and for those who were captives; however, here, the stubborn are not caused to live in an arid, scorched region; they themselves pitch a tent there; they themselves choose to live there. This line is both parallel to the previous lines, as well as contrasted with the previous lines.

Gill gives a slightly different, but reasonable interpretation: *but the rebellious dwell in a dry land; meaning the Jews, to whom Christ came, and whom they rejected, reviled, hated, and would not have him to reign over them, and were a gainsaying and disobedient people; for which their land was smitten with a curse, and in the time of their wars became a dry land; when famine and pestilence were everywhere, and such tribulation as was never known, (Isa. 8:21—And they shall pass through it, hard pressed and hungry. And it shall be, they shall be hungry; he will rave and curse his king and his God, and face upward).* Moreover, the nations of the world, among whom they are dispersed, are a dry land to them; and even such places as are become fruitful through the preaching of the Gospel are no other to them, who neither do hear it, nor will they hear it; and they are like persons in a dry and thirsty land, vainly expecting a Messiah, who will never come. This may also be applied to all that obey not the Gospel of Christ, who will be punished with everlasting destruction from his presence, and shall not have a drop of cold water allowed them to cool their tongue. The allusion may be thought to be to the Jews, that murmured and rebelled against God, and vexed his Spirit in the wilderness, where their carcasses fell; and so dwelt in a dry land, and entered not into rest, or the land of Canaan.⁴⁸

Application: It is normal to feel compassion for men, women and children whom we see as innocent in Arabic countries. There is often internal unrest, warring factions and suppression of thought. But, bear in mind, they

⁴⁸ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:6.

choose to be Muslim. Muslim countries tend to be poor, oppressive and filled with violence. Iraq and Lebanon both elected Muslim leaders, and Lebanon, despite being a prosperous thriving democracy, has sunk into internal warfare since the last election. You may protest, *they don't have any choice; they are born into this!* However, in the United States, in a country which is very prosperous, where there are almost unlimited opportunities, Muslims are attempting to impose Muslim ways on our country. At this point in time (2007), these are small things: cab drivers who do not want to pick up people who are morally offensive to them; some who have insisted on specific prayer rooms and foot baths at airports; those who have put on big shows at US airports, and have then sued when people became concerned about their erratic behavior. These things in themselves seem innocuous, but this is a movement which is getting larger and wanting to have more privileges and more religious areas and things at their disposal in secular places. A recent survey (the **Pew Survey**) shows that 26% of American Muslims under 30 believe that, under some circumstances, suicide bombings are justified. That is a mindset; that is a way of thinking; that is a stubborn person choosing to live in a scorched and arid region. A further example of being willful and stubborn: a significant number of newspapers either did not report this particular fact or they buried it deep into a story about this Pew Survey.

Application: Going on a tangent from above, some news organizations defended their approach to this story by alleging that the big story is, *most Muslims in the US are better integrated, more Americanized and less radical than Muslims outside of the States*. Such news organizations tend to ignore or bury stories or under-report aspects of stories which do not fit with their world view. It is not news that most Muslims in the US are temperate and law-abiding and live-and-let-live individuals. We see this day after day in the lack of Muslim violence inside our country. So, that most Muslims in the US are not crazy radicals *is not news!* The fact that there is a significant percentage of US Muslims who believe that killing innocent men, women and children in order to make a political statement is sometimes justified—that is news. That is shocking.

Application: Our news organizations are intentionally slanting a huge portion of the news: *All one has to do is to read the headlines for most stories. Marines struggle against Insurgents. Two Marines killed.* reads the liberal paper's headline. The conservative paper reads: *Marines take rest of Najaf. Enemy routed.*⁴⁹ This was taken from a forum; and, unbelievably enough, there were arguments from liberals that it is important that 2 Marines were killed and that should be in the headline. These are people who choose to live in an arid region. God does not place them there; they choose that place for themselves.

Application: It is clear from an examination of the U.A.E. or of Dubai that not only do Arab nations sit on enough oil in order to make the entire nation prosperous, but that this can be done—it is realistic and achievable. But, instead, Arabs choose to live in arid, scorched regions; God does not place them there.

Back to the understanding of this verse: *...but those who are willful [and headstrong] have settled into a scorched region*. Perhaps David first considered Joseph, as in the previous line, and how is thinking about those who were living in the Land of Promise for the 7 years of drought. The sons of Jacob did go to Egypt for food, and were eventually brought with their families to stay with Joseph during the famine which followed; but others—the willful and stubborn—remained in the land, which, for 7 years, was a scorched region. The application which I gave above is apt; but, I also wanted to give this from David's viewpoint; taking what he probably read and translating it thousands of years ago into poetry.

Furthermore, bear in mind that, even in the desert, God brought food and water to Israel for 40 years. God would have let their negative attitudes die off completely in the desert, had not Moses, their intercessor, stand between them and God's wrath. Because of Moses, these people were led from the desert wilderness into the Land of Promise, a land flowing with milk and honey.

By the way, what differentiates a desert from a land flowing with milk and honey? Rain. Simple rain (or snow). Who controls that? God does. With all the science and weather information which we have gathered over the past 50 years, our weathermen still have difficulty determining when it will rain or how much. In the city of Houston, where I live, there have been at least two instances of 35 inches of rain falling on some parts of this

⁴⁹ Taken from <http://www.able2know.com/forums/about25361.html>

general area in one 24 hour period; and, although the weathermen were able to predict rain, no one had any idea as to how much rain we were going to get. Throughout this past week, where I live, we have been given anywhere from a 30 to a 60% chance of rain. Does this mean that it is going to actually rain? We really don't know. Although there are definitely some days where a weatherman can unequivocally predict rain or sunshine, there are as many days where you might as well just toss a coin in the air. God has set up an extremely complex set of laws into place which govern our weather. He knows, with 100% accuracy, where it will rain and where it won't; and He knows, to whatever precision is required, how much rain will fall over this or that place. God can (and will) make the desert into a lush, green forest, simply by adding rain. But, those who are willful and headstrong, they will be placed into a scorched region. Psalm 105:33–35: *He sets rivers to a wilderness, and water springs to thirsty ground; a fruitful land to a salty desert; because of the wickedness of those who live in it. He puts the wilderness into pools of water; and dry land into water-spring.*

There are parallel verses as well to this portion of the psalm: Deut. 28:23–24: *And your heavens over your head shall become bronze, and the earth under you iron. Jehovah shall make the rain of your land be dust and ashes. It shall come down on you from the heavens until you are destroyed.* Mal. 1:3: *I have hated Esau and have made his mountains a desolation, and his inheritance to be for the jackals of the wilderness.*

Again, we might reasonably interpret this verse spiritually: those who spend their lives against God, being willful and stubborn, never believing in His Son, will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. By the way, let me add, rarely does the Old Testament speak of the Lake of Fire (or Hell); and there are few passages in the New which speak of it. We find the place where the Lake of Fire is mentioned the most often is in the gospels by our Lord. No one is more fit to speak of hell than the One Who gives us life, than the One Who delivers us from hell, than the One Who experienced hell on our behalf.

Barnes sums up this verse: *The idea is, that the condition of the rebellious as contrasted with that of those whom God has under his protection would be as a fertile and well-watered field compared with a desert. For the one class he would provide a comfortable home; the other, the wicked, would be left as if to dwell in deserts and solitudes: In other words, the difference in condition between those who are the objects of his favor, and those who are found in proud rebellion against him, would be as great as that between such as have comfortable abodes in a land producing abundance, and such as are wretched and homeless wanderers in regions of arid sand. While God be-friends the poor and the needy, while he cares for the widow and the orphan, he leaves the rebel to misery and want. The allusion here probably is to his conducting his people through the desert to the land of promise and of plenty; but still the passage contains a general truth in regard to the principles of his administration.*⁵⁰

You may ask, *which of these interpretations is accurate?* No doubt, David was thinking of Joseph or he was thinking of the Jews when it came to God taking a solitary one and giving him a house; and he must have been thinking about Joseph or about the Exodus generation when he wrote of being led from slavery into freedom (or, into prosperity); contrasting this with the negative volition of the Egyptians when God required them to let His people go. However, God the Holy Spirit, Who inspired David, would have in His mind the other interpretations which I have offered. The idea is, God did not just do these things only one time in human history; what is spoken of here is what God does often with His people. In other words, whether David's focus was narrow or broad, we may broadly apply this verse. Furthermore, we find the participle used twice in this verse, which would indicate what God typically does. Therefore, we are not speaking of one incident alone, but of God's *modus operandi*. However, when it comes to those whom God makes live in a parched, dry area, David uses the Qal perfect, which indicates a completed action, a finality. If we choose against God—if we spend every moment of our lives rejecting Jesus Christ as our Savior—God assigns us to a parched land, to the Lake of Fire, and this assignment is forever.

Application: We need to think when we apply this verse. Take some homeless man—any homeless man wandering the streets of this or that city. Most of the time, he finds himself in that position because he has abused

⁵⁰ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:6.

drugs and/or alcohol. If any homeless person turns toward God—if he believes in Jesus Christ—and is positive toward the teaching of God’s Word after that, we may reasonably assume that, at some point, God will lead this man away from the parched places into a home; away from his captivity to drugs and alcohol, into freedom. However, realize that there is also the promise to the homeless man who is wilful and stubborn—he will continue to occupy parched places. The key is that man’s volition.

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This next verse is going to be a bit of an odd duck. The structure clearly associates this verse with a main verb or a set of main verbs (the *bêyth* preposition along with the infinitive construct usually sets a temporal marker to be associated with a main verb). It does not appear that this temporal relationship belongs with the verse which we just covered; however, if this is to be associated with the verse that follows, then it is odd that we find a musical interlude between this and verse after. However, this is not unheard of in the realm of music. I can think of one particular song where a stanza ended with a particular word, but that word was not spoken; then there was a musical interlude and that word was the first word in the next stanza.⁵¹ An unusual thing to do, just as what David will do here is unusual.

God with Israel in Sinai

Elohim, in Your going forth to faces of Your
people;
in Your marching in desert;..
Selah!

Psalm
68:7

O Elohim, when You went forth before Your
people;
when You marched in the desert wasteland;..
[Musical] Pause [or, musical interlude; lit.,
Selah!]

O God, when You went out in front of Your people;
and when you marched before them in the desert wasteland;..
[Musical interlude].

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	Elohim, in Your going forth to faces of Your people; in Your marching in desert;.. Selah!
Septuagint	O God, when You went forth before your people, when You went through the wilderness; Pause.
Significant differences:	No significant differences.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	You set your people free, and you led them through the desert.
The Message	God, when you took the lead with your people, when you marched out into the wild,...
Revised English Bible	God, when at the head of your people you marched out through the barren waste,...
	[Selah]

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

⁵¹ This is a song from the *Love Forever Changes* album.

Bible in Basic English	O God, when you went out before your people, wandering through the waste land; <i>Selah</i> .
Complete Apostles' Bible	O God, when You went forth before Your people, when You went through the wilderness; Pause:
God's Word™	O God, when you went in front of your people, when you marched through the desert, <i>Selah</i>
JPS (Tanakh)	O God, when You went at the head of Your army, when You marched through the desert,.. <i>Selah</i> .
NET Bible®	O God, when you lead your people into battle, when you march through the desert,.. (<i>Selah</i>).
The Scriptures 1998	O Elohim, when You went out before Your people, When You stepped through the wilderness, <i>Selah</i> .

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

The Amplified Bible	O God when You went forth before Your people, when You marched through the wilderness, <i>Selah</i> [pause, and calmly think of that]!
LTHB	O God, when You marched before Your people, when You walked on through the wilderness. <i>Selah</i> .
Updated Bible Version 2.11	O God, when you went forth before your people, When you marched through the wilderness; <i>Selah</i> .
Young's Updated LT	O God, in Your going forth before Your people, In Your stepping through the wilderness, <i>Selah</i> .

What is the gist of this verse? V. 7 sets up the next verse. The psalmist is speaking to God, and he says “When You went forth in front of Your people, when You marched [before them] through the wilderness...” However, the psalmist leaves the listener hanging at this point, and apparently breaks into a musical interlude.

Psalm 68:7a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
yâtsâ' (יָצָא) [pronounced <i>yaw-TZAWH</i>]	<i>to go out, to come out, to come forth; to rise; to flow, to gush up [out]</i>	Qal infinitive construct with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3318 BDB #422
The infinitive construct, when combined with the bēyth preposition, can often take on a temporal meaning and may be rendered <i>when [such and such happens]</i> . It can serve as a temporal marker that denotes an event which occurs simultaneously with the action of the main verb.			
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l^e</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510

Psalm 68:7a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
pânîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced paw-NEEM]	face, faces, countenance; presence	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular)	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, they mean <i>upon the face of, before, before the face of, in the presence of, in the sight of, in front of</i> . When used with God, it can take on the more figurative meaning <i>in the judgment of</i> . This can also mean <i>forwards; the front part</i> [or, the edge of a sword]. L ^e pânîym (לְפָנֶיךָ) can take on a temporal sense as well: <i>before, of old, formerly, in the past, in past times</i> .			
‘am (עַם) [pronounced gahm]	people; race, tribe; family, relatives; citizens, common people; companions, servants; entire human race; herd [of animals]	masculine singular collective noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5971 BDB #766

Translation: O Elohim, when You went forth before Your people;... As most translators agree, we have a temporal phase here, which we will need to affix to a main verb—one which comes before or after this verse. This is a phrase used to indicate a general going out before his army, as we find similar phrasing in Judges 4:14 9:39 2Sam. 5:24

We also should determine *what period of time is under consideration here?* The quick and easy answer is, when God led His people through the desert, which is in keeping with what follows and with what has preceded this. God led the Exodus generation as a cloud by day and God remained with Israel as a pillar of fire by night (Ex. 13:21).

Psalm 68:7b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
tsâ'ad (צָאָד) [pronounced tzaw-GAHD]	to step, to march; to mount up	Qal infinitive construct with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6805 BDB #857
The infinitive construct, when combined with the bēyth preposition, can often take on a temporal meaning and may be rendered <i>when [such and such happens]</i> . It can serve as a temporal marker that denotes an event which occurs simultaneously with the action of the main verb.			
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88

Psalm 68:7b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
y ^e shîymôwn (יִשְׁמֹון) [pronounced y ^e -shee-MOAN]	desert, wasteland, waste-place; transliterated Jeshimon	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3452 BDB #445

Translation: *...when You marched in the desert wasteland;..* The time and place referred to here is, *when God led Israel through the desert wilderness on their march from Egypt to the Land of Promise*. As has been previously stated, when the Ark of God was going to move with Israel behind, Moses would speak the first line of this psalm (see Num. 10:35), and they would move out.

Now, interestingly enough, there is a pause here—a musical interlude—so the listener is thinking about *when God leads His people through the desert wasteland*, while there is music being played. Normally, we would expect a musical pause, and then another segment of the psalm is begun, but here, we think about God leading Israel through the desert and how this is going to be tied to what is coming—and we do this thinking during a musical interlude.

Gill comments: *...when You didst march through the wilderness; at the head of the Israelites, leading, guiding, and directing them; providing for them all things necessary, and protecting them against their enemies. And so Christ goes before his people, as they pass through the wilderness of this world; and does the like good offices for them, until he, as the great Captain of their salvation, brings them safe to glory: for what is here said is taken notice of as a resemblance of what he now does, or has done, under the Gospel dispensation, to which this psalm belongs; particularly of his marching through the wilderness of the Gentile world, in the ministry of the word by his apostles, wherein he went forth conquering and to conquer.*⁵²

Psalm 68:7c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
çelâh (חֲלֹה) [pronounced seh-LAW]	to lift up, to elevate, to exalt [with one's voice], to gather, to cast up [into a heap]; it is transliterated Selah	interjection	Strong's #5542 BDB #699

The verbal cognate is 'âlâh (חֲלֹה) [pronounced saw-LAW], which means *to lift up and toss aside*. In the Piel stem, it means *to weigh*, which involves lifting up the object and placing it upon the balance. Gesenius gives the meaning of çelâh as *rest, silence, pause*, as çelâh does not necessarily have to match the meaning of its cognates. My thinking, which is a combination of BDB and Gesenius, is that the voices build up to a crescendo here, and, very likely, they are then followed by a vocal (but not necessarily, musical) silence. This would reconcile the points made by Gesenius and still make this compatible with its cognates.⁵³ Another very reasonable possibility is that the instruments are *lifted up* for a musical interlude. The NLT translation of *Interlude* is very good.

Translation: *[Musical] Pause* [or, musical interlude; lit., *Selah*.] As described in the exegesis, this word çelâh comes from a verb which means *to lift up*. It is reasonable to assume that those who are playing musical instruments are to lift up these instruments and play during a pause in the singing. I believe that this is called the

⁵² Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:7.

⁵³ For more discussion, see H.W.F. Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*; ©1979 by Baker Books; p. 588.

bridge in modern music? Keil and Delitzsch suggest: *The music, as Sela directs, here becomes more boisterous; it gives intensity to the strong cry for the judgment of God; and the first unfolding of thought of this Michtam is here brought to a close.*⁵⁴ Let me suggest that this also is a time where David takes a break from writing, and concentrates on his run. Obviously, he is formulating this as he runs; he does not stop to scratch out a few verses on a rock or a tree; but this represents a break in his thinking, and the music intensifies as he simply runs.

This, as has been noted, is placed in an odd spot. We would expect this verse to continue into the next, to inform us as to *what* happened when God led His people through the wilderness. However, instead of getting that answer, the singing stops, and music is played. Perhaps the idea is, grab the listeners attention, and then put him on hold for a moment.

Interestingly enough, although I would have expected several commentators to say something about the odd placement of the musical pause, Spurgeon is the only one I recall who made a comment on it.⁵⁵

As you will notice, a majority of the translations simply have the next verse continued after the previous. Let me suggest that, David is quoting from Deborah (more on that to come) from Judges 5:4–5; so, he wants those hearing these familiar words to stop and think about where they come from and by whom the word were written. The idea is, the people will recognize Deborah's psalm, and be thinking about Deborah and Barak, and about Moses, about whom, in part, the psalm was written.

**Earth quaked—
in fact, [two] heavens dropped down from
faces of Elohim.
This Sinai from faces of Elohim,
Elohim of Israel.**

Psalm
68:8

**The earth quaked;
furthermore, the heavens poured down [rain]
from Elohim.
This Sinai [quaked] because of Elohim,
the Elohim of Israel.**

**The earth quaked and the heavens poured down rain from Elohim.
In fact, all that occurred in the Sinai desert came from God, the God of Israel.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

Earth quaked—
in fact, [two] heavens dropped down from faces of Elohim.
This Sinai from faces of Elohim,
Elohim of Israel.

Peshitta

The earth shook, the heavens also lowered at the presence of God; even Sinai itself was moved at the presence of God, the God of Israel.

Septuagint

...the earth quaked, yea, the heavens dropped water at the presence of the God of Sina, at the presence of the God of Israel.

Significant differences:

The Greek tells us that the heavens dropped down *rain*, which is implied but not stated in the Hebrew. I have inserted the proper verb for the 3rd phrase; the Greek and Latin translators were confused, so they connected God with Sinai.

The Syriac speaks of the heavens being *lowered*, which is not necessarily different from the Hebrew; a difference connotation and interpretation, perhaps, but which probably has its root in the same Hebrew text. Secondly, the Syriac text does add a verb to the third phrase where Sinai *is moved* at the presence of God, which is quite similar to my insertion of the verb *to quake*.

⁵⁴ Keil & Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 5, p. 404.

⁵⁵ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 68:7. The comment itself was not really worth reproducing.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	God of Israel, the earth trembled, and rain poured down. You alone are the God who rules from Mount Sinai.
Good News Bible (TEV)	...the earth shook, and the sky poured down rain, because of the coming of the God of Sinai, the coming of the God of Israel.
<i>The Message</i>	Earth shook, sky broke out in a sweat; God was on the march. Even Sinai trembled at the sight of God on the move, at the sight of Israel's God.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	The earth was shaking and the heavens were streaming, because God was present; even Sinai itself was moved before God, the God of Israel.
Complete Apostles' Bible	...the earth quaked; yea, the heavens dropped water at the presence of the God of Sinai, at the presence of the God of Israel.
<i>God's Word</i> ™	...the earth quaked and the sky poured in the presence of the God of Sinai, in the presence of the God of Israel.
HCSB	...the earth trembled, and the skies poured down rain before God, the God of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel.
JPS (Tanakh)	...the earth trembled, the sky rained because of God, you Sinai, because of God, the God of Israel.
NET Bible®	..the earth shakes, yes, the heavens pour down rain before God, the God of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel.
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	The earth shook and the heavens dropped before Elohim, This Sinai, shook before Elohim, the Elohim of Yisra'ël.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	The earth trembled, the heavens also poured down [rain] at the presence of God; yonder Sinai quaked at the presence of God, the God of Israel.
A Conservative Version	...the earth trembled, the heavens also dropped at the presence of God, Sinai at the presence of God, the God of Israel.
Updated Bible Version 2.11	The earth trembled, The heavens also dropped [rain] at the presence of God: This Sinai [trembled] at the presence of God, the God of Israel.
WEB	The earth trembled. The sky also poured down rain at the presence of the God of Sinai -- At the presence of God, the God of Israel.
Young's Updated LT	The earth shook, Yea, the heavens have dropped before God, This Sinai--before God, the God of Israel.

What is the gist of this verse? While God leads Israel through the desert, the earth shook and it rained in Sinai in the presence of God leading Israel.

Psalm 68:8a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿerets (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced EH-rets]	earth (all or a portion thereof), land	feminine singular noun	Strong's #776 BDB #75

Psalm 68:8a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
raʿash (רָאֵשׁ) [pronounced raw- GAHSH]	to quake, to tremble, to shake; to be moved [shaken]	3 rd person feminine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7493 BDB #950

Translation: *The earth quaked;...* As the Jews crossed the desert, before Sinai, this great mountain quaked and shook—the very mountain which Moses went up upon. God made His presence known by the quakes which the Israelites experienced (Ex. 19:18).

That God's presence is made known by earthquakes is found in several passages: Ex. 19:18: *And the mountain of Sinai was smoking, all of it, because Jehovah came down on it in fire. And its smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace; and the mountain quaked exceedingly.* Psalm 77:18: *The voice of Your thunder in the tempest; lightning flashes lit up the world; the earth trembled and quaked!* Psalm 114:6–8: *O mountains, that you skip like rams? O little hills, like lambs? Tremble, O earth, from the face of the Lord, from the face of the God of Jacob; who turned the rock into a pool of water, the flint into a fountain of waters.* Isa. 64:1–4: *Oh that You would tear the heavens and come down, that mountains would quake before You. As the brushwood fire burns and fire causes water to boil, make known Your name to Your foes, that nations might tremble before You. When You did terrifying things which we did not look for, You came down; mountains flowed down before You.* Obviously, these passages refer not only to earthquakes, but to volcanic eruptions and to great rainstorms; interesting activity for David to note. Heb. 12:26: *...whose voice shook the earth then, but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once I will shake not only the earth, but also the heavens"* (Haggai 2:6). Rev. 11:19: *And the temple of God in Heaven was opened, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple, and lightning flashes, and voices, and thunders, and an earthquake, and a great hail occurred.*

Psalm 68:8b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾaph (אֲפֹ) [pronounced ahf]	in fact, furthermore, also, yea, even, indeed; even though	a conjunction which signifies <i>addition</i> or <i>emphasis</i>	Strong's #637 BDB #64

This word appears to have two different purposes: (1) A surprise is then mentioned or the unexpected is said. (2) A reference is made to a preceding sentence and it is expanded or emphasized and we would translate this word *yea*, *à fortiori*, *the more so*, *how much more* (following an affirmative clause), *how much less* (following a negative clause), *furthermore*, *in fact*.

shamayim (שָׁמַיִם) [pronounced shaw-MAH- yim]	heavens, skies	masculine dual noun	Strong's #8064 BDB #1029
nâṭaph (נָטַף) [pronounced naw-TAHF]	to drop, to fall in drops, to drip	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #5197 BDB #642
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577

Psalm 68:8b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
pânîym (פָּנִיִּם) [pronounced paw-NEEM]	face, faces, countenance; presence	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular)	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, min pânîym mean <i>from before the face of; out from before the face, from the presence of</i> . However, together, they can also be a reference to the cause, whether near or remote, and can therefore be rendered <i>because of, because that; by</i> .			
ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohîm	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Translation: ...furthermore, the heavens poured down [rain] from Elohîm. Rain poured down from the heavens while the mountain quaked. Ex. 19:16–18: And on the third day, it being morning, it happened: *There was thunder and lightning, and a heavy cloud on the mountain, and the sound of a ram's horn, very strong! And all the people in the camp trembled. And Moses caused the people to go up from the camp to meet God. And they took their stand at the lower part of the mountain. And the mountain of Sinai was smoking, all of it, because Jehovah came down on it in fire. And its smoke went up like the smoke of a furnace; and the mountain quaked exceedingly.* Bear in mind that this is the Middle East, where rain is rare; and rainstorms are even more rare. And all of this occurs in the midst of an almost unlivable desert and it all came from Jehovah God.

Although the Exodus generation saw both rain and manna drop down from heaven, I believe that our context here dictates that we are speaking of rain. However, the principle is the same, as God is behind both.

In one of Moses' two psalms, we read: *Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak. And hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain; my speech shall drop down as the dew, as the small rain on the tender plant, and as the showers on the grass; because I will proclaim the name of Jehovah and ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock; His work is perfect. For all His ways are just, a God of faithfulness, and without evil; just and upright is He* (Deut. 32:1–4). Just as the rain and dew change a desert into a garden, so doctrine works in our soul, turning us from angry, wayward individuals to much happier servants.

It is interesting that, we have no records in Moses' writings of quakes or of heavy rainfall when they were in the desert (except for Mount Sinai quaking). However, this passage and Judges 5:4 (*Jehovah, when You went out of Seir, when You marched out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled and the heavens dropped, the clouds also dropped water*) both allude to rainstorms and earthquakes during the moving of the people from Egypt to Israel (the passage in Judges specifically alludes to Mount Seir, which would have been when Israel regrouped and began to march to the Land of Promise with the real intent of going in).

Application: Let's consider the conditions of the desert wandering for a moment. Israel had the chance to enter into the Land of Promise within 2 years of leaving Egypt, and they chose not to (see Num. 13–15). God let them sweat out this choice in the desert for the next 38½ years. God kept the younger generation alive (the generation of promise) and He killed the older generation (Gen X) by the sin unto death. Living and dying in the desert was a metaphor which these people lived day in and day out for 38 years; God gave them enough to keep the younger generation alive, but they received no Word from God during this time. They just dropped one by one in the desert until God had removed the cancerous element of Gen X. When the new generation got up off their butts and began to move toward the Land of Promise, God again made Himself manifest to them through these quakes and storms. They were about to invade a country of vicious, child-sacrificing heathen; they needed to see overwhelming manifestations of God's power as they moved toward combat.

Now, quite frankly, I do not know why Moses did not speak of these storms and earthquakes; however, Deborah wrote of them in Judges 5, and that was close enough in time for her to record these things. That is, Deborah would have been one or two generations removed from the Generation of Promise, but she would have heard stories passed down through these generations about the rainstorms and the quakes. It is also close enough to the desert movement, that it would preclude Deborah from simply making it up. But, again, I am not sure why Moses did not allude to these storms and quakes.

Psalm 68:8c			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
zeh (זֶה) [pronounced zeh]	<i>here, this, this one; thus; possibly another</i>	demonstrative adjective	Strong's #2088, 2090 (& 2063) BDB #260
Çîynai (סִינַי) [pronounced see-NAH-ee]	<i>thorny; transliterated Sinai</i>	singular proper noun	Strong's #5514 BDB #696
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
pânîym (פָּנִים) [pronounced paw-NEEM]	<i>face, faces, countenance; presence</i>	masculine plural construct (plural acts like English singular)	Strong's #6440 BDB #815
Together, min pânîym mean <i>from before the face of; out from before the face, from the presence of</i> . However, together, they can also be a reference to the cause, whether near or remote, and can therefore be rendered <i>because of, because that; by</i> .			
ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Translation: *This Sinai [quaked] because of Elohim,...* I think the gist of this line is, all of this *occurred* at the foot of Mount Sinai, and it occurred because of Jehovah God and that Sinai itself quaked. We may also gather this from comparing this to Judges 5:4–5, which David is obviously quoting. Normally, when a verb is lacking, but clearly needed, we generally insert the verb *to be*; however, in this instance, however, our context (v. 8a), where this passage came from (Judges 5:4–5), and the need for a verb (a need *to be* does not satisfy), all demand the verb *to quake*. Because God's concentrated presence was on Sinai, the mountain quaked and there were great rainstorms, along with thunder and lightning (Ex. 19:16–18).

Why didn't Deborah before or David at this time supply the verb *to quake*? Let me offer two possible reasons: (1) when it comes to meter and poetry, perhaps not only was *to quake* obviously the verb here, but the sound of the verse as poetry was smoother without the verb. (2) Perhaps the emphasis was upon *Sinai*, where God first revealed Himself and His Law to the Jews. God's power and presence are no doubt in view, but the original writer wanted to recognize the importance of Sinai, even though that is not the thrust of this psalm.

Psalm 68:8d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #430 BDB #43
Yisʿrâʾêl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>yis-raw-ALE</i>]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975

Translation: ...the Elohim of Israel. And, as is a theme often presented in the Old and New Testaments: the God of Israel is the God Who controls the universe.

Interestingly enough, David is quoting Deborah from the book of Judges.

David Quotes Judges 5:4–5

Judges 5:4–5	Psalm 68:7–8
<p>O Jehovah, when You went forth out of Seir, when You marched out of the fields of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped. Yea, the clouds dropped water. The mountains quaked before the face of Jehovah, this Sinai [quaked] from before Jehovah the God of Israel.</p>	<p>O Elohim, when You went forth before Your people; when You marched in the desert wasteland;.. [Musical] Pause The earth quaked; furthermore, the heavens poured down [rain] from Elohim. This Sinai [quaked] because of Elohim, the Elohim of Israel.</p>

Note the differences; Deborah speaks of God marching out of Seir and our of the fields of Edom; this is where the Israelites swung around the southern tip of the Dead Sea, after 39–40 years in the desert, when they were going to come up the east side of the Dead Sea and the Jordan River. Deborah is focusing upon the Generation of Promise, children when Israel left Egypt, and their march to take the Land of Promise. After Gen X died out, this moving out of Seir and the fields of Edom represents positive volition on the part of the remaining Israelites, the generation of promise, in their march to take Israel. David instead focuses on God's guidance to Israel during his time.

David also emphasizes that the rain which poured down was *from God*, which we do not find in Deborah's song.

Deborah speaks of the heavens dropping [rain], and then tells us that the clouds dropped water. David summarizes that in one phrase.

Finally, Deborah speaks of mountains quaking before (or because of) God, which line supplies the verb for the following line. David leaves out the line and quotes the next line verbatim. We insert the verb *to quake*.

Finally, thrice in Deborah's psalm, God is called *Jehovah*; and in these same places, David calls Him *Elohim*.

Obviously, David wants to quote Deborah, but he takes artistic license and makes a few changes.

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David made some alterations when he adapted Deborah's words for his psalm. Why did he do this?

Why Did David Alter Deborah's Words?

1. David is writing a psalm to be sung while the Ark is being carried from Obed-edom's home to Jerusalem.
2. Deborah was celebrating the victory God gave to Barak and to her.
3. So David more generically to God leading Israel, which certainly is represented by the Ark moving forward in front of the congregation of Israel.
4. Deborah looks back to God leading Israel to victory, as God had done for Deborah and Barak; David looks to God simply leading Israel.
5. At some point in time, people seemed to shift from using God's proper name, *Jehovah*, and began to use *Elohim* more often. The change in this tradition appears to have taken place between the time of Deborah and David. We only know that this occurred, and we have the theory that, because God is holy, His name was considered holy; and therefore, it was spoken aloud fewer and fewer times by His people. At some point in time, we even lost the pronunciation of God's name.
6. I should add that, when we read *Elohim*, we may be speaking of one member of the Trinity; but, more reasonably, this would refer to all the members of the Trinity. When we use the name *Jehovah* (or, *Y^ehowah*), we are referring to one particular member of the Trinity—and *most* of the time, this is a reference to Jesus Christ in His pre-incarnate form. Let me offer one off-the-wall suggestion: during the time of David, or prior to this time, there was a debate about saying *Jehovah* aloud. So, if a song contains the name *Jehovah*, some might not sing His name aloud, causing a drop in volume when the opposite should occur. David solves this problem by using *Elohim* instead. I say this is an *off-the-wall* suggestion, because David certainly uses the name *Jehovah* in v. 20. Perhaps v. 20 is handled by a soloist? I am thinking out loud here.
7. David quotes enough from Deborah's words to indicate that he knew Scripture, and he makes enough changes so that these words are now applied to his circumstances and, apparently, to his culture.
8. Deborah speaks of great rain twice and the ground quaking twice; David speaks of these two things once each. I suspect that David is speaking of two incidents—what happened in Sinai and what happened when she and Barak stood up to the Canaanites (Judges 4). David is speaking merely of God's power and involvement in our lives; Deborah is speaking of parallel instances.
9. David quotes Deborah closely enough so that, those who know her psalm, recognize it; and remember the great victories which God gave to Moses and to Deborah and Barak. David is not speaking of victories in his own experience, but of those clearly from the past. The Ark symbolizes these victories from the past.
10. This helps to explain David's musical pause in the middle of a thought; the people of Israel, hearing this sung, and some of them singing it, would pause and recall where these words came from, and, therefore, the historical incidents that they pointed to.
11. This is known as artistic license; there is nothing which requires David to quote Deborah *word-for-word*. Hundreds of years later, Apostles would quote from the Old Testament in a similar fashion, not always giving an exact quotation and not always applying the verse quoted with its original intention. One might even argue that David is, in a manner of speaking, giving the Apostles the freedom to adjust the Old Testament passage to their circumstance or to their doctrine. Let me quickly add, we do not have the same privilege, as the Apostles wrote Scripture by the Holy Spirit. So, when an Apostle, to make a point, quotes an Old Testament passage, he does not always use it in the same way that it was originally meant to be used..

This is an historical reference which recognizes God's power and God's actions on behalf of Israel throughout history. David tailors these words to the occasion of transporting the Ark of God, a clear symbol of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior.

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Rain freely You scatter, O Elohim;
Your inheritance—and he is wearied—You set
her up.

Psalm
68:9

You have scattered rain freely [or, *in*
abundance], O Elohim;
You established Your inheritance, when it [the
rain] was wearied.

You have cast down rain in great abundance, O God;
You established Your inheritance when the rain stopped.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	You will set aside for Your inheritance a free rain, O God: and it was weakened, but You have made it perfect.
Masoretic Text	Rain freely You scatter, O Elohim; Your inheritance—and he is wearied—You set her up.
Peshitta	You, O God, sent a plentiful rain, whereby You confirmed Your inheritance when it was weary.
Septuagint	O God, You will grant to Your inheritance a gracious rain; for it was weary, but You refreshed it.

Significant differences: God's inheritance appears to be in the second line in the Hebrew; the Greek and Latin both make it a part of the first line, calling the rain something which God granted or set aside for His inheritance.

Although the Hebrew does not appear to make a lot of sense at first, but the gender of the pronominal suffixes helps to tell us who is who. The Greek, Latin and Syriac all appear to apply the suffixes to *inheritance*.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	When your land was thirsty, you sent showers to refresh it.
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	God, you gave plenty of rain. It made your Promised Land fresh again when it was dry.
Good News Bible (TEV)	You caused abundant rain to fall and restored your worn-out land;...
New American Bible	There you poured abundant rains, God, graciously given to the poor in their need. [This is v. 11 in the NAB].
New Jerusalem Bible	God, you rained down a shower of blessings, when your heritage was weary you gave it strength.
New Living Testament	You sent abundant rain, O God, to refresh the weary Promised Land.
Revised English Bible	You, God, send plentiful rain; when your own land languishes you restore it.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	You, O God, did freely send the rain, giving strength to the weariness of your heritage.
Complete Apostles' Bible	O God, You will grant to Your inheritance a gracious rain; for it was weary, but You have refreshed it.
God's Word™	You watered the land with plenty of rain, O God. You refreshed it when your land was exhausted.
HCSB	You, God, showered abundant rain; You revived Your inheritance when it languished.

JPS (Tanakh)	You released a bountiful rain, O God, when Your own land languished, You sustained it.
NET Bible®	O God, you cause abundant showers to fall on your chosen people. When they are tired, you sustain them,...
New International Version	You gave abundant showers, O God; you refreshed your weary inheritance.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	You, O God, did send a plentiful rain, You did restore <i>and</i> confirm Your heritage when it languished <i>and</i> was weary.
A Conservative Version	Thou, O God, sent a plentiful rain. Thou confirmed thine inheritance when it was weary.
<i>Updated Emphasized Bible</i>	A plentiful rain You shed abroad, O God, upon Your inheritance, When exhausted, You Yourself supported it.
English Standard Version	Rain in abundance, O God, you shed abroad; you restored your inheritance as it languished;...
King James 2000 Version	You, O God, did send a plentiful rain, by which you did confirm your inheritance, when it was weary.
MKJV	You, O God, sent a plentiful rain, by which You upheld Your inheritance when it was weary.
Updated Bible Version 2.11	You, O God, sent a plentiful rain, You confirmed your inheritance, when it was weary.
A Voice in the Wilderness	You, O God, sent a plentiful rain, by which You established Your inheritance when it was weary.
Young's Updated LT	A shower of free-will gifts you shake out, O God. Your inheritance, when it has been weary, You have established it.

What is the gist of this verse? God sends a great deal of rain to the Jews while they are walking through the desert; however, once He establishes them, this plentiful rain comes to an end.

Psalm 68:9a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
geshem (גֶּשֶׁם) [pronounced GHEH-Shem]	rain, showers; violent rain, heavy shower	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1653 BDB #177
When we have nouns of different number and gender placed together like this, we would expect the first to be in the construct form; however, Owen does not list it as a construct. Sometimes, the difference between a construct and its absolute form is merely a change of vowel points, which would have been added centuries after this was written. However, since this was read over and over in the Temple and later in the synagogues, it would seem reasonable that tradition would have presented this as a construct. Therefore, I admit to being confused by these nouns being thrown together like this.			
n°dābāh (נָדָבָה) [pronounced n°-DAW°-VAW]	freewill, readiness of mind [to give], freely, with a willing mind, willing to volunteer; a spontaneous offering, a freewill sacrifice; largeness, abundance	feminine plural noun	Strong's #5071 BDB #621

The relationship between these two nouns is unclear. Owen does not list rain as being in the construct; and the nouns do not match in number or in gender (they would match if one modified the other).

Psalm 68:9a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Another option is, this should be an adverb which modifies the verb in this phrase (I do not find an adverbial form for this word).			
nûph (נוף) [pronounced <i>noof</i>]	<i>to wave, to shake [e.g., the hand to beckon someone]; to scatter, to shake forth [rain]</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #5130 BDB #631
ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Translation: *You have scattered rain freely* [or, *in abundance*], *O Elohim*;... The Israelites—possibly as many as 2 million—spent 40 years in the desert wilderness, and the only thing which slowed them down was their own negative volition. What God did provide for them was water. We have two incidents where there was no water, but that indicates that most of the time, there was water enough to sustain them. This would made much greater than normal rainfall for this area, which God provided. Since we do not hear of continual rains upon the Israelites, we must reasonably assume that God caused it to rain in that general vicinity, and that streams and rivers brought water to the Jews. For this reason, the verb *to scatter* is quite appropriate, where God scattered rain upon the desert lands. God did this freely and abundantly. Although the noun which appears to define *rain* can mean *abundance*, according to the lexicons, it appears to have this meaning only in this verse. The rest of the time, it means *freely, willingly*. Despite Israel's bad attitude and negative volition, God continued to provide for them in His faithfulness. We apply this interpretation to this portion of v. 9a simply because of the context; apart from the context, making sense out of v. 9a would be quite difficult.

God continued to give the rain to Israel *freely*, which indicates that they had abundant rain. Barnes interprets this as God giving the people manna.⁵⁶ Although I do not know if I agree entirely, God did provide Israel with water and with manna, both of which had their origins from on high (even when water was given to Israel after Moses struck the rock, the water had to come from somewhere; I tend to lean toward a more natural explanation for this water⁵⁷). That this could refer to the manna and quail as well, could be confirmed with Psalm 78:21–28: *Therefore, when the LORD heard, He was full of wrath; a fire was kindled against Jacob; His anger rose against Israel, because they did not believe in God and did not trust His saving power. Yet He commanded the skies above and opened the doors of heaven, and He rained down on them manna to eat and gave them the grain of heaven. Man ate of the bread of the angels; He sent them food in abundance. He caused the east wind to blow in the heavens, and by His power He led out the south wind; He rained meat on them like dust, winged birds like the sand of the*

⁵⁶ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:9. Clarke agrees with Barnes. Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:9. Gill, instead, sees this as God giving the Holy Spirit in abundance, which makes little sense, inasmuch as, only a limited number of people were empowered by God the Holy Spirit. Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:9. The problem with Gill's approach is, he keeps trying to apply this psalm to the Church Age. Although I respect his opinion and quote him frequently, his comments seriously miss the mark here, going off into some parallel universe, saying things like *Now, by the plentiful ministration of the doctrines of the Gospel, accompanied with the Spirit and grace of God, the hearts of the Lord's people are refreshed, as the weary, dry, and thirsty land, is with a comfortable shower of rain; and by it weary souls have rest, or at least are directed by it to Christ, where they find it: and as the earth is "prepared" (u), as the word used signifies, by rain, for the nourishment of plants; so is the church by the Gospel, whose plants are an orchard of pomegranates, for the reviving and fructifying of those who are planted in it; whereby they appear to be trees of righteousness, and the planting of the Lord; and so are confirmed, settled, and established in the house of God, and in the truths of the Gospel*. Ibid. Hopefully, you can see why I did not bother to throw this in with the regular text.

⁵⁷ I think that when Moses struck the rock, he set off a geyser, which God had determined would be there in eternity past; the exact mechanics behind how God did this are unknown and unimportant.

seas; He let them fall in the midst of their camp, all around their dwellings. In any case, this rain simply refers to the provisions of God for His people.

Now, *why would Moses mention the striking of the rocks, but not rainstorms?* This is an easy answer: the striking of the rock and receiving water from the rock was extremely important, as it spoke of Jesus dying for our sins. We learn from that, that Jesus would be struck one time for our sins. Throwing in additional rainstorms would simply confuse this issue. So God gave Moses a narrow focus when recalling these incidents. What we read in Judges 5 and in our passage is evidence that God provided logistical grace for His people in the desert. What we read in Exodus and Numbers about the Moses striking the rock, informs us about Jesus Christ dying for our sins (in those passages, I have gone into much greater detail).

Psalm 68:9b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nachlâh (נַחֲלָה) [pronounced nah-khuh-LAW]	<i>inheritance, possession, property, heritage</i>	feminine singular noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5159 BDB #635
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lâ`âh (לָאָה) [pronounced law-AW]	<i>to be wearied, to be exhausted, [fatigued, worn out, worn down], to be wearied [tired, worn out] [from anything]</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Niphal perfect	Strong's #3811 BDB #521
`attâh (אַתָּה) [pronounced ahT-TAW]	<i>you</i> (often, the verb <i>to be</i> is implied)	2 nd person masculine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #859 BDB #61
kûwn (כּוּן) [pronounced koon]	<i>to set up, to erect; to confirm, to establish, to maintain; to found [a city, the earth, etc]; to direct [e.g., arrows], metaphorically to turn one's mind [to anything]</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Pilel (Polel) perfect; with the 3 rd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #3559 BDB #465

The Polel is not acknowledged in Mansoor's book nor in Zodhiates; it comes from Owen's book. However, it is essentially the same as the Piel (intensive) stem with a different conjugation. It appears to be called the Pilel in Gesenius and BDB.

Translation: ...You established Your inheritance, when it [the rain] was wearied. After 40 years in the desert, and after God wiped out by the sin unto death the strongly negative Gen X, God brought their sons and daughters into the Land of Promise and they took the land by force, as God directed them to. In this way, God established His inheritance, the Jews—nation Israel, in the land. The phrase *when it was wearied* refers back to the rain (this is where gender and number come into play). God apparently took all of the water out of the sky in that region in order to sustain the exodus Jews.

Your inheritance refers to the Jews, as we find in Psalms 28:9 33:12 74:2 78:62, 71 79:1 94:5, 14 106:40.

The very literal translation is *Rain freely You scatter, O Elohim; Your inheritance—and he is wearied—You set her up*. The verb *is wearied* is a 3rd person masculine singular, which would refer to the 3rd person masculine singular noun *rain*. The 3rd person feminine singular suffix affixed to the final verb (*to erect, to set up, to establish*) would refer to the nearest feminine singular noun, which is *[Your] inheritance*. In both phrases, I obviously had a difficult

time taking the Hebrew and giving it a reasonable translation—I had to take some liberties here. And, again, the context helps to explain the meaning of these words.

Barnes interprets this differently: *You strengthened Your people when they were exhausted, or were in danger of fainting. In other words, God sent a supply of food - manna, quails, etc. - when they were in the pathless wilderness, and when they were ready to perish.*⁵⁸ Although Barnes' interpretation here makes perfect sense, he confounds a feminine singular suffix with a 3rd person masculine singular verb. What is wearied is a 3rd person masculine singular noun, to properly correspond with the verb. The nearest masculine singular noun would be *rain* (v. 9a). What God *establishes, confirms, sets up* is a 3rd person feminine singular suffix; and the closest feminine singular noun is *inheritance*.

Matthew Henry gives us a short, concise approach to this and the next verse: *[God] provided very comfortably for them both in the wilderness (Psalm 68:9—You have cast down rain in great abundance, O God; You established Your inheritance when Israel was worn out) and in Canaan (Psalm 68:10—Your people then lived in the land; You, O God, established the grace-oriented by means of Your good character).*⁵⁹ That is an excellent summary of these two verses.

**Your community remained in her;
You established in Your good to the poor,
Elohim.**

Psalm
68:10

**Your community lived in it [the land];
You, O Elohim, established the humble [or,
possibly, the grace oriented] in Your
goodness.**

**Your people then lived in the land;
You, O God, established the grace-oriented by means of Your good character.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	In it shall Your animals dwell; in Your sweetness, O God, You have provided for the poor.
Masoretic Text	Your community remained in her; You established in Your good to the poor, Elohim.
Peshitta	Your living creatures have lived there; You, O God, have proved of Your goodness for the poor.
Septuagint	Your creatures dwell in it; You have in your goodness prepared for the poor.
Significant differences:	The first noun could refer either to an <i>animal</i> or to <i>community</i> ; so there is no differences with that noun. The second line is simply a matter of interpretation. Therefore, there are no significant differences in any of the ancient texts.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Your people settled there, and you were generous to everyone in need.
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	Your people came to live in it. God, you gave good things to the poor people that needed them. You made them strong.
Good News Bible (TEV) The Message	...your people made their home there; in your goodness you provided for the poor. For your people to camp in and enjoy. You set them up in business; they went from rags to riches.

⁵⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:9.

⁵⁹ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:9 (edited and appended).

New Jerusalem Bible	Your family found a home, which you in your generosity provided for the humble.
New Living Testament	There your people finally settled, and with a bountiful harvest, O God, you provided for your needy people.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	Those whose resting-place was there, even the poor, were comforted by your good things, O God.
God's Word™	Your flock settled there. Out of your goodness, O God, you provided for oppressed people.
HCSB	Your people settled in it; by Your goodness You provided for the poor, God.
JPS (Tanakh)	Your tribe dwells there; O God, in Your goodness You provide for the needy.
NET Bible®	...for you live among them. [The meaning of the Hebrew text is unclear; it appears to read, "your animals, they live in it," but this makes little, if any, sense in this context. Some suggest that khayah is a rare homonym here, meaning "community" (BDB 312 s.v.) or "dwelling place" (HALOT 310 s.v. III). In this case one may take "your community/dwelling place" as appositional to the third feminine singular pronominal suffix at the end of v. 9, the antecedent of which is "your inheritance." The phrase (yashvu-vah, "they live in it") may then be understood as an asyndetic relative clause modifying "your community/dwelling place." A literal translation of vv. 9b-10a would be, "when it [your inheritance] is tired, you sustain it, your community/dwelling place in [which] they live."] ⁶⁰ You sustain the oppressed with your good blessings, O God.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

A New Conservative Version	Your congregation dwelt in it. You, O God, prepared for the poor from Your goodness.
Updated <i>Emphasized Bible</i>	You living host has remained there, You provide in Your country for the humbled one [plainly, <i>the humbled people</i>], O God!
LTHB	Your flock lived in it. You, O God, have prepared for the poor in Your goodness.
A Voice in the Wilderness	Your community has dwelt in it; You, O God, have provided from Your goodness for the poor.
Young's Updated LT	Your company dwells in it, You prepare in Your goodness for the poor, O God.

What is the gist of this verse? God's people (community) dwell in the Land of Promise. God's good nature is shown to those who are humble, which should probably be interpreted as *grace-oriented*, meaning that we are speaking here of believers.

⁶⁰ *The Net Bible®*; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 68:10 (footnote; slightly edited). I don't agree with their assessment here; however, it does explain the reasoning behind their translation.

Psalm 68:10a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
chayyâh (חַיָּה) [pronounced khay-YAWH]	<i>living thing, animal, life, organisms, lifeform; appetite, revival, renewal; community, family, assembled group, allied families, bands</i>	feminine singular noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #2416 BDB #312
yâshab (יָשָׁב) [pronounced yaw-SHAH ^b V]	<i>to remain, to stay, to inhabit, to sit, to dwell</i>	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #3427 BDB #442
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity; with the 3 rd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #none BDB #88

Translation: Your community lived in it [the land];... We have two things to deal with here: several ancient translations have *beasts* living wherever; and then we must deal with the 3rd person feminine singular suffix, and to what it refers.

Barnes explains the noun: *The word tendered “congregation” – chayyâh (חַיָּה) [pronounced khay-YAWH] – means properly a beast, an animal (Gen. 1:30 2:19 8:19 37:20). Then it comes to be used as a collective noun, meaning a herd or flock; thus, a troop of people, an array or host (2Sam. 23:11, 13 Psalm 74:19); and it is applied here to the people, under the idea so common in the Scriptures that God is a Shepherd.*⁶¹ Couldn't have said it better myself. Barnes explanation makes much more sense than Clarke's, who equivocates *chayyâh* to the quail with which God fed the Israelites.⁶²

After 40 years in the desert wilderness, and after the Israelites took the land, they lived in the land where God placed them. Do you recall Matthew Henry's summary? V. 9 is God's care for Israel in the wilderness; this verse is His care for Israel in the land. Understanding that basic differentiation makes this a much easier verse to unravel.

Now, although there are admittedly many feminine singular nouns scattered throughout this psalm, the one which makes the most sense to go to here is *the land* (v. 8), even though *the land* spoken of in that verse is actually different from the land spoken of here. In v. 8, we are speaking of the Sinai desert and here we are speaking of the land of Canaan, which is Israel's inheritance (even though, when we spoke of *Your inheritance*, this was a reference to God and *His inheritance*, which would be *the believers of the earth* in general and *Israel* in context). Now, I will admit, this is a little weird to draw associations with nouns that do not refer to exactly that with which we are associating the suffixes with. I don't know if this means that my interpretation is way off or if this is the sense in which the psalm is meant to be strung together. However, there is a clear historical chronology in this psalm. Beginning with v. 6, God brings His people toward the Land of Promise while leaving the hard-hearted Egyptians back in a dry land. God preserves and guides Israel in the desert vv. 7–9. Here, we speak of God's *community* dwelling in *it*, so we stay with the logical and chronological order, and those who know barely a thimbleful of Old Testament history know that Jews walked to and then lived in the Land of Promise.

David is writing this song for his people who know their own history—at least portions of it; therefore, he does not have to spell out every single line of his song. One of the characteristics of poetry is, the writer says a lot with very few words. That is a characteristic of art in general: great art, great poetry can be returned to again and again

⁶¹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:10 (slightly edited).

⁶² Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:10.

without becoming weary of experiencing it. In fact, in later readings, sometimes nuances are uncovered, giving additional meaning and depth to the poem.

I've used the term *poetic license* before, and, at some point in time, I need to define what this means. However, in this case, David is using a 3rd person feminine singular suffix and going back to a feminine singular noun being used in one way, and he appropriates that noun in this verse to be used in a different way. It is poetic license and those who are listening to this psalm being sung understand what David is saying, as it is their history.

Barnes concurs on the reference, reasoning his position in a slightly different manner: *The idea of the writer all along pertains to that land, and to the mercy which God had shown to it. After showing by an historical reference what God had done for the people in the wilderness, he returns here, though without expressly mentioning it, to the land of promise, and to what God had done there for his people.*⁶³

John Wesley summarizes this half of v. 10: *This land for the use of thy people: which God did by designing it for them, and expelling the old inhabitants; by furnishing it with all sorts of provisions, and making it fruitful by his special blessing.*⁶⁴

Psalm 68:10b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kûwn (כּוּן) [pronounced koon]	<i>to erect (to stand up perpendicular), to set up, to establish, to prepare, to strengthen, to be stabilized</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #3559 BDB #465
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
tôwb (טוֹב) [pronounced toh ^b v]	<i>pleasant, pleasing, agreeable, good, better</i>	feminine singular adjective which acts like a substantive; with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #2896 BDB #373
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^e)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
ʿânîy (עֲנִי) [pronounced ʿaw-NEE]	<i>poor, afflicted, humble; those in circumstances of humiliation and poverty</i>	masculine singular adjective (functions here as a noun); with the definite article	Strong's #6041 BDB #776
ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43

⁶³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:10.

⁶⁴ John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Psalm 68:10.

Translation: ...You, O Elohim, established the humble [or, possibly, *the grace oriented*] in Your goodness. Although most translations have God establishing or uplifting *the poor*, I think that it is better understood here that we are referring to the grace-oriented—those who were willing to trust God, and therefore, those whom God brought into the land. God set them up in the land, and He did this according to His perfect character; here, represented by the word *goodness*.

Let's go into a little history: the Exodus generation, in some ways, is a misnomer. There were two generations of Jews who left Egypt to trek to the Land of Promise. There are those who were over 20, whom I have called Gen X; and there are those who left Egypt as children and teenagers whom I call the Generation of Promise. Gen X failed test after test after test; they complained, they moaned, they asked to go back to the desert. They were the generation who made all of the decisions. Their children, the Generation of Promise, went along for the ride. They were too young to make these decisions. For instance, when Moses went up Mount Sinai, most of the Jews gathered together their gold earrings and jewelry and convinced Aaron to make a golden calf idol out of this gold. Those under 20 did not really have a say in any of this. They are children and under the control of their parents. So, they had no real culpability here. Their parents did. After failing test after test after test, God finally planted these whiney ingrates in the desert (other theologians think that they continued to wander), and kept them there for 38½ years while Gen X died out. This also allowed their children to grow to a majority age. Their children, the Generation of Promise, recognized the failure of their fathers, and decided, as they watched their parents die prematurely in the middle of the desert, to trust God. So, they are not just positionally *grace oriented*, they are grace oriented in their actions; they recognize that Moses has been appointed by God as their intermediary. They recognize that Moses has authority over them. They are grace oriented in this way, and God would establish them in the land in His goodness.

God's goodness is simply a reference to a specific portion of God's character. God desires the best for His people. Accordingly, we are often our own worst enemies (a truism which even many heathen will attest to). When a person recognizes that, what God tells us is best for his life is actually best for his life, he is grace oriented; and God's goodness wins out, and his life is the better for it.

Application: Personally, I have been cheated, I have been treated badly, and I have faced unjust situations which were never rectified. It does me absolutely no good to dwell on those situations; it does me no good to relive this or that circumstance, and think, *I should have done this or that*. It does me no good to plot revenge against someone who has done me wrong. All of these situations were crafted in such a way as to increase my happiness and to increase my peace of mind and to increase my trust in God. In my own past, I see again and again, I am my own worst enemy; and, above all of this is this overarching lattice of God's goodness. This does not mean that I have not made some mistakes in my life, the results of which continue with me today. However, the Great God of this Universe is with me and He has combined all things together for good on my behalf (Rom. 8:28). I know that when I am guided by God's innate goodness, my life is the better for it; and when I go my own way—when I sin—there is a price to pay.

Application: This should help to explain some things that occur in this world. There are a number of cause and effect laws which God has put into motion. When a person adheres to these laws, their life is good; when they run counter to these laws, their life sucks. For instance, I knew a guy who spent a lot of time feeling sorry for himself and doing drugs. He got involved in scientology and his life got better. It is not that scientology is the right path and that we all need to get there; but he stopped feeling sorry for himself and he got some self-discipline and got off drugs. Self-discipline is a good thing. Any person who learns to exercise some self-discipline makes his life better. Our culture may tell us to indulge our desires; to lust and then to carry out that lust; but most religions teach some form of self-discipline, which is good trait, and which trait will improve pretty much any person's life. Anyone can lead a better life on this earth by simply adhering to many of God's laws, even if he does not believe in Jesus Christ. Now, he will spend eternity in hell; but his life on this earth will be good because he understands, to some degree, and attempts to follow, to the best of his ability, a trait God has established as good.

Application: This also explains how, even though a religion might lead a person in the right direction in many areas, that same religion might damage their lives as well. An obvious example is Islam—many African Americans, by becoming Muslims, got off of drugs and got away from constant self-gratification, and this made

their lives better. However, the characteristics of the god of that religion—Satan—is becoming clear in our generation. It is a religion of hatred and revenge and anger and indignation, where brainwashing and the simplest of arguments are given, and yet, so many Muslims cannot see the big picture and do not recognize that the greatest killers of Muslims today are other Muslims. They try to equivocate the violence in their religion to the crusades or to quasi-Christian anger over abortion, but Muslims foment more violence in a day than all the misguided Christians during the entire abortion fight; and Muslims foment more violence and death in a month, than man did during the crusades (also inspired by Satan, turning, for instance, the world-class nation of Spain into the 3rd class country that it is today).⁶⁵

Application: I am going further and further out on a tangent, but notice how Satan has to let his true colors be known. Satan could not sit back and allow a religion which he has inspired reveal characteristics and laws of God to predominate. At some point, Satan has to show his true nature and his true control over this or that religion. With Islam, it is violence and hatred, which today has become the thrust of that religion.

Now, a personal note, which is completely out of left field: when I began exegeting this psalm—simply taking the Hebrew and attempting to wrest an English translation from it—I became very frustrated, verse after verse after verse. After translating a verse, I often would explain what it meant, and there were at least a dozen verses in this psalm that I could not explain. Now, so far, I am quite confident and comfortable with my work up to v. 10; I feel that, as I have gone along in this psalm, God the Holy Spirit has opened it up to me, revealing the meaning of each and every verse, whereas, my first run-through was extremely frustrating. I only can hope this continues throughout the rest of the psalm.⁶⁶

Since I have gone so far afield in my applications and tangents from those applications, let me remind you that God, in His goodness, establishes the grace oriented, just as He established the Generation of Promise in the Land of Promise.⁶⁷ Furthermore, even though the church of today is not spiritualized Israel, God's dealings with Israel are a metaphor for us. God took a rebellious people and placed them into a land of prosperity (relative to that time period). Again and again, God forgave them their shortcomings and failures. And, the fact that God still has a plan for Israel, should encourage us—particularly those of us who have failed time and time again.

One last word about the poor: when John the Baptizer was unsure as to whether Jesus was the Messiah to come, he sent some of his disciplines to ask Jesus about this. Jesus answered, **“Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he who does not stumble because of Me”** (Matt. 11:4b–6 Isa. 35:5 61:1a).

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God Prevails Against Heathen Kings

**Adonai gives an utterance;
those [women] bringing good news [are] an
army great.**

Psalm
68:11

**Adonai gives a promise [or, mandate];
those [women] who bring good news [or,
female messengers] [are] a great army.**

**After our Lord gives a mandate,
a great army of women bring the good news to their land.**

⁶⁵ I have not actually sat down with the figures and determined just how many were killed during abortion protests and during the Crusades and compared this with Muslims today; but I have a feeling that I am pretty close in my equivocation by number of incidents.

⁶⁶ It has also been comforting to take a particular stand in the interpretation of this or that verse, and then find that another recognized theologian has taken the same stand.

⁶⁷ Although the designation *the promised land* is common, I prefer the *Land of Promise*; and I thought that slight change was pretty much original with me; however, that is one of the first things which Barnes speaks of in his exegesis of Psalm 68:10.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	The Lord shall give the word to them that preach good tidings with great power.
Masoretic Text	Adonai gives an utterance; those [women] bringing good news [are] an army great.
Peshitta	The LORD will give good news with great power.
Septuagint	The Lord God will give a word to them that preach it in a great company.

Significant differences: Quite frankly, I don't even know where to start with this verse. The Hebrew appears to have two lines, but I am not really certain about that. It is quite frankly difficult to even determine which words they have in common, as the translation of this verse is quite difficult. The Latin appears to agree with the Hebrew in the first word, but the Greek and Syriac seem to be translating from different Hebrew words from the very beginning.

God says something, and it is unclear whether it is directed toward the *female messengers*. The final word appears to be the same, that this is a *great army* of some sort, but it is unclear how that relates to the rest of the verse.

It is possible that the problem is not that these translators have slightly different texts to work with, but that they are having problems translating and interpreting the text which they have before them.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	You gave the command, and a chorus of women told what had happened:...
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	The Lord gave a message and a large number of women passed on the good news.
Good News Bible (TEV)	The Lord gave the command, and many women carried the news:...
<i>The Message</i>	The Lord gave the word; thousands called out the good news:...
New Jerusalem Bible	The Lord gave a command, the good news of a countless army.
New Living Testament	The LORD announces victory, and throngs of women shout the happy news.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	The Lord gives the word; great is the number of the women who make it public.
Complete Apostles' Bible	The Lord God will give a word to them that preach it in a great company.
<i>God's Word</i> TM	The Lord gives instructions. The women who announce the good news are a large army.
HCSB	The Lord gave the command; a great company of women brought the good news:...
JPS (Tanakh)	The LORD gives a command, the women who bring the news are a great host:...
NET Bible®	The Lord speaks; many, many women spread the good news.
New International Version	The Lord announced the word, and great was the company of those who proclaimed it.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

A Conservative Version	LORD gave the word. Great [was] the company of those who published [it].
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Updated <i>Emphasized Bible</i>	Let My Lord but give the word The herald bands will be a mighty army.
Hebrew Names Version	The Lord announced the word. The ones who proclaim it are a great company.
LTHB	Jehovah gave the Word; the bearers of it <i>were</i> a great army.
NRSV	The Lord gives the command; great is the company of those [or, <i>company of the women</i>] who bore the tidings;...
Updated Bible Version 2.11	The Lord gives the word: The women who publish the good news are a great host.
A Voice in the Wilderness	The Lord gave the Word; great was the host of those who proclaimed it.
WEB	The Lord announced the word. The ones who proclaim it are a great company.
Young's Updated LT	The Lord gives the saying, The female proclaimers are a numerous host.

What is the gist of this verse? This verse appears to say that there is a great army of women who bring God's message to someone—Israel, perhaps?—or that the message was brought to a great company or to a great army. This will be given two possible interpretations when we get into the text.

Psalm 68:11a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾădônâi (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced <i>uh-doh-NAY</i>]	<i>lord, master, owner, superior, sovereign</i> ; can refer to the trinity or to an intensification of the noun; transliterated <i>Adonai</i>	masculine plural noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #113 BDB #10
nâthan (נָתַן) [pronounced <i>naw-THAHN</i>]	<i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set; to make</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
ʾêmer (אָמַר) [pronounced <i>AY-mer</i>]	<i>utterance, speech, word, saying, discourse; promise; command, mandate</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #561 & #562 BDB #56

Also spelled ômer (אָמַר) [pronounced *OH-mer*]. Gesenius treats these as the same word; Strong gives them two different Strong's #'s.

Translation: *Adonai gives a promise* [or, *mandate*];... God delivers a mandate, a command, a promise or a word; this might be seen as equivalent to the divine decrees. With man, we tend to come up with ideas, commands, and mandates as we go along; God did this all at once. However, He is presented here as giving these mandates, commands or promises out piecemeal, in language of accommodation.

Given the context of this psalm, I would think that we are speaking of God's promises to Israel about taking the land which is before them, and that God would make certain that they would conquer the kings of the land (see Ex. 23:22–23, 27–28, 31 Deut. 7:10–24 11:23–25 Joshua 1:2–6). Had this verse occurred earlier in the psalm, it would have more reasonably been applied to God giving His commandments to Moses; however, what seems to be in view is the taking of the land.

Psalm 68:11b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bâsar (בָּשַׂר) [pronounced bāw-SHR]	<i>a bearer of good news, the bringer of news; a messenger</i>	feminine plural, Piel participle; with the definite article	Strong's #1319 BDB #142
tsâbâ' (צָבָא) [pronounced tsaw'-VAW]	<i>army, war, or warfare</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #6635 DB #838
rab (רַב) [pronounced rahv]	<i>many, much, great (in the sense of large or significant, not acclaimed)</i>	masculine singular adjective	Strong's #7227 BDB #912

Translation: ...those [women] who bring good news [or, female messengers] [are] a great army. What God wants us to know is presented by a great army. We are not given any more specifics than this. Although we do have a handful of women who prophesy or who have prominent places in Biblical history, I don't that we can rightly suggest that there is a great army of women who bring the good news. What occurs to me is, God's laws, mandates and His system of sacrifices guide the Jews both into better behavior and toward the gospel of Jesus Christ. Such information was not available to the Jews in Egypt, as they were slaves. Even if God had given them the Law when in Egypt, they did not really have the freedom to disseminate it. However, once the Jews are settled into the land, they naturally divide themselves into families, and the woman, no longer a slave, can now properly raise her children, which includes teaching her children the mandates of God. God made His Word available in a number of ways, including having it engraved on some public stones. The first teacher a child has is his mother. What she says to him in his infancy through his youth affects his life forever. Once the Jews are settled into the land, after the Law has been given, then the women of Israel become a great army of evangelists, so to speak, to their own children.

A second interpretation is, this word from Adonai is given to this great army of those who bring good news (ostensibly to mankind). The problem with this is, we do not have a preposition here to indicate this. On the other hand, I don't know if we properly find the lâmed preposition (*to, for*) or 'el (*unto*) before a verb, even though the verb is functioning as a noun. Whether this is the case or not, still leaves us with females who are a great army of those who bring the good news.

A third interpretation is, the women would celebrate the victories of their men in battle, and that they would bring this good news to the camp in general. I don't know that we have any specific instances of this actually occurring in the writings of Moses (although this may be implied in Ex. 15:1–21), but we do have such things recorded under similar circumstances in at least two later instances (1Sam. 18:6–7 2Chron. 20:26–28). Therefore, just as we have taken it on faith that there were earthquakes and rainstorms which Israel saw in the desert after Sinai; we may reasonably assume that victory on the battlefield brought the women out to proclaim and celebrate this victory, which then became a custom of Israel's. To be clear, since we have entered into the Land of Promise in v. 10, Moses is not with Israel, having died prior to entering into the land. Therefore, these proclamations and celebrations by women could reasonably occur at any time after entering the land in order for these words to apply to that. If there is an army of men out there defeating Israel's (and God's) enemies, then there is an army of women at home ready to proclaim and celebrate the successful return of their husbands, sons and brothers. I believe this to be the accurate explanation for this verse.

We know of such celebration from World War II, when men began to return from the theaters of war in Europe, Africa and the Pacific. There were great celebrations here in America. We seem to have lost this tradition since then; furthermore, some of our greater wars (Korea and Vietnam) have not been as clearly successful.

A fourth interpretation is, the word given by Adonai follows below in the next few verses.

All of these interpretations can work together. God gives His mandates; He provides information through the sacrificial system which He instituted, and He provides Israel with a great history of divine involvement. God provides these things, and the women of Israel learn these things, which they then teach to their children. A portion of what they teach may be the verses which follow (or, if you will, the text of this entire psalm). Vv. 12–14 might reasonably be seen as the information a mother passes along to her child, about the power of Israel because of their relationship with God. Or, all of the verses which follow could be seen to be the information a mother would pass along to her child. Or, as I have also suggested, what is found in this entire psalm might be seen as that which a mother would teach or child (or, sing to her child).

This interpretation fits the verse in a number of ways: Israel needed to be a free, settled society outside of Egypt. In this psalm, which has a chronology to it, we first had Israel wandering in the desert and then God gives them the Land of Promise. The teaching of God's mandates can take place either in the desert or when Israel comes into the land. Secondly, those who bring the good news or those who are messengers are women, as we have the feminine plural Piel participle. Thirdly, these female messengers are said to be a great army; and a female messenger would be any woman who has children.

Application: I have been in the homes of hundreds of families. One disturbing trend which I have noticed is, many families do not have a single book in their entire house. Often, there are few if any pencils or pens, paper or even magazines. The same house may have a large screen tv and several dozen DVD's, but there is nothing of the written word in their house. The children of that household start out behind the eight-ball when they begin school. They won't know how to read, they probably do not know their ABC's, and they have no interest in reading. A child who is read to both develops and appreciation for the written word, and, as he listens to a story, his mind imagines all of the details. The mother's influence in this realm will impact the children of her household for all of their lives.

Application: Previously I dealt with the importance of a father's influence and here of the mother's influence. Now, let's pull this together. An uneducated father out in the real world working feels the impact of his lack of education daily. He is going to encourage his children in the realm of education for their benefit. If all there is, is a woman who sits at home collecting government payments, she is going to place less value on education and more value on government programs (I am over-generalizing here, obviously). I also need to throw in timeliness. The time for education is not age 5, when a child begins school; the time to develop a child's mind goes back to his first 5 years, and what is done to exercise that child's imagination, playfulness, intellect. We already know that you can ruin a child for life by locking him up away from any stimulation for the first few years of his life, so that they cannot develop mentally ever. It should be clear that a child raised on tv and DVD's is also going to be intellectually stunted (and it is about time that they do a study on this, by the way).

Application: There is great power in the written word, and God confirms this with the Bible. A parent cannot wait until a child is 5 or 6 to introduce them to the written word.

Application: That was an obvious application with day-to-day life, applicable to the unbeliever as well as the believer. Most of us can understand that application and see just how far reaching a lack of reading material and the lack of a reading teacher in the home (mom or dad) can be. That child is not going to be a doctor, a lawyer or anyone else who deals extensively with the written word. Most of us can see how much this affects a child. Similarly, a child without any spiritual foundation is also crippled for life. The Bible tells us, [Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it](#) (Prov. 22:6). A child with a good spiritual background will be able to avoid a great many of the pitfalls that other children fall prey to. A child brought up without standards or taught to just make up his own standards can more easily end up on drugs, involved in premarital sex, and with the primary driving motivation of his or her life being some form of carnality. Even though such a person can be saved, years of drug use or promiscuity can weigh heavily on a person and affect their entire lives. Let's go back to the illustration which I gave previously: a child raised without books can eventually learn to read; however, he is going to lack imagination, he is going to be several reading levels below his peers, and his interest in reading and his estimation of the importance of reading is going to be low. Such a one, even after learning to read, will be affected for his entire life.

This was a difficult verse, and obviously, there are other interpretations of it:

Theologians Interpret Psalm 68:11	
Theologian	Commentary
Barnes	<p><i>The Lord gave the word</i> - The command, or the order. It is not certain to what the psalmist here refers; whether to some particular occasion then fresh in the recollection of the people, when a great victory had been gained, which it was the design of the psalm to celebrate; or whether it is a general statement in regard to the doings of God, having reference to all his victories and triumphs, and meaning that in all cases the command came from him. The subsequent verses make it evident that there is an allusion here to the ark of the covenant, and to the victories which had been achieved under that as a guide or protector. The entire psalm refers to the ark, and its triumphs; and the idea here seems to be, that in all the victories which had been achieved the “word” or the command came from God, and that its promulgation was immediately made by a “great company” who stood ready to communicate it or to “publish” it. My primary concern here is with the mistaken impression that the Ark of God was taken into battle time after time as a good luck charm, as if God were with the people if they carried the Ark and not with them if they left the Ark in Jerusalem. The victories and triumphs are better seen as belonging to God, rather than to the Ark of God.</p> <p><i>Great was the company of those that published it</i> – Margin, army. More literally, “The women publishing it were a great host.” The word used is in the feminine gender, and refers to the Oriental custom whereby females celebrated victories in songs and dances. See Ex. 15:20–21 Judges 11:34 21:21 1Sam. 18:6–7. The idea here is, that when there was a proclamation of war – when God commanded his people to go out to battle, and to take with them the ark, the females of the land – the singers – were ready to make known the proclamation; to celebrate the will of the Lord by songs and dances; to cheer and encourage their husbands, brothers, and fathers, as they went out to the conflict.⁶⁸ This is a very logical explanation, that groups of women sang about the victories of God and sang Bible doctrine as a part of that.</p>
Clarke	<p><i>“Of the female preachers there was a great host.”</i> Such is the literal translation of this passage; the reader may make of it what he pleases. Some think it refers to the women who, with music, songs, and dances, celebrated the victories of the Israelites over their enemies. But the publication of good news, or of any joyful event, belonged to the women. It was they who announced it to the people at large; and to this universal custom, which prevails to the present day, the psalmist alludes.⁶⁹ My only problem with Clarke’s explanation is, I am unaware of this custom.</p>

⁶⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:11.

⁶⁹ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:11.

Theologians Interpret Psalm 68:11

Theologian	Commentary
Gill	<p><i>The Lord gave the word,.... The word of the Gospel to His apostles. He committed the word of reconciliation to them; he intrusted them with it, as a sacred deposit; He gave gifts unto them, qualifying them for the ministration of it; he gave them a commission to preach it; and he gave them a door of utterance to speak it as it should be, and an opportunity to publish it. The Targum wrongly interprets it of the word of the law. Much of what Gill writes here is true; it is simply unrelated to this verse.</i></p> <p><i>...great was the company of those that published it: There were in our Lord's time twelve apostles and seventy disciples, who were sent out to preach the Gospel; and many more in the times of the apostles, and since. The word for "company" signifies an "army." Christ's ministers are soldiers, and war a good warfare; they have weapons which are not carnal, but spiritual, and mighty through God, and they are made to triumph in Christ in every place. And the word rendered "those that published" is in the feminine gender; not as suggesting that women would be preachers of the Gospel under the New Testament dispensation, for that is forbidden (1Cor. 14:34); but in allusion to the custom of women in Israel publishing the victories obtained by their armies and generals (1Sam. 18:7); and it may be it is used to denote the weakness of Gospel ministers in themselves, who have the treasure of the word put into their earthen vessels, that the power may appear to be of God, and not of man; so ministers are called maidens (Prov. 9:3); and this same word is used of them in Isa. 40:9. And it may be observed, that notwithstanding it is of the said gender, yet it is by the Targum interpreted of men, thus; "but Moses and Aaron evangelized the word of God to the great army of Israel." Quite frankly, I don't know if this is in the targum at this juncture or not. In any case, Gill began to make sense, saying that women announced the victories of the armies of Israel, but then seemed to go far afield with the idea that, the feminine gender of this word was to indicate weakness in the gospel ministers. Gospel ministers, to be sure, are weak; but that is not have anything to do with this verse.</i></p> <p><i>And it may also be observed, that this word which signifies a "publishing of good news", is derived from a root which signifies "flesh" denoting, that the good tidings of the Gospel, or of peace and pardon, righteousness, life, and salvation, published in it, are by an incarnate Saviour, or through his assumption of our flesh, and suffering in it.⁷⁰</i></p> <p>Gill's greatest problem is, he is a covenant theologian, and tries to interpret much of the Old Testament as though it were written for or about the church. For this reason, although he makes an occasional good point, his comments often miss the mark when he allows this evil theology to intrude. Now, as an aside, let me comment about <i>this evil theology</i>, as you may think that I am taking that too far. Covenant theology is anti-grace, which is the basis of our blessings. Israel simply pissed God off so many times that God dumped the Jews, despite His many promises to Abraham and David, and looked elsewhere to find His faithful servant. God knew about all the times the Jews would fail; He knew this in eternity past. However, He was still able to make these promises to David and to Abraham, because He would fulfill these promises to David and to Abraham. God does not promise something, particularly with foreknowledge, and then decide, <i>you know, you are such a total loser that I need to rethink or redesign My promise to you</i>. That is legalism. All that we are and all that we receive is grace. We do not deserve what God has given to us and we do not earn it. God knew that the Jews would fail again and again and again, and He simply did to the Jews what He promises to do—He kicked them out of the land and scattered them into every nation.</p>

⁷⁰ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:11 (slightly edited).

Theologians Interpret Psalm 68:11	
Theologian	Commentary
Henry	Observe here that God was their commander-in-chief: The Lord gave the word, as general of their armies. He raised up judges for them, gave them their commissions and instructions, and assured them of success. God spoke in his holiness, and then Gilead is mine. furthermore, they had prophets, as God's messengers, to make known his mind to them. God gave them his word (<i>the word of the Lord came unto them</i>) and then <i>great was the company of the preachers</i> – prophets and prophetesses, for the word is feminine. When God has messages to send he will not want messengers. Or perhaps it may allude to the women's joining in the triumph when the victory was obtained, as was usual (Ex. 15:20 1Sam. 18:7), in which they took notice of the word of God, triumphing in that as much as in his works. ⁷¹
Keil and Delitzsch	The deliverance of Israel from the army of Pharaoh, the deliverance out of the hand of Jabin by the defeat of Sisera, the victory of Jephthah over the Ammonites, and the victorious single combat of David with Goliath were celebrated by singing women. God's decisive word shall also go forth this time, and of the evangelists, like Miriam (Mirjam) and Deborah, there shall be a great host. ⁷² My first thought was that this referred to specific, named females who were closely involved in the plan of God; however, there were simply not enough of them in Scripture to form a great army.
The NET Bible®	<i>"The Lord gives a word."</i> Perhaps this refers to a divine royal decree or battle cry. <i>"many, many women spread the good news" or "the ones spreading the good news [are] a large army."</i> The participle translated <i>"the ones spreading the good news"</i> is a feminine plural form. Apparently the good news here is the announcement that enemy kings have been defeated (see v. 12). ⁷³ The strongest evidence for this position is the verse which follows, which would be what the women would proclaim in song to Israel.
Kukis	<i>The Lord gives [His promise]:</i> God had promised to Israel that they would go into the land and defeat the heathen occupants of the land. The Israelites had to lean upon these promises in order to give them the strength to go into battle. <i>A great company of women celebrated this.</i> After the men of Israel went into battle and were victorious, the women began to celebrate these victories, proclaiming the good news to all who could hear. Who better to celebrate these victories than the women whose freedom had been assured?

⁷¹ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword; Psalm 68:11.

⁷² Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 68:11.

⁷³ *The Net Bible*®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 68:11.

Theologians Interpret Psalm 68:11

Theologian	Commentary
Spurgeon	<i>In the next verses we do not sing of marching, but of battle and victory “The Lord gave the word.” The enemy was near, and the silver trumpet from the tabernacle door was God’s mouth to warn the camp; then was there hurrying to and fro, and a general telling of the news; “great was the company of those that published it.” The women ran from tent to tent and roused their lords to battle. Ready as they always were to chant the victory; they were equally swift to publish the fact that the battle-note had been sounded. The ten thousand maids of Israel, like good handmaids of the Lord, aroused the sleepers, called in the wanderers, and bade the valiant men hasten to the fray. O for the like zeal in the church to-day, that, when the gospel is published, both men and women may eagerly spread the glad tidings of great joy.⁷⁴ Sorry, but I simply cannot buy into the idea that, before a battle, it is the women who run around and rouse the men so that they will get up and go to war.</i>

After reading the commentaries, I am willing to give credence to the idea that women, as groups, would proclaim the victories of Israel’s generals; however, this does not completely square with *The Lord gave the word*, a phrase which seems to have little meaning apart from my interpretation. If the first phrase had been, *And Israel’s victories are proclaimed* (or words to that effect), I would have to admit to the accuracy of Barnes’ and Clarke’s interpretation of the second half of this verse. On the other hand, perhaps God *mandates* that these women spread the good news throughout the villages of Israel (that could be what ties v. 12a to 12b).

As mentioned above, the strongest evidence that this refers to an army of women singing the good news of a victory of the Israeli army is v. 12, which follows, as well as Psalm 68:25, which reads: [The singers went before, then those playing instruments followed; among them were the maidens playing the timbrels.](#) Music stirred the soul, but the lyrics would have meaning.

In any case, what I wrote about this verse is valid in principle—that women play an extremely important part in conveying God’s truth to the next generation.

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Application: Many of us have lost this understanding that the military buys our freedom with blood. Some of us have been raised with no requirement to go into the military. For some, the propaganda is so great, that we do not realize that there are countries where freedoms are severely restricted. In fact this blind spot is so great, we have various celebrities sucking up to Hugo Chavez, the President of Venezuela, who has shut down the free press in his nation and has subjugated his people to the state. There are many in the United States who do not understand that the great political theologies, like socialism and communism, subjugate the people to the state, and those who do not fit into the state’s places for them, are often killed or “re-educated.” In South Viet Nam and Cambodia, after we deserted our friends there, the taste for freedom was so great, that approximately 3 million people died because they were not easily subjugated to communism. This thirst for freedom, planted by our country, has resulted in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) as being one of the freest economies in the communist world. The greatest problem with those who are blind to the realities of evil is they are unable to recognize evil as evil and they do not believe that it affects them or their family. I have a relative who attributes the actions of suicide bombers to being under pressure from the west, and most actions, he generally divides up into stupid and intelligent (as well as the continuum between these). He is intelligent enough to recognize that, if we just sort of evolved here, and there is no God, then *good and evil*, in the philosophical sense, just do not exist. A person I recognize as being clearly evil, he sees as a combination of stupid and desperate. Believers, for the most part, understand that there is great evil in this world; and when world leaders destroy millions of their own people, those

⁷⁴ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 68:11.

world leaders are evil. Once you recognize that true evil exists in this world, then it becomes clear that a military is necessary now and again to destroy this evil.

**Kings of armies flee,
they flee;
and a [female] inhabitant of a house divides
spoil.**

Psalm
68:12

**Kings of armies flee—they flee;
while [each] female inhabitant of a home
divides up [her] recompense [or, *spoil*].**

**While kings of great armies flee,
women inhabitants of their homes divide up their spoil.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	Kings of armies flee, they flee; and a [female] inhabitant of a house divides spoil.
Peshitta	Then the kings of armies will be defeated, and the household of God will divide the spoil.
Septuagint	The king of the forces of the beloved, of the beloved, <i>will even grant them</i> for the beauty of the house to divide the spoils.

Significant differences: In the Hebrew, the kings of armies flee. In the Syriac, they are said to be *defeated*, which may be simply the English version of the Syriac or an interpretation given by those who translated the Bible into Syriac. The Greek and Latin both have something about *the beloved*, which makes little sense to me.

In the Hebrew, the female inhabitant of the house, divides the spoils; the Greek and Latin both have *the beauty of the house* instead; and the Syriac gives the more holy sounding *the household of God divides the spoils*. I'll roll with the Masoretic text, myself.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	"Kings and their armies retreated and ran, and everything they left is now being divided.
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	Kings of huge armies ran away. They fled! The women at home decided who should have what their soldiers brought from the war.
Good News Bible (TEV)	"Kings and their armies are running away!" The women at home divided what was captured:...
<i>The Message</i>	"Kings of the armies are on the run, on the run!"
New Jerusalem Bible	The chieftains of the army are in flight, in flight, and the fair one at home is sharing out the spoils.
New Living Testament	Enemy kings and their armies flee, while the women of Israel divide the plunder.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	Kings of armies quickly go in flight: and the women in the houses make a division of their goods.
Complete Apostles' Bible	The king of the forces of the beloved <i>will even grant them</i> for the beauty of the house to divide the spoils.

God's Word™

They say, "The kings of the armies flee; they run away. The women who remained at home will divide the goods.

HCSB

"The kings of the armies flee--they flee!" She who stays at home divides the spoil.

JPS (Tanakh)

"The kings and their armies are in headlong flight; housewives are sharing in the spoils;...

NET Bible®

Kings leading armies run away — they run away!

The lovely lady of the house divides up the loot. [The Hebrew form appears to be the construct of נִוְהַ (nûh, "pasture") but the phrase "pasture of the house" makes no sense here. The translation assumes that the form is an alternative or corruption of "beautiful woman" (which has an additional letter in the Hebrew). A reference to a woman would be appropriate in light of v. 11b].

The Scriptures 1998

"Sovereigns of armies flee in haste! And she who remains at home divides the spoil."

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

A Conservative Version

Kings of armies fled quickly, and she who remained at home divided the spoil.

Updated Emphasized Bible

Kings [some codices have *messengers*] of armies, they flee, they flee!

And she who stays at home [lit., *the inhabitants (fem.) Of the house*; but the meaning may be *the home-staying portion of the people*] will share in the spoil.

Hebrew Names Version

"Kings of armies flee! They flee!" She who waits at home divides the spoil,...

LTHB

Kings of armies fled, they ran away; yea, she who stayed home has divided the plunder.

A Voice in the Wilderness

Kings of armies fled, they fled away; and she who stayed at home divided the spoils.

Young's Updated LT

Kings of hosts flee utterly away, And a female inhabitant of the house apportions spoil.

What is the gist of this verse? This verse may or may not begin the announcement made by the army of women above. In any case, kings of opposing armies flee, and the spoil gained in battle is divided up by the women of the households of Israel.

Psalm 68:12a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced <i>MĒH-lek</i>]	king, ruler, prince	masculine plural construct	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
tsâbâ' (צָבָא) [pronounced <i>tsaw^b-VAW</i>]	army, war, or warfare	masculine plural noun	Strong's #6635 DB #838
nâdad (נָדַד) [pronounced <i>naw-DAHD</i>]	to move; to move oneself, to wander about, to stray; to retreat, to flee, to depart; to fly [away], to flutter; to remove, to put away; to abominate	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5074 BDB #622
nâdad (נָדַד) [pronounced <i>naw-DAHD</i>]	to move; to move oneself, to wander about, to stray; to retreat, to flee, to depart; to fly [away], to flutter; to remove, to put away; to abominate	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5074 BDB #622

Translation: *Kings of armies flee—they flee;...* The repetition of the verb expresses that which is emphatic or superlative.⁷⁵ This appears to say that the women, hearing what happened on the battlefield, proclaim it throughout their village, in song. They proclaim that the enemy armies have fled from before Israel. The repetition could also refer to these words in song, as songs often repeat the same words or the same ideas from stanza to stanza.

Another interpretation is, whatever God commands (v. 11) will be brought to pass. Here, the idea is, at God's command, kings of armies flee. Normally, they would invade a region and take all that they could, including the women; however, at God's command, they retreat.

One of the ways that we can tie this altogether is to make the first half of v. 11, a part of this song sung by the army of women: *"Jehovah gives the command," —the female messengers [singing this] are a great army— "[And] kings flee, they run [for their lives], the women of the household divide up the spoil."* Their song may continue into the next verse or so.

We have both historical incidents and prophecy which speak of kings being caused to flee or being beaten down by Israel: Ex. 14:24–25: *And in the morning watch the LORD in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, "Let us flee from before Israel, for the LORD fights for them against the Egyptians."* Num. 31:8: *The Jews killed the kings of Midian with the rest of their slain, Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. And they also killed Balaam the son of Beor with the sword.* Joshua 10:16: *These five kings fled and hid themselves in the cave at Makkedah.* This could have been the very verse which inspired David to write these lines. Recall that David went to the Scriptures in order to determine how the Ark of God should be moved; I think that it is a very real possibility that, as He read of Israel's history, this psalm formed in his mind, and he wrote it specifically for the moving of the Ark. Rev. 6:15–17: *Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?"*

Psalm 68:12b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
nâvâh (נָוָה) [pronounced nâw-VAW]	<i>inhabiting, becoming; as a substantive: a seat; an abode [habitation] [for women, shepherds, animals, God]; a pasture; one who inhabits [a place]</i>	feminine singular adjective; also used as a substantive; here it is a feminine singular construct	Strong's #5116 BDB #627

⁷⁵ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:12.

Psalm 68:12b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
<p>The NET Bible® makes quite a big deal out of this word, and suggests that a letter has been left out (or that this is an alternate spelling for a different word) and that it should mean <i>beautiful women</i>.⁷⁶ However, this word is found 35 times in Scripture and it refers, in one way or another, to a place of dwelling or to a person living in this or that place. Because it is in the feminine singular here, it probably means <i>the female dweller of the house, the female occupant of the house, or the woman of the house</i>. We don't have to stretch or strain this word too much in order for it to fit reasonably with the rest of this verse. However, to be accurate, almost every instance where this word is found, it does mean <i>dwelling, habitation, place where one lives</i>. This is true in poetry as well as in prose. Given that this word is the subject of the verb <i>to divide, to apportion</i>; we may either understand that it is used as a metonym⁷⁷ for the <i>woman of the house</i> or that, on occasion, it actually means that. Obviously, a <i>dwelling place</i> does not apportion the spoils of victory.</p>			
bayith (בַּיִת) [pronounced BAH-yith]	house, household, habitation as well as inward	masculine singular noun with the directional hê	Strong's #1004 BDB #108
châlaq (חָלַק) [pronounced chaw-LAHK]	to divide, to apportion, to allot; to distribute, to disperse	3 rd person feminine singular, Piel imperfect	Strong's #2505 BDB #323
shâlal (שָׁלַל) [pronounced shaw-LAWL]	booty, spoil, plunder, recompense, reward	masculine singular noun; pausal form	Strong's #7998 BDB #1021

Translation: ...while [each] female inhabitant of a home divides up [her] recompense [or, spoil]. Instead of the king dividing up the spoil that he has taken, a stay-at-home woman divides up the spoil. I am assuming that she takes this spoil from the kings of the armies in the previous half of this verse. In the ancient world, there were very few Wal-marts, and most of them had inconvenient locations; so, instead, after a war, the winning army would bring back the possessions of the losing army. This may be from a battlefield and it may be from a village. The victorious army might take the things of a losing army, which that losing army had taken elsewhere (remember when David went after the Amalekites who raided his camp?). This stuff is brought back to the village, and, in a manner unknown to us, is split up and then given to each household, and the women of that household would divide the spoil given to their household (compare Judges 5:30 Joshua 7:21 1Chron. 26:27). We may reasonably assume that most households in that day consisted of an extended family, which might include several nuclear families, and, therefore, several women who divide up the spoil.

Another slightly different twist is, we hear what is happening [God gives a command], then we go to the women and what they do [the women proclaim God's power as a great army or they teach this to their own children]; we hear what is happening [the kings flee; they run (for their lives)]; then we go to the women and what they do [each woman in her household divides up the spoil].

We of course have verses of Scripture which tell us of the women dividing up the spoils of war: Num. 31:8–9: The Jews killed the kings of Midian with the rest of their slain, Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur, and Reba, the five kings of Midian. And they also killed Balaam the son of Beor with the sword. And the people of Israel took captive the women of Midian and their little ones, and they took as plunder all their cattle, their flocks, and all their goods.

⁷⁶ The Net Bible®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 68:12 (footnote).

⁷⁷ Metonyms are used extensively in Scripture and in our daily lives. If we say *the house of David was at odds with the house of Saul*, we are not speaking of the literal houses that they live in, but of the inhabitants of those houses.

If you [all] lie down between [two] stalls [?],
[two] wings of a dove are covered in silver
and her feathers in yellowish gold.

Psalm
68:13

Though you lay between two stalls (?),
the wings of a dove are overlaid with silver
and her feathers with a yellowish gold.

Though you rest between two things,
God still provides great recompense,
like a dove, whose wings are overlaid with silver and her feathers with a yellowish gold.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	If you sleep among the midst of lots, you shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and the hinder parts of her back with the paleness of gold.
Masoretic Text	If you [all] lie down between [two] stalls [?], [two] wings of a dove are covered in silver and her feathers in yellowish gold.
Peshitta	Though you sleep among thorns, yet you will be protected as the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold.
Septuagint	Even if you should lie among the lots, <i>you will have</i> the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her breast with yellow gold.

Significant differences: The first problem is, quite obviously, *where are they laying down?* I don't think that I will be able to give you a definitive answer here, which causes some problems when it comes to interpreting this verse. It should be apparent in the ancient translations and in the English translations which follow, that we do not have a definitive meaning for this word (see the Hebrew exegesis at this point).

Although the ancient translations agree that we then deal with the wings of a dove being covered with silver, it is not completely clear what that does for us. Therefore, the Peshitta suggests that *you will be protected* by them.

Some part of this dove has yellow-gold (or some other exotic coloring) as well, although the ancient renderings disagree here as well.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	And for those who stayed back to guard the sheep, there are metal doves with silver-coated wings and shiny gold feathers."
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	Even if you sleep where the sheep sleep, the *dove will have *wings of *silver and *feathers of gold!
Good News Bible (TEV)	...figures of doves covered with silver, whose wings glittered with fine gold. (Why did some of you stay among the sheep pens on the day of battle?)
<i>The Message</i>	While housewives, safe and sound back home, divide up the plunder, the plunder of Canaanite silver and gold.
New Living Testament	Though they lived among the sheepfolds, now they are covered with silver and gold, as a dove is covered by its wings.
Revised English Bible	Though you linger among the sheepfolds the dove's wings are covered with silver and its pinions with yellow gold.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	Will you take your rest among the flocks? like the wings of a dove covered with silver, and its feathers with yellow gold.
Complete Apostles' Bible	Even if you should lie among the lots, <i>you shall have</i> the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her breast with yellow gold.
God's Word™	Though you stayed among the sheep pens, you will be like the wings of a dove covered with silver, its feathers with yellow gold.
HCSB	While you lie among the sheepfolds, the wings of a dove are covered with silver, and its feathers with glistening gold.
JPS (Tanakh)	...even for those of you who lie among the sheepfolds there are wings of a dove sheathed in silver, its pinions in fine gold."
New International Version	Even while you sleep among the campfires, the wings of <u>my</u> dove are sheathed with silver, its feathers with shining gold."

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Though you [the slackers] may lie among the sheepfolds [in slothful ease], <i>yet for Israel</i> the wings of a dove covered with silver, its pinions excessively green with gold [are trophies taken from the enemy].
A Conservative Version	Though ye lay between two boundaries, [it is as] the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her pinions with yellow gold.
Updated <i>Emphasized Bible</i>	Though you rest between the folds The wings of the dove will be covered with silver, And her pinions with green-shimmering gold.
English Standard Version	...though you men lie among the sheepfolds-- the wings of a dove covered with silver, its pinions with shimmering gold.
Hebrew Names Version	...while you sleep among the campfires, the wings of a dove sheathed with silver, her feathers with shining gold.
New King James Version	Though you lie down among the sheepfolds [or, <i>saddlebags</i>], <i>You will be</i> like the wings of a dove covered with silver, And her feathers with yellow gold."
A Voice in the Wilderness	When you lie down among the sheepfolds, you shall be like the wings of a dove covered with silver, and its pinions with yellow gold.
WEB	While you sleep among the campfires, The wings of a dove sheathed with silver, Her feathers with shining gold.
Young's Updated LT	Though you lie between two boundaries, Wings of a dove covered with silver, And her pinions with yellow gold.

What is the gist of this verse? Although someone lies or sleeps between two things (it is not clear what these two things are), somehow, related to this, there is this dove which is made of silver and gold.

Psalm 68:13a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾîm (אִם) [pronounced eem]	<i>if, though; lo, behold; oh that, if only; when, since, though when</i> (or, if followed by a perfect tense which refers to a past event)	primarily an hypothetical particle	Strong's #518 BDB #49

Psalm 68:13a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shâkab (שָׁכַב) [pronounced shaw-KAH ^B V]	<i>to lie down, to lie down [to sleep, to have sexual relations, to die; because of sickness or humiliation]; to relax</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7901 BDB #1011
bêyn (בֵּין) [pronounced bane]	<i>in the midst of, between, among; when found twice, it means between</i>	preposition	Strong's #996 BDB #107
sh ^o phathâyim (שֹׁפְתַיִם) [pronounced sheh-phah-thaw-YIHM]	<i>stalls, folds; hook-shaped pegs, hooks</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #8240 BDB #1052

We don't really have any idea what this word means. Its verbal cognate means *to place, to put; to give*. The noun is found in only one other place: Ezek. 40:43 (this is a small portion of his vision of the Millennial Temple): *And the **double hooks**, one span, were fastened in the house all around; and on the tables was the flesh of the offering.*

So, what we know is: (1) there are two of them; (2) they may have the meaning *that which is placed, that which is put [wherever];* and (3) it is conceivable that someone could lie down between them.

Gesenius lists this as a masculine noun and Owen as a feminine noun.

BDB suggests that we have the wrong word here in Psalm 68:13, and that this should be Strong's #4942 BDB #1046, a masculine dual noun which means *fire-places, ash heaps, sheepfolds*.

After studying this word for 30 minutes, I do not believe that we will be able to come to any sort of definitive understanding of its meaning, although I will probably list the ideas of a number of commentators below.

Translation: *Though you lay between two stalls (?),...* I must admit to being at a loss with this verse. There are several problems, not the least of which is, between which two things are they laying or resting?

The second problem is, we have been speaking of women in the previous couple of verses, but here, the verb is in the 2nd person, masculine plural form. So, David (or those singing) speaks to a group of those who are laying or sleeping between two things. We might understand this to refer to those who have not gone to war, as not everyone in Israel went to war in every case (recall that Saul kept a standing army of a few thousand, which varied from time to time; as there were deserters).

Psalm 68:13b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kânâph (כַּנָּף) [pronounced kaw-NAWF]	<i>wings of birds (Gen. 1:21 Ex. 19:4 Deut. 32:11) as well as the extremity of a garment (Deut. 22:12, 30 Ruth 3:9)</i>	feminine plural construct	Strong's #3671 BDB #489
yônâh (יוֹנָה) [pronounced yoh-NAW]	<i>dove, pigeon</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #3123 BDB #401

Psalm 68:13b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
châphâh (חָפָה) [pronounced <i>khaw-FAW</i>]	<i>to be overlaid [with gold, silver, wood]; to be covered [with]</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Niphal perfect	Strong's #2645 BDB #341
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
keçeph (כֶּסֶף) [pronounced <i>KEH-sef</i>]	<i>silver, money</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #3701 BDB #494

Translation: ...the wings of a dove are overlaid with silver... The only clear relationship between this part of v. 13 and the previous is, they both refer to a pair of things; here, it is a pair of wings; in the previous portion of this verse, it is a pair of stalls, folds; hook-shaped pegs, hooks or something else, for all we know.

One guess—and I should emphasize the word *guess*—is that this dove is an ornament taken in battle. We are speaking, in this context, of spoils taken in victory, so perhaps this is one of the items which was taken.

Psalm 68:13c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
`eb ^e râh (אֶבְרָה) [pronounced <i>ehb^e-RAW</i>]	<i>feather, wing; pinion [of bird (ostrich, eagle, dove) of God (metaphorically)]</i>	feminine plural noun with the 3 rd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #84 BDB #7
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
y ^e raq ^e raq (יֶקְרָק) [pronounced <i>y^er-âhk-RAHK</i>]	<i>greenish, pale green; greenish-yellow; yellowish</i>	masculine singular adjective	Strong's #3422 BDB #439
chârûwts (חָרוּץ) [pronounce <i>khaw-ROOTS</i>]	<i>gold (used in poetry)</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #2742 BDB #359

This word also means *sharp-pointed, sharp, diligent (adjective); strict decision, decision (masculine noun); trench, moat, ditch (masculine noun)*. The meaning of gold seems to come from the idea that gold is a sharp, bright color.

Translation: ...and her feathers with a yellowish gold. Like parts a and b of this verse, this is tied to v. 13b because we are speaking of the same bird and we are speaking of its feathers being overlaid with something (which is apparently gold; this word is also used in a myriad of ways). I'll be interested to see if any commentator makes sense of this verse.

My first and second time through this verse suggested to me that, we are speaking of those who did not go into battle, but instead remained behind, sleeping between two things (*lamp stands, night stands?*). Since we are speaking of dividing up the spoils of victory, perhaps a dove made of silver and gold is one item that David was familiar with, which had been taken in battle.

Commentators on Psalm 68:13

Commentator	Opinion
Barnes	<i>Though you lie among the pots</i> - There are few passages in the Bible more difficult of interpretation than this verse and the following. Our translators seem to have supposed that the whole refers to the ark, considered as having been neglected, or as having been suffered to remain among the common vessels of the tabernacle, until it became like those vessels in appearance - that is, until its brilliancy had become tarnished by neglect, or by want of being cleaned and furbished - yet that it would be again like the wings of a dove covered with silver, as it had been formerly, and pure like the whitest snow. But it is not certain, if it is probable, that this is the meaning.
Barnes (Alexander)	Prof. Alexander renders it, " <i>When ye lie down between the borders (ye shall be like) the wings of a dove covered with silver;</i> " that is, "when the land had rest," or was restored to a state of tranquility.
Barnes (DeWette, and others)	DeWette renders it, " <i>When ye rest between the cattle-stalls:</i> " expressing the same idea, that of quiet repose as among the herds of cattle lying calmly down to rest. The Septuagint renders it, " <i>Though you may have slept in kitchens.</i> " The words rendered " <i>Though you lie [down]</i> " mean literally, " <i>If you have lain,</i> " alluding to some act or state of lying down quietly or calmly. The verb is in the plural number, but it is not quite clear to what or to whom it refers. There is apparently much confusion of number in the passage. The word rendered "pots" – shephathayim – in the dual form, occurs only in this place and in Ezek. 40:43, where it is translated hooks (margin, end–irons, or the two hearth–stones). Gesenius renders it here "stalls," that is, folds for cattle, and supposes that in Ezekiel it denotes places in the temple–court, where the victims for sacrifice were fastened.
Barnes (Tholuck)	Tholuck renders it, " <i>When you shall again rest within your stone-borders (that is, within the limits of your own country, or within your own borders), you will be like the wings of a dove.</i> " For other interpretations of the passage, see Rosenmüller in loc. I confess that none of these explanations of the passage seem to me to be satisfactory, and that I cannot understand it. The wonder is not, however, that, in a book so large as the Bible, and written in a remote age, and in a language which has long ceased to be a spoken language, there should be here and there a passage which cannot now be made clear, but that there should be so few of that description. There is no other ancient book that has so few difficulties of this kind than the Hebrew Scriptures. This is a very good point which Barnes makes here!

Commentators on Psalm 68:13	
Commentator	Opinion
Barnes (continued)	<p><i>Yet you will be as the wings of a dove covered with silver ...</i> - The phrase “yet you will be” is not in the original. The image here is simply one of beauty. The allusion is to the changeable colors of the plumage of a dove, now seeming to be bright silver, and then, as the rays of light fall on it in another direction, to be yellow as gold. If the allusion is to the ark, considered as having been laid aside among the ordinary vessels of the tabernacle, and having become dark and dingy by neglect, then the meaning would be, that, when restored to its proper place, and with the proper degree of attention and care bestowed upon it, it would become a most beautiful object. If the allusion is to the people of the land considered either as lying down in dishonor, as if among filth, or as lying down calmly and quietly as the beasts do in their stalls, or as peacefully reposing within their natural limits or borders, then the meaning would be, that the spectacle would be most beautiful. The varied tints of loveliness in the land - the gardens, the farms, the flowers, the fruits, the vineyards, the orchards, the villages, the towns, the cheerful homes - would be like the dove - the emblem of calmness - so beautiful in the variety and the changeableness of its plumage. The comparison of a beautiful and variegated country with a dove is not a very obvious one, and yet, in this view, it would not be wholly unnatural. It is not easy always to vindicate philosophically the images used in poetry; nor is it always easy for a Western mind to see the reasons of the images employed by an Oriental poet. It seems probable that the comparison of the land (considered as thus variegated in its beauty) with the changing beauties of the plumage of the dove is the idea intended to be conveyed by this verse; but it is not easy to make it out on strictly exegetical or philological principles.⁷⁸</p>
Clarke	<p><i>Though you lie among the pots</i> - The prophet is supposed here to address the tribes of Reuben and Gad, who remained in their inheritances, occupied with agricultural, maritime, and domestic affairs, when the other tribes were obliged to go against Jabin, and the other Canaanitish kings. To be fair, the eastern tribes did help conquer the land, as they had promised, but after the land had been taken, none of the tribes, except for Judah and Simeon, aggressively occupied their territory, casting out or killing the heathen who lived within Israel.</p>
Clarke (continued)	<p>Ye have been thus occupied, while your brethren sustained a desperate campaign; but while you are inglorious, they obtained the most splendid victory, and dwell under those rich tents which they have taken from the enemy; coverings of the most beautiful colors, adorned with gold and silver. The words <i>birakrak charuts</i>, native gold, so exceedingly and splendidly yellow as to approach to greenness - from <i>yarak</i>, to be green; and the doubling of the last syllable denotes an excess in the denomination - excessively green - blistering green. The Targum gives us a curious paraphrase of this and the following verse: “If ye, O ye kings, slept among your halls, the congregation of Israel, which is like a dove covered with the clouds of glory, divided the prey of the Egyptians, purified silver, and coffers full of the finest gold. And when it stretched out its hands in prayer over the sea, the Almighty cast down kingdoms; and for its sake cooled hell like snow, and snatched it from the shadow of death.” Perhaps the Romanists got some idea of purgatory here. For the sake of the righteous, the flames of hell are extinguished!⁷⁹</p>

⁷⁸ All of these quotes come from Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:13 (I did some editing).

⁷⁹ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:13 (with some editing).

Commentators on Psalm 68:13

Commentator	Opinion
Gill (Kimchi and Scacchus)	<p><i>Though you have lain among the pots,....</i> Kimchi takes these words to be the words of the women, or of the psalmist addressing the Israelites going out to war; that though they should lie in a low, dark, and disagreeable place, in the camp, in the open field, exposed to wind and weather; yet they should be fair and beautiful, and be loaded with gold and silver, the spoil of the enemy. But Fortunatus Scacchus refers them, much better, to the encampment of the Israelites in their tents, and to the disposition and order of their army going to battle: the body of the army in the middle, and the two wings, right and left, on each side; whose glittering armor of gold and brass, the rays of the sun striking on them, are fitly resembled by the colors on the wings and back of a dove. Another learned writer (a) thinks they are an address to the wings of the dove; that is, to the dove itself, meaning the Holy Spirit, expostulating with him how long he would dwell within the limits and borders of the land of Canaan; which was not long after the ascension of Christ, for soon was the gift of the Holy Ghost poured down upon the Gentiles, But rather they are an address to the people of Israel; intimating, that though they had been in adversity, and their lives had been made bitter with hard bondage, in mortar and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field; and had lain among the brick kilns and furnaces when in Egypt; and in the times of the Judges had suffered much from their neighbors, by whom they were frequently carried captive; and had been in affliction in the times of Saul; yet now in prosperous circumstances in the times of David, who had conquered their enemies, and enlarged their dominions, and restored peace; and especially would be more so in the days of Solomon, when they enjoyed great plenty and prosperity, and silver was made to be as the stones of the street. Though it is best of all to apply the words to the church and people of God in Gospel times; and they may describe their state and condition by nature and by grace, in adversity and in prosperity: the former in this clause, in which there is an allusion to scullions, or such as lie among coppers and furnaces, and are black and sooty; and so it describes the Lord's people before conversion, who are black with original sin and actual transgressions; who being transgressors from the womb, and as long as they live and walk in sin, and have their conversation with the men of the world, may be said to lie among the pots: and this may also be expressive of the church of Christ being in adversity, and black with the sun of persecution smiting her; and she might be said to lie among the pots while the ten Heathen persecutions lasted, and also in the reign of antichrist; during which time the church is in the wilderness, and the witnesses prophesy in sackcloth. To which, I can only add, huh?</p>

Commentators on Psalm 68:13

Commentator	Opinion
Gill	<p><i>...yet shall they be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold:</i> alluding to the white silver colour of some doves. Such were the white doves Charon of Lampsacum speaks of, seen about Athos, which were like the white crow Ovid calls the silver fowl with snowy wings: and also it may be to the time when they become of a golden colour, at which time they are fit for sacrifice, as the Jews observe; or to the different appearances of them, according as the rays of light and of the sun differently fall upon them. So the philosopher observes, that the necks of doves appear of a golden colour by the refraction of light. And this describes the saints and people of God as they are by grace. They are comparable to the dove on many accounts: like doves of the valleys, everyone of them mourn for their iniquities; like the trembling and fearful dove, tremble at the apprehensions of divine wrath, and judgment to come under first convictions; and are fearful of their enemies, and of their own state; are humble, modest, and meek; think the worst of themselves, and the best of others; flee to Christ for refuge, and to ordinances for refreshment; are chaste and affectionate to Christ, and harmless and inoffensive in their lives and conversations, Ezek. 7:16. Being "<i>as the wings of a dove covered with silver</i>" may denote the purity of doctrine held by them; the words of the Lord being as silver purified seven times, Psalm 12:6; and the preciousness and sincerity of their faith, by which they mount up with wings as eagles; and the holiness of their conversation, being as becomes the Gospel of Christ: and being as the "<i>feathers of a dove covered with yellow gold</i>" may denote their being adorned with the graces of the Spirit, as faith, hope, and love; which are more precious than gold that perishes, and are called chains of gold, Son. 1:10; see 1Pe. 1:7; or their being clothed with the righteousness of Christ, signified by gold of Ophir, and clothing of wrought gold, Psalm 45:9; or their being enriched with the unsearchable, solid, substantial, and durable riches of Christ, Rev. 3:18. And both may describe also the prosperous estates of the church, either in the first ages of Christianity, when she was clothed with the sun, and had a crown of twelve stars on her head, Rev. 12:1; or in the latter day, when her light will be come, and the glory of the Lord will rise upon her; when her stones will be laid with fair colors, and her foundations with sapphires; when she shall, have the glory of God upon her, and be as a bride adorned for her husband, Isa. 60:1.⁸⁰ Very little of this penetrated my brain as well.</p>
Jamieson, Fausset and Brown	<p>Some translate this, "<i>When you lie between the borders, you will,</i>" &c., comparing the peaceful rest in the borders or limits of the promised land to the proverbial beauty of a gentle dove. Others understand by the word rendered "pots," the smoked sides of caves, in which the Israelites took refuge from enemies in the times of the judges; or, taking the whole figuratively, the rows of stones on which cooking vessels were hung; and thus that a contrast is drawn between their former low and afflicted state and their succeeding prosperity. In either case, a state of quiet and peace is described by a beautiful figure.⁸¹</p>

⁸⁰ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:13. He also makes several references, which may be found in his text; I did not preserve those references. Also, I did some editing as well.

⁸¹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; from e-sword, Psalm 68:13.

Commentators on Psalm 68:13	
Commentator	Opinion
Keil and Delitzsch	<i>The lying down among the sheep—folds (the staked—in folds or pens consisting of hurdles standing two by two over against one another) is an emblem of thriving peace, which (like Psalm 68:8, Psalm 68:28) points back to Deborah's song, Judges 5:16, cf. Gen. 49:14. Just such a time is now also before Israel, a time of peaceful prosperity enhanced by rich spoils. Everything shall glitter and gleam with silver and gold. Israel is God's turtle—dove (Psalm 74:19, cf. Psalm 56:1, Hos. 7:11 11:11 [these passages really don't say that!]). Hence the new circumstances of ease and comfort are likened to the varied hues of a dove disporting itself in the sun. Its wings are as though overlaid with silver (cf. 1Sam. 4:15 Mic. 1:9 4:11), therefore like silver wings; and its pinions with gold—green, and that, as the reduplicated form implies, with the iridescent or glistening hue of the finest gold (not dull, but shining gold).</i>
Keil and Delitzsch re the greenish-yellow color	<i>Ewald remarks, "Arabian poets also call the dove Arab. 'l-wrq'a', the greenish yellow, golden gleaming one." But this Arabic poetical word for the dove signifies rather the ash-green, whity blackish one. Nevertheless the signification greenish for the Hebrew is established. Bartenoro, on Negaim xi. 4, calls the colour of the wings of the peacock by this same word; and I am here reminded of what Wetzstein once told me, that, according to an Arab proverb, the surface of good coffee ought to be "like the neck of the dove," i.e., so oily that it gleams like the eye of a peacock. A way for the transition from green to grey in aurak as the name of a colour is already, however, opened up in post-biblical Hebrew.⁸² I took out a few lines, but Keil and Delitzsch tend to be quite verbose and hard to follow.</i>
NIV Study Bible	<i>[to] sleep among the campfires [means to] rest in camp (see Judges 5:16). Wings of [my] dove are sheathed [means] Israel, God's "dove" (as per Psalm 74:19 and Hosea 7:11), is enriched with silver and gold of plunder from the kings of Canaan even though she still remains in camp. This poetic hyperbole (a figure of speech that uses exaggeration for emphasis) celebrates the fact that God had defeated the kings even before Israel met them in battle (see Joshua 2:8–11 5:1 6:16 2Sam. 5:24 2Kings 7:5–7 19:35 2Chron. 22:22–30).⁸³</i>
Spurgeon	<i>"Though you lie among the pots." Does he mean that the women at home, who had been meanly clad as they performed their household work, would be so gorgeously arrayed in the spoil, that they would be like doves, of silver wing and golden plumage? Or, would he say that Israel, which had been begrimed in the brick-kilns of Egypt, should come forth lustrous and happy in triumph and liberty? Or, did the song signify that the ark should be brought from its poor abode with Obed-edom into a fairer dwelling-place? It is a hard nut to crack. If we knew all that was known when this ancient hymn was composed, the allusion would no doubt strike us as being beautifully appropriate, but as we do not, we will let it rest among the unriddled things. Alexander reads it, "When you lie down between the borders, you will be like the wings," etc., which he considers to mean, "when settled in peace, the land shall enjoy prosperity;" but this version does not seem to us any more clear than our authorised one. Of making many conjectures there is no end; but the sense seems to be, that from the lowest condition the Lord would lift Up his people into joy, liberty, wealth, and beauty. Their enemies may have called them squatters among the pots - in allusion to their Egyptian slavery; they may have jested at them as scullions of Pharaoh's kitchen; but the Lord would avenge them and give them beauty 'for blackness, glory for grime.</i>

⁸² Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 68:11–14 (edited severely).

⁸³ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 847 (footnote) (edited slightly).

Commentators on Psalm 68:13	
Commentator	Opinion
Spurgeon continued	<i>"Yet you will be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold." The dove's wing flashes light like silver, and anon gleams with the radiance of "the pale, pure gold." The lovely, changeable colours of the dove might well image the mild, lustrous beauty of the nation, when arrayed in white holiday-attire, bedecked with their gems, jewels, and ornaments of gold. God's saints have been in worse places than among the pots, but now they soar aloft into the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.⁸⁴</i>
Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge	<i>That is, probably, "Though you have laboured and lain down between the brick-kilns in Egypt - a poor, enslaved, and oppressed people, yet you shall gradually rise to dignity, prosperity, and splendour; as a dove, which has been defiled with dirt, disordered, and dejected, by washing herself in a running stream, and trimming her plumage, gradually recovers the serenity of her disposition, the purity of colour, and the richness and varied elegance of her appearance."⁸⁵</i>
John Wesley	<i>Though you have formerly been exposed to great reproach and misery, yet God has changed your condition. Gold - Beautiful and glorious, like the feathers of a dove, which according to the variety of its postures, and of the light shining upon it, look like silver and gold.⁸⁶</i>

This may have seemed rather extensive, and without much profit to be taken from these opinions (the Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge offers a semi-rational, but still rather far-fetched, understanding of this verse), but I wanted you to be able to see that, everyone struggled with this verse and I don't believe that any of them came up with an appropriate explanation.

Personally, I would probably take Keil and Delitzsch's explanation here. The *laying down in between two things* is a picture of a person at rest. The dove represents one of the items taken in battle as spoil. Taking this one step further than Keil and Delitzsch, the dove might represent peace and tranquility. So, after a successful war against evil enemies (vv. 11–12), Israel is victorious, at ease, in peace, dividing up the spoil of victory.

Similarly, the use of *silver* and *gold* here are significant. *Silver* is often associated with redemption, and all of us who have believed in Jesus Christ are redeemed. *Gold* is often associated with the divinity and royalty of Jesus Christ, as the Ark was covered with gold.

What Barnes says is a great point, and maybe it is what we should take from this verse: it is amazing that we are dealing with a book which is 3000 years old, written in a dead language, originally written without chapters, verses or vowels, and that we can still understand about 97% of it. I made up that percentage, but there have only been a handful of cases where I have come across a verse which I truly did not feel as if I correctly explained or even understood the meaning of that verse. So far in this psalm, despite the difficulties, I feel as if I have reasonably explained at least the first 12 verses, and maybe, because of Keil and Delitzsch, was able to more or less give the gist of this verse. The fact that we understand so much of this Bible should be additional testimony that it is the Word of God.

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It is interesting to speculate just who did understand this verse. I think we can reasonably conclude that David and those who sang this psalm and those who heard this psalm understood this verse. However, that is not really

⁸⁴ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 68:13.

⁸⁵ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, Psalm 68:13.

⁸⁶ John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Psalm 68:13.

enough reason to include it in Scripture. At that time period, they knew who this verse was speaking of, and they knew between which two things they stayed, and probably the reason they were staying there; and they probably had a frame of reference for this dove with wings like silver and gold. In the next 800 years or so, this meaning was lost, as the most ancient translators appear to have struggled with this verse. Obviously the meaning is lost to us today, as I have presented some of the greatest theological minds, and none of them came up with an interpretation that, when you heard it, you thought, *that's it; that explains it!* But never lose sight of the fact that not understanding a verse and its implication is a very rare thing. It may occur a few times in this psalm, but for the most part, we can go through chapter after chapter and understand each and every verse. Maybe it takes a verse like this to make us appreciate just how awesome that fact is.

**In a scattering Shadday kings in her,
He causes snow [to fall] in Zalmon.**

Psalm
68:14

**When the Almighty scatters kings in her [in the
land];
He causes snow [to fall] in Zalmon.**

**When the Almighty God scatters kings in the land,
He also causes snow to fall on Zalmon.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	When He that is in heaven appoints kings over her, they shall be white with snow in Selmon.
Masoretic Text	In a scattering Shadday kings in her, He causes snow [to fall] in Zalmon.
Peshitta	When God appointed a king over Zion, it became white like snow. The Peshitta place Salmon (Zalmon) in the next verse.
Septuagint	When the heavenly One scatters kings upon it, they shall be made snow-white in Selmon.

Significant differences:	There are differences in referencing the Deity here; both the Greek and Latin call Him the <i>Heavenly One</i> ; the Syriac refers to Him as <i>God</i> ; and the Hebrew calls Him <i>Almighty</i> . The Latin and Hebrew both appear to Zalmon become white with snow; the Syriac implies that it is Zion which becomes white like snow; and the Greek seems to be referencing simply a color here: <i>snow-white</i> . I think that the problem in the latter half of this verse is simply one of interpretation, more than dealing with a text that is different from the Masoretic text.
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Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	God All-Powerful, you scattered the kings like snow falling on Mount Zalmon.
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	When Shaddai made (foreign) kings run away in different directions it was like snow on Mount Zalmon.
Good News Bible (TEV)	When Almighty God scattered the kings on Mount Zalmon, he caused snow to fall there.
<i>The Message</i>	On that day that Shaddai scattered the kings, snow fell on Black Mountain.
New Living Testament	The Almighty scattered the enemy kings like a blowing snowstorm on Mount Zalmon.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	When the Most High put the kings to flight, it was as white as snow in Salmon.
Complete Apostles' Bible	When the heavenly One scatters kings upon it, they shall be made snow-white in Zalmon.

God's Word™	Meanwhile, the Almighty was still scattering kings there like snow falling on Mount Zalmon."
HCSB	When the Almighty scattered kings in the land, it snowed on Zalmon.
JPS (Tanakh)	When Shaddai scattered the kings, it seemed like a snowstorm in Zalmon.
NET Bible®	When the sovereign judge ³¹ scatters kings, let it snow on Zalmon!
The Scriptures 1998	When the Almighty scattered sovereigns in it, It did snow in Tsalmon.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

The Amplified Bible	When the Almighty scattered kings in [the land], and it was as when it snows on Zalmon [a wooded hill near Shechem].
A Conservative Version	When the Almighty scattered kings in it, [it was as] it snows in Zalmon.
Updated Emphasized Bible	When the Almighty scatters kings therein, It will gleam like snow in the gloom [or, on Zalmon].
Hebrew Names Version	When the Almighty scattered kings in her, it snowed on Tzalmon.
Young's Updated LT	When the Mighty spreads kings in it, It snows in Salmon.

What is the gist of this verse? God scatters the heathen kings in the land and somehow, this appears to be connected to Him making it snow in Zalmon.

Psalm 68:14a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
pâras (פָּרַס) [pronounced paw-RAHS]	<i>to spread out, to disperse, to scatter</i>	Piel infinitive construct	Strong's #6566 BDB #831
The infinitive construct, when combined with the bēyth preposition, can often take on a temporal meaning and may be rendered <i>when [such and such happens]</i> . It can serve as a temporal marker that denotes an event which occurs simultaneously with the action of the main verb.			
Shadday (יְיָ שַׁדַּי) [pronounced shahd-DAH-ee]	<i>the many-breasted one; and is generally translated Almighty, the Almighty One</i>	proper noun	Strong's #7706 BDB #994
melek ^e (מְלָכִים) [pronounced MEH-lek]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity; with the 3 rd person feminine singular suffix	Strong's #none BDB #88

Translation: *When the Almighty scatters kings in her [in the land];...* It is unclear to what the psalmist is referring here. Although portions of this psalm refer to historical incidents, other portions are quite obscure. All we know

is, God has dispersed kings in *her*; and, by *her*, the 3rd person feminine singular suffix found here, I believe we are referring to the land of Palestine.⁸⁷

Barnes writes: *The reference is to the act of God in causing kings to abandon their purposes of invasion, or to flee when their own countries were invaded. Compare Psalm 48:4-6 (For, lo, the kings met together; they passed by together; they saw, so they marveled; they were troubled and fled away. Trembling and pain seized them there, like a woman in labor). The language here is so general that it might be applied to any such acts in the history of the Hebrew people; to any wars of defense or offence which they waged. It may have reference to the scattering of kings and people when Joshua invaded the land of Canaan, and when he discomfited the numerous forces, led by different kings, as the Israelites took possession of the country.*⁸⁸

It is good to keep in mind that David appears to be approaching this history of Israel chronologically, and after they came into the land, they scattered the kings. Num. 21:3, 21–35 Joshua 10:10–43 12:1–24. This does not mean that each and every king in the land of Canaan was scattered. Some were defeated, most were killed, some possibly escaped, and even a few capitulated to Israel. There were also some heathen kings who remained in the Land of Promise after Israel initially conquered it. However, the overall picture is Israel storming the land and scattering the kings there.

Psalm 68:14b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shâlag (שָׁלַג) [pronounced shaw-LAHG]	to snow; to cause to snow, to make snow; to be as snow	2 nd person masculine singular, Hiphil imperfect; apocopated form	Strong's #7949 BDB #1017
One of the many words which occurs only in this psalm. (Ex. 4:6 Num. 12:10 2Sam. 23:20 2Kings 5:27).		However, the noun cognate clearly means snow	
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
Tsal ^e môwn (צֶלְמוֹן) [pronounced tsahl ^e -MOHN]	shady; to cut off; transliterated Zalmon, Tsalmon	proper masculine singular noun	Strong's #6756 BDB #854

Translation: ...He causes snow [to fall] in Zalmon. This is the only place where we hear of *Zalmon*. Perhaps this is an historical incident where God caused Israel to overcome her enemy in a snowstorm; perhaps this is but an analogy, where kings in the land were scattered about, like the snowflakes on a mountain (assuming that Zalmon is a mountain or mountainous region). This also continues the theme of God's involvement with Israel—particularly with Israel's army—and God's universality, as portrayed by His control of the weather (see vv. 7–8, which we will compare this verse to a little later).

Snow is also used in Scripture as a contrast to man's sinfulness and guilt. Isa. 1:18: Come now and let us reason together, says Jehovah: *Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red as the crimson, they shall be like wool.* Psalm 51:7: *Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall*

⁸⁷ Barnes writes: *The phrase "in it," (margin, for her), refers doubtless to the land of Canaan, and to the victories achieved there. Albert Barnes, Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:14.*

⁸⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:14* (slightly edited).

be whiter than snow. When Israel defeated these heathen kings, this functioned as a cleansing of the land; a purging of the Land of Promise. Perhaps this is the imagery which David meant to convey to us.

Although there is some agreement between some scholars, determining exactly what this verse means seems unlikely to me.

Various Interpretations of Scattered Kings and Snow in Zalmon

Commentator	Comments
Barnes	<p><i>The word Salmon properly means shady, and was applied to the mountain here referred to, probably on account of the dark forests which covered it. That mountain was in Samaria, near Shechem (Judges 9:48—And Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the people with him. And Abimelech took the axes in his hand and cut off a bough of the trees, and lifted it up, and set it on his shoulder. And he said to the people with him, You have seen what I have done; you hasten and do the same). It is not known why the snow of that mountain is particularly alluded to here, as if there was any special whiteness or purity in it. It is probably specified by name only to give more vivacity to the description. There is much difference of opinion as to what is the meaning of the expression, or in what respects the land was thus white.</i></p> <p><i>The most common opinion has been that it was from the bones of the slain which were left to bleach unburied, and which covered the land so that it seemed to be white. This interpretation of the passage is adopted by Rosenmuller, Gesenius, and DeWette. Others suppose it to mean that the land was like the dazzling whiteness of snow in the midst of blackness or darkness. This was the opinion of Kimchi, and this interpretation is adopted by Prof. Alexander. Tholuck supposes it to mean that, when war was waged on the kings and people, they fell as fast as snow-flakes on Mount Salmon; and that the idea is not so much the whiteness of the land, as the fact that they fell in great numbers, covering the land as the snow-flakes do. It is perhaps not possible to determine which of these explanations is correct. Either of them would accord with the meaning of the words and the general sense of the psalm. That of Tholuck is the most poetical, but it is less obvious from the Hebrew words used.⁸⁹</i></p>
Easton	<p><i>A wood near Shechem, from which Abimelech and his party brought boughs and “put them to the hold” of Shechem, “and set the hold on fire” (Judges 9:48). Probably the southern peak of Gerizim, now called Jebel Sulman.⁹⁰</i></p> <p><i>Easton elsewhere comments: Shady; or Zalmon (q.v.), a hill covered with dark forests, south of Shechem, from which Abimelech and his men gathered wood to burn that city (Judges 9:48). In Psalm 68:14 the change from war to peace is likened to snow on the dark mountain, as some interpret the expression. Others suppose the words here mean that the bones of the slain left unburied covered the land, so that it seemed to be white as if covered with snow. The reference, however, of the psalm is probably to Josh. 11 and 12. The scattering of the kings and their followers is fitly likened unto the snow-flakes rapidly falling on the dark Salmon. It is the modern Jebel Suleiman.⁹¹</i></p>

⁸⁹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:14.

⁹⁰ M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*; 1897; from e-Sword, topic: Zalmon.

⁹¹ M.G. Easton M.A., D.D., *Illustrated Bible Dictionary*; 1897; from e-Sword, topic: Salmon.

Various Interpretations of Scattered Kings and Snow in Zalmon	
Commentator	Comments
Fausset	<p>A hill near Shechem on which Abimelech cut down the boughs with which they set on fire the tower of Shechem. Salmon means shady, dark (Psalm 68:14). The brightness of prosperity after the gloom of the conflict was like the glittering white snow which covers dark Salmon's forests (Judges 9:48 Mark 9:3). Or else (Maurer) Canaan had the same snowy appearance, covered over With the corpses of the slain, as Salmon when its trees were cut down by Abimelech changed its dark color for a white one. Joe. 1:7, "He hath barked my figtree ... the branches are made white." The blanching bones too may be referred to.⁹²</p>
Gill	<p>Gill's biggest problem is, he is a covenant theologian, and many of his interpretations are colored by this invalid understanding of God's plan. I include his interpretation only so that you can see just how far afield this theology place you: <i>When the Almighty scattered kings in it,.... His inheritance, his congregation, the church (Psalm 68:9—O God, You sent down a shower of plenty, by which You upheld Your inheritance when it was weary). Which some understand of his diffusing, and spreading and giving, in large numbers, ministers and preachers of the Gospel, pastors and teachers; who are kings and spiritual governors, are over churches, and have the rule over them in the Lord: and so Jarchi interprets them of the disciples of the wise men. Or they may be understood of the Lord's bringing into his churches such as are made kings and priests unto God, and in whose hearts grace reigns; and even of kings, in a literal sense, who will be brought into the church in the latter day (Isa. 49:23—And kings shall be supporting you, and their princesses your nurses. They shall bow to you, faces down to the earth, and lick up the dust of your feet. And you shall know that I am Jehovah, by whom they who wait for Me shall not be ashamed).</i> Though they may be interpreted of wicked kings, and the destruction of them "by it", the dove, the church of Christ; which will be done at the battle of Armageddon, at which time we read of the church being clothed in white, as follows (see Rev. 16:14—<i>For they are spirits of demons doing signs, which go forth to the kings of the earth, even of the whole habitable world to assemble them to the war of that day, the great day of God Almighty).</i></p>

⁹² Andrew Robert Fausset, *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*; from e-Sword, topic: Salmon.

Various Interpretations of Scattered Kings and Snow in Zalmon	
Commentator	Comments
Gill continued	<i>it was white as snow in Salmon; a mountain near to Shechem, which seems to have had its name from the shady trees upon it; and which also, as it seems from hence, was sometimes covered with snow; as was Lebanon, so called from the whiteness of the snow on it; and Olympus is called snowy by Homer, from the snow continually on it (g). Jarchi and Kimchi interpret it, "in darkness", or "in the shadow of death"; denoting, as Ainsworth observes, light in darkness; joy in tribulation: but rather it may design the purity of the church and people of God, through the imputation of Christ's righteousness to them, which is as fine linen, clean and white; and through his pardoning blood, whereby their scarlet and crimson sins are as white as wool, as white as snow; and through the sanctifying grace of the Spirit, by which they are washed and cleansed, and made all glorious within; and through the holiness of their lives and conversations, they hating the garment spotted with the flesh; and washing their garments, and making them white in the blood of the Lamb: or they may be said to be so, as having got the victory over all their enemies; and especially this will be the case when the kings of the earth will be scattered and destroyed by the Almighty Saviour (Rev. 7:9—After these things I saw, and behold, a great crowd which no one was able to number them, out of every nation, even tribes and peoples and tongues, standing in front of the throne, and before the Lamb, having been clothed with white robes, and in their hands palm branches).⁹³</i>
International Standard Bible Encyclopedia	<i>ISBE associates the Zalmon of Psalm 68 with Judges 9:46. From the slopes of Mt. Zalmon, Abimelech and his followers gathered the wood with which they burned down "the stronghold of the house of El-berith," which may have been the citadel of Shechem (Judges 9:46). The mountain therefore was not far from the city; but no name resembling this has yet been recovered in Mt. Ephraim. It is just possible that in the modern Arabic name of Mt. Ebal, es-Sūlēmīyeh, there may be an echo of Zalmon. It is precisely to this mountain, especially to the western slopes, that one would expect Abimelech and his people to go for the purpose in view. The name occurs again in Psalm 68:14, a passage of admitted difficulty. Snow in Palestine is mainly associated with Mt. Hermon, where it may be seen nearly all the year round; hence, doubtless the Greek reading "Mt. Hermon" in Judges. But snow is well known among the uplands in winter; and the Psalmist may simply have meant that the kings were scattered like snowflakes in the wind on Mt. Zalmon. We need not therefore look to Bashan or elsewhere for the mountain. The locality is fixed by the narrative in Judges.⁹⁴</i>
Jamieson, Fausset and Brown	<i>Their enemies dispersed, the contrast of their prosperity with their former distress is represented by that of the snow with the dark and somber shades of Salmon.⁹⁵</i>
Keil and Delitzsch	<i>The language here describes the condition of the people who are victorious by the help of their God, and who again dwell peaceably in the land after the war.⁹⁶ This may be the key which unlocks this verse. Once the kings are scattered (or defeated), there is no more war. One of the quietest, cleanest things on this earth, is a land which has been covered with snow. In war, there would be noise and blood and sweat; and the snow here covers over all, with a quiet, white blanket.</i>

⁹³ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:14 (slightly edited).

⁹⁴ *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor; ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Zalmon.

⁹⁵ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; from e-sword, Psalm 68:14.

⁹⁶ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 68:14.

Various Interpretations of Scattered Kings and Snow in Zalmon	
Commentator	Comments
Kukis	<i>When the Almighty scatters kings in her [in the land]; He causes snow [to fall] in Zalmon.</i> The same God who scatters the various kings in the Land of Promise also causes snow to fall in Zalmon. Part of the visual here is, God scatters these kings just as he scatters the snow on Mount Zalmon.
NIV Study Bible	<i>Zalmon was a mountain near Shechem (Judges 9:46–48), but others identify it here as Jebel Druze, a dark volcanic mountain east of Bashan. its name appears to mean “the dark one”—in distinction from Lebanon (the white one”) range, composed of limestone—and the figure may involve the contrast of white snow scattered on “Dark Mountain.” The reference may then be to abandoned weapons littering the field from which the kings have fled head long (see 2Kings 7:15).⁹⁷</i>
The Open Bible	<i>Perhaps [this] means the vanquished kings were blown about like snow on a mountain. The location of Mount Zalmon is unknown.⁹⁸</i>
Smith’s Bible Dictionary	<i>A hill near Shechem, on which Abimelech and his followers cut down the boughs, with which they set the tower of Shechem on fire (Judges 9:48). Its exact position is not known. Referred to in Psalm 68:14.⁹⁹</i>
Spurgeon	<p><i>“When the Almighty scattered kings in it, it was white as snow in Salmon.” The victory was due to the Almighty arm alone; he scattered the haughty ones who came against his people,’ and he did it as easily as snow is driven from the bleak sides of Salmon. The word white appears to be imported into the text, and by leaving it out the sense is easy. A traveller informed the writer that on a raw and gusty day, he was the side of what he supposed to be Mount Salmon suddenly swept bare by a gust of wind, so that the snow was driven hither and thither into the air like the down of thistles, or the spray of the sea: thus did the Omnipotent one scatter all the potentates that defied Israel. If our authorized version must stand, the conjectures that the bleached bones of the enemy, or the royal mantles cast away in flight, whitened the battle-field, appear to be rather too far-fetched for sacred poetry.</i></p> <p><i>Another opinion is, that Salmon was covered with dark forests, and appeared black, but presented quite another aspect when the snow covered it, and that by this noteworthy change, from sombre shade to gleaming whiteness, the poet sets forth the change from war to peace. Whatever may be the precise meaning, it was intended to pourtray the glory and completeness of the divine triumph over the greatest foes. In this let all believers rejoice.¹⁰⁰</i></p>
Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible	<i>[Zalmon is] a region or mountain...where God apparently scattered enemies of Israel by means of a snowstorm. the passage is obscure and it is not known precisely what the psalmist has in mind.¹⁰¹</i>

⁹⁷ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 847 (footnote).

⁹⁸ *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 762 (footnote).

⁹⁹ Dr. William Smith, *Smith’s Bible Dictionary*; 1894; from e-Sword, topic: Salmon.

¹⁰⁰ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 68:14.

¹⁰¹ *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*; Merrill Tenney, ed., Zondervan Publishing House, ©1976; Vol. 5, p. 1033.

I think that suggestion of Keil and Delitzsch most closely hits the mark. Once the kings have been scattered or killed, then there is a peace, peace in sharp contrast to the war which went before, a peace like the silent, snow covering Mount Zalmon. In war, there is bloodshed, violence, noise and chaos; and on Mount Zalmon, a peaceful, silent snow.

Spurgeon also gives an interesting interpretation, that God scattered the enemies of Israel just like a strong wind blows away the snow from Mount Zalmon. The only problem with Spurgeon's idea is, a great deal must be read into the text—the simile and the wind must be added in order for this to work together.

Mine, of course, is also right on target: [When the Almighty scatters kings in her \[in the land\]; He causes snow \[to fall\] in Zalmon](#). The God who scatters the heathen kings in the Land of Promise is also the God who causes snow to fall in Zalmon, and the results seem to be much the same—the kings are scattered just as God scatters the snow on Mount Zalmon.

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We should look back to vv. 7–9, which may be seen as parallel verses. We have God going out before His people, and this is followed by the earth shaking and by rain pouring down. In this verse, we have God scattering the kings and snow falling in Zalmon.

One of the Parallels of Psalm 68

Psalm 68:7–8	Psalm 68:14
O Elohim, when You went forth before Your people; when You marched in the desert wasteland;	When the Almighty scatters kings in her [in the land];
God's clear hand in His involvement with Israel.	
The earth quaked; furthermore, the heavens poured down [rain] from Elohim. This Sinai [quaked] because of Elohim, the Elohim of Israel.	He causes snow [to fall] in Zalmon.
God's control over nature and the elements.	

The over-arching themes seem to be (1) God's close involvement with Israel; (2) God's power as revealed in His involvement with Israel; (3) God's universal nature, controlling the very weather. I realize that this paints these passages with some very wide brush strokes, but I think that this understanding is reasonable, and that the parallel is accurate.

God's hand in things and in our lives is a strange concept. We look back on the history of Israel, and even if God never made Himself known, I believe that His involvement with Israel would have been clear (as His involvement with modern Israel and the Jews living in the past several centuries).

Application: One of the things which I have noticed in my own rear view mirror is God's hand. When things are happening, I recognize, for the most part, that God is involved and God is active in my life; however, I don't really know *why*. Sometimes, many of these changes are a bit disconcerting. But when I look back, over experiences which I have had, choices which I have made or been forced to make, along with the thousands of mistakes which I have made, God's hand in my life is clear and overarching.

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I think the proper way to interpret this verse is, the same God Who scattered the kings before Israel as Israel went into the land, is the God who causes snow to fall on Zalmon. The idea is, the God of Israel is not just a local god

nor is He simply a very powerful god; He is the God of the Universe, Who has even set our weather patterns into motion.

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The New American Bible footnote for this past section reads: *The Hebrew text upon which the translation is based has apparently suffered dislocation and has been substantially rearranged for sense.*¹⁰² Furthermore, you surely recognize that this psalm has been somewhat of a struggle to reasonably explain. The NAB simply took various halves of verses and rearranged them in a more logical sequence, and they took several liberties with the text, something which the NAB does anyway. The result is an arrangement which is quite logical and more understandable.

The New American Bible Rearranges the Verses	
NAB	
The Lord announced the news of victory; “The kings and their armies are in desperate flight,	In the Hebrew, <i>Jehovah gives the word; kings and armies fled; they fled [away]</i> . This pulls together the first two halves of vv. 11–12
All you people so numerous, will you stay by the sheepfolds?	Recall, <i>those [women] who proclaim [His word] are [like] a great army</i> (v. 11b). Then the NAB jumps down to v. 13a, where they (masculine plural) are lying between two things (the sheepfolds?).
Every household will share the booty, perhaps a dove sheathed with silver, its wings covered with yellow gold.”	yea, <i>she who stayed home has divided the plunder</i> (v. 12b) followed by NAB’s inserted <i>perhaps</i> and <i>the wings of a dove are covered with silver, and its feathers with gleaming gold</i> (v. 13b).
When the Almighty routed the kings there, the spoils were scattered like snow on Zalmon.	<i>Spoils</i> comes from v. 12a, already used in the NAB. Apart from that addition, this is v. 14.
This is part IV of Psalm 68 (according to the NAB), and most of it is a quotation from Jesus Christ, the Lord of victory.	Given the relative difficulty with reading and interpreting this verse, what the NAB has done here is reasonable, and much of their rendering essentially matches the interpretation which I have given this passage.

One of the most difficult things for a translator to do is, determine just how literal he is going to be as opposed to, just how well do you want the reader to get the text. In the middle of the previous century, there were a considerable number of pastors who argued for the used of the King James Version almost as if it were inspired text. Now, no one argued from that position, but they treated the KJV text almost as sacred. Today, that text seems so far removed from American English, that it would seem to be almost a foreign language to any young person. The result of this, plus the result of having so many available language tools is, there are a myriad of translations available to us today, including at least two designed specifically for the internet (the NET Bible® and the World English Bible).

One of my interests was in, examining a variety of translations and determining their strengths and weaknesses. One of the most fascinating things to me is, I developed a new respect for some very loose translations (e.g., the New Living Bible or the Good News Bible). I also recognized, more clearly than ever before, that, although super literal versions of Scripture are extremely important, so are the less literal versions.

¹⁰² *The Complete Parallel Bible*; NRSV, REB, NAB, NJB; Oxford University Press; ©1993; p. 1229 (footnote for NAB).

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Although I break up vv. 15–18 into two sections, the NIV Study Bible perhaps more wisely labels these 4 verses as a *Celebration of God's Ascent to Mount Zion*.¹⁰³

The Mountains of Bashan

Mountain of Elohim, mountain of Bashan;
mountain of peaks, mountain of Bashan.

Psalm
68:15

O mountain of Elohim, O mountain of Bashan,
O mountain of [many] summits, O mountain of
Bashan.

O mountain of Elohim, O mountain of Bashan, O mountain of many summits, O mountain of Bashan.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	The mountain of God is a fat mountain. A curdled mountain, a fat mountain.
Masoretic Text	Mountain of Elohim, mountain of Bashan; mountain of peaks, mountain of Bashan.
Peshitta	Over Salmon, the mountain of God, over the mountain of Bashan and over the mountain ridges.
Septuagint	The mountain of God is a rich mountain; a swelling [or, <i>curled</i>] mountain, a rich mountain.

Significant differences: Apparently, the Greek and Latin attempted to translate the words that they found, as opposed to transliterating them. The Syriac appears to have inserted prepositions which are not actually there.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Our LORD and our God, Bashan is a mighty mountain covered with peaks.
Good News Bible (TEV)	What a mighty mountain is Bashan, a mountain of many peaks!
The Message	You huge mountains, Bashan mountains, mighty mountains, dragon mountains.
New American Bible	You high mountains of Bashan, you rugged mountains of Bashan,...
New Living Testament	The majestic mountains of Bashan stretch high into the sky.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	A hill of God is the hill of Bashan; a hill with high tops is the hill of Bashan.
Adam Clarke	Is Mount Bashan the craggy mount, Mount Bashan, the mount of God? Why envy ye, ye craggy mounts? This is the mount of God in which he has desired to dwell. We have included the next verse as well, as it is tied to the understanding of this verse.
Complete Apostles' Bible	The mountain of God is a rich mountain; a swelling mountain, a rich mountain.
HCSB	Mount Bashan is God's towering mountain; Mount Bashan is a mountain of many peaks.
JPS (Tanakh)	O majestic mountain, Mount Bashan; O jagged mountain, Mount Bashan;...

¹⁰³ The NIV Study Bible; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 847 (footnote).

NET Bible®

The mountain of Bashan is a towering mountain;
the mountain of Bashan is a mountain with many peaks.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Is Mount Bashan, the high mountain of summits, Mount Bashan [east of the Jordan], the mount of God?
<i>A Conservative Version</i>	A mountain of God is the mountain of Bashan; a high mountain is the mountain of Bashan.
<i>Updated Emphasized Bible</i>	A mighty mountain [more literally, <i>a mountain of God</i>] is the mountain of Bashan, A mountain of peaks is the mountain of Bashan!
<i>English Standard Version</i>	O mountain of God, mountain of Bashan; O many-peaked mountain, mountain of Bashan!
<i>Hebrew Names Version</i>	The mountains of Bashan are majestic mountains. The mountains of Bashan are rugged.
<i>NRSV</i>	O mighty mountain, mountain of bashan; O many-peaked mountain, mountain of Bashan!
<i>A Voice in the Wilderness</i>	Mount Bashan is God's mountain; Mount Bashan is a mountain of peaks.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	A hill of God is the hill of Bashan, A hill of heights is the hill of Bashan.

What is the gist of this verse? This appears to be a vocative which should be affixed to the verse which follows; the psalmist speaks to the mountain of God and he speaks to the mountain of Bashan, which is a mountain of many peaks. The next verse will contain what David says to these mountains. There is a second interpretation.

Unlike previous verses, which confused us because of the vocabulary, the words found in the verse are fairly simple (save one); understanding them, however, is something else.

Psalm 68:15a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
har (הַר) [pronounced <i>har</i>]	<i>hill, mountain, hill-country</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #2022 (and #2042) BDB #249
ʾĒlōhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43
har (הַר) [pronounced <i>har</i>]	<i>hill, mountain, hill-country</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #2022 (and #2042) BDB #249
Bâshân (בָּשָׁן) [pronounced <i>baw-SHAWN</i>]	<i>sandy soil; fruitful; and is transliterated Bashan</i>	proper singular noun; a location	Strong's #1316 BDB #143

Translation: O mountain of Elohim, O mountain of Bashan,... I have translated this as a series of vocatives, although it could read, as many have it: The mountain of Bashan is the mountain of Elohim.

Bashan was an area which the Jews conquered prior to going into the Land of Promise. They had several skirmishes as they moved northward near the eastern border of their land, and one of the final ones was with Bashan. After conquering this land, the wandering Jews went into the Land of Promise and took it. Reuben, Gad

and half of Manasseh took the land east of the Jordan, the half-tribe of Manasseh taking the land of Bashan for their inheritance (see Num. 21).

Generally speaking, we associate the *mountain of Elohim* with either Sinai, where the Law was given (Ex. 3:1 18:5 24:13; 1Kings 19:8), or with the highest points of Jerusalem, where the Temple was eventually erected (after the time of David—Psalm 24:3 Isa. 30:29).

Barnes writes: *The allusion is, I think, clearly to Mount Zion; and the idea is, that mountain, though it was not distinguished for its elevation or grandeur - though it had nothing in itself to claim attention, or to excite wonder - yet, from the fact that it had been selected as the place where God was to be worshipped, had an honor not less than that of the loftiest mountain, or than those which showed forth the divine perfections by their loftiness and sublimity. There is connected with this, also, the idea that, although it might be less defensible by its natural position, yet, because God resided there, it was defended by his presence more certainly than loftier mountains were by their natural strength. It should be remarked, however, that many other interpretations have been given of the passage, but this seems to me to be its natural meaning.*¹⁰⁴

Barnes also speaks about the Mountain of Bashan: *Bashan was properly the region beyond Jordan, bounded on the north by Mount Hermon or the Anti-Libanus, and extending south as far as the stream Jabbok, and the mountains of Gilead. The "hill" of Bashan, or the "mountain of Bashan," was properly Mount Hermon - the principal mountain pertaining to Bashan. The name Bashan was properly given to the country, and not to the mountain. The mountain referred to - Hermon - is that lofty range which lies on the east of the Jordan, and in the northern part of the country - a range some twelve thousand feet in height. It is the most lofty and distinguished mountain in Palestine, and the idea here, as above expressed, is, that Mount Zion, though not so lofty, or not having so much in itself to attract attention, was not less honored, and not less safe, as being the special dwelling-place of God.*¹⁰⁵

Keil and Delitzsch write: *[The psalmist] uses the mountains of Bashan as an emblem of the hostile powers east of Jordan. These stand over against the people of God, as the mighty mountains of Bashan rising in steep, only slightly flattened peaks, to little hill-like Zion. In the land on this side Jordan the limestone and chalk formation with intermingled strata of sandstone predominates; the mountains of Bashan, however, are throughout volcanic, consisting of slag, lava, and more particularly basalt (basanites), which has apparently taken its name from Bashan (Basan—Note: This is all the more probable as Semitism has no proper word for basalt; in Syria it is called hag'ar aswad, "black stone"). As a basalt range the mountains of Bashan are conspicuous among other creations of God, and are therefore called "the mountain of Elohim:" the basalt rises in the form of a cone with the top lopped off, or even towers aloft like so many columns precipitous and rugged to sharp points; hence the mountains of Bashan are called a mountain range.*¹⁰⁶

There are several possible interpretations, all or some of which may be applicable (not unusual for the psalms). (1) The psalmist may be addressing both the mountain of Elohim (which, if Sinai, would have been in the far south) and the mountain of Bashan (which would be in the far northeast). The idea is, the psalmist is addressing those over a fairly large area, from just outside of Egypt to east of the Sea of Galilee, which would take in most of the land of Canaan. (2) The psalmist could be just addressing these two mountains, specifically, which is much more difficult to understand. (3) The third interpretation is, the psalmist is asserting that the mountain of Bashan *is* the mountain of Elohim; that is, the mountain of Bashan *belongs to* God. This is a true statement, and perhaps it is tied to the text as being land conquered by Israel when God scattered the heathen kings.

Mountains, in Scripture, are sometimes used to represent nations (Psalm 46:2 65:6). I have suggested that this is a vocative addressed to the people between Sinai and Bashan; perhaps this is addressed to heathen nations

¹⁰⁴ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:15.

¹⁰⁵ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:15.

¹⁰⁶ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 68:15–18.

(represented by Mount Bashan, as Keil and Delitzsch suggest) and to the nation of Israel (represented by the Mountain of God).

Psalm 68:15b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
har (הַר) [pronounced <i>har</i>]	<i>hill, mountain, hill-country</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #2022 (and #2042) BDB #249
gab ^e nûnnîym (גַּבְעֹנִיִּים) [pronounced <i>gah^b-noon-NEEM</i>]	<i>peaks, mountain peak, summits, rounded summit</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #1386 BDB #148
This word occurs only here, and its exact meaning is, therefore, difficult to ascertain. I think that we may reasonably assume, from the context, that many would look at Mount Bashan and then look at Mount Zion and think that Mount Bashan was simply a better, more commanding mountain. So, perhaps this means there are many peaks or many summits on Mount Bashan, but it is human judgment which supposes Mount Bashan to be superior in this way to Mount Zion.			
har (הַר) [pronounced <i>har</i>]	<i>hill, mountain, hill-country</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #2022 (and #2042) BDB #249
Bâshân (בָּשָׁן) [pronounced <i>baw-SHAWN</i>]	<i>sandy soil; fruitful; and is transliterated Bashan</i>	proper singular noun; a location	Strong's #1316 BDB #143

Translation: ...*O mountain of [many] summits, O mountain of Bashan.* As above, I have rendered this as several vocatives. The repetition of *mountain of Bashan* indicates that David is speaking of one particular mountain, one which has many summits or peaks; and one which is owned by God.

Again, Barnes comments: *Mount Hermon [in Bashan] was not a single hill, or a detached mountain, but a chain of mountains - a range of lofty peaks or summits. So of Zion. It was by the presence and protection of God what Bashan was by its natural strength and grandeur. Comparatively low and unimportant as Zion was, it had in fact more in it to show what God is, and to constitute safety, than there was in the loftiness and grandeur of Bashan. The latter, though thus lofty and grand, had no "advantage" over Zion, but Zion might in every way be compared with that lofty range of hills which, by their natural position, their strength, and their grandeur, showed forth so much the greatness and glory of God.*¹⁰⁷

Spurgeon writes: "*The hill of God is as the hill of Bashan,*" or more accurately, "*a hill of God is Bashan,*" that is to say, Bashan is an eminent mountain, far exceeding Zion in height. According to the Hebrew custom, every great or remarkable thing is thus designated. Where we talk of the Devil's Dyke, the Devil's Ditch, the Devil's Punch Bowl, etc., the more commendable idiom of the Hebrews speaks of the hill of God, the trees of the Lord, the river of God, etc. "An high hill as the hill of Bashan," or rather, "a mount of peaks is Bashan." It does not appear that Zion is compared with Bashan, but contrasted with it. Zion certainly was not a high hill comparatively; and it is here conceded that Bashan is a greater mount, but not so glorious, for the Lord in choosing Zion had exalted it above the loftier hills. The loftiness of nature is nothing before the Lord. He chooses as pleases him, and, according to the counsel of his own will, he selects Zion, and passes by the proud, uplifted peaks of Bashan;

¹⁰⁷ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:15.

thus doth he make the base things of this world, and things that are despised, to become monuments of his grace and sovereignty.

Again, the two interpretations: (1) This is addressed, in part, to the mountain of Bashan, which is a mountain of many peaks; or, (2) the assertion is, these many peaks of the mountain of Bashan belong to God. The next verse seems to indicate that these are vocatives.

The NET Bible® gives the following translation with footnotes

The NET Bible® Translates Psalm 68:15 and Comments	
NET Bible® Translation	Footnotes
The mountain of Bashan is a towering mountain;	The mountain of Bashan probably refers to Mount Hermon. In the Hebrew, <i>a towering mountain</i> is, more literally, <i>a mountain of God</i> . The divine name is probably used here in a superlative sense to depict a very high mountain ("a mountain fit for God," as it were). Cf. NIV "are majestic mountains"; NRSV "O mighty mountain."
the mountain of Bashan is a mountain with many peaks.	The meaning of the Hebrew term, which appears only here in the OT, is uncertain. HALOT 174 suggests "many-peaked," while BDB 148 suggests "rounded summit."

Taken from *The Net Bible*®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 68:15.

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Why isn't Zion compared to even more majestic mountains? Why do we not find a comparison here to the Swiss Alps, the Rocky Mountains, the Sierra Nevadas (my personal favorites), Mount Everest, or the Himalayas? This is a book written in a specific region. The mountains which I named are completely unknown to the original readers of Scripture. Furthermore, David had no contact with these other mountains; so, he used imagery which would resonate with the people who heard this psalm sung when the Ark was moved. The issue is not that the Mountains in Bashan are the greatest mountains in the world; the issue is, those who gathered to observe the moving of the Ark to Mount Zion may think within themselves, Mount Bashan is more majestic, but God chose Mount Zion. In fact—and this will knock you over, if you understand what I am saying—God chose Mount Zion *because* David chose Mount Zion.

By reading into the text, as Barnes has apparently done, the psalmist is speaking of Zion is being a well-fortified and secure mountain, even though it is not as high, as many peaked, or as defensible as the mountains in Bashan. Taken with the next verse, one might understand this to mean, of the mountains throughout that area, it would seem as though God would have chosen Mount Hermon in Bashan as a place of habitation, because it is higher and is in a mountain range, yet God has chosen Mount Zion instead within which to live. This advances the narrative to the time of David, who recognized the importance of Zion and bringing the Ark into Jerusalem.

I believe that, when we take this verse in conjunction with what follows, the meaning will be more perspicuous.

**To why do you [all] look with envy, mountains
peaks the mountain desires Elohim for His
dwelling place?
Yea Y^ehowah tabernacles to forever.**

**Why do you look with envy, O mountains, O
peaks, [at] the mountain Elohim desires for His
dwelling place?
Indeed, Y^ehowah will live there forever.**

Psalm
68:16

**Why do you look on with such envy, O mountains, O peaks, at the mountain which God desires as His own dwelling place?
Indeed, Jehovah will live there forever.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	Why suspect, ye curdled mountains? A mountain in which God is well pleased to dwell: for there the Lord shall dwell unto the end..
Masoretic Text	To why do you [all] look with envy, mountains peaks the mountain desires Elohim for His dwelling place? Yea Y ^e howah tabernacles to forever.
Peshitta	What do you want, O you mountains of Bashan? This is the ridge which God desires to dwell in; yeah, the LORD will dwell in it forever.
Septuagint	Wherefore do you conceive evil, you swelling mountains? This is the mountain which God has delighted to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever.
Significant differences:	The first verb is a difficult one to translate and it is reasonable that ancient translators did the best that they could here. This does not necessarily reflect a textual error. The understanding of the remainder of this verse is fairly consistent among the ancient texts.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Why is it jealous of Zion, the mountain you chose as your home forever?
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	High mountains, why do you look at the mountain that God wants to live in? Why do you want him to live in you instead? This (mountain) is where the LORD (himself) will always stay.
Good News Bible (TEV)	Why from your mighty peaks do you look with scorn on the mountain on which God chose to live? The LORD will live there forever!.
<i>The Message</i>	All you mountains not chosen, sulk now, and feel sorry for yourselves, For this is the mountain God has chosen to live on; he'll rule from this mountain forever.
New American Bible	You rugged mountains, why look with envy at the mountain where God has chosen to dwell, where the LORD resides forever?
Revised English Bible	But, you hill of many peaks, why gaze so enviously at the hill where the LORD delights to dwell, where the LORD himself will stay for ever?

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	Why are you looking with envy, you high hills, on the hill desired by God as his resting-place? truly, God will make it his house for ever.
Complete Jewish Bible	Why do you conceive <i>evil</i> , you swelling mountains? <i>This</i> is the mountain which God has delighted to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in <i>it</i> forever.
<i>God's Word</i> TM	Why do you look with envy, you mountains with many peaks, at the mountain where God has chosen to live? Certainly, the LORD will live there forever..
JPS (Tanakh)	why so hostile, O jagged mountains, toward the mountain God desired as His dwelling? The LORD shall abide there forever.
NET Bible®	Why do you look with envy, O mountains with many peaks, at the mountain where God has decided to live?

Indeed the LORD will live there permanently!

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Why look you with grudging <i>and</i> envy, you many-peaked mountains, at the mountain [of the city called Zion] which God has desired for His dwelling place? Yes, the Lord will dwell in it for ever.
A Conservative Version	Why look ye askance, ye high mountains, at the mountain which God has desired for his abode? Yea, LORD will dwell [in it] forever.
Updated <i>Emphasized Bible</i>	Why do you start up [or, <i>why do you look askance</i>], you mountains, you peaks? The mountain of God has desired for his habitation Surely, Yahweh will inhabit it evermore!
Hebrew Names Version	Why do you look in envy, you rugged mountains, at the mountain where God chooses to reign? Yes, the LORD will dwell there forever.
MKJV	Why do you gaze in envy, O mountain range, <i>at the</i> mountain God has chosen for His resting place? Yes, Jehovah will dwell <i>in it</i> forever.
Updated Bible Version 2.11	Why do you+ look askance, you+ high mountains, At the mountain which God has desired for his dwelling place? Yes, Yahweh will stay [in it] forever.
A Voice in the Wilderness	Why do you gaze in envy, O mountain peaks, at the mountain where God desires to dwell? Yes, Jehovah will abide in it forever.
Young's Updated LT	Why do you envy, O high hills, The hill God has desired for His seat? Jehovah also tabernacles [there] forever.

What is the gist of this verse? The psalmist asks the other mountains why they look with envy at what is probably Mount Moriah in Jerusalem, where Jehovah will live forever.

Psalm 68:16a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^f)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
mâh (מה) [pronounced <i>maw</i>]	<i>what, how, why</i>	interrogative; exclamatory particle	Strong's #4100 BDB #552
Lâmed + mâh can be rendered <i>why, for what reason, to what purpose, for what purpose</i> , indicating an interrogatory sentence. BDB also offers the rendering <i>lest</i> . Gesenius, perhaps for this passage alone (1Chron. 15:13), offers the rendering <i>on account of [that] which, because that</i> .			
râtsad (רָצַד) [pronounced <i>raw-TSAHD</i>]	<i>to watch [stealthily; with envious hostility]; to observe insidiously; to look [gaze] [with envy]</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Piel imperfect	Strong's #7520 BDB #952
This verb occurs only here and it has no cognates, making its meaning difficult to ascertain. Barnes suggests that the meaning is <i>to watch insidiously; to look askance at, eyeing with silent contempt</i> . ¹⁰⁸ The traditional meaning which I have assigned to this verb—to look upon with envy—is quite reasonable in all respects.			
hârîym (הָרִים) [pronounced <i>haw-REEM</i>]	<i>mountains, hills</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #2042 (and #2022) BDB #249

¹⁰⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:16.

Psalm 68:16a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
gab ^e nûnnîym (גַּבְעֹנִיִּים) [pronounced <i>gah^bv-noon-NEEM</i>]	<i>peaks, mountain peak, summits, rounded summit</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #1386 BDB #148
har (הַר) [pronounced <i>har</i>]	<i>hill, mountain, hill-country</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #2022 (and #2042) BDB #249
châmad (חָמַד) [pronounced <i>khaw-MAHD</i>]	<i>to desire, to covet, to take pleasure in</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #2530 BDB #326
ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l^e</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to, belonging to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
shebeth (שִׁבְתָּ) [pronounced <i>SHE^b-veth</i>]	<i>seat, dwelling place; same place</i>	feminine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7675 BDB #443

Translation: *Why do you look with envy, O mountains, O peaks, [at] the mountain Elohim desires for His dwelling place?* There are a number of mountains and peaks all around Jerusalem, in all directions, and the psalmist herein asks them *why do they look at the mountain which Elohim desires as His dwelling place?* Presumably, we are speaking of Mount Moriah or Mount Zion, which are in Jerusalem (compare Psalm 2:6 78:68–69 87:1–2 Isa. 2:2–3).

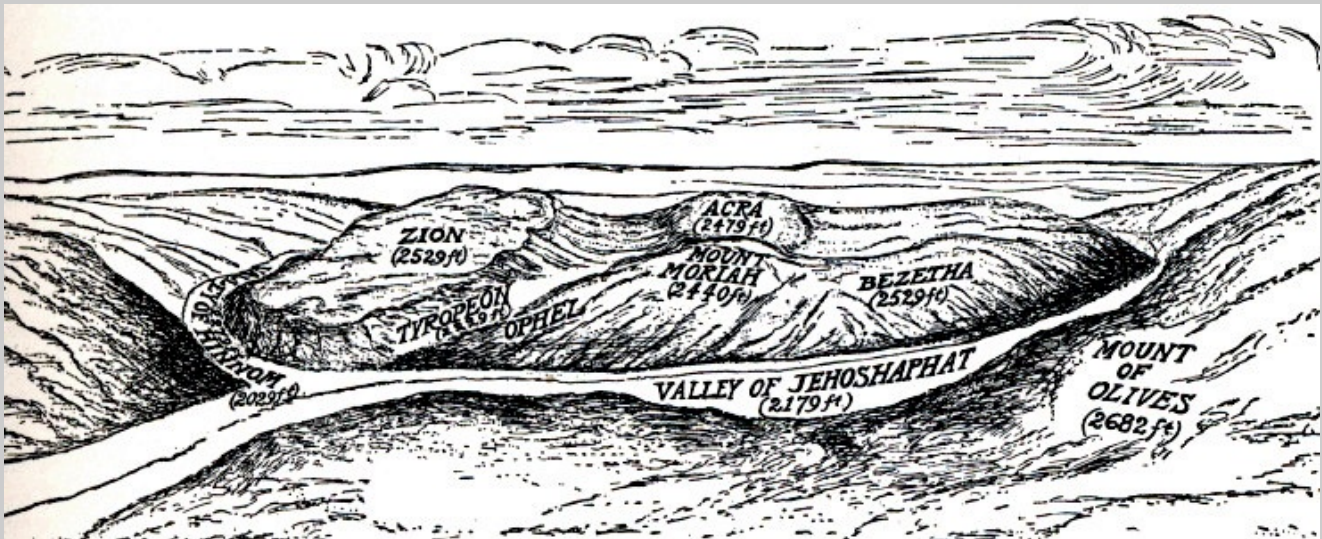
It would be beneficial at this time to examine the **Doctrine of the Jerusalem Mountains**

Normally, this is an abbreviated doctrine where I go into much more detail elsewhere; however, in this case, this is the entirety of the information which I have compiled on the Jerusalem mountains.

The Jerusalem Mountains

1. Jerusalem properly was situated between two mountains: Mount Acra to the North and Mount Zion to the Southwest. Lower Jerusalem as situated at Acra, and upper Jerusalem at Zion. Mount Acra is not mentioned in Scripture.

The Jerusalem Mountains



This was taken from http://www.bible-history.com/jerusalem/firstcenturyjerusalem_the_land_of_jerusalem.html. This is the set of mountains upon which Jerusalem was built.

2. Mount Bezetha, to the southeast is also not mentioned in Scripture. Josephus mentions Mount Bezetha in *The Antiquities of the Jews* Book 15, Chapter 11, where he writes *It was Agrippa who encompassed the parts added to the old city with this wall, which had been all naked before; for as the city grew more populous, it gradually crept beyond its old limits, and those parts of it that stood northward of the temple, and joined that hill to the city, made it considerably larger, and occasioned that hill, which is in number the fourth, and is called "Bezetha," to be inhabited also. It lies over against (across from) the tower Antonia, but is divided from it by a deep valley, which was dug on purpose (a moat), and that in order to hinder the foundations of the tower of Antonia from joining to this hill.*
3. Mount Moriah:
 - a. Mount Moriah is the site of Abraham's intended sacrifice—his uniquely-born son, Isaac (Gen. 22). This, of course, represented our Lord, Who would pay the penalty for our sins in this same general area (on Golgotha).
 - b. This is also the mountain upon which the Temple of Jerusalem was built, which was originally the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite (1Chron. 21 2Chron. 3:1). The Temple also speaks of our Lord through the sacrifices offered there and the Ark of God, which was kept in the Holy of Holies.
4. Mount Zion:
 - a. Unlike these other mountains, Zion is mentioned numerous times in Scripture (161 times). Nearly 50 of those mentions are in Isaiah and nearly 40 of those mentions are found in the psalms.
 - b. Mount Zion is the eastern hill of Jerusalem. It was the stronghold of the Jebusites, attacked by Joab, and became the site of David's palace and the Temple. Surprisingly, this is the first time that Zion is named in Scripture (2Sam. 5:7).
 - c. Zion is often compared or contrasted to Jerusalem, so that it appears to be often used as a synonym for Jerusalem (for instance, 2Kings 19:21 reads: *This is the Word that Jehovah spoke concerning him: The virgin daughter of Zion has despised you and laughed you to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem has shaken her head behind you*).
 - d. Zion is even called the dwelling place of God (Psalm 132:13 135:21).
 - e. Of the 7 times *Zion* is mentioned in the New Testament, 5 of them refer back to Old Testament quotations.
5. Across in the Valley of Jehoshaphat is the Mount of Olives, the site of our Lord's famous Olivet discourse.

Bear in mind that David wrote this psalm, so this would have been before the construction of the Temple, although this may have been on his mind as he wrote this psalm.

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In any case, this verse probably refers to Jerusalem, or, more likely, to Zion in Jerusalem, from which Jesus Christ will rule over the world; and where God made His presence known (both in the Temples build there and when our Lord walked in Jerusalem).

Barnes: *The mountains around Palestine - the mountains of the pagan world - the lofty hills - as if conscious of their grandeur, are represented as looking "askance," in their pride, at Mount Zion; as eyeing it with silent contempt, as if it were not worthy of notice; as if it were so insignificant that it had no claim to attention...[their] look [is one of] silent disdain, as if, by their side, Zion, so insignificant, was not worthy of regard. "Perhaps," by the high hills here, however, are disguisedly also represented the mighty powers of the pagan world, as if looking with contempt on the people of the land where Zion was the place of worship.*¹⁰⁹

Clarke: *The psalmist is speaking particularly of the mountains of Judea, and those of Gilead; the former were occupied by the Canaanites, and the others by Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites, whom Moses defeated.*¹¹⁰

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown: *Mountains are often symbols of nations (Psalm 46:2 65:6). That of Bashan, northeast of Palestine, denotes a heathen nation, which is described as a "hill of God," or a great hill. Such are represented as envious of the hill (Zion) on which God resides.*¹¹¹

Psalm 68:16b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾaph (אֵף) [pronounced ahf]	<i>in fact, furthermore, also, yea, even, indeed; even though</i>	a conjunction which signifies <i>addition</i> or <i>emphasis</i>	Strong's #637 BDB #64
This word appears to have two different purposes: (1) A surprise is then mentioned or the unexpected is said. (2) A reference is made to a preceding sentence and it is expanded or emphasized and we would translate this word <i>yea, à fortiori, the more so, how much more</i> (following an affirmative clause), <i>how much less</i> (following a negative clause), <i>furthermore, in fact</i> .			
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yoh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
shâkan (שָׁכַן) [pronounced shaw-KAHN]	<i>to tabernacle, to pitch a tent; to dwell, to reside, to live in, to domicile at, to settle, to settle down, to encamp</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #7931 BDB #1014

¹⁰⁹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:16. As you will see with my interpretation near the end of this verse, Barnes and I are thinking alike.

¹¹⁰ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:16.

¹¹¹ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; from e-sword, Psalm 68:16.

Psalm 68:16b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^l)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
nêtsach (נצח) [pronounced NAY-tsahkh]	<i>forever, constantly, perpetuity, eternity, enduring; continually</i>	masculine singular noun; pausal form	Strong's #5331 BDB #664

Since so many of the translations incorrectly render this word *glory* or *strength*, I should offer some Scripture where this word is consistently and reasonably rendered *forever*: 2Sam. 2:26 Psalm 9:6 77:8 79:5 Jer. 50:39 Amos 1:11. Although both Gesenius and BDB offer a plethora of meanings for this word, the ones given should suffice for Scripture. Perhaps, in relationship to God, we should understand this word to mean *enduring and eternal*.

Translation: *Indeed, Y^howah will live there forever.* This more specifically tells us that Jesus Christ, during the Millennium, would rule from Jerusalem forever.

Matthew Henry writes: *It is true, Zion was but little and low in comparison with them, and was not covered over with flocks and herds as they were, yet, upon this account, it has the pre-eminence above them all, that it is the hill of God, the hill which he desires to dwell in, and where he chooses to manifest the tokens of his peculiar presence (Psalm 132:13–14—For the LORD has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his dwelling place: "This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it). Why do you insult over poor Zion, and boast of your own height? This is the hill which God has chosen. The Lord will dwell in it for ever, which must have its accomplishment in the gospel Zion. There is no kingdom in the world comparable to the kingdom of the Redeemer, no city comparable to that which is incorporated by the gospel charter, for there God dwells and will dwell for ever.*¹¹²

I probably should have waited until this time to comment on v. 15, which simply cannot stand alone.

Psalm 68:15–16 Translated and Interpreted

Commentator	Translation	Discussion/Interpretation
Clarke	Is Mount Bashan the craggy mount, Mount Bashan, the mount of God? Why do you envy you craggy mounts? This is the mount of God in which He has desired to dwell. ¹¹³	Clarke simply makes it clear that, God chose Mount Zion as His dwelling place, over and above Mount Bashan.

¹¹² Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:16 (edited).

¹¹³ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:15. The commentary is mine, based upon Clarke's commentary.

Psalm 68:15–16 Translated and Interpreted		
Commentator	Translation	Discussion/Interpretation
Kukis	<p>O mountain of Elohim, O mountain of Bashan, O mountain of [many] summits, O mountain of Bashan.</p> <p>Why do you look with envy, O mountains, O peaks,</p> <p>[at] the mountain Elohim desires for His dwelling place?</p> <p>Indeed, Y^ehowah will live there forever.</p>	<p>God speaks to Mount Bashan, which simply refers to a group of mountains which are much more impressive than Mount Zion. Recall how sometimes mountains stand in for nations? David may be addressing the heathen nations, in this way.</p> <p>Just as Zion would not have been a place that one would have intuitively chosen as God's permanent dwelling place, neither would the Jews intuitively been seen as His people. I think this is what David is saying, in a poetic fashion.</p>
NET Bible®	<p>The mountain of Bashan is a towering mountain;</p> <p>the mountain of Bashan is a mountain with many peaks.</p> <p>Why do you look with envy, O mountains with many peaks,</p> <p>at the mountain where God has decided to live?</p> <p>Indeed the Lord will live there permanently!</p>	<p>The Mountain of Bashan is seen as Mount Herman, the most impressive mountain of this region. The literal <i>mountain of God</i> is used here in the superlative sense, to mean <i>a towering mountain, a mountain fit for God, a majestic mountain</i>.</p> <p>The verb <i>to look with envy</i> may be tied to a similar Aramaic verb which means <i>to lie in wait, to watch</i>.</p> <p>The mountain where God has chosen to live is clearly Mount Zion.¹¹⁴</p>

There are several keys to this passage. First of all, I am unsure whether David is speaking to Mount Zion and to Mount Bashan, or whether he is referring to Mountain Bashan as a majestic mountain range. In any case, the key is in v. 16, where God unexpectedly chooses Mount Zion as a place where He will dwell forever (this would be Jesus Christ ruling from Mount Zion throughout the Millennium). However, this is not really the point of what David is saying here. If you were to choose a place wherein God's Presence would dwell, one might look to Mount Sinai, where He appeared to Moses, or to the mountains of Bashan, which include Mount Hermon; however, God chose instead, Mount Zion. It is not the mountains that we are really speaking of; we are speaking of the people of God, the Jews. You might look at the Persians, the Romans or the Greeks, and think, these are a people with whom God will cast His lot. In fact, throughout the ancient world, there were several dominant peoples with whom one would expect God to make an alliance. God chose Abraham and the people who would come from him. God chose the people of Abraham, the Jews. It is to these people, God entrusted His Word; it is from these people that Jesus Christ came; and, in the Tribulation, these people will play the major roll once again. So, to understand this verse, you simply need to look beyond the mountains, and recognize about whom God is speaking.

So, the idea is, these mountains look with envy to Mount Zion, as they would have expected themselves to be chosen as the mountain on which God would dwell. However, it is not really the mountains that we are speaking about, but the peoples from this area, the cradle of western civilization, who look upon Israel with jealousy, thinking that God should have chosen them as a people among whom He would dwell.

¹¹⁴ *The Net Bible®*; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 68:15–16. I took the notes of the NET Bible® and attempted to write commentary which I believed to be consistent with the notes. The text was taken directly from NET Bible®.

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At this point, I am quite pleased with my interpretation, and then I look at the next verse and I find myself facing another struggle to understand and explain what David has written.

What David has written here is pretty amazing. People who live during history rarely understand the times in which they live or their significance. The United States was slow to come to the aid of its allies in World War II and slow to recognize the danger and evil of the Third Reich. People in the United States, living during that period of time, opposed, for the most part, entering into a war with Germany and Japan. After all, those countries were way over there on the other side of the world. We entered into the war far too late. Furthermore, God gave us atomic weapons at exactly the right time with exactly the right president. We can look back and recognize that, any nation which simply rounds up millions of Jews and then slaughters them has got to be evil and should be stopped. The decision was not that clear-cut today.

Even today, people do not recognize just how evil Communism is/was. Stalin and Mao murder millions of their own people. When we left Vietnam, there was a wholesale slaughter in Vietnam and Cambodia which made the Vietnam war look like a stoners' picnic. There are a significant number of liberals today who blame *the war machine*, or they blame Nixon or LBJ for the slaughter of innocent men, women and children when we pulled out of Vietnam. Huge numbers of people even today see our leaving Vietnam as a noble thing, despite the slaughter which followed our exit.

So, how are David's words so amazing and how do they relate to the wars of this past century? David understood the times in which he lived. He understood the significance of what he was doing when he moved the Ark of God. He understood the significance of his intention to build a permanent Temple for the Ark of God. David had an incredible career and life up until that point in time. He could have written about a lot of things in this continuation of Israel's history. However, he recognized that, his choice to make Jerusalem the capital city of Israel and to bring the Ark *permanently* to Mount Zion is the pinnacle of his career, worthy of being mentioned in a psalm which covers the highlights of the history of Israel. David knew this choice, these actions, which brought the Ark of God into Zion, were significant, because Jesus Christ would then make Zion the place from which He would rule the earth for 1000 years.

Application: What are the most important moments of your life? What is the one decision or action of your life which is the most significant in terms of its impact on history? For most people, it is the children that they bring into the world and how they raise these children and what they pass along to their children.

Application: On a recent radio broadcast of Michael Medved, he was speaking about some courses in *Home Economics* being offered at a college or university (I believe that it was a clearly religious university) and the resultant fallout. Some women believed this to be some of the greatest steps backwards that our society could take. Some men saw these as unworthy courses to offer at the college level. Michael Medved, who understands the importance of the family and the importance of the correct rearing of one's children, pointed out that there were few things more important in this world than the running of a household and the raising of children. For that reason, few other courses offered at that college (or anywhere) could be as important as these Home Economic courses, which some people sincerely opposed. This should tell you just how blind people are to their own existence. One can point to gangs, to single-mother households (which account for the lion's share of poverty in this nation, and which our government *encourages* among Black women), to schools which are out of control, and it should be clear that, how we raise our children is fundamental to our society. And, with glaring evidence staring them in the face, people oppose home economic courses, which emphasize the importance and the function of running a household.

David, a man of doctrine, looks at his life and his place in history, his choice to bring the Ark of God to Jerusalem permanently, and he understands that this is the significant choice in his life. The God Who created us will, because of David's choice, rule the earth from Jerusalem.

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The Power and Ascendency of God

A chariot of Elohim, twenty thousand;
thousands of a repetition;
my Adonai in them;
Sinai in the holy [place].

Psalm
68:17

The chariot of Elohim [leads] twenty
thousand—a myriad of thousands [of
angels]—
my Adonai [is] among them,
[as He was with them at] Sinai, [as He was
with them] in the holy place.

The chariot of God leads myriads upon myriads of chariots of angels;
my Lord is among them at Sinai just as He is with them in the Holy of Holies.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	The chariot of God is attended by ten thousands; thousands of them that rejoice: the Lord is among them in Sina, in the holy place.
Masoretic Text	A chariot of Elohim, twenty thousand; thousands of a repetition; my Adonai in them; Sinai in the holy [place].
Peshitta	God rides with a host of angels; the LORD is among them, as in Sinai, in His holy place.
Septuagint	The chariots of God are ten thousand fold, thousands of rejoicing ones: the Lord is among them, in Sina, in the holy place.

Significant differences: In the Greek, *chariot* is in the plural. The Syriac has, instead of *chariot*, a *host of angels*.

The Latin and Greek both have *ten thousand (s)* rather than *twenty thousand*. The Lord being *among* them is a legitimate rendering of the Hebrew.

The ancient translations all have a preposition of some sort before *Sinai*.

Only the Syriac has *His* holy place, as opposed to *the* holy place. However, I have seen good translators insert a personal pronoun now and again, even if one was not there.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	When you, LORD God, appeared to your people at Sinai, you came with thousands of mighty chariots.
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	God has millions of chariots. The Lord came with them to his holy (mountain) Sinai.
Good News Bible (TEV)	With his many thousands of mighty chariots the Lord comes from Sinai into the holy place.
<i>The Message</i>	The chariots of God, twice ten thousand, and thousands more besides, The Lord in the lead, riding down Sinai-- straight to the Holy Place!
New American Bible	God's chariots were myriad, thousands upon thousands; from Sinai the Lord entered the holy place.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	The war-carriage of God is among Israel's thousands; the Lord has come from Sinai to the holy place.
Complete Apostles' Bible	The chariots of God are ten thousand fold, thousands of rejoicing ones; the Lord is among them, in Sinai, in the holy place.
HCSB	God's chariots are tens of thousands, thousands and thousands; the Lord is among them in the sanctuary as He was at Sinai.
NET Bible®	God has countless chariots; they number in the thousands. The Lord comes from Sinai in holy splendor.
New International Version	The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands; the Lord <u>has come</u> from Sinai into his sanctuary.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands upon thousands. the Lord is among them, as He was in Sinai, [so also] in the holy place — the sanctuary [in Jerusalem].
A Conservative Version	The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands upon thousands. LORD is among them, [as in] Sinai, in the sanctuary.
English Standard Version	The chariots of God are twice ten thousand, thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them; Sinai is now in the sanctuary.
A Voice in the Wilderness	The chariots of God are a vast innumerable number, thousands of thousands; the Lord is among them as at Sinai, in the Holy Place.
WEB	The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands. The Lord is among them, from Sinai, into the sanctuary.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	The chariots of God <i>are</i> myriads, thousands of changes, The Lord <i>is</i> among them, in Sinai, in the sanctuary.

What is the gist of this verse? Although *chariot* is in the singular, this verse ether tells us that God *has* 20,000 thousand thousands chariots or that He leads that many. In one of the hundreds of Old Testament passages where the Trinity is implied, we have the Lord among them, in Sinai, in His holy place.

Psalm 68:17a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
recheb (רֶכֶב) [pronounced REH-khe ^b ʋ]	<i>chariot, mill-stone, rider</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #7393 BDB #939
These may seem like very divergent concepts, however, they are all related to the wheel. A person might refer to his car as <i>my wheels</i> ; their circular objects would also be given a similar name. It is usually rendered <i>chariot(s)</i> (Gen. 50:9 Ex. 14:6–7, 9 Deut. 11:4). My guess is that this could have been a word which had its origins in Egypt. There is another usage which apparently has to do with day to day life in the ancient kitchen, although <i>millstone</i> may not be correct (Deut. 24:6 Judges 9:53 2Sam. 11:21). Context makes it easy to distinguish the two divergent meanings.			
ʾĒlōhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Psalm 68:17a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ribbôthayim (רִבְּוֹתַיִם) [pronounced <i>rihb-boh-thah-YIHM</i>]	<i>twenty thousand</i>	feminine dual noun	Strong's #7239 BDB #914
ʿălâphîym (אַלְפִּיִּם) pronounced <i>uh-law-FEEM</i>	<i>thousands, families, [military] units</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #505 (and #504) BDB #48
shinʿân (שִׁנְאָן) [pronounced <i>shin-AWN</i>]	<i>a repetition, a repeating, an iteration, a myriad</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #8136 BDB #1041
This noun is found only here, and appears to come from the verb <i>to repeat, to do again; to change, to alter</i> . Strong's #8138 BDB #1040.			

Translation: The chariot of Elohim [leads] twenty thousand, a myriad of thousands [of angels]—... We have great numbers of something, although *chariot* here is in the singular.

Barnes gives us a little information on chariots: *[They are] usually two-wheeled vehicles, often armed with scythes attached to their axles, were among the most powerful means of attack or defense in ancient warfare.*¹¹⁵ With regards to the number of chariots (or the number of those whom God is leading), Barnes writes: *A closer version is “two myriads,” or twice ten thousand. The original word is in the dual form. The language is designed to denote a very great number. A myriad was a great number; the idea here is that even “that” great number was doubled.*¹¹⁶ And, concerning the final phrase: *The Hebrew is, “thousands repeated,” or “multiplied.” There is in the Hebrew no mention of angels. The Septuagint and the Vulgate render it, “thousands of the rejoicing;” that is, thousands of happy attendants. The original, however, would most naturally refer to the chariots, as being multiplied by thousands.*¹¹⁷ I understood this in a slightly different way.

I have inserted the verb *to lead* simply to give some reasonable meaning to this verse. However, I essentially pulled that word out of the air (or, perhaps the various translations which I noted suggested it to me). In here, we have a word which only occurs here, and seems to be the substantive cognate for the verb *to repeat*. I think the idea here is, God is leading thousands upon thousands of angels—an uncountable number—or, possibly, if we want to choose a number, 20 million times itself (400 trillion). When it comes to God in His chariot, the picture I get is Him leading; and those whom He is leading are an uncountable number, which suggests to me, not the people who are in attendance to David moving the Ark, but more like the great army that God would command, which would be the elect angels (which would be either 40 million or 400 trillion, depending upon the meaning of the word used here). Clark understands this to mean only 40,000.¹¹⁸

How, the notion of *angels* is also inserted here, pulled out of the air—but that is not an unreasonable supposition, as just noted. We have the *chariot of God* (obviously, God does not ride in or require a chariot) amid thousands (or millions or trillions) of something else (angels? chariots?). It makes little sense for God to lead this uncountable number of anything else, although we can reasonably offer a 2nd option that these are the believers whom God will lead when we each take out a demon—however, that interpretation would come out of left field, for this passage. My point is, God leads an uncountable number of angels, and, in the future, He will lead an uncountable

¹¹⁵ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:17.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:17.

number of believers. I don't think that we have any other options in Scripture. Leading an uncountable number of empty chariots would make little or no sense.

What we can reasonably assume is, this is more than just a house call; this is more than just a visit. The idea of war and violence appears to be part and parcel of this great number of angels or chariots, as the chariot was generally seen as an instrument of war. Often, in Scripture, God is pictured as leading a great host; here, we have another possible approach, but which says, essentially, the same thing. What we would expect to find somewhere nearby in this psalm is warfare (v. 21).

Gill agrees with the assessment that we are speaking of angels here: *By "chariots" are meant the angels, as the following clause shows; called "chariots", because they have appeared in such a form (2Kings 2:11—**And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and separated them both; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven**); and because, like chariots of war, they are the strength and protection of the Lord's people; and because of their swiftness in doing his work; and because they are for his honour and glory: they are the chariots of God.*¹¹⁹

Barnes ties this to the previous two verses, which is quite reasonable. The idea is, God has chosen Zion as the place of His Presence. He will rule from Zion in the Millennium. The other mountains look upon Zion with envy and hostility as a place not as blessed with natural defenses; however, David writes that Zion has the defenses of God, which includes this tremendous angelic army of perhaps 400 trillion.

Interestingly enough, there are several places where a number appears to be given for the elect angels.

How Many Angels?		
Citation	Quotation	Comment
Psalm 68:17	The chariot of Elohim [leads] twenty thousand—a myriad of thousands [of angels]—my Adonai [is] among them, [as He was with them at] Sinai, in the holy place.	The suggestions are anywhere between 40,000 and 40 trillion.
Daniel 7:10	A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: a thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.	This sounds like 100 million to me.
Matt. 26:52–53	Then Jesus told him, "Put your sword back in place because all who take up a sword will perish by a sword. Or do you think that I cannot call on My Father, and He will provide Me at once with more than 12 legions of angels?"	Barnes writes: <i>A legion was a division of the Roman army amounting to more than 6,000 men. The number "twelve" was mentioned, perhaps, in reference to the number of his apostles and himself.</i> ¹²⁰ This would be 72,000 or more.

¹¹⁹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:17 (edited).

¹²⁰ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Matt. 26:53.

How Many Angels?		
Citation	Quotation	Comment
Luke 2:13–14	And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”	Gill comments: <i>the angels are innumerable; there are thousands, ten thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand of them: it may be rendered "the multitude."</i> ¹²¹
Heb. 12:22	But you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels,...	This says that there are not just innumerable angels, but innumerable <i>armies of angels</i> .
Rev. 5:11	I saw, and I heard something like a voice of many angels around the throne, the living creatures, and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousands of ten thousands, and thousands of thousands.	The first enumeration would be 100 million; but bear in mind that <i>thousands</i> is in the plural. And then, appended to this is <i>thousands of thousands</i> as if the first numbering of angels was not really sufficient to get across to us just how many angels we are talking about. In any case, the language is very similar to Dan. 7:10, already noted above.

In at least the first two cases and the third, it appears that the writers are getting across the idea of an uncountable number of angels.

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Psalm 68:17b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾădônây (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced <i>uh-doh-NAY</i>]	lord, master, owner, superior, sovereign; can refer to the trinity or to an intensification of the noun; transliterated <i>Adonai</i>	masculine plural noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #113 BDB #10
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within	a preposition of proximity; with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #none BDB #88

Translation: ...my Adonai [is] among them,... *My Lord is among them* again indicates that there is a great number of chariots (or angels) and Jehovah is among these chariots. Again, invading chariots to make war seems to be the underlying idea, and this is not far removed from our Lord returned to earth in the 2nd Advent to destroy all of His enemies.

¹²¹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Luke 2:13.

There are two ways of understanding this verse: God leads this myriad of chariots, and Adonai is among them; or, the chariots of God are a huge number, and the Lord is among them (which is sort of a repetition). We do not have that God *leads* this myriad of chariots in the Hebrew; I inserted that verb as a reasonable interpretation.

Barnes comments: *The real strength, after all, is not in Zion itself, or in the chariots of the Lord surrounding it, but in the Lord himself. "He" is there as the Head of the host; He, as the Protector of his chosen dwelling-place.*¹²²

Now, the idea that [Elohim leads this myriad of chariots](#), and that [my Lord is among them](#), introduces the idea of the Trinity in the Old Testament. Although one could not go to this verse and base the existence of the Trinity upon it, the Trinity is found in the Old Testament, which is a great topic to examine. Therefore, go [here](#) for doctrine of the [Trinity in the Old Testament](#), or see the abbreviated version below.

And just in case you don't look it up, here are a few Old Testament verses where the Trinity is clearly proclaimed:

The Trinity in the Old Testament (the Abbreviated Version)

1. The 4th word of Gen. 1:1 is Elohim, which can be translated *God* or *gods*. The *-im* ending is the plural ending in the Hebrew. This word takes on a masculine singular verb here, and for that reason, some have called this the *plural of excellence*, indicating that God is so excellent that, this could only be expressed with a plural noun. Although I am not saying this is wrong, at the same time, always bear in mind that the first title used for God is a plural word.
2. Before we go further, we should make a quick stop at Deut. 6:4: [Listen, O Israel, Jehovah is our God \[Elohim\] Jehovah is one](#). I have carefully maintained the order of the Hebrew words, and note two things: the parallelism and the italicized words. The italicized words are inserted, and every translator inserts them; sometimes the nouns are mixed around a bit (e.g., [Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD](#) or [Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one](#)). You will note that *Jehovah* occurs twice and suggests a parallelism. In the Hebrew, the subject is not necessarily found first, but the parallelism suggests that *Jehovah* is either the subject both times or it is the predicate nominative both times. So Moses could be saying, "[Listen, O Israel, our God is Jehovah, One is Jehovah;](#)" or, "[Listen, O Israel, Jehovah is our God \[and\] Jehovah is one.](#)" The latter makes the most sense to me, as the numeral *one* is found more often as a modifier than as a noun. However, the numeral *one* is not necessarily *one in number* but it is used for something which represents a unity, as in, [a man and a woman shall leave their parents and they will become one flesh](#). Even in sexual union, a man and a woman are still two distinct people; however, what they form is a union. So, Moses was not making the point that Jehovah God is a single God, although Christians do believe in one God; but that [Jehovah is our Elohim \(plural\) and Jehovah is one](#), indicating unity rather than number.
3. Now let's return to creation. Although it is clear that God created all that is, with and through Jesus Christ (John 1:1–14), we are going to restrict ourselves to the Old Testament. On the 6th day, God created man. we read: [God \[plural noun\] said \[masculine singular verb\], "Let Us make \[plural verb\] man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the sky, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth"](#) (Gen. 1:26). Up until now, even though we had the plural noun *Elohim*, we would always find a masculine singular verb; however, this time, the verb *to make* is a plural verb. This is followed by two words which plural suffixes (*our*). When God designed man, there is apparently a different approach to man than God creating even the heavens and the earth. Up until the creation of man, the verbs have all been masculine singular; now, the verb *to make* is in the plural. Man will be created trichotomous and, apparently, with a greater complexity than what God had already created. We can attest to this complexity, as we can usually recognize human life, but giving it greater definition than that eludes even those in the medical profession. For instance, just how alive is a person who is hooked up to medical machinery which, for instance, breathes for him? Just how alive is the fetus in the womb? These are almost more moral

¹²² Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:17.

The Trinity in the Old Testament (the Abbreviated Version)

questions than they are medical, as medicine and science cannot say with complete certainty what these lives are. Science, in most cases, is able to sustain these lives or to destroy these lives, but giving them further definition, beyond a guess as to how viable these examples are, is outside of medicine's ability. So, when God created a body with a soul and a spirit, this is a creation which man to this day does not fully apprehend. Scientists may tell us that we are 98% identical to chimps,¹ in terms of DNA, but people with an IQ above room temperature don't have any problems distinguishing their fellow human beings from chimps. So, as a result, we have a large percentage of scientists who believe that we evolved from primates, as our DNA is so similar; yet there are a significant number of scientists who do not believe that such an evolution occurred. As a result, there are scientists out there who want to create life in order to harvest portions of it to attempt to cure this or that disease; and there are even some who would want to try human cloning; and there are many out there who view these things as morally repugnant, and in different amounts. It is because, we do not know exactly what the soul is, how it is connected to the body, and we medically don't know what the soul is doing or where it can be found with respect to fetuses, lobotomized patients or comatose patients. Some think that the key to life is the EEG (electroencephalograph) readings of the brain (which is what we use, essentially, to determine if someone is dead). However, a 3 week old fetus has EEG readings; and who knows before that? My only point in all of this is, we are wonderfully made, put together with a variety of elements, that, in and of themselves, are clearly not alive; and that, somehow (by the breath of God), we are made alive. And so, when God made man, all 3 members of the Trinity were involved.

4. Isa. 48 is spoken by God, although we may not, at first understand which member of the Trinity is speaking. However, generally speaking, the revealed member of the Trinity is Jesus Christ. In Isa. 48:3, we read: **"I have declared the former things from then; and they went out of My mouth; and I made them hear; suddenly I acted, and they came about."** This is clearly God and not Isaiah speaking, because Isaiah did not act in order to make his own words come to pass. He speaks of His wrath in v. 9, He speaks of refining Israel in v. 10, and of His name being profaned in v. 11. Then He says (vv. 12–13): **"Listen to Me, O Jacob, and Israel My called: I am He; I am the First; surely I am the Last. My hand surely founded earth, and My right hand has stretched out the heavens; I called to them, they stood up together."** Clearly this is God Who is speaking, and, as we will find out, God the Son, the Revealed Member of the Trinity. Isa. 48:16: **"Come near to Me, hear this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning. From its being, I was there; and now the Lord Jehovah, and His Spirit, has sent Me."** The Lord Jehovah refers to God the Father; His Spirit, of course, is the Holy Spirit. The One speaking is Jesus Christ, the revealed member of the Trinity. The singular verb here is sometimes used, even with a plural subject, when that subject is split up, as it is here. It is also possible that this should read **...the Lord Jehovah has sent Me and His Spirit**. The exact understanding can be cleared up at a later date; that we find the Trinity here is clear.
5. In Daniel 7:13, we have two members of the Trinity: **I was looking in the night visions. And behold! One like the Son of Man came with the clouds of the heavens. And He came to the Ancient of Days. And they brought Him near before Him.** God the Son comes to God the Father.
6. We find God the Father and God the Son in Hosea 1:4–7 as well: **Yahweh said to him, "Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel on the house of Jehu, and will cause the kingdom of the house of Israel to cease. It will happen in that day that I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel." She conceived again, and bore a daughter. Then he said to him, "Call her name Lo-Ruhamah; for I will no longer have mercy on the house of Israel, that I should in any way pardon them. But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and I will save them by Yahweh their God, and will not save them by bow, nor by sword, nor by battle, by horses, nor by horsemen."**

The Trinity is not as clearly taught in the Old Testament as in the New, but it is clearly there. The complete doctrine of the **Trinity in the Old Testament** is found **here**.

¹ I forget what the exact percentage is.

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Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Çîynai (יִצְיַי) [pronounced see-NAH-ee]	<i>thorny</i> ; transliterated <i>Sinai</i>	singular proper noun	Strong's #5514 BDB #696
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
qôdesh (קֹדֶשׁ) [pronounced koh-DESH]	<i>holiness, sacredness, apartness, that which is holy, holy things</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #6944 BDB #871

Possibly this means a sacred [holy, set apart] place.

Translation: ...[as He was with them at] Sinai, [as He was with them] in the holy place. I took some liberties with this portion of the verse as well. I would like to have said, *from Sinai to the holy place*, but the Hebrew really does not allow for that (although several translators went that route). I think that my interpretation is reasonable, that God will be upon Zion just as He was in Sinai and just as He has been found in the Holy of Holies. At the time that David writes this, God has not established a presence in Jerusalem. However, God was clearly with Israel at Sinai and He has been clearly with Israel in the Holy of Holies, within the Tabernacle of God. These are established places where God has been, places where man almost comes face to face with Him. In the previous verses, we speak of Zion, which will become God's mountain. Therefore, I have inserted the words *as He was with them at Sinai, and as He was with them in the Holy of Holies*.

AT first, I must admit to struggling with v. 17; however, I believe that we can come to some reasonable conclusions of this verse, and relate it to what has come before.

Psalm 68:17 Translated and Interpreted

Commentator	Translation	Discussion/Interpretation
Barnes	The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels; the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.	<i>The meaning of this verse is, that God is abundantly able to maintain his position on Mount Zion; to defend the place which He had selected as his abode. Though it has less natural strength than many other places have - though other hills and mountains, on account of their natural grandeur, may be represented as looking on this with contempt, as incapable of defense, yet He who has selected it is fully able to defend it. He is himself encompassed with armies and chariots of war; thousands of angels guard the place which he has chosen as the place of his abode.</i> ¹²³

¹²³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:17.

Psalm 68:17 Translated and Interpreted		
Commentator	Translation	Discussion/Interpretation
Kukis	The chariot of Elohim [leads] twenty thousand—in fact, a myriad of thousands— my Adonai [is] among them, [as He was with them in] Sinai, in the holy place.	Barnes ties this verse to the previous two verses, which may be the most sensible approach. God has chosen Zion from which to establish His Presence, and other mountains look at Zion with contempt and envy, as they see themselves as more defensible. However, God has a huge army—an army of an astonishing size—making Zion easy to defend. Furthermore, God is among all of these chariots, as He was at Sinai with Moses and the people, and as He is in His holy place.
NET Bible®	God has countless chariots; they number in the thousands. The Lord comes from Sinai in holy splendor.	Heb “thousands of [?].” The meaning of the word shin’an, which occurs only here in the OT, is uncertain. Perhaps the form should be emended to sha’anan (“at ease”) and be translated here “held in reserve.” The MT reads, “the Lord [is] among them, Sinai, in holiness,” which is syntactically difficult. The present translation assumes an emendation to ’adonay ba’ missinay (“The Lord comes from Sinai”).
NIV Study Bible	The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands; the Lord [has come] from Sinai into his sanctuary.	I believe the idea here is, God has gone from Sinai, when the Jews set out for the Land of Promise, and He is about to be with the Jews in His sanctuary, which will be at Zion. The NIV Study Bible comments: <i>[the chariots of God refer to] God’s great heavenly host, [which are] likened to a vast chariot force (2Kings 6:17) Habak. 3:8, 15). In the time of the Roman empire Jesus referred to God’s host in terms of “legions” (Matt. 26:53).</i> ¹²⁴
The Open Bible	Surrounded by unnumbered thousands of chariots, the LORD came from Mount Sinai into his sanctuary.	God has all the resources that He needs. The triumph begun in the Exodus is now complete (next verse). ¹²⁵

¹²⁴ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 847 (footnote; slightly edited).

¹²⁵ Edited from *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 762 (footnote).

In all interpretations, there must be some additional words added in order for this verse to make sense. However, we may operate from the knowledge that God was with His people in the Desert at Sinai, and the Jews attending this celebration, listing to David's psalm being sung, are aware of this as well. This is as fundamental to their understanding as the fact that Abraham is their father. Therefore, David does not need to insert any words before Sinai, as all these listening realize that God was there, on Mount Sinai, speaking to Moses.

Now, I do not reject a reading because I don't like it or because it does not fit in with my theology. I am in complete agreement with the idea that, God went from Sinai with the Jews to Mount Zion, a trip which David has, in a manner of speaking, given to us in the words of these psalm. Unfortunately, even though this understanding fits well with the surrounding text, a number of words must be added in order to make this the meaning and translation of this verse.

Furthermore, we have the phrase *His holy place* here, and we might argue with the meaning of that. However, many Jews would realize that God somehow makes His Presence known about His Ark (which they are seeing being carried) within the Holy of Holies, which is a very reasonable understanding of *His holy place*. Many of the Jews in attendance probably assume that David is going to establish the Tabernacle in Jerusalem. We will later find out that David is going to plan to build a Temple for God in Jerusalem.

Now, that last statement is amazing beyond almost anything we can imagine. God, Who created the universe, Who created things so large and far away and so small, that we cannot even see these things; and yet God is going to allow David to choose a place where God will establish His Presence. God will allow a mere man, Solomon, to build a Temple, wherein God will establish His Presence. This is the place on earth where God will dwell as the resurrected Jesus Christ, allowing man to choose His throne, if you will. God did not order David to do any of this; David does this of his own free will. David knows a great deal of doctrine at this time, and he will learn a great deal more; and from his knowledge of doctrine, David will make this choice, and for a thousand years, based upon David's choice, God will dwell bodily in Jerusalem, upon Mount Zion. That God would allow one of His creatures to make this kind of choice on His behalf is simply mind-boggling.

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Even though it was rather difficult to unravel these past few verses, I think that we have done so with a reasonable amount of understanding, and without doing too much violence to the original text. I think that it is reasonable to draw some conclusions based upon where we have been.

Concluding Points on Psalm 68:15–17

1. David has chosen Mount Zion as the place from which he would rule, and this will become the place of God's Presence on earth as well.
2. Poetically speaking, the mountains all around Mount Zion look at Zion with contempt and envy, wondering how a mountain lacking their height and their natural beauty could be chosen over them as God's place on earth.
3. One of the charges is, Zion is smaller than these other mountains, and therefore less defensible. David then speaks of the myriads upon myriads of angels in chariots who defend Zion, among whom is God.
4. God, in the past, has made His Presence known in Sinai and later in the Holy of Holies, wherever the Tabernacle happened to be.
5. This is apropos, as this psalm is being sung in front of myriads of Jews who are watching the procession of the Ark of God, which speaks of God's Presence.
6. The idea of moving the Ark is, David has selected Mount Zion as being the place for God's Presence, which will be from where God will preside over the earth even throughout the Millennium. This in itself is quite incredible, that God would allow a mere man to make such a choice. [Who is man, that You are mindful of him?](#)
7. Despite our fallen state, despite our many failures, despite our desire to do evil, God is with us and God sustains us and, in some strange inexplicable way, we are important to Him. That He sent His Son to die

Concluding Points on Psalm 68:15–17

for us is unimaginable. I have enemies in this life, and, if given the choice, if these enemies stood before me en masse, I'd have little problem saying, *to hell with you*. We are the enemies of God; we, by our very nature, stand in opposition to Him. And yet, graciously, **while we were yet sinners, Jesus Christ died for us**.

8. And here, God even allows David to make a choice from his own volition as to where God will dwell during the Millennium. Mount Zion will forever stand as a monument to God's grace and to His love for us, despite our wayward natures. I know what is inside of me; and that God forgives me and even blesses me is quite amazing. That God accepts me, that God has forgiven me, and that my free will actually counts for something, are incredible concepts and a testimony to God's incredible grace. And even though I don't know you, that the same relationship between you and God exists is also in incredible testimony to His grace.

Bear these points in mind as we move into the next verse, which appears to be tied to this verse.

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You have gone up to the height [or, to the Most High];

You have led captive a captive [or, captivity]; Psalm
You have taken gift in the man [or, mankind], 68:18
and also rebellious ones;
to tabernacle Yah Elohim.

You have gone up on high [or, to the Most High];

You have led captivity captive;
You have received gifts in the presence of
mankind.
And even [in the presence of] the rebellious;
Yah Elohim lives [there].

You have gone up to the Most High;
You have led captivity captive;
You have received gifts in the presence of mankind;
and Jehovah God lives there in the presence of the rebellious.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

You have gone up to the height [or, to the Most High];
 You have led captive a captive [or, captivity];
 You have taken gift in the man [or, mankind];
 and also rebellious ones to tabernacle Yah Elohim.

Septuagint

Having gone up on high, you have led captivity captive, you have received gifts in man, yea, for *they were* rebellious, the Lord the Blessed God dwells [there?].

Significant differences:

The first primary difference is, *gift* is in the plural in the Greek. However, the Greek attempts to match the second half of this verse, which is quite difficult to understand (Brenton's English rendering of the Greek makes good English sense, but does not match the Greek).¹²⁶

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

¹²⁶ Most of the time, I simply use Brenton's rendering and note the differences between what he tells us the Greek says and compare it to the Hebrew. If there is a striking difference, however, much of the time, I will look at the original Greek text to see if Brenton carefully followed the Greek text or if he took liberties with the text in order for the English to make sense (which is apparently what he did here).

CEV	When you climbed the high mountain, you took prisoners with you and were given gifts. Your enemies didn't want you to live there, but they gave you gifts.
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	You went to the high (mountain). You took with you the *prisoners that you had caught. You received gifts from men, the men that had fought against you. The *LORD God will always live here.
Good News Bible (TEV)	He goes up to the heights, taking many captives with him; he receives gifts from rebellious people. The LORD God will live there.
<i>The Message</i>	You climbed to the High Place, captives in tow, your arms full of booty from rebels, And now you sit there in state, GOD, sovereign GOD!
New Jerusalem Bible	You have climbed the heights, taken captives, you have taken men as tribute, even rebels that Yahweh God might have a dwelling-place.
New Living Testament	When you ascended to the heights, you led a crowd of captives. You received gifts from the people, even from those who rebelled against you. Now the LORD Go will live among us here.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	You have gone up on high, taking your prisoners with you; you have taken offerings from men; the Lord God has taken his place on the seat of his power.
<i>God's Word™</i>	You went to the highest place. You took prisoners captive. You received gifts from people, even from rebellious people, so that the LORD God may live there.
JPS (Tanakh)	You went up to the heights, having taken captives, having received tribute of men, even of those who rebel against the LORD God's abiding there.
NET Bible®	You ascend on high, you have taken many captives. You receive tribute from men, including even sinful rebels. Indeed the LORD God lives there!

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	You have ascended on high. You have led away captive a train of vanquished foes; Y have received gifts of men, yes, of the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell there with them. [Eph. 4:8.]
Bullinger (updated)	You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received [and given] gifts for men, (Even for the rebellious also), That Jehovah Elohim might live among them.
A Conservative Version	Thou have ascended on high. Thou have led captivity captive. Thou have received gifts among men, yea, [among] the rebellious also, that LORD God might dwell [with them].
Updated <i>Emphasized Bible</i>	You have ascended on high You have led in procession [or, <i>captured</i>] a body of captives. You have received gifts consisting of men, Yea, even the rebellious, That Yah Elohim might settle down to rest.

Hebrew Names Version	You have ascended on high. You have led away captives. You have received gifts among men, yes, among the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell there.
LTHB	You have gone up on high; You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men; yea, to dwell <i>among</i> the rebellious, O Jehovah God.
MKJV	You have gone up on high; You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts for men, yes, <i>for</i> the rebellious also, that <i>You</i> might dwell among them, O Jehovah God.
Updated Bible Version 2.11	You have ascended on high, you have led away captives; You have received gifts among man, Yes, [among] the rebellious also, that Yah God might stay [with them].
A Voice in the Wilderness	You have gone up on high; You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts for men, yes, even for the rebellious; that YAH God might dwell among them.
Young's Updated LT	You have ascended on high, You have taken captive captivity, You have taken gifts for men, That even the refractory may rest, O Jah God.

What is the gist of this verse? Recall that our Lord is with His myriad of angels (as per the previous verse). He ascends to what we may reasonably assume is heaven. He leads away captives. He receives gifts among men and it appears that Jehovah God lives among the rebellious (although this latter phrase is difficult to understand).

Psalm 68:18a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿālāh (עָלָה) [pronounced gaw-LAWH]	<i>to go up, to ascend, to come up, to rise, to climb</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #5927 BDB #748
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l) ¹	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to</i>	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
mârôm (מָרוֹם) [pronounced maw-ROHM]	<i>height, that which is high; the Most High; a lofty fortified place; high-mindedness, pride; collectively for leaders, princes</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4791 BDB #928

Translation: You have gone up on high [or, to the Most High];... We can wrest from this at least three fairly straightforward meanings: (1) David is moving the Ark to Mount Zion, which Ark represents Jesus Christ. So, moving the Ark to a high place in Zion represents Jesus Christ ruling from Mount Zion, which He will do in the Millennium. (2) Jesus Christ will go to a High Place—presumably the 3rd heaven—which will be where men will be judged. (3) Jesus Christ will rule from Mount Zion throughout the Millennium.

Spurgeon writes: *The ark was conducted to the summit of Zion; God himself took possession of the high places of the earth, being extolled and very high. The antitype of the ark, the Lord Jesus, has ascended into the heavens with signal marks of triumph. To do battle with our enemies, the Lord descended and left his throne; but now the fight is finished, he returns to his glory, high above all things is he now exalted.*¹²⁷

Barnes writes: *The idea is, that God had descended or come down from his dwelling-place in the case referred to in the psalm, and that having now secured a victory by vanquishing His foes, and having given deliverance to his people, He had now returned, or re-ascended to His seat, His abode in heaven.*¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 68:18.

¹²⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:18 (slightly edited).

Clarke¹²⁹ understands this as the elevation of a king or a military general after winning a war. This is probably a reasonable interpretation, and the two ways in which David meant for this line to be understood—as a new king is elevated over the subjects whom he has just defeated; and as Jesus Christ ascending to heaven.

Ascending into the heights possibly refers to the moment when the Ark of the Covenant reaches its destination in the procession.¹³⁰ This is completely in line with the way that I have divided up this psalm. This would complete the 2nd major division of this psalm, where the Ark is carried to the place that David prepared for it, paralleling what would occur in the future, when Jesus Christ ascends to the throne of the world in Mount Zion.

We find this verse quoted in Eph. 4:8: **Because of this, He says, "Having gone up on high, He led captivity captive," and gave "gifts to men."** In the New Testament, this is a simpler passage. Jesus Christ, because of the plan of God (see the previous verses in Eph. 4), ascends to heaven, and He will lead those in Abraham's bosom up into heaven as well. Also, as a result of God's plan, Jesus Christ gave gifts to men—in the context of Eph. 4—this refers to spiritual gifts being given to men as a result of His ascension. However, the meaning of the source for this verse—our passage here in Psalms—is something partially, if not entirely, different.

As in Ephesians, we appear to have Jehovah God ascending; however, in this passage, it is possible that this should read that **You have gone up** [or, *ascended*] **to the Most High**. To the Jewish mind, this may not have made a lot of sense, as how do you have God going up to God? Even though the Trinity is taught in the Old Testament, it is not as clearly presented as we find it in the New. So, we can go back to passages like this, Gen. 1:26 or Isa. 48:16, and the Trinity appears to be plainly presented; however, from the perspective of the Jew, they did not get this. So Jesus Christ did ascend to the Most High, God the Father; and He ascended to the *lofty, fortified place*—to the throne room of God, after He was raised from the dead.

On the other hand, we can point to the Greek quotation of this verse and say, He is going up on high; however, also bear in mind that Paul is using this passage in what appears to be another way. In any case, we have the Lord God ascending, and whether we interpret this as *up to the Most High* or *up on high*, in either case, it appears as though He ascends into the 3rd heaven. Don't forget that He leads all of these myriads of chariots of angels.

Interestingly enough, this phrase has been interpreted a number of different ways in the past; Gill writes: *You have ascended on high,.... Which is to be understood, not of Moses ascending up to the firmament, as the Targum and Jarchi interpret it, of which we nowhere read; nor of David's going up to the high fortresses, as Aben Ezra; nor of God's ascent from Mount Sinai; but of Christ's ascension to heaven, as the apostle cites and explains it in Eph. 4:8; which ascension respects him as man, was not figurative, as in Gen. 17:22; but real and local, from earth to heaven, and was certain and visible; he was seen to go up by angels and men; and, because of the certainty of it, it is here expressed in the past tense, though it was then future.*¹³¹

Psalm 68:18b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shâbâh (שָׁבַח) [pronounced shaw ^b -VAW]	to lead away captives, to take captive	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #7617 BDB #985
shêbîy (שְׁבִי) [pronounced sh ^{eb} -VEE]	captives, captivity	masculine singular noun; pausal form	Strong's #7628 BDB #985

¹²⁹ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:18.

¹³⁰ Paraphrased from *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 762 (footnote).

¹³¹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:18.

Translation: ...[You have led captivity captive](#);... These words are cognates and there are several approaches to the concept of this verse. My original thinking was, those who have been kept in Abraham's bosom were, in a manner of speaking, captives; and Jesus Christ would lead them out of Abraham's bosom when He resurrects them. We are, in a sense, captive to our bodies of sin, and when we are resurrected, we will be led out as previous captives.

The picture of leading away the captives is taken from war, and this would more likely refer to those defeated in war, but not yet killed. From a human standpoint, such a large group of prisoners taken in war would be relocated and placed into servitude. In our case, our Lord is leading away either human or angelic creation of those who have rebelled against Him.

Clarke writes: *The conquered kings and generals were usually tied behind the chariot of the conqueror - bound to it, bound together, and walked after it, to grace the triumph of the victor.*¹³²

Barnes comments: *"[You have made captivity captive](#)," or "[You have captured a captivity](#)." The main idea is, that He had achieved a complete victory; that He had led all His foes captive. The language "would" also express the idea that He had made captives for Himself of those who were captives to others, or who were in subjection to another. As applied in the Christian sense, this would refer to those who were captives to Satan, and who were held in bondage by him, but who had been rescued by the Redeemer, and brought under another captivity - the yielding of voluntary service to Himself. Those once captives to sin were now led by Him, captives in a higher sense.*¹³³

Gill's comments: *[You have led captivity captive](#); meaning either such who had been captives, in which sense the word is used in Psalm 126:1; and so may design either those who had been prisoners in the grave, but were set free at Christ's resurrection, and went with him in triumph to heaven; or all his people, whom he redeemed by his blood from that captivity and bondage they were in by nature; or rather those who led them captive are here meant by "captivity"; such as sin, Satan, the world, death, and every spiritual enemy, whom Christ conquered and triumphed over; the allusion may be to public triumphs, when captives were led in chains, even kings and great men, that had captivated others: the words seem to be borrowed out of Judges 5:12.*¹³⁴

More important is the time frame. David seems to have gone from establishing our Lord's reign from Zion to His leading away captives. David first established Jerusalem as the capital city of Judah, in part because it will be more or less centrally located with respect to all of Israel. However, in doing so, David is also determining the place on earth from where Jesus Christ will reign. At the end of this reign, Satan and his minions will be loosed from their prison and they will lead the Gog and Magog revolution against perfect environment and against perfect rule, and this rebellion will be stifled, and God will, as I read this verse, lead away His captives, which will be the angels and the people who rebelled against Him. So, David has covered the history of Israel down to the very end times, when Israel would be

Psalm 68:18c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lāqach (לָקַח) [pronounced law-KAHKH]	<i>to take, to take from, to take away, to take in marriage; to seize, to take possession of; to send after, to fetch, to bring; to receive</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #3947 BDB #542

¹³² Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:18.

¹³³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:18 (slightly edited).

¹³⁴ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:18 (slightly edited).

Psalm 68:18c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
The BDB gives the following meanings: <i>to take, take in the hand; to take and carry along; to take from, take out of, take, carry away, take away; to take to or for a person, procure, get, take possession of, select, choose, take in marriage, receive, accept; to take up or upon, put upon; to fetch; to take, lead, conduct; to take, capture, seize; to take, carry off; to take (vengeance).</i>			
mattânâh (מַתָּנָה) [pronounced <i>māht-taw-NAW</i>]	gift, present; bribe	feminine plural noun	Strong's #4979 BDB #682
b ^e (ב) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
ʾādām (אָדָם) [pronounced <i>aw-DAWM</i>]	a man, a human being, mankind, Adam	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #120 BDB #9

Translation: ...You have received gifts in the presence of mankind. When a warring king defeats another nation, he leads them away captive and men bring him gifts (tribute). These gifts will come from other nations hoping to bribe this king into not destroying them; these gifts can come from those remaining in the land which they have just defeated. So, what we have on the surface is a very typical military operation in the ancient world. There is a huge army, found in v. 17; they defeat the enemy and lead many of them away captive in v. 18a, and the king receive tribute from all of the nations around.

Wesley writes: *[These] expressions are borrowed from the ancient custom of princes, who, after some glorious achievements, used to go up into their royal cities in triumphant chariots, being attended by their captive enemies, and afterward to distribute gifts to their soldiers and subjects, and sometimes to do some acts of clemency even to their rebels and enemies.*¹³⁵

Now, David is obviously not wandering off in this psalm to describe a very successful battle, nor is he speaking of himself. This psalm has gone from the inception of Israel to the reigning in of sinful man at the end of time by God's great armies. Furthermore, note how there is this great arc from the first verse until this one: *Let God arise, let His enemies be scattered, and those who hate Him, flee before Him... The chariots of God are innumerable and the Lord is among them, as He was at Sinai and in the Holy of Holies. You have ascended on high and You have led Your captives into captivity, and You have received tribute before all mankind. And the Lord God will dwell there, even among rebellious man* (Psalm 68:1, 17–18). In between all of this has been the history of Israel, taken down to the war of the Great Tribulation, which also involves Israel. We may quibble about the meaning of this or that phrase within this psalm, as it has been a difficult struggle to interpret it; however, the overall scope of the psalm and the historical narrative are reasonably clear; furthermore, when he apply this historical lattice to the psalm, it also helps us out with many of the particulars.

In the New Testament, this portion of v. 18 reads, *And He gave gifts to men*. In the New Testament, this is a reference to spiritual gifts being distributed to Church Age believers. However, in the Hebrew Old Testament, Jesus Christ is receiving (or, taking) *gifts with* (or, *before, in the presence of, by means of, among, within*) *mankind*.

My interpretation of Psalm 68:18, is going to be different from Eph. 4:8. In v. 18, these gifts are believers, who are gifts from God the Father to God the Son. Whether this is the intention of David in writing this or not, I don't

¹³⁵ John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Psalm 68:18.

know. Perhaps David has in mind gifts of appreciation from man to Jesus Christ; or perhaps he is thinking of animal sacrifices. Let's apply the historical lattice here to v. 18: when a king defeats a nation, he receives tribute from the nations which he defeated, and sometimes from nations which are simply afraid of him. This is probably what David had in mind. A great dynasty is established on Zion, and men bring tribute to the King of Kings.

At the end of the Tribulation, there is going to be a great war which takes place in Israel, where huge alliances of countries will converge, and God will destroy these armies, taking away captive His captives. In this scenario, the tribute He receives would be reasonably interpreted as believers from all dispensations, who are gifts to God (which could be what the Holy Spirit had in mind here, but not what David had in mind).

On the other hand, what David means by this is not what Paul meant when he quoted this verse. David is writing this great historical narrative, taking Israel's history into the end times; Paul is writing about spiritual gifts. Paul is *not* going back to this psalm and saying, "And this is proof that God has given these spiritual gifts to us in the Church Age." The gist of Paul's message and David's psalm are completely and fundamentally different.

This brings me to a topic which I approach with no little trepidation:

How is Old Testament Scripture Used in the New Testament?

1. What appears to be the primary use of Old Testament Scripture in the New Testament is as a fulfillment of prophecy. That is, something will occur in the New Testament history, and the writer will note that this is a fulfillment of something written hundreds of years ago. Primarily, we find this in the gospels and in reference to our Lord.
2. A New Testament writer may take an Old Testament passage and quote it in order to shed light on its meaning. What Jesus Christ taught is often completely misunderstood. The Law of Moses had been distorted by the religious hierarchy of His time. He explained, with great patience, how the Law was to be understood. One of the end results of a thorough understanding of the Law was, we do not meet God's standards. The pharisees believed that there were set of laws which we could follow and thereby gain the approbation of God. They themselves made a great effort to follow these laws and to make certain that others observed them following these laws—very much like some devout Muslims today (the pharisees of Jesus' time had much more in common with religious Muslims than they do with believers in Jesus Christ, whom they persecuted). Back to the original point: Jesus often would take an Old Testament passage which had been misapplied or subject to a fury of legalism, and He would break it on down so the people could understand. Jesus Christ summed up the Ten Commandments with "You will love God with all your heart and soul and you will love your fellow man as you love yourself." The first mandate which Jesus gave covered the first four commandments and the second mandate of our Lord sum up the last six commandments. In other words, Jesus was not teaching anything which was subversive nor did He undercut the Law of Moses in any way. He simply taught it correctly. So, an Old Testament passage would be quoted and/or summarized and explained correctly, often by Jesus Christ Himself.
3. A New Testament may quote an Old Testament passage to put it into an historical perspective from the standpoint of future events in relation to God's dispensational view of history.
4. Many prophetic statements in the Old Testament can be taken in several different ways. A New Testament writer might take such a passage and interpret it in a specific manner in order to show one particular fulfillment of that passage (which does not negate other interpretations).
5. Here, we find an unusual usage of the Old Testament where Paul takes a passage and twists it to say what he wants it to say. He is not interpreting the passage in the psalms; he is not even saying that, *here is a new way of looking at this passage*. Paul is giving new life to this passage, and giving a meaning to it which it did not originally possess. We may not like this sort of an interpretation, but I don't believe that you can reasonably understand either passage, the context of either passage, and then try to say Paul was giving the correct or another interpretation of this passage.

I am loath to make a blanket statement, but I don't believe that any part of the Church Age is specifically prophesied in the Old Testament. I believe that the Church Age was meant to be hidden from those in the Old Testament. From Abraham through our Lord's crucifixion and resurrection, we are in the Age of Israel. It is not until Pentecost when we have the beginning of the Church Age. So, for passages taken from the Old Testament and applied to a doctrine or to an event of the Church Age, these are passages not originally written for the Church Age specifically. Therefore, such passages have one meaning in the Old Testament and a different meaning in the New. This is what we are dealing with here, at least in part.

Perhaps, and I am thinking out loud here, the idea is, God has a clear, non-Church Age meaning for every Old Testament Scripture; however, it is possible that God has allowed for a handful of these Scriptures to have a meaning for the Church Age. In this way, the Church Age remains hidden from prying eyes, yet God allows some Church Age doctrine to be pulled out of the Old Testament.

Quite frankly, although I lean toward my original impression, I must admit to not being convinced either way about Old Testament for Church Age believers. There are obvious lessons that we are able to learn from the Old Testament (otherwise, I would be wasting my life exegeting these Old Testament passages), but is there any mystery doctrine to be gleaned from the Old Testament? I believe that, with little difficulty, we can produce Pauline passages which speak to the Church Age as being hidden from those in the Old Testament, and, hidden from the Angelic Conflict as well. However, does that imply that there is absolutely no exclusively Church Age doctrine to be found in the Old Testament or is the doctrine there, but we need to unearth it?

Neither of these positions quite solves our dilemma with Paul. He changes the text of this verse, and interprets the new changed text so that it means what he wants it to mean. He is allowed to do that by means of God the Holy Spirit, and we certainly are not; but then, how often does he do this? How often do other Church Age writers of Scripture do this.

Let me draw an analogy here, which may be instructive, although it may not completely explain everything. Moses, when writing Exodus through Numbers, was exceedingly careful about what occurs, what he says, and, particularly, what God says. Moses understood the importance of God's Word and was not about to treat it lightly or place it on the same level as his own words. Then we have the 38½ years in the desert, during which Moses pens a psalm which he does not place into the Pentateuch, as he just cannot place his words side-by-side God's words (even though his psalm was divinely inspired). But then, with the book of Deuteronomy, things change dramatically. Moses speaks to his people authoritatively, from the doctrine in his soul, revealing even, from time to time, information and laws not found in the previous 3 books. He speaks empowered by God the Holy Spirit, but no longer does Moses feel a need to draw a line between what he is teaching (which ends up being the text for the book of Deuteronomy) and God's Word.

Paul, when he takes this passage out of psalms and changes it in order to get his point across, he does so with confidence and impunity, just as Moses did when speaking to his people before they crossed over into the Land of Promise.

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Psalm 68:18d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction#64	No Strong's # BDB #251
`aph (אֵפ) [pronounced <i>ahf</i>]	<i>in fact, furthermore, also, yea, even, indeed; even though</i>	a conjunction which signifies <i>addition</i> or <i>emphasis</i>	Strong's #637 BDB #64

Psalm 68:18d

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
This word appears to have two different purposes: (1) A surprise is then mentioned or the unexpected is said. (2) A reference is made to a preceding sentence and it is expanded or emphasized and we would translate this word <i>yea</i> , <i>à fortiori</i> , <i>the more so</i> , <i>how much more</i> (following an affirmative clause), <i>how much less</i> (following a negative clause), <i>furthermore</i> , <i>in fact</i> .			
çârar (צָרָר) [pronounced saw-RAHR]	stubborn, rebellious, willful, headstrong [and uncontrollable]	masculine plural, Qal active participle	Strong's #5637 BDB #710

Translation: *And even [in the presence of] the rebellious;...* I would interpret this as being a part of the previous part of the verse, rather than with that which follows. So, Jesus Christ, *Jehovah God, receives gifts in the presence of man and in the presence of those who are rebellious*. The gifts are believers, and they are gifts to Jesus Christ in the presence of men and in the presence of those who are rebellious. Whether the rebellious refer to unbelievers or to fallen angels, is worth at least one comment: the addition of the words *and even* seems to indicate that *mankind* is equivalent to *rebellious, willful types*. This does make perfect sense, as we are in rebellion against Him. and even so after we are saved. So, in our natural state, as believers or unbelievers, we are in rebellion against Him.

Gill writes of *rebellious*: *yea, for the rebellious also; disobedient and unbelieving, as all men are by nature, even God's elect, before conversion (see Titus 3:3); who are not only called by grace, and have the blessings of grace bestowed upon them; but some of them have gifts given them, whereby they are fitted to preach the Gospel to others, as Saul, the blasphemer, persecutor, and injurious; and some of those among the Jews, that were concerned in the crucifixion of Christ: though some think the Gentiles are intended, on whom the Holy Spirit was poured forth after our Lord's ascension; and so the Targum interprets it of the rebellious, who become proselytes, and return by repentance.*¹³⁶

Psalm 68:18e

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^l)	to, for, towards, in regards to	preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
shâkan (שָׁכַן) [pronounced shaw-KAHN]	to tabernacle, to pitch a tent; to dwell, to reside, to live in, to domicile at, to settle, to settle down, to encamp	Qal infinitive construct	Strong's #7931 BDB #1014
Yâh (יְהוָה) [pronounced yaw]	an abbreviated form of YHWH, the proper name for God in the Old Testament	proper masculine noun	Strong's #3050 BDB #219
ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohîm	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43

¹³⁶ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:18.

Translation: ...Yah Elohim lives [there]. This is not quoted in the Ephesians passage (the previous portion of this verse was not either) and it is a bit confusing (like much of this psalm!). I would interpret this as indicating the Jehovah God [God the Father] lives in the High Place, where Jehovah God [God the Son] goes to. However, bear in mind, that back in v. 16, we have God dwelling in Mount Zion, which causes some consternation among other mountains in that area. So, perhaps the idea is, *after* leading captivity captive, God dwells in Zion.

Bullinger understands this to mean that Jehovah God lives among or with the rebels who have been taken captive.¹³⁷ He later softens this somewhat, saying that our Lord reaches out and stoops down *to the most unworthy recipients of such divine gifts*.¹³⁸ In other words, our Lord lives among the rebellious, which is us—believers and unbelievers—whose nature is against God, whose nature is in rebellion against God.

Barnes writes: *[This verse is] literally, “For the dwelling of Jah, God.” The idea is, that He had achieved such a triumph; He had so brought the rebellious under subjection to Himself, that He could take up his abode with them, or dwell with them as his people. His rule could be extended over them, and they would acknowledge Him as their sovereign. This would be applicable to a people in ancient times that had been subdued by the people of God. It might now be properly applied, also, to sinners who by the power of truth have been so subdued as to submit to God. It is applicable to all who have been conquered by the Gospel - whose enmity has been slain - who have been changed from enemies to friends - so that the Lord may dwell in their hearts, or rule over them.*¹³⁹

Clarke writes: *That the Lord God might dwell among them: The conqueror now coming to fix his abode among the conquered people to organize them under his laws, to govern and dispense justice among them.*¹⁴⁰ This does make perfect sense, and perhaps this is the sense in which this verse should be taken; however, bear in mind that the last two words are not found in the Hebrew.

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There are two possible ways of understanding one of the phrases here:

The Two Translations of Psalm 68:18

First Translation	Second Translation
You have gone up on high [or, <i>to the Most High</i>]; You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts in the presence of mankind—even [in the presence of] the rebellious. Yah Elohim lives [there].	You have gone up on high [or, <i>to the Most High</i>]; You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts in the presence of mankind. And even [in the presence of] the rebellious; Yah Elohim lives [there].
In this situation, God lives on high, where our Lord goes to. The first and last line of this verse belong together, and what falls between is incidental to these two thoughts.	Although Jesus Christ go up on high, where God lives is in the presence of the rebellious.
Jesus Christ receives gifts in the presence of mankind and in the presence of the rebellious (which could refer to the fallen angels as well as to those who have rejected Jesus Christ as Savior).	Here, the emphasis is that God lives among the rebellious and that He receives gifts in the presence of mankind (these gifts being those who have believed in Him).

¹³⁷ *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 74.

¹³⁸ *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 473.

¹³⁹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:18 (slightly edited).

¹⁴⁰ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:18.

Poetry is often written in such a way as to convey more than one meaning, and I believe that is the case here. Whether this is David's intention or God the Holy Spirit at work, I could not say. However, it is both true that Jesus Christ ascends to the Most High, Who lives in the 3rd heaven; and it is also true that God would live among men—even among the rebellious.

Now, to be fair, the Hebrew word rendered *even* is often used to tie two clauses closely together, which approach favors the first translation rather than the second. Interestingly enough, even though Barnes appears to acknowledge this in his commentary, he interprets this as if he were interpreting the 2nd translation.

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In any case, that God lives among us (or will live among us) is a theme found throughout Scripture.

God Lives Among Us

1. The Ark of God was indicative that God dwelt with Israel. We have to be careful at this point. Many heathen religions had statues of Gods which they worshiped, which lived in their temples. The Ark of God was different. It was not worshiped and it was not even seen. As has been discussed, the Ark of God spoke of Jesus Christ.
 - a. That the Ark was kept in the Holy of Holies and was not seen is very significant.
 - b. People knew about the Ark of the Covenant through Bible doctrine in their souls, not because they had seen the Ark. Relatively speaking, only a small percentage of Israelites had seen the Ark. The Exodus generation had seen it, as it was carried with them when they moved from place to place. The army who seized it during the time of Samuel saw it—and most of them died in battle. A number of people when the Ark was returned to the land saw the Ark, and many of them died. But, for the most part, the average Israelite had never seen the Ark.
 - c. We know God through His Word; not because we have seen Him.
 - d. We know that God is among us, even though we have not seen Him.
 - e. This is key to understanding the Ark.
 - f. No heathen religion had a religious icon like the Ark. It was never to be seen; heathen idols were seen in their temples. The Ark was not to be worshiped; heathen worshiped their idols made of wood and stone. The Ark represented Jesus Christ and the Ark spoke of God on earth, but the Ark in and of itself was not God.
2. In an manner of speaking, when Israel became too idolatrous for the nth time, God sent them into captivity, which is represented in part by God leaving His Tabernacle: *For they enraged Him with their high places; and they provoked Him to jealousy with their molten images. When God heard, and He passed over, and He utterly rejected Israel. And He left the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent He dwelt in among men; and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hands* (Psalm 78:38–61).
3. Solomon, when he dedicated the Temple, said, *"And now, O Jehovah the God of Israel, keep with Your servant David, my father, that which You spoke to him, saying, There shall not be cut off to you a man from before Me, sitting on the throne of Israel. Only, if your sons watch their way to walk in My Law, as you have walked before Me. And now, O Jehovah the God of Israel, let Your Word be verified, which you spoke to Your servant David. For is it true that God shall dwell with men on the earth? Behold, the heavens, and the Heaven of heavens, do not contain You. How much less this house that I have built!"* (2Chron. 6:16–18). Solomon understood that was omnipresent, yet, in some way, God would occupy the Temple which Solomon had built. Solomon may not have even understood, but the end result would be that God would dwell among us on earth in bodily form.
4. Jesus Christ was God come in the flesh, to live among us. *And what agreement does a temple of God have with idols? For you are a temple of the living God, even as God said, "I will" dwell in them and "walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be My people."* (2Chron. 6:16 Lev. 26:12 Ezek. 37:27). *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and without Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being. And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us. And we beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from the Father, full of grace and of truth* (John 1:1–3, 14).

God Lives Among Us	
5.	Today, Jesus Christ lives in us. Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word, and My Father shall love him. And We will come to him and will make a dwelling place with him." (John 14:23). For so says the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, and His name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, even with the contrite and humble of spirit; to make live the spirit of the humble and to make live the heart of the contrite ones (Isa. 57:15).
6.	In the future, our Lord will live on this earth again, in bodily form, ruling from Zion. And I heard a great voice out of Heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God with men! And He will tabernacle with them, and they will be His people, and God Himself will be with them as their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. And death shall be no longer, nor mourning, nor outcry, nor will there be pain any more; for the first things passed away (Rev. 21:3–4). If your sons will keep My covenant and My testimonies which I will teach them, their sons shall also sit on the throne for You forever. Jehovah has chosen Zion; He has desired it for His dwelling-place. This is My rest till forever; I will dwell here; I have desired it (Psalm 132:12–14). All around the new Temple shall be eighteen thousand cubits. And the name of the city from that day shall be JEHOVAH IS THERE (Ezek. 48:35). This sort of hope and approach distinguished the faith of Israel from all heathen religions.
7.	

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It may be helpful to see the Old and New Testament passages side by side, along with their interpretations:

The New Testament Parallel	
Psalm 68:18	Ephesians 4:8–12
You have gone up on high [or, to the Most High]; You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts in the presence of mankind. And even [in the presence of] the rebellious; Yah Elohim lives [there].	That is why it is said--'When He went up on high, He led His captives into captivity. And He gave gifts to mankind.' Now surely this 'going up' must imply that he had already gone down into the world beneath. He who went down is the same as He who went up--up beyond the highest Heaven, that He might fill all things with His presence. And He it is who gave to the Church Apostles, Prophets, Missionaries, Pastors, and Teachers, to fit his People for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the Body of the Christ.
You have gone up on high [or, to the Most High]; You have led captivity captive;... We have the ascension of Jesus Christ, which appears to include His taking all of those in Sheol with Him to be judged.	That is why it is said--'When He went up on high, He led His captives into captivity.' Now surely this 'going up' must imply that he had already gone down into the world beneath. He who went down is the same as He who went up--up beyond the highest Heaven, that He might fill all things with his presence. Paul cites this as proof that God came to this earth in the form of a man. Paul does not quote that latter half of this verse, although that could have been cited to make the same point.

The New Testament Parallel

Psalm 68:18	Ephesians 4:8–12
<p>Notice that the Hebrew employs the 2nd person masculine singular here. We also have two sentences which are not grammatically related, although being that they are located together implies a relationship between the sentences.</p>	<p>Paul uses the 3rd person masculine singular here. Note that Paul also renders this as a conditional sentence (or sorts) using the adverb <i>when</i>. Perhaps Paul's intention here is to immediately indicate that there was going to be a difference between the Old Testament text and his use of it. However, even with these minor differences, Paul reasons from this first portion of the verse that, if Jesus goes up on high, then He had to have first been here on earth. In that way, Paul is drawing a logical inference from the Old Testament meaning of the text. Therefore, despite the change of the text, Paul is still logically applying the original meaning of the text.</p>
<p>You have received gifts in the presence of mankind. In the presence of man, Jesus Christ receives gifts, which I have interpreted as the believers whom God has given Jesus Christ.</p>	<p>And gave gifts to mankind.' And He it is who gave to the Church Apostles, Prophets, Missionaries, Pastors, and Teachers, to fit his People for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the Body of the Christ. Paul is not quoting the Greek text here; he has made a few minor changes to the Greek text. He is pointing out that Jesus Christ has given the spiritual gifts that we believers now possess. Paul's New Testament point here is, once Jesus has ascended into heaven, He sent to us God the Holy Spirit (providing the unity of the church) and God the Holy Spirit distributed gifts to men, for the building up of the ministry.</p>
<p>David is probably referring to believers who are the gifts of God to Jesus Christ. It would not be logical for David to be talking about spiritual gifts, as there is no indication that Old Testament prophets gave direct prophecies about the Church Age.</p>	<p>Paul changes the text and gives this another interpretation: that God the Holy Spirit distributes gifts to believers at salvation. This application or interpretation has caused no end difficulty for scholars over the years. From our examination of Psalm 68, as obscure as it might be at times, it is clear that the distribution of spiritual gifts in the Church Age is <i>not</i> the focus of this passage in context. It is Paul's focus, but not David's.</p>
<p>And even [in the presence of] the rebellious; Yah Elohim lives [there]. God lives among the rebellious; He lives among mankind. This has a two-fold meaning: God is omnipresent and among mankind all of the time. God takes on the body of a man and lives among us, and is subject to all that we are subject to.</p>	<p>This passage in the New Testament is about unity and about spiritual gifts; and what remains in Psalm 68:18 is not a part of Paul's topic.</p>
<p>I must admit that it was not easy for me to accept that Paul changes the Old Testament text in order to make a point. However, Paul wrote empowered by the Holy Spirit. He wrote Ephesians from prison, and it is possible that he is quoting Scripture from memory. No matter what the case, the Holy Spirit allowed Paul to take some liberties with this verse and give it an application which it did not have in the first place.</p>	
<p>Bear in mind, as you compare these passages side-by-side, that Paul is not stating anything which is false; nor is he giving a proper interpretation to Psalm 68:18 (or, at least, not to all of it), nor is he claiming to give a proper interpretation to it.</p>	
<p>Just so there is no confusion, you and I are not allowed to take some passage and twist it to make a point, unless that point is accurate and doctrinal to begin with.</p>	

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With this history of Israel behind us, including Israel's future with God, we move to the second half of this psalm. wherein the psalmist give us good reason why Jesus Christ is the Lord of Glory, and why God is worthy of our worship and dedication.

Because there is a musical pause immediately following this verse, it is possible that this verse gives praise to God for what has been previously covered, and that this is a transitional verse, from the first half of this psalm to the second half.

The God of Our Salvation [transitional verses]

**Blessed is Adonai,
a day a day,
carries for us the God our deliverance.
Selah!**

Psalm
68:19

**Blessed is Adonai,
day [after] day, God bears our deliverance [or,
salvation] for us.
[Musical] Pause [or, musical interlude; lit.,
Selah!]**

**Blessed is the Lord—
day after Day, God bears the burden of our deliverance [or, salvation] for us.
Musical interlude.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	Blessed be the Lord day by day: the God of our salvation will make our journey prosperous to us.
Masoretic Text	Blessed is Adonai, a day a day, carries for us the God our deliverance. Selah!
Peshitta	Blessed be the LORD, for He has chosen us and His heritage, even the God of our salvation.
Septuagint	Blessed be the Lord, day along day; and the God of our salvation shall prosper us. Pause.

Significant differences: The verb of the second phrase seems to be in question, although both the Latin and Greek relate it to being prosperous. The Syriac seems to go off in some other direction entirely having little in common with the Hebrew apart from the first phrase and the words *God of our salvation*.¹⁴¹

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	We praise you, Lord God! You treat us with kindness day after day, and you rescue us.
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	Say good things about the Lord! Every day he gives us help with what we have to carry.

¹⁴¹ Bear in mind that I work from the English translation of the Syriac and not from the Syriac directly. In this particular case, the English rendering from the Greek by Brenton differed considerably from the actual Greek. Brenton rendered this verse: **Blessed be the Lord God, blessed be the Lord daily; and the God of our salvation shall prosper us. Pause.** The Greek is much different than Brenton's rendering.

Good News Bible (TEV)	He is the God that saves us! SELAH Praise the Lord, who carries our burdens day after day; he is the God who saves us.
<i>The Message</i>	Blessed be the Lord-- day after day he carries us along.
New Living Testament	Praise the Lord, praise God our savior! For each day he carries us in his arms.

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

Bible in Basic English	Praise be to the Lord, who is our support day by day, even the God of our salvation. <i>Selah</i> .
Complete Apostles' Bible	Blessed be the Lord God, blessed be the Lord daily; and the God of our salvation shall prosper us. Pause.
<i>God's Word</i> ™	Thanks be to the Lord, who daily carries our burdens for us. God is our salvation. <i>Selah</i>
HCSB	May the Lord be praised! Day after day He bears our burdens; God is our salvation. <i>Selah</i>
JPS (Tanakh)	Blessed is the LORD. Day by day He supports us, God our deliverance.
NET Bible®	The Lord deserves praise! Day after day he carries our burden, the God who delivers us. (<i>Selah</i>)

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Blessed be the Lord, Who bears our burdens <i>and</i> carries us day by day, even the God Who is our salvation! <i>Selah</i> [pause, and calmly think of that]!
Adam Clarke	Blessed be the Lord day by day, who bears our burdens for us.
A Conservative Version	Blessed be LORD, who bears our burden daily, even the God who is our salvation. <i>Selah</i> .
<i>Updated Emphasized Bible</i>	Blessed be My Lord! Day by day He bears our burden for us, GOD Himself is our salvation [some codices (1 early printed edition, the Septuagint, the Vulgate) have this word in the plural, which may then be translated <i>deliverances</i> , <i>victories</i> or simply be emphatic].
English Standard Version	Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; God is our salvation. <i>Selah</i>
LTHB	Blessed be the Lord: day by day He carries a load for us, the God of our salvation. <i>Selah</i> .
NRSV	Blessed be the Lord, who daily bears us up; God is our salvation. <i>Selah</i>
A Voice in the Wilderness	Blessed is the Lord who day by day bears our burdens, the Mighty God of our salvation! <i>Selah</i> .
Young's Updated LT	Blessed is the Lord, day by day He lays on us. God Himself is our salvation. <i>Selah</i> .

I pass through a psalm twice, and then go back and fill in with some additional material. I am at the second pass through now and have noticed something which seems to stand out—vv. 19–35 appear as if they could be a different psalm. In vv. 7–18, we essentially have a history of Israel, from Egypt to the end times. One would wonder, once you reach the end times, what can you add to that? Therefore, on the one hand, this appears to be a good place to end Psalm 68A and begin Psalm 68B. However, the first few verses of this psalm seem to set the tone: God scatters His enemies, a theme which is found in vv. 21–23, culminating in a victorious procession in vv. 24–25. Furthermore, we are called to sing to God back in v. 3; this takes place in v. 25, and we are called

upon to sing to God again in v. 32 (actually, all the kingdoms of the earth). So, one might argue that we are proceeding from God's specific relationship with Israel to His universal relationship with all mankind.

What I have done throughout this psalm is, thought out loud. Instead of getting it all organized and figured out and mapped out, I have shared with you how difficult it has been to organize and then fully appreciate the meaning of this psalm.

In that spirit, something else has popped out at me—perhaps I should have divided up the psalm by the calls to sing to God (vv. 3, 32) and by the calls to bless Him (vv. 19, 26). What I am saying is, even after this second pass through, I am still not entirely satisfied with my organization of these verses. As we have seen in other Davidic psalms is, David often has a very precise organization to his psalms, an organization which varies from psalm to psalm.

What is the gist of this verse? The psalmist calls upon us to bless the Lord, Who daily bears our burdens and Who is our salvation.

Psalm 68:19a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bârak ^e (בָּרַךְ) [pronounced <i>baw-RAHK^e</i>]	<i>blessed, blessed be [is], blessings to; happiness to [for], happiness [is]</i>	Qal passive participle	Strong's #1288 BDB #138
ʾădônâi (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced <i>uh-doh-NAY</i>]	<i>Lord, Master, my Lord, Sovereign; can refer to the Trinity or to an intensification of the noun; transliterated Adonai</i>	masculine plural noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #113 & #136 BDB #10

This is a form of Strong's #113, where there are three explanations given for the yodh ending: (1) this is a shortened form of the plural ending, usually written -îym (יִם) [pronounced *eem*], an older form of the *pluralis excellentiae* (the plural of excellence), where God's sovereignty and lordship are emphasized by the use of the plural; (2) this is the actual, but ancient, plural of the noun, which refers to the Trinity; or (3) this is the addition of the 1st person singular suffix, hence, *my Lord* (the long vowel point at the end would distinguish this from *my lords*).

There are points of grammar which speak to the options above, but not so that we may unequivocally choose between the three. (1) When we find ʾădônay (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced *uh-doh-NAH*] (note the difference of the vowel ending), it always means *my lords*. (2) Jehovah calls Himself ʾădônâi (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced *uh-doh-NAY*] in Job 28:28 Isa. 8:7; however, many of the Job manuscripts read *Y^ehowah* and 8 ancient Isaiah manuscripts read *Y^ehowah* instead. This suggests, that either ancient Scribes were confused about this form of *Adonai* or that they simply substituted *Adonai* for *Y^ehowah*, which was not an abnormal practice (in oral readings, the ancient Tetragrammaton was not spoken, but *Lord* was said instead). And even if every manuscript read *Adonai*, then we may also reasonably conclude that one member of the Trinity is addressing another member of the Trinity (although the idea of God saying *my Lord* would be theologically confusing, even if addressing another member of the Trinity; although Jesus did refer to God the Father as *our Father*).

Almost every single translator renders this *Lord, the Lord, or Adonai*. I am not aware of any, off the top of my head, who typically render this *my Lord*.

Translation: Blessed is Adonai,... A thorough discussion of *Adonai* (which some might render *my Lord*) is found above in the Hebrew exegesis. I must admit problems with the idea of my conferring *blessings* upon God (or, any other believer making that statement). How do we, as puny man, *bless God* or call for God *to be blessed* or *happy*? I think that the idea here is, the psalmist is recognizing God's perfect happiness. We cannot do or say

anything which would affect God's happiness. In the context of this verse, it appears that God is happy to provide for us salvation, which, given the immense pain and suffering which our Lord took upon Himself on our behalf, His happiness is almost an unfathomable concept.

Now tie this to what has gone before—God has been involved with Israel from the very beginning. God, despite what Israel has done, is happy; God, despite all of Israel's failures, is happy. God, execute His plan perfectly, His plan is perfect, and his plan is perfectly aligned with His justice, righteousness and love.

Psalm 68:19b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yôwm (יוֹם) [pronounced yohm]	<i>day, today</i> (with a definite article)	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
yôwm (יוֹם) [pronounced yohm]	<i>day, today</i> (with a definite article)	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3117 BDB #398
âmaç (אָמַץ) [pronounced gaw-MAHS]	<i>to carry a burden, to carry a load, to take up, to lift up</i> ; it is especially used for a load which is lifted up onto a horse or mule	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #6006 BDB #770
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l) ^e	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 1 st person plural suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

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

êl (אֱל) [pronounced ALE]	<i>God, God, mighty one, strong, hero</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #410 BDB #42
yeshûw'âh (יְשׁוּעָה) [pronounced yeshoo-GAW]	<i>deliverance, salvation</i>	feminine singular noun with the 1 st person plural suffix	Strong's #3444 BDB #447

Translation: ...day [after] day, God bears our deliverance [or, salvation] for us. Here is an area where I must confess some confusion. We are in time, and God has invented time. Time is a factor in all that we do. However, since God is outside of time, how is that related to the crucifixion? That is, even though Jesus Christ, as man, came into history at a specific point and died for our sins at a specific point, is there any sense in which this is outside of time? To answer my own question, the humanity of Jesus Christ is subject to time; and therefore, when

He bore our sins in His humanity, that was also confined to time, despite the fact that His Deity is eternal and outside of time.

God took upon the burden of our salvation when He died for our sins. I believe that the idea that *day after day* He bears our salvation actually references our day to day failures rather than our Lord bearing, in some eternal sense, our sins. God maintains our salvation every day, despite our failures and sins.

What David no doubt meant by these words is, God was daily involved with Israel's deliverance. He gave Israel's history for the first 18 verses, which illustrates God's continual, day by day involvement in Israel's affairs.

Barnes, among others, missed the twofold significance of this verse. He writes: *the idea here is, "Blessed be the Lord God even if he lays a burden on us, and if he does this daily, for he is the God of our salvation." He enables us to bear it; he gives us strength; and finally he delivers us from it. "Though," therefore, he constantly lays on us a burden, he as constantly aids us to bear it. He does not leave us. He enables us to triumph in him, and through him; and we have occasion constantly to honor and to praise his name. This accords with the experience of all his people, that however heavy may be the burden laid on them, and however constant their trials, they find him as constant a helper, and they daily have occasion to praise and bless him.*¹⁴² The primary problem is that Barnes' has the Lord putting a load or a burden *on* us, but that is not the preposition which David uses; whatever God is doing is *for* us or *to* us. Another problem with many translations is, they insert the relative pronoun *who* where the pronoun is not found.

Psalm 68:19c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
çelâh (חֲלֹה) [pronounced seh-LAW]	<i>to lift up, to elevate, to exalt [with one's voice], to gather, to cast up [into a heap]; it is transliterated Selah</i>	interjection	Strong's #5542 BDB #699

The verbal cognate is ḥâlâh (חָלָה) [pronounced saw-LAW], which means *to lift up and toss aside*. In the Piel stem, it means *to weigh*, which involves lifting up the object and placing it upon the balance. Gesenius gives the meaning of çelâh as *rest, silence, pause*, as çelâh does not necessarily have to match the meaning of its cognates. My thinking, which is a combination of BDB and Gesenius, is that the voices build up to a crescendo here, and, very likely, they are then followed by a vocal (but not necessarily, musical) silence. This would reconcile the points made by Gesenius and still make this compatible with its cognates.¹⁴³ Another very reasonable possibility is that the instruments *are lifted up* for a musical interlude. The NLT translation of *Interlude* is very good.

Translation: [Musical] Pause [or, musical interlude; lit., *Selah!*] As described in the exegesis, this word çelâh comes from a verb which means *to lift up*. It is reasonable to assume that those who are playing musical instruments are to lift up these instruments and play during a pause in the singing. I believe that this is called the *bridge* in modern music? Keil and Delitzsch suggest: *The music, as Sela directs, here becomes more boisterous; it gives intensity to the strong cry for the judgment of God; and the first unfolding of thought of this Michtam is here brought to a close.*¹⁴⁴ Let me suggest that this also is a time where David takes a break from writing, and concentrates on his run. Obviously, he is formulating this as he runs; he does not stop to scratch out a few verses on a rock or a tree; but this represents a break in his thinking, and the music intensifies as he simply runs.

¹⁴² Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:19.

¹⁴³ For more discussion, see H.W.F. Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*; ©1979 by Baker Books; p. 588.

¹⁴⁴ Keil & Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 5, p. 404.

Finding the musical pause here makes me wonder if I did not split up my sections incorrectly. It is possible that the previous verse was a celebratory verse, based upon the history of God's involvement with Israel and the future which God will have with Israel. In the alternative, perhaps this previous verse is the glue with which this psalm is held together, providing a transition from God's history with Israel to God's character and actions.

<p>Êl to us Êl, to salvation acts; and to Y^ehowah Adonai to the death an end.</p>	<p>Psalm 68:20</p>	<p>Our God [is] a God with respect to [His] acts of salvation; and to Y^ehowah Adonai, with respect to death, [there are] limits [or, the Lord Jehovah is the end with respect to death].</p>
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**Our God is a God who delivers us;
and, when speaking of death, the Lord Jehovah sets the limits [or, the Lord Jehovah is the end of
death (for us)].**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	Our God is the God of salvation: and of the Lord, of the Lord are the issues from death.
Masoretic Text	Êl to us Êl, to salvation acts; and to Y ^e howah Adonai to the death an end.
Peshitta	He that is our God is the God of Salvation, the LORD God who has the power of life and death.
Septuagint	Our God is the God of salvation; and to the Lord, Lord belong the exit from death.
Significant differences:	The first phrase in the Hebrew is rather difficult, and the differences between the other ancient texts and the Hebrew may simply be a result of trying to interpret the Hebrew.

All the versions have two names for God in the second half of this verse, and they all have the word death, but the other word which causes confusion in the Hebrew is probably interpreted in a way that made sense to them. In other words, these ancient translators probably worked from the same Hebrew text that we are working from.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	You always protect us and save us from death.
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	Our God is the God who will make us free. The LORD our God will save us from death.
Good News Bible (TEV)	Our God is a God who saves; he is the LORD, our Lord, who rescues us from death.
The Message	He's our Savior, our God, oh yes! He's God-for-us, he's God-who-saves-us. Lord GOD knows all death's ins and outs.
New American Bible	Our God is a God who saves; escape from death is in the LORD God's hands.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	Our God is for us a God of salvation; his are the ways out of death.
Complete Apostles' Bible	Our God is the God of salvation; and to the Lord belong the issues from death.
God's Word™	Our God is the God of victories. The Almighty LORD is our escape from death.

HCSB	Our God is a God of salvation, and escape from death belongs to the Lord GOD.
JPS (Tanakh)	God is for us a God of deliverance; God the Lord provides an escape from death.
NET Bible®	Our God is a God who delivers; the LORD, the sovereign Lord, can rescue from death. [The Hebrew read: “and to the Lord, the Lord, to death, goings out.”].
The Scriptures 1998	Our Ėl is the Ėl of deliverance; And to יהוה, the Master, belong escapes from death.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

The Amplified Bible	God is to us a God of deliverances <i>and</i> salvation, and to God, the Lord, belongs escape from death [setting us free].
A Conservative Version	God is to us a God of deliverances, and escape from death belongs to lord LORD.
Updated Emphasized Bible	The God we have is a God of saving deeds, And due to Yahweh, My Lord are escapes from death [more literally, <i>exits to death</i>].
MKJV	Our God is the God of salvation; and to Jehovah are the issues of death.
A Voice in the Wilderness	Our Mighty God is the God of salvation; and unto Jehovah the Lord belong the escapes from death.
Young's Updated LT	God Himself is to us a God for deliverances, And Jehovah Lord hath the outgoings of death.

What is the gist of this verse? This verse picks up where the previous verse left off. Our God is a God of salvation (or, deliverance). What appears to be the meaning of the second half of this verse is, escape from death belongs to God.

Psalm 68:20a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ֵל (אֱל) [pronounced ALE]	God, God, mighty one, strong, hero	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #410 BDB #42
לָמֵד (ל) (pronounced P)	to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by	directional/relational preposition with the 1 st person plural suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
ֵל (אֱל) [pronounced ALE]	God, God, mighty one, strong, hero	masculine singular noun	Strong's #410 BDB #42
לָמֵד (ל) (pronounced P)	to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
môwshâ'ôwth (מוֹשָׁעוֹת) [pronounced moh-shaw-GOHTH]	saving acts, acts of deliverance, salvations; deliverances	feminine plural noun	Strong's #4190 BDB #448

Translation: Our God [is] a God with respect to [His] acts of salvation;... Like much of this psalm, this verse is difficult to understand. In fact, I spent 2½ days¹⁴⁵ dealing with just one word in the latter half of this verse. This might be more literally rendered *God to us [is] a God with respect to deliverances*. I would prefer that this reads, *Our God is a God of deliverances*, as that would be fairly easy to interpret. Whether this is what this verse means or not, is difficult to discern, as the nuances of the prepositions are difficult to understand.

¹⁴⁵ 2½ study sessions, which comes out to be about 5 or 6 hours.

In any case, that God is a God of salvation, is clearly found in many places in the Old Testament (and New). "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation." (Isa. 12:2). But Israel is saved by the LORD with everlasting salvation; you shall not be put to shame or confounded to all eternity. For thus says the LORD, who created the heavens (he is God!), who formed the earth and made it (he established it; he did not create it empty, he formed it to be inhabited!): "I am the LORD, and there is no other. I did not speak in secret, in a land of darkness; I did not say to the offspring of Jacob, 'Seek me in vain.' I the LORD speak the truth; I declare what is right. "Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, you survivors of the nations! They have no knowledge who carry about their wooden idols, and keep on praying to a god that cannot save. Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the LORD? And there is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none besides me. "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other (Isa. 45:17–22). But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God. I will not save them by bow or by sword or by war or by horses or by horsemen (Hosea 1:7).

Psalm 68:20b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
w ^e (or v ^e) (וּ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly <i>yhoh-WAH</i>]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
ʾădônâi (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced <i>uh-doh-NAY</i>]	<i>Lord, Master, my Lord, Sovereign; can refer to the Trinity or to an intensification of the noun; transliterated Adonai</i>	masculine plural noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #113 & #136 BDB #10
lâmed (ל) (pronounced <i>l</i>)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
mâveth (מָוֶת) [pronounced <i>MĀW-veth</i>]	<i>death, death [as opposed to life], death by violence, a state of death, a place of death</i>	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #4194 BDB #560
tôwtsâ'ôwth (תּוֹצְאוֹת) [pronounced <i>toh-tzaw-OHTH</i>]	<i>a limit, an end; exit; the place from which one goes out [i.e., a gate]; a place of exit, a termination</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #8444 BDB #426

With regards to a boundary, this is an extremity point, where we see a change in the direction of the boundary.

Translation: ...and to Y^ehowah Adonai, with respect to death, [there are] limits [or, the Lord Jehovah is the end with respect to death]. I spent 2½ study sessions on one word in this verse alone—the final word, tôwtsâ'ôwth. So, you may want to take a glance at the **Doctrine of Tôwtsâ'ôwth** or take a quick gander at the summary below:

Even though I have spent about 7 or 8 hours on this word, I have that thought, will anyone ever read this; this is a bit of minutia if there ever was. However, it took me most of this time to come to a reasonable conclusion as to the meaning and use of this word, which even involved whipping out a map and examining the map side-by-side the boundaries given where this word *tôwtsâ`ôwth* is used extensively (Num. 34).

A Summary of the Doctrine of *Tôwtsâ`ôwth*

1. At first, one would think that the meaning of *tôwtsâ`ôwth* would be easy to ascertain. It comes from the verb *to go out*, and *tôwtsâ`ôwth* is always found in the plural, so the rendering *outgoings* seems like a quick fix (this is how Young consistently renders it). However, that meaning makes very little sense. The rendering *exit* is not too bad, but it does not really convey the meaning of the word.
2. Among the meanings offered for *tôwtsâ`ôwth* are:
 - a. KJV renderings: *going [forth], goings, outgoings; issues; borders*.
 - b. Strong's renderings: properly (*only in plural collective*) *exit, that is, (geographical) boundary, or (figuratively) deliverance, (actively) source: - border (-s), going (-s) forth (out), issues, outgoings*. Strong's #8444.
 - c. BDB translations: 1) *outgoing, border, a going out, extremity, end, source, escape; 1a) outgoing, extremity (of border); 1b) source (of life); 1c) escape (from death)*. BDB #426.
 - d. Gesenius translations: *a going out, the place from which [a person or thing] goings forth [hence, a gate]; a fountain; the place of exit or termination*.
3. We find *tôwtsâ`ôwth* used primarily when giving a set of boundary points for a specific area or territory. We find it so used in: Num. 34:4–5, 8–9, 12 Joshua 15:4, 7, 11 16:3, 8 17:9 18:12, 14, 18–19 19:14, 22, 29, 33 1Chron. 5:16 Ezek. 48:30
4. If you examine a map along side Num. 34, it appears as though *tôwtsâ`ôwth* is used when a change of direction is noted. That is, if you are moving along a southern border and the border itself is going to change direction somewhat and move in a northwestern direction, then *tôwtsâ`ôwth* is used. Although I was unable to come up with a clear and simple English translation for this word, *end* or *limit* are reasonable renderings of *tôwtsâ`ôwth*, as long as one keeps in mind that a boundary direction change is also involved.
5. What appears to be the best translation is *end* or *limit*.
6. The two difficult passages where the rendering of *tôwtsâ`ôwth* is difficult is Psalm 68:20 and Prov. 4:23, and it is from these passages where we appear to get a myriad of weird meanings. Not only are these meanings not very helpful, but, in my cases in Psalm 68:20, the preposition found there is changed in order to accommodate a meaning which might not even properly apply.
 - a. One passage deals with life and the other with death, which one might see these as side-by-side territories, where there is a change of compass direction. One can come up to the boundary of life, which is death, and either enter into death or enter into life everlasting.
 - b. When one bears this in mind, a better understanding of these passages results.
 - c. Psalm 68:20: *Our God is the God of salvation; and to Jehovah the Lord is the end* [or, *limit*] *with respect to death*. Our relationship to God, when we come to the border between life and death, determines the direction that we move in next—whether we enter into death or whether we change direction and move into life eternal.
 - d. Prov. 4:23: *Guard your heart more than any prison, because from your heart is the end* [or, *limit*] *of life*. What determines our eternal destiny is what is in our heart—have we believed in Jesus Christ? Our thinking is key to this life and to the life which follows. What is in our heart determines the direction that we go in once we come up to the *limit* of life.

Believe it or not, that is a summation of about 9 pages of careful analysis of this word, which is all found under the **Doctrine of *Tôwtsâ`ôwth***.

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Our death, our final end, is closely associated with Jehovah God. Whatever direction we go in, at the boundary, is up to Jehovah God, and it is based upon faith in His Son. Although, in our live, God delivers us many times

through this and that difficulty, and the end of our life is that final deliverance, when we are at the extremity of the boundary of life, and we can enter into eternal death or eternal life.

Barnes gives a similar interpretation: *Probably the only idea intended here by the psalmist was, that safety or deliverance from death proceeds solely from God. The sentiment, however, is true in a larger sense. All that pertains to deliverance from death, all that prepares for it, all that makes it easy to be borne, all that constitutes a rescue from its pains and horrors, all that follows death in a higher and more blessed world, all that makes death "final," and places us in a condition where death is no more to be dreaded - all this belongs to God. All this is under his control. He only can enable us to bear death; He only can conduct us from a bed of death to a world where we shall never die.*¹⁴⁶

Spurgeon writes: *[God] has ways and means of rescuing his children from death: when they are at their wit's end, and see no way of escape, he can find a door of deliverance for them. The gates of the grave none can open but himself, we shall only pass into them at his bidding; while on the heavenward-side he has set open the doors for all his people, and they shall enjoy triumphant issues from death. Jesus, our God, will save his people from their sins, and from all else besides, whether in life or death.*¹⁴⁷

Perhaps the parallel that is being drawn here is, at the beginning of this psalm, David spoke of Israel's exodus (exit) from Egypt and from slavery (see Psalm 68:6); and here, God is leading us in our exit from death. At the end of our lives, we reach a boundary point, which could lead to eternal death or to eternal life; our Lord determines our eternal destiny. Recall that there were two generations which are often combined together and called the Exodus generation. The first generation (Gen X) chose death, and they died off in the desert; the second generation (the generation of promise) chose life, and God led them into the Land of Promise. What was the key? The key was trusting in the Word of God. The key was believing in Jesus Christ.

God's power over death is seen again and again in Scripture. **See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god beside me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; and there is none that can deliver out of my hand** (Deut. 32:39). **The LORD kills and brings to life; he brings down to Sheol and raises up** (1Sam. 2:6). **For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment** (John 5:21, 28–29). **Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"** (John 11:25–26). **Jesus Christ is speaking to John: "Fear not, I am the first and the last, and the living one. I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades."** (Rev. 1:17b–18).

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God Destroys His Enemies

**Only Elohim mortally wounds a head of His enemies;
a head—hairs [bristling up]—walks around in his guilt.**

Psalm
68:21

**Surely Elohim will shatter the head of His enemies;
the crown of his head—[his] hair bristling up
walking around [with evil intent] with his guilt
[for wrongdoing].**

**Surely God will shatter the head of His enemies—
those who walk around with evil intent, saturated in their own guilt for their evil actions.**

¹⁴⁶ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:20 (slightly edited).

¹⁴⁷ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 68:20.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	Only Elohim mortally wounds a head of His enemies; a head—hairs [bristling up]—walks around in his guilt.
Septuagint	But God shall crush the heads of his enemies; the hairy crown of them that go on in their trespasses.
Significant differences:	Although the LXX seems different from the MT, they have just given alternate translations of this or that phrase.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Our Lord and our God, your terrible enemies are ready for war, but you will crush their skulls.
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	But God will break the heads of his enemies. (He will break) the hairy heads of those people that will not stop doing wrong things.
Good News Bible (TEV)	God will surely break the heads of his enemies, of those who persist in their sinful ways.
<i>The Message</i>	What's more, he made heads roll, split the skulls of the enemy As he marched out of heaven,...
New Jerusalem Bible	...but God smashes the head of his enemies, the long-haired skull of the prowling criminal.
New Living Testament	But God will smash the heads of his enemies, crushing the skulls of those who love their guilty ways.
Revised English Bible	God himself smites the heads of his enemies, those proud sinners with their flowing locks.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	The heads of the haters of God will be crushed; even the head of him who still goes on in his evil ways.
<i>God's Word</i> ™	Certainly, God will crush the heads of his enemies and destroy even the hair on the heads of those who continue to be guilty.
HCSB	Surely God crushes the heads of His enemies, the hairy head of one who goes on in his guilty acts.
JPS (Tanakh)	God will smash the heads of His enemies, the hairy crown of him who walks about in his guilt.
NET Bible®	Indeed God strikes the heads of his enemies, the hairy foreheads of those who persist in rebellion.
New International Version	Surely God will crush the heads of his enemies, the hairy crowns of those who go on in their sins.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	But God will shatter the head of His enemies, the hairy scalp of such a one as goes on still in his trespasses <i>and</i> guilty ways.
<i>Updated Emphasized Bible</i>	Yeah God Himself will strike through the head of His foes, — The hairy crown of him who is marching on in his guilty deeds.
English Standard Version	But God will strike the heads of his enemies, the hairy crown of him who walks in his guilty ways.
New King James Version	But God will wound the head of His enemies,

Updated Bible Version 2.11	The hairy scalp of the one who still goes on in his trespasses. But God will strike through the head of his enemies, The hairy top of the head of such a one as goes on still in his guiltiness.
A Voice in the Wilderness	But God shall wound the head of His enemies, and the hairy head of him who walks on in his guilt.
Young's Updated LT	Only--God will strike the head of His enemies, The hairy crown of a habitual walker in his guilt.

What is the gist of this verse? God strikes down His enemies, those who walk about in their trespasses.

Psalm 68:21a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾak ^e (אָךְ) [pronounced <i>ahk^e</i>]	<i>surely, certainly, no doubt, only, but; only now, just now, scarcely; only this once; nothing but, merely [before a substantive]; quite, altogether [before an adjective]</i>	adverb of restriction, contrast, time, limitation, and exception. Also used as an affirmative particle. Expanded meanings given here.	Strong's #389 BDB #36
ʾĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43
mâchats (מַחֲטִים) [pronounced <i>MAW-khats</i>]	<i>to severely wound, to mortally wound, to smite through, to pierce; to shatter, to smite, to agitate, to shake</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #4272 BDB #563
rôʾsh (רֹאשׁ) [pronounced <i>rohsh</i>]	<i>heads, princes, officers, captains, chiefs; company, band, division</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #7218 BDB #910
ʾâyab (אֵיבָב) [pronounced <i>aw-YA^BV</i>]	<i>enemy, the one being at enmity with you; enmity, hostility</i>	masculine plural, Qal active participle with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #340 BDB #33

Translation: *Surely Elohim will shatter the head of His enemies;...* Like much of this psalm, some of what is said here is quite unusual. Here, God shatters the one leading His enemies; one might even suggest that this is Satan who is being referred to here.

I believe that the first half of this psalm dealt with specific historic events; it is unclear to me whether we are now dealing with generalities (God destroys the head of any set of enemies) or whether this is very specific (God will destroy Satan) and of an eschatological nature.

Barnes tells us¹⁴⁸ that we are speaking of complete destruction here, and there are many passages with the same theme. After Satan had caused the fall of man, God said to him, *"Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall*

¹⁴⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:21.

bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." (Gen. 3:14b–15). Psalm 110:5–6: The Lord is at your right hand; he will shatter kings on the day of his wrath. He will execute judgment among the nations, filling them with corpses; he will shatter chiefs over the wide earth. Habak. 3:12–13: You marched through the land in wrath. You threshed the nations in anger. You went forth for the salvation of your people, For the salvation of your anointed. You crushed the head of the land of wickedness. You stripped them head to foot. Rev. 14:19–20: And the angel cast his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vintage of the earth, and cast it into the wine press of the great wrath of God. And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and there came out blood from the wine press, even to the bridles of the horses, as far as 184 miles.

Psalm 68:21b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
qod ^e qôd (קֹדֶד) [pronounced kod ^e -KOHD]	head, crown of head, tope of one's head, hairy part of head	masculine singular noun	Strong's #6936 BDB #869
Barnes writes: <i>More literally, "the top of the hair." The Hebrew word used here for "scalp" means the vertex, the top, the crown, as of the head, where the hair "divides itself;" and the idea is properly, "the dividing of the hair." Gesenius, Lexicon. The allusion is to the top of the head; that is, the blow would descend on the top of the head, producing death.</i> ¹⁴⁹			
sê'âr (שֵׂאֵר) [pronounced say-GAWR]	hair, hairs; hair brisling up	masculine singular noun	Strong's #8181 BDB #972
hâlak ^e (הָלַךְ) [pronounced haw-LAHK ^e]	an attacker, a robber, a vagrant; one walking about [with evil intent]	Hithpael participle	Strong's #1980 (and #3212) BDB #229
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
'âshâm (אֲשָׁם) [pronounced aw-SHAWM]	guilt, fault, blame, responsibility [for sinful actions]; a guilt-offering; possibly this word can apply to the actions for which one is guilty (trespass, offense)	masculine plural noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #817 BDB #79

What appears to be the case with this word is, the *guilt* or *fault* is so closely identified with the *guilt offering*, that the same word is used for both.

Translation: ...the crown of his head—[his] hair brisling up walking around [with evil intent] with his guilt [for wrongdoing]. This is an interesting description. As mentioned in v. 21a, perhaps we are speaking of Satan here; and at the top of his head are hairs bristling up. It is an odd thing to say, and I don't really know how to explain what David is saying exactly with this description.

What about this *hairy part of one's head, his hair bristling up*? What do the commentaries say?

¹⁴⁹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:21.

Commentaries on the Hairy Scalp of His Enemies	
Scripture	Incident
Gill	...by whom may be meant the antichrist: Jarchi interprets it of Esau, who was an hairy man, and a figure of antichrist: and his hairy scalp may denote his fierceness and cruelty, appearing like a savage beast, drinking the blood of the saints; and like a thief and a robber, who used to let their hair grow long, shagged, and entangled, to strike terror into men they met with; and also his pride and haughtiness; he exalting himself above all that is called God, and opening his mouth in blasphemy against him: and likewise it signifies his great power and authority, he having people, kingdoms, and nations, depending upon him, as hair on the head, and subject to him: and of him it may be truly said, that he "goes on still in his trespasses"; in tyranny, idolatry, superstition, and will worship; taking no notice of what God says by his witnesses, nor any warning by what the eastern empire suffered by the Turks and Saracens; so as to repent of the works of his hands, of worshiping idols of gold, silver, brass, and wood; nor of his murders, sorceries, fornications, and thefts; but still persisting in them, until his, and the sins of his followers, reach to heaven. ¹⁵⁰
Keil and Delitzsch	The hair-covered scalp is mentioned as a token of arrogant strength, and un-humbled and impenitent pride, as in Deut. 32:42 (<i>I will make My arrows drunk with blood while My sword devours flesh--the blood of the slain and the captives, the heads of the enemy leaders</i>), and as the Attic koma'n directly signifies to strut along, give one's self airs. The genitival construction is the same as in Isa. 28:1 (<i>Woe to the majestic crown of Ephraim's drunkards, and to the fading flower of its beautiful splendor, which is on the summit above the rich valley. Woe to those overcome with wine</i>). The form of expression refers back to Num. 24:17 (<i>I see him, but not now; I perceive him, but not near. A star will come from Jacob, and a scepter will arise from Israel. He will smash the forehead of Moab and strike down all the Shethites</i>), and so to speak inflects this primary passage very similarly to Jer. 48:45 (<i>Those who fled stand without strength under the shadow of Heshbon; for a fire is gone forth out of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sihon, and has devoured the corner of Moab, and the crown of the head of the tumultuous ones</i>). ¹⁵¹
McGee	The one referred to as the "hair scalp" is the Antichrist. In Spite of what the Antichrist will try to do, he will fail. God will bring His people even from the depths of the sea. This is Israel's restoration. ¹⁵²
Spurgeon	He may glory in his outward appearance, and make his hair his pride, as Absalom did; but the Lord's sword shall find him out, and pour out his soul. Headstrong sinners will find that providence overcomes them despite their strong heads. They who go on in sin will find judgments come on them; and the adornment of their pride may be made the instrument of their doom. He covers the head of his servants, but he crushes the head of his foes. ¹⁵³
Wesley	In ancient times many people used to wear long and shaggy hair, that their looks might be more terrible to their enemies. ¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:21.

¹⁵¹ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 68:21 (slightly edited and Scripture added).

¹⁵² J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Chapters 42–89*, ©1991 by J. Vernon McGee; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; p. 118.

¹⁵³ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 68:21.

¹⁵⁴ John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Psalm 68:21.

Although none of these explanations quite float my boat, I think that this is both a reference to pride—which the hair can be—as well as a more specific reference to Satan, who is closely associated with pride throughout Scripture.

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The verb used comes from *to walk, to walk around*; but with the added dimension of walking around with evil intent. One of the key aspects of sin is, most people are not content to keep it hidden or to keep it as a part of their own secret lives—they continually involve others with their sins. They walk around spreading their sins and their evil. Obviously, for those who read this, 99% of you are believers in Jesus Christ (no idea why an unbeliever would want to spend this much time in the Word). Most of you should recognize that, your sins affect and violate others. Satan operates this way, but on a much larger scale. Think of Satan as a Stalin or a Hitler. As long as you go along with the program, you are okay. You might be required to inflict misery on others, but as long as you go along with their wishes, most of the time, you are excluded. However, for those who do not want to be a part of this program, they suffer great misery and pain—it is in Satan's nature to hurt those who do not want to go along with his plan. So, he walks around, with evil intent, carrying the guilt for all of his wrongdoing with him.¹⁵⁵

At this point, we ought to examine the **Doctrine of `Āshâm** ([HTML](#) [PDF](#)).

As occurs when I examine a word, I go into much greater detail than most would want; however, a summary of these points is found below.

A Summary of the Doctrine of `Āshâm

1. What we have discovered can be summed up rather neatly: `āshâm (אָשָׁם) [pronounced *aw-SHAWM*], means *guilt, fault, blame, responsibility [for sinful actions]; a guilt-offering*; possibly this word can apply to the *actions* for which one is guilty (*trespass, offense*). I cannot point to any particular passage which requires us to use this word in the sense of *a trespass, an offense*, however. Strong's #817 BDB #79.
2. `Āshâm appears to be used for *guilt, blame or responsibility for sin*, rather than for the sin or the
3. `Āshâm is undoubtedly used to mean *guilt offering* in Ezek. 40:39 42:13 44:29 46:20. transgression itself (see Gen. 26:10). Bearing this in mind is the key to understanding this word. This is particularly important in Isa. 53:10, where our Lord takes our *guilt* on Himself. He does not take the actual sin upon Himself, but the guilt for the sins (i.e., when `āshâm is used). *Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand* (Isa. 53:10). The fact that the same word is used for both the *guilt* and the *guilt-offering* is remarkable, and theologically significant. Our Lord took our guilt for our wrongdoing upon Himself and then He became *an offering for guilt*. The significance is, this is the same word and it is applied to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ did not commit any sins; however, He took upon Himself *the blame, the guilt, the responsibility* for those sins, and He became our *sin-offering*, where the *guilt* for the sin becomes *the offering for the sin*, as it stands written: *He bore our sins in His body on the cross* (1Peter 2:24a). *He Who knew no sin was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him* (2Cor. 5:21).
4. Even the ancient heathen understood that some sort of guilt offering was necessary when dealing with a holy God. 1Sam. 6:1–6. This is important, as it tells us that God evangelized outside of Israel. Whether they got the ceremony right or not is another thing; but key is, they believed in Jehovah Elohim, the God of Israel; that determined their salvation. Whatever other goofy things that they did had no bearing on the issue.

¹⁵⁵ Barnes presents this as a man who continues in his sin, but I believe that this is the essence of sin—it is an act which someone wants to eventually *share* with others. This is why the person who is angry with you does not want to simply revel in his own anger, but he wants to act on it as well. I've faced many people like this in my life, and it is rarely enough for them to simply enjoy their own animosity toward me; they had a desire to act upon this animosity and many did.

What I must admit amazed me was just how theologically accurate this term is and how closely it interests with Christian doctrine.

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We studied the plural noun here, which appears to indicate that we are speaking of guilt (in the plural); perhaps it is to be tied to all of the guilt Satan should have for all that he has done.

Hell—eternal hellfire—is an awesome concept to contemplate, and few believers give it much consideration. None of us want to see friends or loved ones condemned to the Lake of Fire; and some might not even want to see Satan condemned there either; but consider these things:

A Human Rationale for the Lake of Fire

1. Take the worst mass murderers in history; those who spent decades destroying the lives of families, killing and maiming children in front of their parents, and parents in front of their children; whose lives are dedicated to the pain and suffering of others. Consider Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, Mao, Saddam Hussain; the amount of pain that these men caused is beyond human comprehension.
2. Satan inspired these men; Satan may have even possessed some of these men. They may have traded temporal power for the evil which they did.
3. Almost anyone understands why these men deserve death; and why Satan deserves death. Their killing and evil were barely constrained by physical constraints.
4. There are Muslim radicals who would kill their own children; who would radicalize their own children; all for some evil doctrines and an evil philosophy. When it comes to those who are white, they would destroy as many as they possibly could. When it comes to those who are infidels in their eyes, they would destroy as many as possible.
5. Most of us understand why such people and demonic forces deserve eternal death. These are men who had achieved great positions of wealth and power, and yet continued to spend most of their lives increasing human suffering.
6. The only thing which prevents these types from committing more evil is physical restraint. You can only kill so many people in so many days.
7. A person's potential and his sinfulness separate that person from God.
8. God is perfect righteousness and cannot have fellowship with relative righteousness.
9. So, whether the evil of man is great or not compared to other men is not the issue to God.
10. It is our choice to violate His laws. It is our nature to violate His laws.
11. We do not know what we might do, had we been brought up in a different environment, with different parents, with different values. We have a sin nature, and we are willing to violate God's laws, but no one knows, under different circumstances, just how far we would go—no one knows, apart from God.
12. All of the hate and misery and violence and pain in this world is the result of one creature's choice to violate God's mandates; we can take this all back to that one creature who said, ["I will be like the Most High."](#)
13. If one creature with free will, who chooses to disobey God, brings such suffering and evil into God's creation, and if this one creature is unable to not bring this suffering into God's creation, it should be clear that, at the very least, complete separation from that creature will be necessary at some point in time, if God's creation is ever to survive.
14. None of us know the true potential for our own evil, or just how far we would go, given different circumstances. However, we should be able to at least recognize that, in order for God's creation to function apart from evil and suffering, then all which is connected to sin must be completely and unequivocally removed from God's creation. God allowed Satan to interact with man, and Satan's involvement with man has resulted in absolute misery and pain and injustice. Let me take this to the small scale. In a classroom of 25 students, if they are interested and willing to learn, teaching and learning become wonderful experiences. I would not trade my memories of the classroom for anything in the world. However, as soon as you throw in one or two reprobates, who feel that school is a jail sentence

A Human Rationale for the Lake of Fire

rather than a privilege, the whole dynamic changes. If there are 5 or more of these reprobates, teaching becomes nearly impossible and anything but a joy. In order for good teaching to occur, you must separate out those who are actively opposed to learning (I was a teacher for 29 years, so I understand the concept of motivating students; however, there are limits; and, besides, this is just an illustration). The point is, without separation, those who are evil are going to continue to make things miserable for those who are not.

15. Now, let's approach this from a second perspective: within all of us, there is a desire to see justice; to see wrongs overturned. I recall from many years back, of a young gal being forced out of her car here in Houston and killed, just so the perpetrator could steal her car. Her potential, her family, her loved ones—none of these were taken into consideration by the criminal who killed her. When I heard the other day that this man, decades later, was being executed, it was good news—not that it took so long, but that he was finally getting what he deserved. We've had a number of heinous crimes here in Houston—two teen girls who took the wrong shortcut near a park, and were brutally raped, sodomized and then kicked to death by a gang of thugs; of one boy who brutally sodomized another with a foreign object, almost killing him, and physically harming this boy forever; when I hear that the evil, vicious men who committed these crimes are going to pay for their evil, it's good news; it is right.
16. I don't want to see these criminals merely rehabilitated. I don't want to see them talk things out with a counselor or a psychiatrist, come to the conclusion that what they did was very wrong, and then cut them loose. To me, this result would be a grave evil—even if I could be assured that these criminals would never murder again. Something inside me wants for them to pay for what they did; something inside me desires to see them get exactly what they gave.
17. Justice must be done in this world. God cannot allow for sin to go unpunished. He cannot allow evil to get by without justice being the ultimate result.
18. So, not only must there be separation, but there must be justice. Had the perpetrators of those crimes just been sent to France or put on an island in order to separate them from me and the society in which I live, that would not have been good enough for me. I would expect punishment; and, in the examples which I gave, the ideal punishment seems death, if not a slow, painful, miserable death. I have a difficult time imagining that the perpetrators of those evils should be allowed to die humanely; I would feel better if they died in the same way that their victims died.
19. God is perfect justice; God is perfect righteousness. He is in possession of all the facts behind every sin and every wrong; and He, more than anyone else, knows that separation is necessary for His world to function apart from attack, and that justice must be done with regards to those who violate His mandates. God's very character demands it; and for many of us, at least in some cases, we would demand it.
20. Therefore, if God mandates that the Lake of Fire is the proper punishment for rebellion against Him, we may not fully understand why the end result should be so harsh, but we should be able to comprehend, to some degree, the necessity for separation and for justice to be done.

I understand that, for some, the concept of the Lake of Fire is exceedingly harsh, even with these rationalizations provided. Bear in mind, the one Person Who spoke of the Lake of Fire more than any other is Jesus Christ, Who died for our sins. He provided our escape. However, God the Holy Spirit did not inspire every writer of Scripture to deal with this topic. Hellfire is not a subject to be taken lightly. However, the keys are separation and justice.

An extended quote from Proverbs might be apropos at this time: *Because I have called, and you have refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no one has paid attention; But you have ignored all my counsel, And wanted none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your disaster. I will mock when calamity overtakes you; When calamity overtakes you like a storm, When your disaster comes on like a whirlwind; When distress and anguish come on you. Then will they call on me, but I will not answer. They will seek me diligently, but they will not find me; Because they hated knowledge, And didn't choose the fear of Yahweh. They wanted none of my counsel. They despised all my reproof. Therefore they will eat of the fruit of their own way, And be filled with their own schemes. For the backsliding of the simple will kill them. The careless ease of fools will destroy them. But whoever listens to me will dwell securely, And will be at ease, without fear of harm.*" (Prov. 1:24–33)

Or, heed some of the words spoken by our Lord: "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no, but, unless you change your mind, you will all perish in the same way. Or those eighteen, on whom the tower in Siloam fell, and killed them; do you think that they were worse offenders than all the men who dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, no, but, unless you change your mind, you will all perish in the same way." (Luke 13:2–5).

Heb. 2:1–4: Therefore we ought to pay greater attention to the things that were heard, lest perhaps we drift away. For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense; how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation -- which at the first having been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by various works of power, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will?

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Said Adonai, "From Bashan, I will bring back;
I will bring back from depths of a sea..."

Psalm
68:22

Adonai has said, "I will bring [them] back from
Bashan;
I will bring [them] back from the depths of the
seas..."

The Lord has promised, "I will bring them back from Bashan;
and I will bring them back from the depths of the seas;..."

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	The Lord said: I will turn them from Basan, I will turn them into the depth of the sea:
Masoretic Text	Said Adonai, "From Bashan, I will bring back; I will bring back from depths of a sea.
Septuagint	The Lord said, I will bring again from Basan, I will bring my people again through the depths of the sea.
Significant differences:	The one difference is the second preposition; the Hebrew uses the min preposition twice, and the Greek first uses ἐκ (which properly translates the min preposition) and then uses ἐν. The Latin verbs are reasonable translations of the Hebrew verb, but the Latin also differs in the 2 nd preposition. The Peshitta is in agreement with the Hebrew.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	You promised to bring them from Bashan and from the deepest sea.
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	The Lord says, "I will bring (my enemies) back from Bashan. I will bring them back (even from) deep down in the sea.
Good News Bible (TEV)	The Lord has said, "I will bring your enemies back from Bashan; I will bring them back from the depths of the ocean,...
<i>The Message</i>	...saying, "I tied up the Dragon in knots, put a muzzle on the Deep Blue Sea."
New Living Testament	The Lord says, "I will bring my enemies down from Bashan, I will bring them up from the depths of the sea.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	The Lord said, I will make them come back from Bashan, and from the deep parts of the sea;...
Complete Apostles' Bible	The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring <i>My people</i> again through the depths of the sea.
HCSB	The Lord said, "I will bring them back from Bashan; I will bring them back from the depths of the sea..."
NET Bible®	The Lord says, "I will retrieve them from Bashan, I will bring them back from the depths of the sea,..."

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	The Lord said, I will bring back [your enemies] from Bashan, I will bring them back from the depths of the [Red] Sea,...
A Voice in the Wilderness	The Lord said, I will bring back from Bashan; I will bring back My people from the depths of the sea;...
WEB	The Lord said, "I will bring you again from Bashan, I will bring you again from the depths of the sea;..."
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	The Lord said: `From Bashan I bring back, I bring back from the depths of the sea.

What is the gist of this verse? God promises to bring back [the Jews? His enemies?] from Bashan and from the depths of the seas.

Psalm 68:22a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾāmar (אָמַר) [pronounced aw-MAHR]	<i>to say, to speak, to utter; to say [to oneself], to think</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #559 BDB #55
ʾădônâi (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced uh-doh-NAY]	<i>Lord, Master, my Lord, Sovereign; can refer to the Trinity or to an intensification of the noun; transliterated Adonai</i>	masculine plural noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #113 & #136 BDB #10

This is a form of Strong's #113, where there are three explanations given for the yodh ending: (1) this is a shortened form of the plural ending, usually written -îym (יִם) [pronounced eem], an older form of the *pluralis excellentiae* (the plural of excellence), where God's sovereignty and lordship are emphasized by the use of the plural; (2) this is the actual, but ancient, plural of the noun, which refers to the Trinity; or (3) this is the addition of the 1st person singular suffix, hence, *my Lord* (the long vowel point at the end would distinguish this from *my lords*).

There are points of grammar which speak to the options above, but not so that we may unequivocally choose between the three. (1) When we find ʾădônâi (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced uh-doh-NAH] (note the difference of the vowel ending), it always means *my lords*. (2) Jehovah calls Himself ʾădônâi (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced uh-doh-NAY] in Job 28:28 Isa. 8:7; however, many of the Job manuscripts read *Y^ehowah* and 8 ancient Isaiah manuscripts read *Y^ehowah* instead. This suggests, that either ancient Scribes were confused about this form of *Adonai* or that they simply substituted *Adonai* for *Y^ehowah*, which was not an abnormal practice (in oral readings, the ancient Tetragrammaton was not spoken, but *Lord* was said instead). And even If every manuscript read *Adonai*, then we may also reasonably conclude that one member of the Trinity is addressing another member of the Trinity (although the idea of God saying *my Lord* would be theologically confusing, even if addressing another member of the Trinity; although Jesus did refer to God the Father as *our Father*).

Psalm 68:22a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Almost every single translator renders this <i>Lord, the Lord, or Adonai</i> . I am not aware of any, off the top of my head, who typically render this <i>my Lord</i> .			
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
Bâshân (בָּשָׁן) [pronounced <i>baw-SHAWN</i>]	<i>sandy soil; fruitful; and is transliterated Bashan</i>	proper singular noun; a location	Strong's #1316 BDB #143
shûwb (שׁוּב) [pronounced <i>shoo^bv</i>]	<i>to cause to return, to bring, to be caused to turn back mentally, reminisce, to return something, to restore, to bring back, to send back, to regain, to recover, to make restitution, reconsider, think again, to be caused to return</i>	1 st person singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #7725 BDB #996

Translation: *Adonai has said, "I will bring [them] back from Bashan;...* We have already made mention of Bashan back in v. 15; there, Bashan looked upon the mountain of God with jealousy. Here, God promises to bring something or someone back from Bashan. My first guess was, God will bring back Jews who have been scattered all over the earth. However, given the context of God crushing the head of His enemies in the previous verse, and feet wading in blood in the next verse, it is more likely speaking of God pursuing and bringing back His enemies who make their escape to Bashan, which is nearby, but on the edge of Israel.

Psalm 68:22

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shûwb (שׁוּב) [pronounced <i>shoo^bv</i>]	<i>to cause to return, to bring, to be caused to turn back mentally, reminisce, to return something, to restore, to bring back, to send back, to regain, to recover, to make restitution, reconsider, think again, to be caused to return</i>	1 st person singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #7725 BDB #996
min (מִן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
m ^e tsûwlâw (מַצּוּלָה) [pronounced <i>m^ets-OO-law</i>]	<i>depth, deep; the deep sea</i>	feminine plural construct	Strong's #4688 BDB #846

Psalm 68:22

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yâm (יָם) [pronounced yawm]	sea, lake, river, seaward, west, westward	masculine singular noun	Strong's #3220 BDB #410

Translation: ...I will bring [them] back from the depths of the seas... What or who is found in the depths of the seas? Is this another word for Hades, where the dead are kept? Elsewhere we read, ...and the sea gave up her dead (Rev. 20:13a). Taking the verse as a whole and apart from its context, I first assumed that God is promising to bring back all Jews, alive or dead, into the Land of Promise. However, that certainly involved taking great liberties in this interpretation, as it is not clear that God is speaking to Jews here nor is it clear that *bringing them back* means to the Land of Promise. The primary problem with this interpretation is the context; I would have to completely ignore the context of the previous and following verses.

Another interpretation is, God brought His people through the Sea of Reeds, where they walked on the bottom of the sea when they were leaving Israel. Here is how this might be fit into the context. God smashes the head of His enemies in the previous verse; Israel wades through the blood of their enemies in the next. What we have in v. 22 are allusions to Israel's victory in Bashan and at the Sea of Reeds, where God defeated Israel's enemies. The idea that God is bringing the Jews *back* to the Land of Promise is this: the family of Jacob lived in the Land of Promise until there was a great famine in the land, and they all moved to Egypt (the last few chapters of Genesis give us the entire story). When God brought the Jews into the land, 400 years later, He was bringing them *back* to the Land of Promise.

It is clear that, this is the Lord speaking here; and, the last time this psalm gave us a physical location for Him, He was *ascending on high* (v. 18).

Another interpretation is, God will chase after and bring back Israel's enemies, whether they flee to the west (the Mediterranean Sea) or to the east (Bashan). The only difficult word then, would be *depths*, as the use of this word would imply that God is bringing these men back from death (they certainly aren't swimming in the depths of the seas). This being the case, perhaps we are speaking of a final judgment here, which God will impose on unbelievers.

We essentially have 3 possible interpretations here:

How Should We Interpret, *I will bring [them] back from Bashan; I will bring them back from the depths of the sea?*

Theory	Comments
God will bring the Jews back who have been scattered all over the land and who have been scattered across the sea.	<p>This does not really fit in with the context of this verse; since Bashan is, more or less, a part of Israel, gathering up Jews from Bashan is not some superhuman feat.</p> <p>With regards to the <i>sea</i>, this is a singular noun here, which more than likely refers to one particular sea. We are stuck with asking, <i>which sea and why from its depths?</i> This simply does not seem to be the regathering of Israel.</p>

How Should We Interpret, *I will bring [them] back from Bashan; I will bring them back from the depths of the sea?*

Theory	Comments
God will bring His enemies back who have tried to escape.	This fits with the context. Bashan is essentially a cut-off point between Israel and not-Israel, in the northeast, and this is one direction that Israel's enemies might flee in. The might try to escape by crossing the Mediterranean Sea, to the west, and God would bring His enemies back from there. Spurgeon writes: <i>There is there no escape from God, neither the heights of Bashan nor the depths of the great sea can shelter from his eye of detection and his hand of justice. The powers of evil may flee to the utmost ends of the earth, but the Lord will arrest them, and lead them back in chains to adorn his triumph.</i> ¹⁵⁶
God will bring back the enemies of Israel for a final judgment in the end times.	The context does not really appear to lend itself to a final judgment. However, enemies of Israel have died in battle in Bashan; conceivably some of them are in the depths of the sea; and God might be said here to bring them back for a final judgment. Again, the big problem seems to be the context. God smashing the head of His enemies and causing Israel to wade through their blood (vv. 21, 23) sounds like the actual battle rather than a final judgment.
This alludes to the victory that Israel had over the king of Bashan back in Num. 21:33–35 and to God bringing Israel across the Sea of Reeds when the Egyptian army was pursuing them.	<p>This interpretation might be seen as an example of God shattering the head of His enemies; however, the verse itself says, "I will bring them back from Bashan" which does not appear to be a commemoration of Israel's previous victory. However, the allusion could be that God is bringing the Jews <i>back to the Land of Promise</i>, although they did make a brief stop in Bashan to defeat the king of Bashan.</p> <p>The Jews did previously live in the Land of Promise; all of Jacob's family lived here before. So, God could be seen as bringing Israel through Bashan and along the bottom of the Sea of Reeds to bring them back into the land He has promised them. In both cases, God destroyed Israel's enemies, which is how this interpretation fits contextually.</p> <p>Isa. 51:10–11 reads: <i>Isn't it You who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; who made the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over? The ransomed of Yahweh shall return, and come with singing to Zion; and everlasting joy shall be on their heads: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and sighing shall flee away</i> So, in Scripture, the depths of the sea could be clearly related to the Sea of Reeds over which God allowed Israel to escape. Furthermore, this is also related to Israel's return to the land.</p>

¹⁵⁶ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 68:22 (edited somewhat).

How Should We Interpret, *I will bring [them] back from Bashan; I will bring them back from the depths of the sea?*

Theory	Comments
Gill writes: <i>I will bring [My people] again from the depths of the sea; out of the most wretched and desperate condition, out of the depths of sin and misery; out of an helpless and hopeless state, in which they were through the fall, and their actual transgressions: the allusion is to the bringing of the children of Israel through the Red sea, and out of the depths of it, unto dry land.</i> ¹⁵⁷	The context has nothing to do with Israel sinning and God bringing them back from the <i>depths of their sin</i> ; the context is all about God dealing with His enemies. Unfortunately, some exegetes focus so much on a passage, and let their imagination run so wild, that they come up with the most fanciful interpretations.
<i>The Targum interprets the whole of the resurrection of the righteous, whether devoured by wild beasts, or drowned in the sea.</i> ¹⁵⁸	Again, context is ignored; we are not speaking of Israel necessarily but of Israel's enemies (or, Israel in relation to her enemies). Therefore, the resurrection of the righteousness simply does not fit with the context.

The 2nd and 4th interpretations appear to be the most reasonable.

In poetry, there is not a problem with a verse have two distinct interpretations. This could explain why God the Holy Spirit did not specify *who* God was bringing back from Bashan and back to the depths of the sea.

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**...in order that you will mortally wound your feet in blood;
a tongue of your dogs from the enemies his portion."**

Psalm
68:23

**...so that you bathe your feet in blood
[and] the tongue of your dogs [this blood] from
[your] enemies [is] his portion."**

**...with the result that your feed are wading in blood
and the tongues of your dogs lap up this blood of your enemies as its portion."**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate

That your foot may be dipped in the blood of your enemies; the tongue of your dogs be red with the same.

Masoretic Text

...in order that you will mortally wound your feet in blood;
a tongue of your dogs from the enemies his portion."

¹⁵⁷ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:22.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

Peshitta	That your foot will be dipped in the blood of your enemies and the tongue of your dogs in the same.
Septuagint	That your foot may be dipped in blood, and the tongue of your dogs be stained with that of your enemies.

Significant differences: The Greek, Latin and Syriac have *your foot being dipped [bathed?] in blood*. A slight change of one Hebrew letter would allow for this change. The Greek and Latin have *the tongue of your dog being stained or turned red*. In the Syriac, it is implied that the dog's tongue *[is dipped] into the same [blood]*. In the Hebrew, it appears that the blood of the enemies is the portion of the dogs, although the exact Hebrew is rather obscure at this point.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Then we could stomp on their blood, and our dogs could chew on their bones.
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	Then you can put your feet into their blood and even your *dogs can drink some!"
Good News Bible (TEV)	...so that you may wade in their blood, and your dogs may lap up as much as they want."
<i>The Message</i>	You can wade through your enemies' blood, and your dogs taste of your enemies from your boots.
New American Bible	You will wash your feet in your enemy's blood; the tongues of your dogs will lap it up."
New Living Testament	You, my people, will wash your feet in their blood, and even your dogs will get their share!

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	So that your foot may be red with blood, and the tongues of your dogs with the same.
Complete Apostles' Bible	That your foot may be dipped in blood, <i>and</i> the tongue of your dogs <i>be stained</i> with that of <i>your</i> enemies.
<i>God's Word</i> ™	...so that you, my people, may bathe your feet in blood and the tongues of your dogs may lick the blood of your enemies."
HCSB	...so that your foot may wade in blood and your dogs' tongues may have their share from the enemies."
JPS (Tanakh)	...that your feet may wade through blood; that the tongue of your dogs may have its portion of your enemies."
NET Bible®	so that your feet may stomp in their blood, and your dogs may eat their portion of the enemies' corpses."

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

Updated <i>Emphasized Bible</i>	That you may bathe [so it should be, as per the Aramaic, Septuagint, Syriac and Vulgate] your foot in blood, — The tongue of your dogs from the foes has its portion.
English Standard Version	...that you may strike your feet in their blood, that the tongues of your dogs may have their portion from the foe."
New King James Version	That your foot may crush them in blood, And the tongues of your dogs <i>may have</i> their portion from <i>your</i> enemies.
Updated Bible Version 2.11	That you may crush [them, dipping] your foot in blood, That the tongue of your dogs may have its portion from [your] enemies.
A Voice in the Wilderness	...so that your foot may shatter your enemies in blood, and the tongue of your dogs may lap it.

Young's Updated LT

So that you dash your foot in blood, In the blood of enemies—the tongue of Your dogs."

What is the gist of this verse? This verse appears to be applied to those who are brought back from Bashan and from the depths of the seas, and that they will enjoy a bloody triumph over their enemies. A second interpretation is, Israel was brought back from the depths of the Sea of Reeds and from Bashan in order to wade through the blood of their enemies, who are also in the Land of Promise.

Psalm 68:23a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
l ^a ma'an (ל מ ע ן) [pronounced l ^a -MAH-ġahn]	<i>for the sake of, on account of, to the intent of, to the intent that, to the purpose that, in order that, in view of, to the end that</i>	compound preposition and substantive which acts like a preposition	Strong's #4616 BDB #775
This is the substantive ma'an (ל מ ע ן) [pronounced MAH-ġahn], which means <i>purpose, intent</i> , combined with the lamed preposition (which is the only way that it is found in Scripture).			
mâchats (מ ח צ ת) [pronounced MAW-khats]	<i>to severely wound, to mortally wound, to smite through, to pierce; to shatter, to smite, to agitate, to shake</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #4272 BDB #563
Here, the net Bible suggests that this is the word râchats (ר ח צ ת) [pronounced raw-KHAHTS] instead. It means <i>to wash, to bathe, to wash off</i> . Strong's #7364 BDB #934.			
regel (ר ג ל) [pronounced REH-ge]	<i>foot, feet</i>	feminine singular noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #7272 BDB #919
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
dâm (ד מ) [pronounced dawm]	<i>blood, often visible blood</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #1818 BDB #196

Translation: ...so that you bathe your feet in blood... The first verb is generally used when your mortally wound someone. God is apparently still speaking, and He appears to be speaking to the Jew (*you*) and the verb is applied to *your* (the Jew's) foot. The verb is also used to mean *to shake, to agitate*; and I believe the picture which is being painted is, the blood is so thick on the ground, that the Jews to whom God is speaking will lift up their feet and attempt to shake the blood off. Maybe the idea is, they are wading through blood (which is how many translators understood this verse to say). There is a similar verb which means *to bathe*, which might have been what was intended here. Since the verb is also used for violence, perhaps the intention is to imply violence has occurred. Perhaps, if the verb means *to bathe*, that the violence is implied.

If we are to understand in the previous verse that God brings Israel through the Sea of Reeds, which they walked across *dry-shod*; it is in contrast with them wading through the blood of their enemies in the land of Israel.

We find similar imagery in Psalm 58:10: *The righteous will rejoice when he sees the retribution; he will wash his feet in the blood of the wicked.*

Psalm 68:23b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâshôwn (לִשׁוֹן) [pronounced law-SHOHN]	<i>tongue; speech; language; lapping; tongue-shaped</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #3956 BDB #546
Owen mistakenly lists this as a feminine singular construct.			
keleb (כֶּלֶב) [pronounced KEH-le ^b v]	<i>dog</i>	masculine plural noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3611 BDB #476
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
ʿāyab (אֵיִב) [pronounced aw-YA ^b V]	<i>enemy, the one being at enmity with you; enmity, hostility</i>	masculine plural, Qal active participle	Strong's #340 BDB #33
mên (מֵן) [pronounced main]	<i>a portion, a part</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4482 BDB #585
I wonder if the word that is actually found here should be...			
m ^e nâth (מִנָּת) [pronounced m ^e nawth]	<i>a part, a portion</i>	feminine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4521 BDB #584
Although the vowel points are different (which could simply refer to a regional pronunciation), all of the consonants for the second word match up. We do find the masculine version, however, in Psalm 45:9 154:4 (but with a different meaning). The feminine version is found in 6 other passages, meaning <i>a part, a portion</i> .			
This is not a major issue, in my opinion; but I thought that I should point it out; what we find in the Hebrew is the letter tâw (ת), which is properly a part of the feminine singular noun (it is the letter which makes this noun feminine), but it is not a part of the masculine noun.			
This discussion does not affect the meaning of this verse.			

Translation:...[and] the tongue of your dogs [this blood] from [your] enemies [is] his portion.” We see dogs today as pets, but they were not seen that way in the ancient world. In Jewish life, dogs were not pets, but dangerous animals who apparently adapted to human civilization and were scavengers within cities and towns. Even though we do not have *blood* in this phrase, it was in the previous phrase, and I have assumed here that the portion of the dogs in Israel is the blood of Israel’s enemies, which, again, is so high, that the Israelites whom God brings back, have to wade through. The scavenger dogs drink the blood as their portion of living in the land.

Barnes writes: *A more literal rendering would be, “That you may crush - your foot in blood - the tongue of your dogs from the enemies, from him.” The idea of “dipping” the foot in blood is not in the passage directly; but the leading thought is that of “crushing” the enemy. It is then “added” that the foot would be in blood. So of the tongue of the dogs. The “meaning” is, that the tongues of dogs would be employed in licking up the blood of the enemies, though that is not “expressed” in so many words. The*

*sense of the whole is, that the foes of the people would be slain.*¹⁵⁹ Clarke adds: *God will make such a slaughter among his enemies, the Amorites, that you wilt walk over their dead bodies; and beasts of prey shall feed upon them.*¹⁶⁰

Perhaps the idea is, the blood is so deep in the Land of Promise that they are wading through the blood and the blood comes up to the tongues of dogs. Obviously, this is not to be understood literally, but figuratively. Israel, in taking the land, killed hundreds of thousands of God's enemies. Similar imagery is found in Rev. 14:20: **Then the press was trampled outside the city, and blood flowed out of the press up to the horses' bridles for about 180 miles.** Also in Rev. 19:17–18: **Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out in a loud voice, saying to all the birds flying in mid-heaven, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God, so that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of commanders, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of their riders, and the flesh of everyone, both free and slave, small and great."** And in 1Kings 21:19: **"Have you murdered and also taken possession? In the place where the dogs licked Naboth's blood, the dogs will also lick your [Jezebel's] blood!"**

Application: Some people foolishly think that all Christian theology centers upon **Forgive your enemies** and **Do to others as you would have them do to you**. Although these passages have great meaning, they are not the end-all and be-all of Christian doctrine. There is a time for slaughter and war; there is a time for criminals to be executed. There is a time for God's people to kill so many of their enemies that they will wade through their blood to proceed from point A to point B. There is a time for God to illustrate His perfect righteousness and justice.

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The Procession of God

**They have seen Your solemn processions,
Elohim;
processions of my El my King into the holy
place.**

Psalm
68:24

**They have seen Your solemn processions, O
Elohim;
[they have seen] the processions of my God,
my King, into the holy place.**

**They see Your solemn processions, O God;
and they have seen the processions of my God, my King, to the holy place.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	They have seen Your solemn processions, Elohim; processions of my El my King into the holy place.
Septuagint	Your goings, O God, have been seen; the goings of my God, the king, in the sanctuary.

Significant differences: The verb *to see* is in the aorist passive indicative in the Greek; it is used in the active sense in the Hebrew. We have two 1st person singular suffixes in the second half of this verse in the Hebrew; but only one particle in the Greek to match these. The Latin matches the Hebrew. In any case, the differences are insignificant.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	We have seen crowds marching to your place of worship, our God and King.
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	God, they will see your people walking together.

¹⁵⁹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:23.

¹⁶⁰ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:23.

	They will see my God and my King leading his procession into the temple.
Good News Bible (TEV)	O God, your march of triumph is seen by all, the procession of God, my king, into his sanctuary.
<i>The Message</i>	See God on parade to the sanctuary, my God, my King on the march!
New Jerusalem Bible	Your processions, God, are for all to see, the processions of my God, of my king, to the sanctuary:...
New Living Testament	Your procession has come into view, O God— the procession of my God and King as he goes into the sanctuary.
Revised English Bible	Your processions, God, come into view, the processions of my God, my King in the sanctuary:...

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English <i>God's Word™</i>	We see your going, O God: even the going of my God, my King, into the holy place. Your festival processions, O God, can be seen by everyone. They are the processions for my God, my king, into the holy place.
HCSB	People have seen Your procession, God, the procession of my God, my King, in the sanctuary.
NET Bible®	They see your processions, O God — the processions of my God, my king, who marches along in holy splendor.
<i>The Scriptures</i> 1998	They have seen Your goings, O Elohim, The goings of my Ēl, my Sovereign, Into the set-apart place.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	They see Your goings, O God, even the [solemn processions] of my God, my King, into the sanctuary — in holiness.
<i>Updated Emphasized Bible</i>	They have seen Your progress [or, <i>procession</i>], O God, The progress [or, <i>procession</i>] of my GOD, my King, into the sanctuary;...
English Standard Version	Your procession is seen, O God, the procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary—.
New King James Version	They have seen Your procession, O God, The procession of my God, my King, into the sanctuary.
A Voice in the Wilderness	They have seen Your goings, O God; the goings of my Mighty God, my King, in the sanctuary.
Young's Updated LT	They have seen Your goings, O God, Goings of my God, my king, in the sanctuary.

What is the gist of this verse? Some set of people [those brought back from Bashan or from the depths of the seas] have seen God's procession to the sanctuary.

Psalm 68:24a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
râ`âh (רָאָה) [pronounced raw-AWH]	to see, to look, to look at, to view, to behold; to perceive, to understand, to learn, to know	3 rd person plural, Qal perfect	Strong's #7200 BDB #906
hălîykâh (הֲלִיכָה) [pronounced huhl-ee-KAW]	a going, progress; a solemn procession; a way; a traveling company	feminine plural noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1979 BDB #237

Psalm 68:24a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿĒlōhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Translation: *They have seen Your solemn processions, O Elohim;...* This verse may be why this is tied to the moving of the Ark. There were two processions where the Ark of God was to be moved, the first ending in tragedy and the second one being successful. One might include the Ark being moved from Philistia back to Israel (1Sam. 6–7).

It is not clear who is observing this solemn procession. This may reference back to those who are brought back from Bashan and those brought back from the depths of the seas. Recall, that we may be speaking of Israel, as those who had to first walk through the Sea of Reeds and then defeat the king of Bashan (essentially their first and last steps from Egypt to the edge of the Land of Promise); or, the other option is, we are speaking of Israel's enemies. It is obvious that Israelites would view this solemn procession; it makes less sense for Israel's enemies to be gathered to such an event.

In the next verse, David will speak of the musicians at this procession, and Barnes suggests¹⁶¹ that these are the ones observing the procession. Let me see if I can explain the concept of a parade: there are those who watch the parade and those who participate in the parade. Most of the time, we are speaking of two distinct, non-intersecting sets of people. If parade organizers determined that the only people who would observe their parade are those who are in the marching band within the parade, then the parade would be cancelled. The point I am belaboring here is, the people in this verse are those who are watching the parade; the people in the next verse are those who are participating in the parade; there is no overlap and there is no subset relationship between these two groups.

Psalm 68:24b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
hăliykâh (הֵלִיכָה) [pronounced <i>huhl-ee-KAW</i>]	<i>a going, progress; a solemn procession; a way; a traveling company</i>	feminine plural construct	Strong's #1979 BDB #237
ʾēl (אֵל) [pronounced <i>ALE</i>]	<i>God, God, mighty one, strong, hero</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #410 BDB #42
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced <i>MEH-lek</i>]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine singular noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
b ^e (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, at, by, near, on, with, before, in the presence of, upon, against, by means of, among, within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88

¹⁶¹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:24.

Psalm 68:24b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
qôdesh (קֹדֶשׁ) [pronounced koh-DESH]	holiness, sacredness, apartness, that which is holy, holy things	masculine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #6944 BDB #871

Possibly this means a sacred [holy, set apart] place; a sanctuary.

Translation:...[they have seen] the processions of my God, my King, into the holy place. If we are speaking of the Ark and if we are speaking of David moving the Ark into Jerusalem, then the *holy place* would be the tent which David erected for it.

Processions is in the plural here, possibly to refer to the two times which David attempted to move the Ark into Jerusalem. The other approach is, we are speaking of the Ark here as one procession, and, when our Lord returns, that will be His second procession (after destroying all of the unbelievers on this earth). I would not be surprised if David was thinking of the first theory while God the Holy Spirit was thinking of the second.

Went before singers;
after, those playing stringed instruments;
in a midst of young women sounding timbrels.

Psalm
68:25

The singers are in front [lit., *preceded*];
[and] after [them], [are] those who play
stringed instruments;
in the midst of young women playing timbrels.

The singers were in front of the procession, and after them were those playing stringed instruments;
in the midst of young women who played timbrels.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	Princes went before joined with singers, in the midst of young damsels playing on timbrels.
Masoretic Text	Went before singers; after, those playing stringed instruments; in a midst of young women sounding timbrels.
Peshitta	The princes went before, the singers followed after; among them were the damsels playing with timbrels.
Septuagint	The princes went first, next before the players on instruments, in the midst of damsels playing on timbrels.
Significant differences:	The most obvious difference is, the other ancient texts have the princes leading this procession.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	The singers come first, and then the musicians, surrounded by young women playing tambourines.
Good News Bible (TEV)	The singers are in front, the musicians are behind, in between are the young women beating the tambourines.
<i>The Message</i>	Singers out front, the band behind, maidens in the middle with castanets.
Revised English Bible	...in front the singers, with minstrels following, and in their midst girls beating tambourines.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	The makers of songs go before, the players of music come after, among the young girls playing on brass instruments.
HCSB	Singers lead the way, with musicians following; among them are young women playing tambourines.
NET Bible®	Singers walk in front; musicians follow playing their stringed instruments, in the midst of young women playing tambourines.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	The singers go in front, the players on instruments last; between them the maidens playing on tambourines.
<i>Updated Emphasized Bible</i>	In front are the singers, Behind are those who play the harp, And in the midst of damsels playing on timbrels.
MKJV	The singers went before, then the musicians came; among <i>them were</i> the virgins playing the timbrels.
New King James Version	The singers went before, the players on instruments <i>follow</i> after; Among <i>them were</i> the maidens playing timbrels.
NRSV	...the singers in front, the musicians last, between them girls playing tambourines:...
A Voice in the Wilderness	The singers went before, then those playing instruments followed; among them were the maidens playing the timbrels.
<i>Young's Literal Translation</i>	Singers have been before, Behind <i>are</i> players on instruments, In the midst virgins playing with timbrels.

What is the gist of this verse? David describes the procession, where singers are in the lead followed by those playing musical instruments, and there are young girls in the midst [of the parade? in between the two groups?] playing timbrels.

Psalm 68:25a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
qâdam (קָדַם) [pronounced kaw-DAHM]	<i>to precede, to go before; to get before; to anticipate; to do before; to rush on; to meet, to go to meet anyone; to bring when followed by a bêyth preposition</i>	3 rd person plural, Piel perfect	Strong's #6923 BDB #869
shîyr (שִׁיר) [pronounced sheer]	<i>singers, choir; professional singers; musicians</i>	masculine plural, Qal active participle	Strong's #7891 BDB #1010
The Greek, Latin and Syriac all have <i>princes</i> instead of <i>singers</i> .			
ʿachar (אַחַר) [pronounced ah-KHAHR]	<i>after, following, behind</i>	preposition	Strong's #310 BDB #29
nâgan (נָגַן) [pronounced naw-GAHN]	<i>those who play stringed instruments, ones that strike strings of a stringed instrument; minstrels, musician</i>	masculine plural, Qal active participle	Strong's #5059 BDB #618

Psalm 68:25a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
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The Englishman's Concordance of the New Testament calls this both a Qal participle and a Poel participle. I don't know that there is any real difference in this case.

Apart from this passage, *nâgan* only occurs in the Piel, and it is unclear as to how that would differ from the Qal with this word. The Piel generally indicates intensity, and one might propose that the Piel participle could refer to a professional musician or to one who is a virtuoso. However, we do not have instances of this word occurring in the Qal and the Piel in order to attempt to draw such a distinction. Furthermore, this being poetry, the Qal active participle may have simply sounded better.

Translation: *The singers are in front* [lit., *preceded*]; *[and] after [them], [are] those who play stringed instruments*;... David spoke of a procession leading into the holy place. Here, we have a description of the procession: the singers are in front After the singers came those who played stringed instruments.

We might theorize that the singers came first, because what they sang was significant. They would be singing, for instance, this particular psalm, and the words are powerful and meaningful. The words communicate divine viewpoint. Music is nice and it stirs the soul, but even God allowed for the music for these psalms to disappear from history, as that was not near as important as the meaning of these psalms.

It is very clear that the singers are in front of the procession. Although the verbiage allows for the musical instruments to be anywhere in the procession, including at the end, I suspect that they were right behind the singers, possibly on both sides of the Ark. An alternate view is, the singers were singing a capella, and the music played was unrelated and occurred at the end of the procession. Although the text allows for this, I don't believe that this is the way we are to understand these events.

Again, this seems to be in perfect accord with the second time that David moved the Ark and seems to parallel 1Chron. 15:16–22, 27–28. Now, interestingly enough, despite the detail of the description of this procession in Chronicles, female singers and timbrel players do not appear in the Chronicles description. This does not mean that we are speaking of different processions (although that could be the case) but that we are getting at best a 2nd hand account from an observer in Chronicles; and David has probably written this psalm prior to the procession, in anticipation for the procession, and so that this psalm could be performed at the procession. That two different views can be presented of the same procession is more likely than unlikely. However, an unlikely theory would be that, David wrote this for the 1st procession, which ended in disaster. This theory is flawed because David clearly understands much of the history of Israel in this psalm, which suggests that he had been studying the Scriptures (something true of the 2nd procession but not of the 1st). Secondly, if God the Holy Spirit is going to inspire David to write about either procession, even in advance, He is going to favor the 2nd procession which was successful because David understood Bible doctrine the second time through.

Another unlikely theory is, David saw the parade in his mind's eye when he wrote this psalm, and simply got some of the details wrong, as this psalm was written prior to the procession. Here's the deal: God the Holy Spirit inspired David to write this psalm; God the Holy Spirit does not get the details wrong. Even though there appear to be only masculine names given in the Chronicles account, that does not mean that they were the only ones involved. Also, realize, David is organizing this event. David is not going to organize an all-male event. That is not in his character. David would no more organize an all-male event (apart from war) than would he go to an all-male beach. An all-male beach is just stupid.

Psalm 68:25b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
tâvek ^e (תָּוֶק) [pronounced taw-VEK ^E]	<i>midst, among, middle</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #8432 BDB #1063
With the bēyth preposition, tâvek ^e can mean <i>in the middle of, in the midst of; into, among</i> .			
ʿălâmôwth (עַלְמוֹת) [pronounced guh-law-MOHTH]	<i>young women; soprano/falsetto singing</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #5961 BDB #761
This is simply the plural form of:			
ʿal ^e mâh (עַלְמָה) [pronounced ǵah ^l -MAW]	<i>virgin; girl of marriageable age; [possibly] a newly married woman, a young woman</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #5959 BDB #761
tâphaph (תִּפְפָּה) [pronounced taw-FAHF]	<i>sounding timbrels, beating [playing upon] [a drum]; timbrel players; percussionists</i>	feminine plural, Qal active participle	Strong's #8608 BDB #1074

Translation: ...in the midst of young women playing timbrels. If we have a plural suffix after *midst*, these women playing timbrels would have been in the middle of the procession; however, they are affixed to the construct *midst*, indicating that the singers and stringed instrument players were in their midst. So, it appears as though we have a lot of woman either in the midst of the procession playing timbrels; with singers out in front and those carrying stringed instruments in back. What makes the most sense to me is, these 3 groups are coordinated and all playing the same song at the same time (parades can be long enough for several marching bands).

Barnes gives us some historical perspective: *The word rendered “playing with timbrels” means to strike, to beat; and hence, to strike or beat upon a timbrel. A timbrel is a kind of drum, a tabret, or tambourine, usually beaten with the fingers. It is an instrument which has been in use from the remotest antiquity.*¹⁶²

The NET Bible® adds: *To celebrate a military victory, women would play tambourines (see Ex. 15:20 Judges 11:34 1Sam. 18:6).*¹⁶³ Given the fact that the previous verses deal with God destroying His enemies, the singing and celebration here is very apropos; it is the natural progression of things after a great victory.

Ideally speaking, we have studied the procession in 1Chron. 15 and now we are studying it here, and there seem to be some distinct differences. Maybe this psalm was really supposed to be written for a different procession?

Two Accounts of the Same Procession

1. By the very nature of a parade, two people can attend a parade and give entirely different descriptions

¹⁶² Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:25.

¹⁶³ *The Net Bible®*; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 68:25.

Two Accounts of the Same Procession

of the parade. By the same token, two people can give an account of the procession of the Ark of God, and differ in several details.

2. In Psalm 68:25, written prior to the event, David concentrates on the female singers in front and mentions the young women who are playing timbrels as well. David clearly appreciated the female gender and whether before or after the event, would have thought about the female performers more than the male performers. If David went to a beach today, he would come back recalling the variety of bikinis, but he might not have a clue as to the latest male fashions in swimwear.
3. Someone else observed the parade and noticed how many Levites were involved, from which branch, and what instruments they played. Although there may have been male and female players, this observer did not focus on gender, but more upon the music as the thing which stood out in his mind. Hundreds of years later, the writer of Chronicles incorporated this person's account of this event.
4. The description of this event being different does not mean that we are really speaking of two events or that one of the writers got the details wrong; they simply observed different things. Different things stood out to them.
5. David failed in the first procession because he did not know the doctrine of moving the Ark of God. Psalm 68 reveals a thorough knowledge of the history of Israel. Therefore, Psalm 68 would have been written by a David who knows Israel's history and knows the proper way to move the Ark because he has studied the Scriptures.
6. Okay, why do I bother even discussing this? There are 4 gospels, 2 written by those who were firsthand eyewitnesses, and 2 written by those who did not observe the events, but compiled a recollection of the events by speaking to those who observed them firsthand. Two of the accounts by the 2 eyewitnesses are remarkably different—Matthew and John. However, we are just getting the observations of two different men, who have different interests and different personalities, with different backgrounds and completely different professions, with very different vocabularies, who observe the same events. If their accounts were too similar, they would be suspect. That we have a different perspective offered in the gospels of the same set of events; that some of the events are discussed in detail by one writer, and not at all by another, is exactly what we should expect.
7. Why are the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) so similar? Mark was written by Mark who did not personally observe any of the events of the life of Christ and Luke was an historian (and a physician) who did not observe these events. Both men probably used the book of Matthew as source material; both men probably spoke to the same people concerning what these people observed. The result is, 3 gospels with many similarities and points of intersection.
8. Note how we began with Psalm 68 and 1Chron. 15, and we are suddenly discussing the gospels? The idea is, there are similarities that, if we understand them with the Old Testament, that we can apply what we learn to the New Testament gospel accounts.
9. One more tangent, but an extremely important one: *why 4 gospels? Why not just give one complete account and let it go at that?* Allow me to answer that below, with the next short doctrine:

These points do not guarantee that this is a psalm written by David to commemorate the moving of the Ark into Jerusalem, but I don't believe that there was a procession during David's time more important than that one.

One of the fascinating things about Scripture is, there are, on occasion, two or more accounts written about the same incident. Hyper critics disparage Scripture sometimes because these multiple accounts do not match detail for detail; however, if they were too similar, then these hyper critics would just claim that one copied his account from the first account.

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This actually leads us to the very reasonable question, *why are there 4 gospels?*

Why Are There Four Gospels?

1. There is no event in history more important than God coming in the flesh into human history.

Why Are There Four Gospels?

2. Obviously, to us, the most important event of His life on this earth is His death on the cross and His resurrection.
3. God clearly understands the importance of these events in His plan, and we have analogies to Jesus (Abraham offering up his son; the life of Samuel) and we have even pre-cross descriptions of the cross in greater detail than what we find in the gospels (Psalm 22 Isa. 53). Obviously, when the most important event of history occurs, God is going to make certain that it is recorded.
4. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that more than one person would be inspired to write about it. In fact, it is surprising that only 4 people felt called to record their experiences (however, bear in mind that the 12 Disciples were not writers; but they were more men of the earth).
5. God the Holy Spirit saw to it that there would be 4 widely disseminated gospels all written and disseminated within the 1st century A.D. What we do not have during that same time period, in a very hostile environment, are other writers and scholars saying, "This book written by Matthew is a lot of hooey; I was there; I saw what happened and he just made up a bunch of stuff!" We don't find that from 1st century literature nor do we find any accounts of those who disputed the gospel accounts.
6. Notice what we have today in a culture where a huge percentage of people believe in Jesus Christ—people writing books disputing the existence of God and disputing even our Lord's existence. In the 1st century, there was much more animosity toward believers in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ was so hated that He was executed on a cross. There was great scholarship in the era. If the facts of the gospels were to be disputed, then someone from the era would have written a book to dispute them. This is only logical! If we have books written against Christ in our day where being a Christian is not an offense for which we can be imprisoned (at least, not in the USA), then surely, *if there were valid reasons to dispute the facts of the gospels*, such books would have been written in the 1st century A.D. as well. It just never occurred to anyone of that era to simply blatantly lie and put it all down on parchment or on clay tablets for distribution. Too many people knew the truth at that time, whether they believed in Jesus Christ or not.
7. So, in the 1st century, there are 4 books about the life of Jesus Christ circulating along with thousands of evangelists and believers; and 0 books disputing the facts of the gospels, during a time when the world was quite hostile to Christians. This suggests that the gospels are factual.
8. That there are 4 different accounts of the life of our Lord, 2 of them from firsthand witnesses, also suggests that Jesus Christ was real and that He was Who He said He was (God). If 4 people wrote about an event, and we had manuscripts from close to that era during which the event took place, then we would conclude with almost 100% certainty that the event occurred. Most of what we know about ancient history is written by one man who did not observe the event, who lived at a time far removed from many of the events, whose existing manuscripts were copied hundreds of years after his time (like Josephus, for instance). We give such works a great deal of credibility; and should give the gospels even more credibility, given the time of their writing, given the antiquity of existing manuscripts, given that there are 4 gospels, and given that we do not have books written from that era which dispute the facts of the gospels. In this respect, the gospels have no equal in ancient history. If you are to trust any ancient event of history, then, logically, we should trust the gospels even more to provide accurate history.

What is quite interesting is to examine these gospels, recognizing that each is presented by a different human author, and each author has a different perspective, a different outlook, a different personality, a different writing style and a different vocabulary. In the Greek, John's writing stands out, as much of what he writes can be read by a 1st year Greek student. On the other hand, he seems to have understood what was the most important aspects of our Lord's ministry.

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In assemblies, bless Elohim Y^ehowah
from a fountain of Israel.

Psalm
68:26

Bless Elohim in the assemblies,
[and blessings to] Y^ehowah from the fountain
of Israel.

**Bless Jehovah God in the assemblies
and call for blessings to Jehovah from the fountain of Israel.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	In the churches bless God the Lord, from the fountains of Israel.
Masoretic Text	In assemblies, bless Elohim Y ^e howah from a fountain of Israel.
Peshitta	Bless God in the congregations, even the LORD, you that are of the fountain of Israel.
Septuagint	Praise God in the congregations, the Lord from the fountains of Israel.
Significant differences:	<i>Fountain</i> in the Hebrew and Syriac is in the singular; it is found in the plural in the Greek and Latin.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	They come shouting, "People of Israel, praise the LORD God!"
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	Say good things about God among all the people there! All you people of Israel, (praise) the LORD!"
Good News Bible (TEV)	"Praise God in the meeting of his people; praise the LORD, all you descendants of Jacob!"

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	Give praise to God in the great meeting; even the Lord, you who come from the fountain of Israel.
Complete Apostles' Bible	Praise God in the congregations, the Lord from the fountains of Israel.
God's Word™	Thank God, the Lord, the source of Israel, with the choirs.
HCSB	Praise God in the assemblies; <i>praise</i> the LORD from the fountain of Israel.
JPS (Tanakh)	In assemblies bless God, the LORD, O you who are from the fountain of Israel.
NET Bible®	In your large assemblies praise God, the LORD, in the assemblies of Israel!

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Bless, give thanks <i>and</i> gratefully praise God in full congregations, even the Lord, O you who are from [Jacob] the fountain of Israel.
<i>Updated Emphasized Bible</i>	In the congregation, bless God, My Lord from among the called of Israel.
Hebrew Names Version	"Bless God in the congregations, even the Lord in the assembly of Yisra'el!"
A Voice in the Wilderness	Bless God in the congregations, the Lord, from the fountain of Israel.
WEB	"Bless God in the congregations, Even the Lord in the assembly of Israel!"
Young's Updated LT	In assemblies, bless God, The Lord—from the fountain of Israel.

What is the gist of this verse? The assembly of Israel (presumably) is called upon to bless God.

Psalm 68:26a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
maq ^e hêlôwth (מִקְהָלוֹת) [pronounced mahk ^e -hay-LOHTH]	<i>assemblies, congregations [particularly, those which praise God], choirs</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #4721 BDB #875
Although this word occurs only here, we have the masculine plural form in Psalm 26:12 and this word has enough cognates to insure the accuracy of this translation.			
bârak ^e (בָּרַךְ) [pronounced baw-RAHK ^e]	<i>invoke God, praise, celebrate, bless [God]; bless [men], invoke blessings; to bless [as God or man] and therefore cause to prosper or make happy; salute anyone [with a blessing]; curse</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Piel imperative	Strong's #1288 BDB #138
Ēlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Translation: [Bless Elohim in the assemblies](#),... David calls for God to be blessed from the assemblies. Now, we may reasonably assume that God's character and grace are being so recognized, or the psalmist is asking for the congregation to recognizes God's grace and character.

I would think that the assemblies would refer to the people of Israel—in particular, those gathered on occasions such as the moving of the Ark (such Israelites would understand the importance of that).

Psalm 68:26b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
YHWH (יהוה) [pronunciation is possibly yhoh-WAH]	transliterated variously as <i>Jehovah, Yahweh, Y^ehowah</i>	proper noun	Strong's #3068 BDB #217
min (מִן) [pronounced min]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
mâqôwr (מִקְוֵה) [pronounced maw-KOHR]	<i>spring, fountain; source of monstrous blood; flow of blood; figuratively of eye</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #4726 BDB #881
Yis ^e râ'êl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced yis-raw-ALE]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975

Translation:...[and blessings to] Y^ehowah from the fountain of Israel. I first have assumed that we have an ellipsis here, and that there is more here than simply saying that, for whatever reason, there are fountains of Israel. However, even with that understanding, we are left to determine the meanings of the fountains (actually, *fountain*).

Now, in much of Scripture, fountain can refer to water, and water can mean truth or to refreshment (often from truth). Jesus Christ is, of course, the fountain of life, and He spoke of Himself in that way as well ("If any man is thirsty, let him come to me and I will quench his thirst; I will give of the everlasting water so that he never thirsts again" —this is from memory, and certainly not a direct quote). Israel would provide information about Jesus Christ, and they would, in that way, be a fountain of knowledge and truth. The problem with my original interpretation here is, it does not seem to really fit the context and I do not consider the preposition (*from*).

Another interpretation of this verbiage is, being of the stock of Israel, being of the river of Israel; having one's spiritual origins in Israel. In the KJV, in the margin, we read *You who are of*, a phrase whose sense Barnes calls *undoubtedly correct*. He writes: *The appeal is to the Hebrew people represented as descending from a common stock or ancestor – Jacob or Israel – as a stream or river flows from a fountain. Compare Isa. 48:1 (Hear this, O house of Jacob, who are called by the name of Israel, and who came from the waters of Judah, who swear by the name of the LORD and confess the God of Israel, but not in truth or right); and Isa. 51:1 (Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, you who seek the LORD: look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug). All the descendants of Jacob or Israel are thus called on to unite in solemnly praising the Lord their God.*¹⁶⁴

One would not apply this simply to biological lineage, but to spiritual lineage, being of the spiritual fountain of Israel. That is, these promises and assurances apply to those who are regenerate in Israel.

Gill writes: *[even] the Lord, from the fountain of Israel; or, "the Lord, who is of the fountain of Israel" (w); that is, whose natural descent is from Israel, or Jacob, as Christ's was, according to the flesh, Rom. 9:5 (To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen); though some (Aben Ezra and Kimchi) take this to be a description of the posterity of Jacob, those that go out from the fountain of Israel.*¹⁶⁵

Here's the problem: to what or to whom does the *fountain of Israel* refer?

The Fountain of Israel		
Commentator	Translation/Interpretation	Comments
Barnes	Bless Elohim in the assemblies, even Jehovah, you who are of the fountain of Israel. Israelites are called upon here to bless the Lord, and these Israelites are said to be <i>of the fountain of Israel</i> .	This is a credible explanation for this verse. Also, Barnes' interpretation will seem to be borne out by the verses which follow, which name specific tribes of Israel.
Gill	Bless God in the assemblies, [and blessings to] Y ^e howah [who is] of the fountain of Israel. The idea is, Jehovah is actually going to be from Israel; Jehovah God will be born <i>from</i> the fountain of Israel.	This is the most reasonable way for us to understand this verse; it takes into account the ellipsis (which ellipsis is <i>not</i> required for this interpretation to work), and, most importantly, this interpretation takes into account the preposition <i>from</i> , indicating the Jehovah God will have His human origins in Israel.

¹⁶⁴ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:26 (edited).

¹⁶⁵ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:26.

The Fountain of Israel		
Commentator	Translation/Interpretation	Comments
Kukis	Bless Elohim in the assemblies, [and blessings to] Y*howah from the fountain of Israel. It is Jehovah God Who is the found of Israel, referring to a fountain of truth (and possibly of blessing).	The problem with my original interpretation is, I do not really consider the preposition <i>from</i> . Without this little preposition, my interpretation might have merit; however, with this preposition, it does not.
Spurgeon	<i>"Bless God in the congregations; even the Lord, from the fountain of Israel." A parallel passage to that in Deborah's song: "They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord." The seat of the ark Would be the fountain of refreshing for all the tribes, and there they were to celebrate His praises. If the Lord overflows with grace, we should overflow with gratitude. Ezekiel saw an ever-growing stream flow from under the altar, and issue out from under the threshold of the sanctuary, and wherever it flowed it gave life: let as many as have quaffed this life-giving stream glorify "the fountain of Israel." ¹⁶⁶</i>	This fountain of Israel flows throughout to give life. If this verse stood alone, apart from any context, then Spurgeon's approach might be seen as reasonable; however, I don't know that this understanding really fits in with the context of this verse.

Both Gill and Barnes seem to have the right approach; they both take into account the min preposition (*from*). Perhaps David was thinking along the lines of Barnes when he wrote this, and God the Holy Spirit meant for us to understand this as Gill did.

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There Benjamin [is the] least, treading them down;
princes of Judah [are] their heap [of stones];
princes of Zebulun, princes of Naphtali.

Psalm
68:27

Then [or, *there*], insignificant Benjamin has dominion over them;
the princes of Judah [are] their means of execution [or, *means of control*; or, *are in a group*],
[along] the princes of Zebulun [and] the princes of Naphtali.

Then, the insignificant tribe Benjamin will lead them,
and the leaders of Judah are in their group,
then the leaders of Zebulun and Naphtali.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate

There is Benjamin a youth, in ecstasy of mind. The princes of Juda are their leaders: the princes of Zabulon, the princes of Nephthali.

¹⁶⁶ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 68:26.

Masoretic Text	There Benjamin [is the] least, treading them down; princes of Judah [are] their heap [or stones]; princes of Zebulun, princes of Naphtali.
Peshitta	There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah, and their governors, the princes of Zebulun and the princes of Naphtali.
Septuagint	There is Benjamin the younger one in ecstasy, the princes of Judah their rulers, the princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali.
Significant differences:	As you can read, the description which goes with Benjamin is different in the ancient translations, although the Greek and Latin agree that he is in ecstasy. The Hebrew is also difficult when describing Judah, although the other ancient translations agree that we are speaking of their rulers or governors.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	The small tribe of Benjamin leads the way, followed by the leaders from Judah. Then come the leaders from Zebulun and Naphtali.
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	Benjamin, the youngest, will go first. The leaders of Judah will make a noise (praising God). (Then will come) the leaders of Zebulun and Naphtali.
Good News Bible (TEV)	First comes Benjamin, the smallest tribe, then the leaders of Judah with their group, followed by the leaders of Zebulun and Naphtali.
New Jerusalem Bible	Benjamin was there, the youngest in front, the princes of Judah in bright-coloured robes, the princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali.
New Living Testament	Look, the little tribe of Benjamin leads the way. Then comes a great throng of rulers from Judah and all the rulers of Zebulun and Naphtali.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	There is little Benjamin ruling them, the chiefs of Judah and their army, the rulers of Zebulun and the rulers of Naphtali.
God's Word™	Benjamin, the youngest, is leading them, next the leaders of Judah with their noisy crowds, then the leaders of Zebulun, then the leaders of Naphtali.
NET Bible®	There is little Benjamin, their ruler, and the princes of Judah in their robes [The MT reads rigmatam, which many derive from ragam ("to kill by stoning") and translates, "[in] their heaps," that is, in large numbers], along with the princes of Zebulun and the princes of Naphtali.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	There is little Benjamin in the lead [in the procession], the princes of Judah and their company, the princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali.
A Conservative Version	There [is] little Benjamin their ruler, the rulers of Judah [and] their council, the rulers of Zebulun, the rulers of Naphtali.
Updated <i>Emphasized Bible</i>	There is Benjamin, the Diminutive — ruling them, The princes of Judah — their throng, The princes of Zebulun, The princes of Naphtali.
English Standard Version	There is Benjamin, the least of them, in the lead, the princes of Judah in their throng, the princes of Zebulun, the princes of Naphtali.

Updated Bible Version 2.11 There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the leaders of Judah and their multitude, the leaders of Zebulun, and the leaders of Naphtali.

Young's Literal Translation There is little Benjamin their ruler, Heads of Judah their defense, Heads of Zebulun—heads of Naphtali.

What is the gist of this verse? Some of the tribes of Israel are named.

I want you to bear in mind the context, which is either that Jehovah God is *from the fountain [lineage] of Israel* or that those who are called upon to bless Jehovah God are *from the fountain [lineage] of Israel*. The greater context appears to be one of war and bloodshed, back in vv. 21–23.

Although I am beginning to have greater confidence in my understanding of the parts of this psalm (very much because of the work of Barnes, Gill and Spurgeon), I am still having some difficulty pulling the entire psalm together as a contiguous whole. Most of the first half of this psalm could be matched up with the history of Israel; however, with v. 20, we seem to be covering material which is explicable, but I am having problems grasping the overarching theme.

Psalm 68:27a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
shâm (שָׁם) [pronounced shawm]	<i>there; at that time, then; therein, in that thing</i>	adverb	Strong's #8033 BDB #1027
Bin ^e yâmîn (בִּנְיָמִן) [pronounced bin-yāw-MIN]	transliterated <i>Benjamin</i> , it means <i>son of [my] right hand</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #1144 BDB #122
tsâ'îyr (צָעִיר) [pronounced tzaw-GEER]	<i>little, insignificant, young, youngest, least</i>	masculine singular adjective	Strong's #6810 BDB #859
Owen lists this as an adverb, but it appears to modify <i>Benjamin</i> . BDB does not present this word as an adverb, so my guess is, this is a typo on the part of BDB.			
râdâh (רָדָה) [pronounced raw-DAW]	<i>to tread with the feet; to rule, to have dominion over, to subdue; to take possession of</i>	Qal active participle with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #7287 BDB #921

Translation: *Then* [or, *there*], *insignificant Benjamin has dominion over them*;... Recall that we were speaking of a procession, and it is possible that, what is meant here is, the smallest tribe of Benjamin leads the procession. Given that David has made mention of the musicians and singers in the procession, it is reasonable for him to mention those who represent the tribes who also walk in this procession. Furthermore, this could be reasonably tied back to the phrase *fountain of Israel*, which the tribe of Benjamin is from. However, there is probably more to this in meaning; e.g., the tribe of Benjamin was the ruling tribe for some time (at least, under Saul).

We are speaking of a procession, which suggests, perhaps, that the tribe of Benjamin was in the lead. A problem with this interpretation, which is not in any way, at odds with the Hebrew words found here, is that, David is the author of this psalm, and the tribe of Judah has become predominant. Benjamin was the ruling tribe, but not for the previous decade or so.

Barnes suggests¹⁶⁷ that the tribe of Benjamin was predominant in this procession, but that just seems unlikely to me. Allowing representatives from that tribe to go first is simply graciousness on the part of David.

We have a word used here which is given a myriad of translations because this word is found only here. Spurgeon suggests¹⁶⁸ that the significance of this word is in parallel to the *princes* of Judah, Issachar and Zebulun. That is, one leader of Benjamin leads this parade, and that the word here simply refers to his leadership position within this tribe. This is a reasonable explanation, and is more or less in line with the ancient translations given this rare word. In other words, there is one leader from the tribe of Benjamin who marches in this procession, who represents the tribe of Benjamin. I will cover this word in greater detail in the next section.

Gill, who is not a dispensationalist, keeps mixing the Church Age into this, saying things like, *[Benjamin] is "their ruler"; that is, in the congregations or churches, where he was a ruler; or in the procession, the triumphal progress of Christ in Judea, and in the Gentile world, by the ministry of the word.*¹⁶⁹ Gill's confusion about such things is one reason which I do not quote his commentary much in this psalm.

Now, what Gill¹⁷⁰ and others point out is, Benjamin is the smallest tribe, having been wiped out to practically nothing back in Judges 20 and Benjamin is the youngest son of Jacob—two reasons to speak of this as the least of the tribes (despite the fact that they were the ruling tribe for about 40 years). We have several passages which allude to the smallness or to the insignificance of the tribe of Benjamin: Gen. 42:32 Judges 20:35 21:6–25 1Sam. 9:21.

Gill does point out something which is an interesting parallel. Paul, originally Saul of Tarsus, is from the tribe of Benjamin (Rom. 11:1); and God renamed him Paul (Acts 7:58 2Cor. 10:10), which means *little, least* (Paul calls himself the *least* of the Apostles). The idea is, Paul comes from the *least* of the tribes of Israel, that he is the *last* Apostle called, and that he is the *Apostle of Grace*. However, Paul taught primarily Church Age doctrine, making him the greatest of the Apostles, as our understanding of the age that we are in comes from him (this does not mean that we study Pauline epistles exclusively). Gill¹⁷¹ sees this psalm as being prophetic of Paul. Obviously, this is not what David had in mind when he wrote this psalm. However, perhaps this is God the Holy Spirit winking at us, placing this little tidbit deep into confusing psalm, not as a prophetic note, per se, but suggesting that God does know the end from the beginning. I see it more as God's sense of humor. The parallels are there, they are intentional (by God the Holy Spirit and not by David), but they are to be taken more as a sly wink than as an outright Church Age prophecy.¹⁷²

I may theorize that we will see the tribes in some sort of a chronological order (Benjamin as the first ruling tribe and Judah as the second); or that we begin with the first royal tribe which begins to conquer the enemies of Israel followed by the second royal tribe to conquer the land; however, two more tribes are named in this verse, which do not fit into that hypothesis. Or we could suggest that Benjamin and Judah are mentioned here as representative of all the tribes, little Benjamin from central Israel, and the ruling tribe of Judah from the far south, and two more tribes from the far north are thrown in. The problem with that hypothesis is, we would expect to see the tribes Dan, Judah and, perhaps, Reuben listed, as these would be from the farthest north, farthest south and farthest east. And maybe I am trying to affix too much meaning to the tribes which are specifically mentioned here.

McGee also makes some comments here, which stray somewhat from the topic, but need to be said: *These verses are talking about the children of Israel. There are those today who believe that Great*

¹⁶⁷ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:27.

¹⁶⁸ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 68:27.

¹⁶⁹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:27.

¹⁷⁰ Gill actually says that this is *not* the reason Benjamin is called the *least* of the tribes. Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:27.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Again, I don't believe that there are any prophecies concerning the Church Age to be found in the Age of Israel.

Britain is the ten lost tribes of Israel. Perhaps they think little Benjamin really refers to Big Ben in London. May I say to you that there are interpretations that are as wild as that toya. Little Benjamin simply means the tribe of Benjamin. It does not mean anything else. But notice that little Benjamin has a great God.¹⁷³

Psalm 68:27b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
sar (שָׂר) [pronounced sar]	chieftain, chief, ruler, official, captain, prince, leader, commander	masculine plural construct	Strong's #8269 BDB #978
Y ^e hûwdâh (יְהוּדָה) [pronounced y ^e hoo-DAW]	possibly means <i>to praise, to be praised</i> ; and is transliterated Judah	masculine proper noun/location	Strong's #3063 BDB #397
rig ^e mâh (רִגְמָה) [pronounced rihg ^e -MAW]	heap [of stones]; crowd [of people]; a band, a company; execution stones; means of execution; means of control	feminine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine plural suffix	Strong's #7277 BDB #920

The meaning of this word is more difficult to ascertain; it is based upon the verb which means *to execute by stoning*. Strong's #7275 BDB #920. Perhaps this means *execution stones* or *means of execution* or *means of control*.

Although the NET Bible® has *in their robe* and the NJB has *in their bright-coloured robes*, I am unable to find any Hebrew words for *robes* or for *garments* which are closer than having one consonant in common. The Greek and Latin render this as *their leaders*; and, again, I cannot find a Hebrew word which means *leader, ruler* which is at all similar to rig^emâh (רִגְמָה) [pronounced rihg^e-MAW]. However, I took this word to possibly mean *means of control*, which is not a far distance from *leader, ruler*. At the very least, David does impress us with his extraordinary vocabulary.

sar (שָׂר) [pronounced sar]	chieftain, chief, ruler, official, captain, prince, leader, commander	masculine plural construct	Strong's #8269 BDB #978
Z ^e bûwlûn (זְבוּלֹן) [pronounced z ^e b-oo-LOON]	exalted, honored; transliterated Zebulun	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #2074 BDB #259
sar (שָׂר) [pronounced sar]	chieftain, chief, ruler, official, captain, prince, leader, commander	masculine plural construct	Strong's #8269 BDB #978
Naph ^e tâlîy (נַפְתָּלִי) [pronounced nahf ^e -taw-EE]	wrestling; possibly cord, thread; twisted; transliterated Naphtali	masculine singular proper noun	Strong's #5321 BDB #836

Translation: ...the princes of Judah [are] their means of execution [or, means of control; or, are in a group], [along] the princes of Zebulun [and] the princes of Naphtali. It appears to me that these other three tribes are subservient or under the tribe of Benjamin. Again, one meaning may be that the princes of these tribes followed behind; and the other meaning is, the princes of these tribes were subservient to the tribe of Benjamin.

¹⁷³ J. Vernon McGee, *Psalms Chapters 42–89*, ©1991 by J. Vernon McGee; Thomas Nelson, Inc.; p. 118.

Perhaps the reference to the *princes* of this or that tribe indicates that a chosen few from every tribe walked within the procession as representatives of their tribe. It is possible that representatives from 4 tribes were all who marched in this procession, and that these represented all of the tribes of Israel; or, it is possible that David simply chose not to name each and every tribe.

One might guess that these other 3 tribes were involved in the enforcement of the laws, given the meaning of the verbal cognate for *rig^emâh* above.

There is one particular word here which causes us a great deal of trouble when it comes to understanding this verse: *rig^emâh* (רִגְמָהּ) [pronounced *rihg^e-MAW*], a word which occurs only here, and its verbal cognate means *to execute by stoning*. Obviously, this is problematic, so let's see how others have translated and interpreted this verse (which we will place into a context).

In assemblies, bless God, The Lord—from the fountain of Israel.

There is little Benjamin their ruler, Heads of Judah their **rig^emâh**, Heads of Zebulun—heads of Naphtali.

Your God has commanded your strength, Be strong, O God, this You have wrought for us (Psalm 68:26–28).

The idea appears to be that, we have a procession of people, and some of the tribes are identified here.

Interpreting *rig^emâh* in Psalm 68:27

Translation	Interpretation
There is Benjamin a youth, in ecstasy of mind. The princes of Judah are their leaders : the princes of Zabulon, the princes of Nephthali (Latin Vulgate).	As I have pointed out many times in the past, in the psalms, the Greek and Latin tend to agree, even when in opposition to the Masoretic text. The word in question is rendered <i>their leaders</i> in the Latin.
There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the princes of Judah, their governors , the princes of Zebulun and the princes of Naphtali (Peshitta).	This makes a great deal of sense: there is a procession of those referred to in this psalm, and they include the tribe of Benjamin and their ruler; Judah and the governors of Judah.
There is Benjamin the younger one in ecstasy, the princes of Judah their rulers , the princes of Zabulon, the princes of Nephthali (LXX).	The Septuagint has Benjamin in amazement or ecstasy, which is a departure from the Masoretic text. Judah is listed as their <i>rulers</i> , even though that appears to be applied to the tribe of Benjamin in the MT. The idea appears to be that Judah is marching with their rulers in this procession.
There is little Benjamin ruling them, the chiefs of Judah and their army , the rulers of Zebulun and the rulers of Naphtali (BBE).	Here, we seem to have two paths to the verbal cognate of <i>rig^emâh</i> : first, we are dealing with a number of people (a <i>throng</i> or a <i>multitude</i>); and we are dealing with those who might be involved in enforcing capital punishment.
Benjamin, the youngest, is leading them, next the leaders of Judah with their noisy crowds , then the leaders of Zebulun, then the leaders of Naphtali (God's Word™).	The idea of a number of people is conveyed by God's Word™, and they add the idea that this multitude is noisy.
There is little Benjamin with their ruler, the leaders of Judah and their multitude , the leaders of Zebulun, and the leaders of Naphtali (MKJV).	This is the most common interpretation of <i>rig^emâh</i> , although it is decidedly unclear where this interpretation comes from.

Interpreting Rig ^e mâh in Psalm 68:27	
Translation	Interpretation
There is little Benjamin, their ruler, and the princes of Judah in their robes, along with the princes of Zebulun and the princes of Naphtali (NET Bible®).	Both the Message and the NET Bible® translate rig ^e mâh to mean robes, although I don't follow their reasoning for doing so.
There [is] Benjamin, the least of them, in their lead; princes of Judah in their throng; princes of Zebulun princes of Naphtali (Owen).	Interestingly enough, Owen, who is generally quite literal, inserts the preposition <i>in</i> twice where it does not occur.
There is little Benjamin, their ruler, The princes of Judah, their council, The princes of Zebulun, and the princes of Naphtali (WEB).	This is one way to solve the problem; simply say that the princes of Judah are a part of the council of Israel, whatever that is.
The idea that rig ^e mâh refers to a <i>multitude</i> or <i>throng</i> of people is not completely removed from its verbal cognate. Its verbal cognate means <i>to stone, to heap stones upon someone</i> ; and this noun might refer to the <i>number</i> of stones used in a heap.	
In support of this interpretation, Barnes writes: <i>The Hebrew word here, rigmâh, means crowd, throng, band. It never means "council" [which is how this word is translated in the KJV]. The idea is, evidently, that large numbers of the tribe of Judah attended - that the "princes" or leaders were accompanied by throngs of their own people; in allusion to the fact that Judah was one of the largest of the tribes of Israel.</i> ¹⁷⁴	
I experimented with the idea that this noun might refer to execution in some way, or to a nation being controlled, to some extent, by the law, which includes execution. However, that did not seem to really fit the context well (Then [or, there], insignificant Benjamin has dominion over them; the princes of Judah [are] their means of execution [or, means of control; or, are in a group], [along] the princes of Zebulun [and] the princes of Naphtali).	
On the other hand, if we could derive from the verb the sense of control as in leadership, then this would fit reasonably well with the context.	
As has happened in other passages, I don't believe that I can narrow the meaning of rig ^e mâh down to a medical certainty, but I believe understanding it to refer either to some sort of leadership or to a larger group (in contrast to Benjamin, which is the smallest) is reasonable.	
Spurgeon simplifies this. He indicates that the word refers to a particular ruler or leader, who is called by that name (which is in line with the other ancient versions); and that Benjamin, being so decimated now, had but one principle leader; in contrast to Judah, Issachar and Zebulun, who have several princes ruling over them instead. ¹⁷⁵	

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This would be an interesting turn of events in Israel, as the tribe of Judah was thought to supplant the tribe of Reuben as the ruling tribe; and then, out of nowhere, the little tribe of Benjamin takes the lead. Perhaps this is David acting graciously, allowing those from the tribe of Benjamin to march first in a procession of tribes, and perhaps this is all that David means here.

Zebulun and Naphtali are northern tribes, and perhaps they are brought in here as representatives of the other tribes of Israel. Judah was mentioned, as Judah would reasonably be thought to lead (which it did); and the other two tribes were simply added as representative—or so is my initial theory.

¹⁷⁴ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:27.

¹⁷⁵ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 68:27.

Barnes comments on the mention of these two tribes: *These were remote or border tribes, and they seem to be mentioned here to show that all the tribes were represented; that is, that this was a national celebration. The fact that these tribes are mentioned as being represented on the occasion, proves that this psalm was composed before the revolt of the ten tribes, and the formation of the kingdom of Israel; that is, as “early” as the time of Solomon. This increases the probability that the psalm was written by David.*¹⁷⁶

Gill suggests¹⁷⁷ that Peter, Andrew, James and John, Philip and Nathaniel are Apostles from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun (Matt. 4:13–22). That passage indicates that they certainly lived and worked the Sea of Galilee, which suggests that they might be of those two tribes (this assumes that some from the northern tribes returned to this area after being dispersed in 721 B.C.).¹⁷⁸ Again, this is certainly not David’s intention to look into the future and tells us of the origins of the Apostles; but, this could be God the Holy Spirit winking at us once again.

Bear in mind, this interpretation is quite interesting, and it is possible the God the Holy Spirit threw this in just to mess with us; but David obviously did not have anything like this in mind when he wrote these words.

Psalm 68:27 reads: **Then [or, there], insignificant Benjamin has dominion over them; the princes of Judah [are] their means of execution [or, means of control; or, are in a group], [along] the princes of Zebulun [and] the princes of Naphtali.** As I went through this verse, I came up with a number of questions, and some moderately satisfactory answers:

Questions and Answers Concerning Psalm 68:27	
Questions	Answers
Why is the tribe of Benjamin listed as the preeminent tribe?	Benjamin is the smallest tribe, yet they became the first ruling tribe of Israel. David graciously allows them to go first in the procession, even though he supplanted the Sauline dynasty.
Why is the tribe of Judah mentioned second?	Judah is the ruling tribe of Israel and logically first in this procession. However, because David had Benjamin go first, Judah is therefore second.
What does the word <i>rig'mâh</i> mean?	This is unclear; ancient translations understand this word to mean <i>leader</i> of some sort; based upon its cognate verb, we might see this word as meaning <i>a means of control</i> or as a <i>group</i> .
Why do we find two miscellaneous tribes thrown in here?	Perhaps these tribes are simply representatives from the northern kingdom, both from the far north, which pull in, so to speak, the tribes between themselves and Judah.
What is the significance of this verse in context?	In the previous verse, we have a reference to the <i>fountain of Israel</i> , which refers back to the <i>origins</i> or <i>lineage</i> of Israel. Some of the tribes who came from the lineage of Israel are named here, relative to their place in the procession.
Why are only 4 tribes named?	It is possible that the Apostles came from these 4 tribes. However, this is not a prophecy about the Apostles, but somewhat of a wink from God the Holy Spirit, who knows the end from the beginning.

I must admit to not being completely satisfied with the answers that I have provided here.

¹⁷⁶ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:27.

¹⁷⁷ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:27.

¹⁷⁸ Naphtali and Zebulun are among the *lost tribes of Israel*. However, we have no way of knowing whether or not some of them occupied their original territories in the time of our Lord.

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One of the things which occurred to me was, perhaps the territories controlled by these tribes represent somewhat the order of our Lord's life. Interestingly enough, these regions are significant, but not in the specific order given. Our Lord was born in Bethlehem, which is in Judah. The child was presented in the Temple, in Jerusalem (Luke 2:22–24), and Jerusalem was a city originally on the border of Judah and Benjamin. Jesus was raised in Nazareth, which I believe would have been in southern Zebulun and much of His public ministry occurred near the Sea of Galilee, which would have been in Issachar (this is where He called most of His disciples). So, it is interesting that these are the important areas related to our Lord, but they do not really fall in the same order in our Lord's life as these princes march. In any case, it is interesting that God the Holy Spirit chose for these to be the tribes named, who occupied areas which are significant in the life of our Lord.

At the very least, we may understand that these are 4 of the tribes in this procession (these tribes are represented in the procession by their leaders; the entire tribe is not marching); and that the probable order is given. Beyond these things, it is difficult to ascertain exactly what David is trying to get across to us.

I must say that, from the outset, no way did I anticipate spending 6 pages discussing this particular verse.

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God Will Subjugate His Enemies

**Mandated your Elohim your strength;
Strengthen, O Elohim, that You have done for
us.**

Psalms
68:28

**Your Elohim commands your strength [or,
protection, glory] [possibly, Summon Your
strength, O God];
make secure [or, strong], O Elohim, that which
you have done for us.**

**Your God mandates you to be strong;
Further strengthen and secure, O God, that which you have done on our behalf.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate
Masoretic Text

Command your strength, O God confirm, O God, what you have done in us.
Mandated your Elohim your strength;
Strengthen, O Elohim, that You have done for us.

Septuagint

O God, command your strength: strengthen, O God, this which you have done in us.

Significant differences:

These translations seem to be quite similar to the Hebrew, although understanding what is being conveyed is a whole other matter. It appears as though the Greek and Latin present the first verb as a 2nd person masculine singular imperative; the Hebrew presents it as a 3rd person masculine singular perfect.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)
Good News Bible (TEV)

Our God, show your strength! Show us once again.
Your God sent the power (that gave you help).
God, be powerful (again) as you did (in past times) for us,...
Show your power, O God, the power you have used on our behalf...

New Jerusalem Bible	Take command, my God, as befits your power, the power, God, which you have wielded for us.
New Living Testament	Summon your might, O God. Display your power, O God, as you have in the past.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	O God, send out your strength; the strength, O God, with which you have done great things for us,...
God's Word™	Your God has decided you will be strong. Display your strength, O God, as you have for us before.
HCSB	Your God has decreed your strength. Show Your strength, God, You who have acted on our behalf.
JPS (Tanakh)	Your God has ordained strength for you, the strength, O God, which You displayed for us....
NET Bible®	God has decreed that you will be powerful. O God, you who have acted on our behalf, demonstrate your power,...

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Your God has commanded your strength [your might in His service and impenetrable hardness to temptation]. O God, display Your might <i>and strengthen what</i> You have wrought for us!
<i>Updated Emphasized Bible</i>	You God has commanded [some codices (the Aramaic, Septuagint, Syriac and Vulgate) read <i>Command, O God</i>] <i>your strength, —</i> The strength O God, which You have wrought for us.
Hebrew Names Version	Your God has commanded your strength. Strengthen, God, that which you have done for us.
NRSV	Summon your might, O God; show your strength, O God, as you have done for us before.
Young's Updated LT	Your God has commanded your strength, Be strong, O God, this You have done for us.

What is the gist of this verse? I think what is being conveyed here is, God is telling us to be strong (which often means to be strong *in Him* or *by means of Him*) and that we can depend upon Him to back us up with His strength.

Psalm 68:28a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
tsâvâh (צַוָּה) [pronounced tsaw-VAW]	to commission, to mandate, to lay charge upon, to give charge to, charge, command, order	3 rd person masculine singular, Piel perfect	Strong's #6680 BDB #845
ʾĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohîm	masculine plural noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Psalm 68:28a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
The LXX, Syriac, Targum and Vulgate read <i>Command, O God</i> . Some Hebrew manuscripts also have this rendering, according to the NIV Study Bible. ¹⁷⁹ Most Hebrew manuscripts, however, read <i>Your God has summoned power for you</i> .			
ʿôz (ֹז) [pronounced gohz]	<i>strength, might; firmness, defense, refuge, protection; splendor, majesty, glory praise</i>	masculine singular noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5797 BDB #738

Translation: *Your Elohim commands your strength* [or, *protection, glory*] [possibly, *Summon Your strength, O God*];... This sounds to me as if God is commanding us to be strong; God has mandated our strength (assuming, reasonably, that the 2nd person masculine singular suffix applies to us). Realize that this is all a grace operation; that is, God does not command us to do something that we are unable to do. God gives us the grace resources to be strong.

Psalm 68:28b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿâzaz (אָזַז) [pronounced gaw-ZAHZ]	<i>to strengthen, to make strong; to make secure; to become strong, to be made strong; to be strong, robust, powerful</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative; with the voluntative hê	Strong's #5810 BDB #738
ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43
zûw (זוּ) [pronounced zoo]	<i>this; which, that, where</i>	both a demonstrative and relative pronoun; undeclinable	Strong's #2098 BDB #262
pâʿal (פָּעַל) [pronounced paw-ĠAHL]	<i>to do, to make, to construct, to fabricate, to prepare</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal perfect	Strong's #6466 BDB #821
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^e)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 1 st person plural suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510

Translation: *...make secure* [or, *strong*], *O Elohim, that which you have done for us*. This is an interesting phrase here. First, I should point out that we have a *paregmenon* [pronounced *pa-REG-me-non*] here, which is when words of similar origin and sound are used, but words which are not similar in the sense in which they are used.¹⁸⁰ We just had this back in v. 18 where our Lord *led captivity captive*. In this verse we have:

Your God mandates you to be strong;

¹⁷⁹ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 848 (footnote).

¹⁸⁰ A paraphrase of Bullinger's definition from *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 304.

Further **strengthen and secure**, O God, that which you have done on our behalf.

God mandates us to be strong, and He accomplishes this mandate on our behalf (if we are willing). God gives us the spiritual assets to be strong and He gives us the opportunity to develop our spiritual muscles. Notice what God did and did not do for Israel in entering the Land of Promise. God could have wiped out each and every heathen idolater prior to Israel entering into the land. God could have killed every single one of them in an instant and Israel could have walked into the land without there being opposition; God did not do that.

God has, in eternity past, designed a plan for our lives—for each one of us. There are common elements, e.g., the filling of the Holy Spirit and the intake of Bible doctrine; but then, there is a lot in His plan which applies specifically to us as individuals. David, the psalmist, is calling for God to make that which He has done secure and to strengthen it. Perhaps, the idea is that, David is praying that we better apprehend what God has done on our behalf. Or, perhaps the idea is, David is encouraging us to be strengthened in God and to lean upon Him for His strength.

An illustration which comes to mind is being tutored in a difficult subject (like math). You might have the greatest tutor in the world by your side, but the real accomplishment is, not that they are able to do and explain the problems which plague you, but that you reach a point where you can do those problems on your own. That is strengthening yourself in God. God made us as reflections of Him. When we take ourselves to a point where we are creating something or accomplishing something or dealing with something which is a difficult problem, there is great personal satisfaction in the process and the results.

For instance, I designed and helped to construct an addition to my house; even though God could, in an instant, command the same thing to be done, much of the satisfaction of this addition is the creative process and the work involved. If I had the choice to snap my fingers and God creates it on my behalf or to do it myself, and prefer to do this myself, although it is a process which will take several years. There is personal satisfaction related to the creative process and to work. The same is true of our spiritual lives. If, every time we got into a jam, all we had to do is snap our fingers, and God would make it stop hurting—there would be no sport in that. God has made it possible to work within our souls to develop us as spiritual human beings, despite our fallen nature.

Let me suggest another illustration: have you ever helped your son or daughter learn to ride a bicycle? Now, you can be there right behind him, keeping him balanced, with the training wheels on the bike; but nothing beats the initial joy of this child being able to ride on his own. Let me give you another example—as early as your child was able to learn, you taught him how to tie his shoes. What you did not need was an emergency call from your high school Freshman child many years later, demanding that you drive to school and tie his shoes for him.

Another illustration which might be more spot on. You may be well off and you may have enough money in order to give your children whatever they desire. Now, how does it prepare them for life to point at something and saying, “Buy that for me” and you go ahead and buy it for them. That’s a good way to raise a child if you want an adult in the end to be a leech off you for the next 40–50 years (and there are adult children who are like this, who have no initiative whatsoever). It is far better for the child to allow them to earn the money to get whatever it is that they want, and for them to recognize that there are real limits with respect to the things which they lust after. In my childhood, I received a modest allowance, but I learned early in life—maybe around 12 or so?—to go out and work for my money. So, I mowed lawns, which I hated doing. My younger kid brothers all had paper routes. The only money I recall being just given without working for it (besides birthdays of course) is my dad once handed me \$5 for the Senior prom, which even in those days, did not go very far. The end result of all this is, my brothers and I have all been reasonably successful in our lives, and all of us, at one time or another, have had our own small businesses. This was good training for us to, from a young age, learn how to fend for ourselves. Now, my parents were always there to back us up; and, when it rained, they would be driving my kid brothers in the car to deliver papers—but the growth which we experienced as a result of working from a young age was a great blessing for us.

I am giving these examples by way of illustrating a point; however, just so you don’t get off balance in the other direction, there is a place for buying your children gifts. Even though I learned from an early age to get what I

wanted by working, this does not mean that I led a Spartan existence without any gifts. God gives His children (that's us) wonderful, marvelous, incredible gifts. You see, there is a balance; we learn how to be spiritually self-sustaining, but God still gives to us. You teach your children how to be grown and independent, but that does not mean that you don't give them gifts now and again.

Application: God is developing you as a spiritual human being. Of course, God could give you anything that you ask for and He could bail you out of any jam that you could get yourself into. God could snap His fingers, and there would be a pile of money on your living room floor; God can snap his fingers, and all of your enemies will immediately decide to move to Fargo, North Dakota; God can snap His fingers and every ache, pain, malady, disease or potential disease would disappear. God does not want us to develop that way. We depend upon God just as we depended upon our parents; but we also learn, by means of His gracious assets, to grow spiritually. Our life is as much preparation as it is a resolving of the angelic conflict. In all of this, we receive great dividends in this life and in the life which follows, just as the training my parents gave me—which included allowing me to take the initiative and doing things for myself—was the greatest gift that they could give me. God raises us in this life like a wonderful, loving parent. He has given us the spiritual operating assets to get through this life in the greatest way possible. God has made all of this possible, despite our old sin nature and despite the fact that we are in the devil's world (analogous to the things which my parents did for me and I hope did for you).

Application: I hope that these analogies cause you to understand why, every time that you call out to God, saying, "Make it stop hurting" or "Solve this problem for me, God" or "Give this to me" that sometimes—often in fact—God does not step in and make our problems disappear; He does not just give us whatever we ask for. There is spiritual growth involved, and this is for our benefit. Just as a parent cannot do each and every thing for his child, and given that child everything that the child asks for, without ruining that child for life; so God has developed a system where we can grow spiritually, and where we can deal with these things of life directly. He is always there and there are times when we will fail miserably; but, this is how we grow and this is the best way.

Related to this is capacity. Your spiritual growth gives you capacity to enjoy the things which God has given you. If your child has no capacity for life, you might buy him a gift that he has been nagging at you to buy him for a month or two; and, after playing with it for 20 minutes, he finds himself bored. No capacity. How many Christians find themselves bored or frustrated with their lives? How many Christians spend their lives lusting after power, sex, money, things, position? That is a person who is under the control of his old sin nature and a person without capacity for life.

By the way, God sometimes gives us a taste of how it could have been. I had a wonderful career as a teacher. I did feel as though I should have been teaching higher level courses, but what I did teach for the bulk of my teaching career were wonderful courses with great kids. I was given a taste of how things could have been (in a negative way), and, in retrospect, I have come to realize even more how wonderful my career was, and how much God had done on my behalf. Now, there are some things which God chose in my past life which I did not understand—for instance, I took some university courses which were graduate credit when I took them, then the university rejigged on this even though I had the catalogue to prove that they were graduate credit, and then, several years later, when this was not an issue any more, they were designated as graduate credit on my transcripts. However, in retrospect, this required me to make a number of decisions relative to this situation, and perhaps that was the purpose for all of it. Furthermore, I was not the only person at that school; there were those that I worked with and worked for who also had decisions to make and a life to be answerable for. But I digress. My original point is, there are going to be bumps in the road; there will be problems; there will be times when you do not progress as you should progress; there will be injustices in your life; and this is God guiding us and helping us grow, and giving us the opportunity to apply the doctrine which we have learned.

Application: I hope that these illustrations and personal history help you to realize that trusting God does not mean that you find some park bench to sit on, and wait there for someone to offer you a job and a bite to eat. This is why, when you get a broken arm, you don't just pray over it to be fixed. These things are not trusting Jesus. These things do not show great faith in God. If a new, 24-year-old executive called home to have his mother come kiss a boo-boo or to have his father come and tie his shoes, you would think this executive is socially retarded and fundamentally broken. The same is true of a Christian, who, every 5 minutes, needs to *pray about it*. The same

is true of a Christian who gets into jam after jam after jam and his only response is, *God help!* I'm not saying that there will not be instances in your life where you have to go to God in prayer and ask Him to take care of this or that; what I am saying is, when it comes to tying your spiritual shoe laces, you ought to be able to do that without a lot of prayer and fasting.

This may help us to better understand how we are made in God's shadow image (Gen. 1:26–27). The father of any family is like God to his sons. He raises his sons to stand on their own two feet; he raises his sons to be men. God the Father is the same way with believers; He raises us to be spiritually self-sustaining believers. This is one of the reasons why we find the relationship between ourselves and God analogized over and over again to a father-son relationship.

This further helps explain the importance of a father in a family. The woman's movement has tried to de-emphasize that; the gay and lesbian movements have tried to de-emphasize that; Communism has tried to have the state raise the children; Hillary Clinton informs us that it take a village to raise a child; but what it takes is 1 mother and 1 father. And if anyone doubts this, just look at the African American culture today: 75% of children are born to unwed mothers; a huge percentage of African American boys are raised apart from their fathers; and we find in these children a culture where there is no work-ethic, no value on education, high unemployment, anger, and a constant state of feeling victimized. What has come up through the cracks over the past 30 years has been a *hip-hop* culture where women are seen as ho's, the police and all authority figures are bashed, crime is glorified, and drugs and violence are glorified. No government program is going to fix this (except, perhaps, removing the such easy access to welfare, which financially encourages single-mother families). What the African American culture needs is women who do not procreate unless they are married; men who do not use women; and men who marry and stick with the marriage. One generation of this, and all education and employment inequities would disappear.

Can you imagine trying to live the Christian life apart from God? Apart from God's Word? It just isn't possible. Similarly, a boy cannot grow up to be a man without a father. This is the shadow image which God has set up for us.

One last doctrine for this verse: What do we do when we face a problem? Isn't the greatest show of faith to go and sit on a park bench, enjoy God's creation from this vantage point, and say to God, "You solve it; I am trusting You."

What Do We Do When We Face a Problem?

1. As we all know, problems are inevitable in this life. Every day that we get up in the morning, we face a physical problem; we have problems with our spouses or with our children; we go into work, and we have problems with the boss or with our co-workers; on the drive to and from, we have problems. Problems and difficulties are simply a part of our lives. What do we do about them?
2. Obviously, we turn to the problem solving devices. There are some pressures that we face in life simply because we are out of fellowship. Naming your sins to God needs to be done regularly like breathing. If we are under divine discipline, the quickest way to get out of it is to name our sins to God, which is the first problem solving device.
3. I could, at this point, name the other 9 problems solving devices, but they can be found [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) or [here](#) on the internet. William Pauley put together the most thorough web resource on this topic, which is a [pdf document](#).
4. Quite often, we will find that we have learned something in Bible class which applies. I have faced this on some terrific difficulties in my life, and it is amazing how often I find myself applying a principle from last night's Bible class or a principle learned in a very recent Bible class.
5. There are problems and difficulties that God chooses for us to live with. Paul had his eye problem (or whatever it was) that he prayed 3 times to God to remove, and he understood God to be telling him, "[My grace is sufficient for you.](#)"
6. Finally, there are problems which can be solved and we can't solve them; there are going to be things in life where we must simply sit back and allow God to take care of them for us. This will not be every

What Do We Do When We Face a Problem?

problem that we face, but this will be the case for some problems that we face. In these situations, we simply sit back and watch God take care of things.

This always reminds me of the Alcoholics Anonymous Prayer: *God, grant me the strength to change the things I can, the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, and the wisdom to know the difference.*

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Now, what is wrong with the teaching, *have faith in God and to step back and let God handle everything?* Faith is only one aspect of our lives. Faith is fundamental in the Christian life, but it is not the end-all and be-all of Christianity. Faith is not the only factor in our Christian walk. Furthermore, faith is not strictly a passive function. The problem is, too many teachers and/or believers oversimplify the Christian life. They pick out a half dozen or a dozen aspects of the Christian life, and this is all there is for them. A good example of this: *not sinning*. It is advisable for everyone—believers, unbelievers, immature believers, growing believers, and mature believers—not to sin. There are great benefits to living a life without sin (or, more correctly, a life where sin is mostly resisted). However, this is not all there is to the Christian way of life. An unbeliever can attempt to lead a life free of sin; an unbeliever can be moral and ethical. In fact, this is the argument of some atheists: *I am just as moral and ethical as any Christian, if not more so; therefore, I do not need to believe in God!* There are certainly fundamentals of the faith; there are certainly basics in the Christian way of life; maturity involves learning some fundamental principles of faith and then applying them. However, as we grow spiritually, we always find that there is more to it; there is more to the Christian faith than the basics. Let's go back to one of the illustrations that I gave earlier: part of growing up as a child is learning how to tie your own shoes—now, you may learn 20 different ways to tie your shoes and you might be able to tie your shoe laces with blinding speed, but this is not all there is to growing up. Life is more complex than that; there is much more to normal human maturity than tying your own shoe laces. The spiritual life is no less complex; we begin with basic concepts, but we continually build upon these basic concepts. Therefore, even though there are times when a situation is beyond our control and we have to trust God with the outcome, this is not the only way to face a problem or a difficulty in life; furthermore, developing a complete faith in God to the point that our life becomes totally passive is *not* the goal of Christian growth.

**From Your Temple upon Jerusalem,
to You bring [in a procession] kings a present.**

Psalm
68:29

**Because of Your Temple upon Jerusalem,
[in a procession] kings bring presents [lit., a
present] to You.**

**Because of Your Temple, which rests upon Jerusalem,
kings bring presents to You.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

From Your Temple upon Jerusalem,
to You bring [in a procession] kings a present.

Septuagint

From Your temple at Jerusalem kings bring presents to You.

Significant differences:

Presents is plural in the Greek, which is a reasonable translation of the Hebrew singular.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV

Then kings will bring gifts to your temple in Jerusalem.

EasyEnglish (Churchyard)

...from your temple in Jerusalem.

Good News Bible (TEV)	Kings will (then) bring gifts to you.
New American Bible	...from your Temple in Jerusalem, where kings bring gifts to you. Show it [your power] from your temple on behalf of Jerusalem, that kings may bring you tribute.
Revised English Bible	Kings will bring you gifts for the honour of your temple in Jerusalem.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	Out of your Temple in Jerusalem.
God's Word™	Kings will bring you gifts because of your temple high above Jerusalem.
JPS (Tanakh)	...from Your temple above Jerusalem. The kings bring You tribute.
NET Bible®	...as you come out of your temple in Jerusalem! Kings bring tribute to you.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	[Out of respect] for Your temple at Jerusalem kings shall bring gifts to You.
<i>Updated Emphasized Bible</i>	Because of Your temple above Jerusalem Unto You will kings bear along a gift —
<i>A Voice in the Wilderness</i>	Because of Your temple at Jerusalem, kings shall bring presents unto You.
<i>Young's Updated LT</i>	Because of Your temple at Jerusalem, To You kings bring a present.

What is the gist of this verse? Kings would bring presents (probably animal sacrifices) to Jesus Christ because His Temple is in Jerusalem.

Psalm 68:29a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
min (מן) [pronounced <i>min</i>]	<i>from, away from, out from, out of from, off, on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
hêychâl (הֵיכָל) [pronounced <i>hay-SHAWL</i>]	<i>a large, magnificent building; a palace, a palace of [Jehovah]; a temple, a portion of the Temple</i>	masculine singular noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1964 BDB #228
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over; on the ground of, because of, according to, on account of, on behalf of, with, by, besides, in addition to, to, toward, together with, in the matter of, concerning, as regards to</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
Y ^e rûwshâlayim (יְרוּשָׁלַיִם) [pronounced <i>y'roo-shaw-LAH-yim</i>]	possibly means <i>founded upon peace</i> or <i>city of the Jebusites</i> (or both); it is transliterated <i>Jerusalem</i>	Proper singular noun, location	Strong's #3389 BDB #436

Translation: [Because of Your Temple upon Jerusalem,...](#) This short phrase would argue against this psalm being written during the time of David, as there was no Temple in Jerusalem at that time nor had there ever been until the time of Solomon. However, David clearly had intentions of building a temple in Jerusalem (1Chron. 17:1–4), so this may have been on his mind. Since the Psalm begins by telling us that it is a psalm of David, it would be silly to herein deny that it is. Therefore, David must be looking into the future—when he would build a Temple in Jerusalem (at the time of writing the psalm, we may reasonably assume that he had the intention of doing so); and God the Holy Spirit is getting across the information that Jesus Christ would be revealed in Jerusalem. David uses this same word in Psalm 5:7 11:4 18:6 27:4 65:4 138:2. Sometime in the future, I'll have to consider David's use of this word in the psalms more fully.

The purpose of the Temple of God is to reveal Jesus Christ. Therefore, we may reasonably conclude that the underlying message here is that not only would the Temple reveal our Lord, but that Jesus Christ would Himself be revealed in Jerusalem.

Barnes suggests that the word here could refer simply to David's palace: *The word rendered "temple" here properly means a palace; then, the abode of God considered as a king, or his residence as a king. It might, therefore, be applied either to the tabernacle or to the temple, erected as the special dwelling-place of God. As the word has so general a meaning, the passage here does not prove that the psalm was composed after Solomon's temple was reared, for it may refer to the tabernacle that David set up for the ark on Mount Zion.*¹⁸¹

Gill presents a different approach: *Not the material temple there, which was not in being in David's time, but was built by his son, and destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar; and though it was rebuilt by Zerubbabel, repaired by Herod, and was the Messiah's temple, into which he entered as the Lord and proprietor of it, Mal. 3:1; yet was quickly after his time demolished, and will never be rebuilt more; but the Messiah's spiritual temple, of which he is the builder, foundation, and cornerstone; the materials of which are believers in him, and it is for his service, worship, and glory.*¹⁸² I have two problems with this interpretation—I don't know that our Lord is presented as *the build, foundation and cornerstone* of the *Temple*, and that the Temple is the believers throughout time. But more importantly, even given this interpretation, why would kings bring presents to such a Temple? Furthermore, what is the relationship between this *human Temple* and Jerusalem? For these reasons, Gill's approach does not ring true to me. David's words in Psalm 5:7 ([But I, in the plenty of Your grace, I will come into Your house. I will worship in Your fear toward Your holy temple, O Jehovah](#)) also make this sound more like a stone and brick Temple as opposed to the body of Christ (believers in Jesus Christ).

Most translators render the preposition here *at* (*at Jerusalem*). Barnes remarks: *[This] literally [should read], "upon," or "above" Jerusalem. Perhaps the idea is, that as the place of worship was built on Mount Zion, it was "above," or seemed to "overhang" the city. The city was built mostly in the valleys that lay between the different hills or eminences - Mount Zion, Mount Moriah, Mount Ophel.*¹⁸³ The future Temple of God would tower over the city of Jerusalem, so the language here is quite apt.

God's earthly house is established in Jerusalem, which accounts for all of the celebration of the second half of this psalm.

Okay—*why doesn't God allow David to build a Temple to Him?* Many of us would think, *who better to do this than a man after God's own heart?* David and Solomon both represent Jesus Christ as king and conqueror. David represents Jesus Christ as the One Who would come in the 2nd advent and wipe out all of the enemies who threaten Israel. This is what David did—time and time again, David wiped out the enemies of Israel. Solomon presided over Israel during great prosperity where there was little or no warfare. This is Jesus Christ in the

¹⁸¹ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:29.

¹⁸² Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:29.

¹⁸³ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:29.

Millennium. The Temple represents Jesus Christ occupying a semi-permanent place on this earth, so Solomon, who represents Jesus Christ as King over the Earth is the man who should build the Temple of God.

Now, think about the logical progression of the leaders of Israel: Samuel, who represented Jesus Christ in His 1st advent, even to the point of being brought back from the dead. David represents Jesus Christ during the 2nd advent, when He returns and crushes Israel's enemies, just as David did. Finally, Solomon represents Jesus Christ during the Millennium, exercising a semi-permanent rule over this earth.

Now, you notice that there is a gap between Samuel and David. This is when Saul reigned, which was a mistake of the people. The people rejected God as their ruler (Jesus Christ) and chose someone else. The people of God crucified Jesus Christ, their Lord. The end result of this was a complete and total defeat of the Jewish people, which occurred when Saul died. All of these men, in their own ways, represented Israel's future with respect to the Lord of Israel, Jesus Christ.

Psalm 68:29b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^e)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by</i>	directional/relational preposition with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	No Strong's # BDB #510
yabal (יָבַל) [pronounced yah ^b -VAWL]	<i>to lead, to bring, to bear, to carry, to carry along [often in a procession]; to produce, to bring forth</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #2986 BDB #384
melek ^e (מֶלֶךְ) [pronounced MEH-lek]	<i>king, ruler, prince</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #4428 BDB #572
shây (שָׁי) [pronounced shay]	<i>gift, present; a gift [offered as homage]</i>	masculine singular noun; pausal form	Strong's #7862 BDB #1009

Translation: ...[in a procession] kings bring presents [lit., a present] to You. Like much of this psalm, I was originally nonplussed by this line. The word *to bring* generally refers to things which are brought in a procession; the word for *present* is in the singular. The idea is, the kings of this world would pay homage to Jesus Christ; hence the singular object, but plural subject.

What seems likely is, the present which would be brought to God at the Temple would be Temple sacrifices. David probably uses the singular because there is but one correct present to bring the Lord of Glory, and that is a slain animal. God the Holy Spirit uses the singular here because there is one death upon the cross which propitiates God.

In going back to Gill's understanding that the *Temple* represents the believers in Jesus Christ; this makes little sense for kings to bring presents to us. I can picture kings bringing sacrifices to the Temple, which represents Jesus Christ, but I really don't see the kings of the world dropping by my house with gifts.

The idea that kings of the world would bring presents to Jerusalem, is confirmed by Scripture: *The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him* (Psalm 72:10–11). *Vow and pay to Jehovah your God; let all that are around Him bring presents to the Fearful One. He shall cut off the spirit in rulers; He is feared by the kings of the earth* (Psalm 76:11–12). *And the Queen of Sheba gave to the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and very many spices, and precious stones; no spice like that came any more for abundance, that she gave to*

King Solomon. And also, the navy of Hiram that bore gold from Ophir brought in from Ophir almug trees, a great many, and precious stones; and the king made the almug trees a support for the house of Jehovah, and for the king's house, and harps and lyres for singers; no such almug trees have come, nor have there been seen such to this day (1Kings 10:10–12). And King Solomon was greater than any of the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom; and all the earth was seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom that God had put into his heart; and they were each one bringing his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments, and armor, and spices, horses, and mules, a year by year matter (1Kings 10:23–25). See also 2Sam. 8:2, 6, 10 2Kings 3:4.

Even though this psalm has been difficult so far, it becomes even more so in the next verse:

**Rebuke [or, castigate] a community [or, living thing, animal, life, organisms, life form; appetite] of stalk [or, reed];
a congregation of mighty ones
in calves of peoples trampling [down] in [or, submitting with] bars of silver;
scatter peoples; wars they delight in.**

Psalm
68:30

**Castigate the community [or, life, living thing, animal] of stalks [or, reeds],
the congregation of mighty ones,
with calves of people trampling down [or, prostrating themselves with] bars of silver;
scatter [these] people,
[for] they delight in war [possibly, He scatters (them); the people desire to draw near].**

**Rebuke the community of reeds; rebuke the gathering of mighty ones,
whose calves trample down even bars of silver.
Scatter those who delight in war.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Latin Vulgate	Rebuke the wild beasts of the reeds, the congregation of bulls with the calf of the people; who seek to exclude them who are tried with silver. Scatter thou the nations that delight in wars.
Masoretic Text	Rebuke [or, castigate] a community of stalk; a congregation of mighty ones in calves of peoples trampling [down] bars of silver; scatter peoples; wars they delight in.
Peshitta	Rebuke the wild beasts [possibly, oppressors] of the marshes, the multitude of the wild bulls, the idols of the Gentiles which are covered with silver; scatter the people who delight in war.
Septuagint	Rebuke the wild beasts of the reed: let the crowd of bulls with the heifers of the nations be rebuked, so that they who have been proved with silver may not be shut out: scatter thou the nations that wish for wars.

Significant differences: Even though we find *wild beasts* in the Greek, as opposed to a *community* in the Hebrew, the Greek translation is possibly appropriate and many English translations followed the lead of the Greek translators. The same could be said of *bulls* from the Greek.

There are several differences after this throughout the Greek, which may possibly be attributable to their attempt to make sense of this verse.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Punish that animal that lives in the swamp! Punish that nation whose leaders and people are like wild bulls. Make them come crawling with gifts of silver. Scatter those nations that enjoy making war.
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	Be angry with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the animals that live in the reeds • the group of bulls among the calves of the nations. When they fall on their knees, they will bring to you pieces of silver. Make the people that find pleasure in war run away from you in all directions.
Good News Bible (TEV)	Rebuke Egypt, that wild animal in the reeds; rebuke the nations, that herd of bulls with their calves, until they all bow down and offer you their silver. Scatter those people who love to make war!
New Jerusalem Bible	Rebuke the Beast of the reeds, that herd of bulls, that people of calves, who bow down with ingots of silver. Scatter the people who delight in war.
New Living Testament	Rebuke these enemy nations— these wild animals lurking in the reeds, this herd of bulls among the weaker calves. Humble those who demand tribute from us [or, <i>Humble them until they submit, bringing pieces of silver as tribute</i>].
Revised English Bible	Scatter the nations that delight in war. Rebuke those wild beasts of the reeds, that herd of bulls, the bull-calf warriors of the nations, who bring bars of silver and prostrate themselves. Scatter these nations which delight in war.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	Say sharp words to the beast among the water-plants, the band of strong ones, with the lords of the peoples, put an end to the people whose delight is in war.
God's Word™	Threaten the beast who is among the cattails, the herd of bulls with the calves of the nations, until it humbles itself with pieces of silver. Scatter the people who find joy in war.
JPS (Tanakh)	Blast the beast of the marsh, the herd of bulls among the peoples, the calves, till they come cringing with pieces of silver Scatter the peoples who delight in wars!
NET Bible®	Sound your battle cry against the wild beast of the reeds, and the nations that assemble like a herd of calves led by bulls! They humble themselves and offer gold and silver as tribute. God scatters the nations that like to do battle.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Rebuke the wild beasts dwelling among the reeds [in Egypt], the herd of bulls [the leaders], with the calves of the peoples; trample under foot those who lust for tribute money; scatter the peoples who delight in war.
A Conservative Version	Rebuke the wild beast of the reeds, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the peoples, trampling under foot the pieces of silver. He has scattered the peoples that delight in war.
Updated <i>Emphasized Bible</i>	Rebuke The wild beast of the reeds

	The herd [or, <i>assembly</i>] of mighty oxen among the calves of the peoples — Each one bowing down with bars of silver, — Scatter the peoples, who take delight in wars.
Hebrew Names Version	Rebuke the wild animal of the reeds, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the peoples. Being humbled, may it bring bars of silver. Scatter the nations that delight in war.
LTHB	Rebuke the wild beasts of the reeds, the herd of bulls, with the calves of the peoples, trampling down with pieces of silver. He scatters the people <i>who</i> delight in war.
WEB	Rebuke the wild animal of the reeds, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the peoples. Being humbled, may it bring bars of silver. Scatter the nations that delight in war.
Young's Updated LT	Rebuke a beast of the reeds, a company of bulls, With calves of the peoples, Each humbling himself with pieces of silver, Scatter peoples delighting in conflicts.

What is the gist of this verse? To be quite frank with you, I am at a loss with regards to this verse. My thinking out loud follows.

At first glance, I must admit to not having much of a clue as to what any of this verse says, apart from the final line. Therefore, let me present some of the translations with a preliminary interpretation.

Hypotheses Based upon other Translations of Psalm 68:30	
Translation	Possible Interpretation
Rebuke the wild beasts of the reeds, the congregation of bulls with the cows of the people; who seek to exclude them who are tried with silver. Scatter the nations that delight in wars (Latin Vulgate):	The first few phrases are in line with most translations: God is called upon to rebuke a variety of animals—presumably those who belong to nearby heathen nations. I don't know how to interpret the 2 nd to the last phrase. The final phrase is in line with most translations: nations who delight in war are to be scattered.
Rebuke the wild beasts of the marshes, the multitude of the wild bulls [or, <i>oppressors</i>], the idols of the Gentiles which are covered with silver; scatter the people who delight in war (Peshitta).	Here we have the rebuking of wild beasts, oppressors (or bulls) and idols covered in silver. Note, instead of <i>calves</i> , the Latin Vulgate has <i>idols</i> , which may be an interpretation by St. Jerome.
Rebuke the wild beasts of the reed: let the crowd of bulls with the heifers of the nations <i>be rebuked</i> , so that they who have been proved with silver may not be shut out: scatter the nations that wish for wars (LXX).	We have the mass rebuking of animals again, but with a reference then to those who have been proven or tested with silver (whatever that means) not being shut out.
It should be apparent from above that was some agreement in the translation of this verse.	
Say sharp words to the beast among the water-plants, the band of strong ones, with the lords of the peoples, put an end to the people whose delight is in war (BBE).	We're rebuking animals and people here.
Rebuke the beasts that dwell among the reeds, the herd of bulls with the calves of the peoples. Trample underfoot those who lust after tribute; scatter the peoples who delight in war (ESV).	Here, we have the standard rebuking of animals, with a reasonable trampling underfoot of those who lust after silver.

Hypotheses Based upon other Translations of Psalm 68:30

Translation	Possible Interpretation
<p>Threaten the beast who is among the cattails, the herd of bulls with the calves of the nations, until it humbles itself with pieces of silver. Scatter the people who find joy in war (God's Word™).</p> <p>Rebuke the wild animal of the reeds, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the peoples. Being humbled, may it bring bars of silver. Scatter the nations that delight in war (HNV).</p> <p>Rebuke the wild beasts of the reeds, The herd of bulls, with the calves of the peoples, Each one humbling himself with pieces of silver. Scatter the peoples who delight in conflicts (The Scriptures 1998)!</p> <p>Rebuke the wild animal of the reeds, The multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the peoples. Being humbled, may it bring bars of silver. Scatter the nations that delight in war (WEB).</p>	<p>This seems to be the most common translation. First of all, we have the rebuking or threatening of animals, which is somewhat confusing to me.</p> <p>Secondly, either the people or the animals pay silver in tribute, which is an indication of their submission. The problem is, there is only one word in this verse which definitely points toward animals, and that is <i>calves</i>.</p> <p>Thirdly, those who delight in war (these same people, I would assume) are scattered. The problem here is, they are paying tribute, but then, they are also scattered. Are these therefore two different groups of people?</p>
<p>Rebuke the wild beasts of the reeds, the herd of bulls, with the calves of the peoples, trampling down with pieces of silver. He scatters the people who delight in war (LTHB).</p>	<p>We seem to be trampling down the animals with pieces of silver here.</p>
<p>Rebuke the beasts of the reeds, the community of the bullheaded with the calves of the peoples, trampling with pieces of silver. Scatter the people who delight in war (Voice in the Wilderness).</p>	<p>Here, the silver is trampled underfoot.</p>
<p>Rebuke the beast among the reeds, the herd of bulls among the calves of the nations. Humbled, may it bring bars of silver. Scatter the nations who delight in war. (NIV)</p>	<p><i>the herd of bulls among the calves [are] powerful princes supporting the pharaoh, and the lesser princes of other nations. Egypt is singled out here as representative of the hostile nations—because of Israel's past experiences with that world power and because at the time the psalm was composed it was the one great empire on Israel's immediate horizons.</i>¹⁸⁴</p> <p>The problem with this explanation is, during the time of David, the Philistines were a much greater and more immediate threat to David.</p>
<p>Rebuke those wild beasts of the reeds, that herd of bulls, the bull-calf warriors of the nations, who bring bars of silver and prostrate themselves. Scatter these nations which delight in war.</p>	<p>The psalmist calls upon God to rebuke wild beats and bulls and bull-calf warriors—which all seem to be identified as enemy soldiers—and this seems to include those who bring bars of silver and prostrate themselves before God (Israel?). God is also called upon to scatter nations who delight in war.</p>

¹⁸⁴ The NIV Study Bible; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 848 (footnote).

Hypotheses Based upon other Translations of Psalm 68:30	
Translation	Possible Interpretation
Blast the beast of the marsh, the herd of bulls among the peoples, the calves, till they come cringing with pieces of silver Scatter the peoples who delight in wars! The Tanakh	The psalmist calls upon God to blast the beasts of the marsh, and other animals, which possibly represent nations, until they submit, coming cringing with silver as tribute. God is called upon to scatter nations who delight in wars.
Sound your battle cry against the wild beast of the reeds, and the nations that assemble like a herd of calves led by bulls! They humble themselves and offer gold and silver as tribute. God scatters the nations that like to do battle. The NET Bible®	God is called upon to go to war with nations probably represented by various animals; and some will humble themselves and offer gold and silver in tribute. God is then said to scatter nations who light to go to war.
Rebuke The wild beast of the reeds The herd [or, assembly] of mighty oxen among the calves of the peoples — Each one bowing down with bars of silver, — Scatter the peoples, who take delight in wars. Updated <i>Emphasized Bible</i>	The psalmist calls upon God to rebuke a variety of animals. Somehow, there is obeisance involved possibly with gifts of silver bars? Then God is called upon to scatter those to delight in warfare.
Rebuke the wild beasts of the reeds, the herd of bulls, with the calves of the peoples, trampling down with pieces of silver. He scatters the people who delight in war. LTHB	The psalmist calls upon God to rebuke a variety of animals, who, apparently, are trampling down pieces of silver or they are trampling down something with pieces of silver. God scatters those people who delight in war.
Rebuke the wild animal of the reeds, the multitude of the bulls, with the calves of the peoples. Being humbled, may it bring bars of silver. Scatter the nations that delight in war. WEB	For some reason, it appears that the psalmist is calling upon God to rebuke a variety of animals. Those who are humbled (nations?) may bring tribute of silver bars. Nations who delight in war are called upon to be scattered.

The only thing which seems to make sense is, these animals are representative of foreign armies, which David calls upon God to rebuke. It appears that, whatever groups might be left, bring tribute—either to God or to Israel. The only portion of this verse which appears to be simple is, that David calls upon God to scatter those nations who delight in war.

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One more thing: let's establish the context. God destroys His enemies, so much so that those in Israel wade in their blood (vv. 21–23). Then we jump to the procession, which may reasonably be seen as the moving of the Ark of God, which represents Jesus Christ, the One who has destroyed His enemies (vv. 24–25). One might even see this as being the march of the victors. Those who are in the procession and by whose hand destroyed their enemies (vv. 26–27). We are to strengthen ourselves in God (v. 28) and kings will bring tribute to Jerusalem, because the Lord is there (Who will be there in the future, Whose presence is represented by the Ark—v. 29). In the following verse, [Envoys come out of Egypt and Ethiopia will stretch out her hand to God](#) (which seems to also indicate obeisance—v. 31).

What might fit in between this verses are animal sacrifices brought to the King of Glory, and we have at least one unequivocal mention of an animal in this verse. However, if that is the understanding, then the clearest portion of this verse—that **God will scatter those who delight in war**—does not fit in with the context at all. Another reasonable thought to place within this context is, some will come to do obeisance to God (vv. 29b, 31) and some will not (v. 30).

Psalm 68:30a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
gâ'ar (גָּעַר) [pronounced gaw-GAHR]	<i>to rebuke, to rebuff, to castigate</i>	2 nd person masculine singular, Qal imperative	Strong's #1605 BDB #172
chayyâh (חַיָּה) [pronounced khay-YAWH]	<i>living thing, animal, life, organisms, life form; appetite, revival, renewal; community, family, assembled group, allied families, bands</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #2416 BDB #312
qâneh (קָנֶה) [pronounced kaw-NEH]	<i>a stalk [of corn], a reed, bone, balances; water-plant, calamus (aromatic reed); derived meanings: measuring-rod; reed (as unit of measure - 6 cubits); beam (of scales - for scales themselves); shaft or branches [of Lampstand]; higher bone of an arm, shoulder-joint</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #7070 BDB #889
This is just one of the many difficult words in this verse.			
ʿêdâh (עֵדָה) [pronounced êd-DAWH]	<i>company, congregation, assembly, meeting; a company of people assembled together by appointment, a group of people acting together</i>	feminine singular construct	Strong's #5712 BDB #417
ʿabbîyr (אַבְיִיר) [pronounced ahb-BEER]	<i>mighty, valiant, mighty one; bull; powerful; noble; chief</i>	masculine plural adjective; also used as a substantive	Strong's #47 BDB #7
It could be interpreted, by Psalm 103:20, as angels. This same word is applied to <i>ordinary man</i> (Judges 5:22 Lam. 1:15 Jer. 46:15), to animals (Psalm 22:13), to princes (Psalm 58:31), to nobles (Job 24:22). This adjective is used for <i>bulls</i> (Psalm 22:12), <i>horses</i> (Jer. 8:16 47:3 50:11) and everywhere else to <i>men</i> .			
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
ʿêgel (עֵגֶל) [pronounced GAY-gel]	<i>calf; bullock, steer</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #5695 BDB #722
ʿammîym (עַמִּיִּם) [pronounced gahm-MEEM]	<i>peoples, nations; tribes [of Israel]; relatives of anyone</i>	masculine plural collective noun	Strong's #5971 BDB #766

Psalm 68:30a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
râphaç (רָפַח) [pronounced raw-FAWS]	<i>to let oneself be trampled [stomped, tread upon]; to prostrate oneself; to be submissive</i>	Hithpael participle	Strong's #7511 (& #7515) BDB #952
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
rats (רַצ) [pronounced rahts]	<i>a piece, a bar; a fragment</i>	masculine plural construct	Strong's #7518 BDB #954
The meaning of this noun is dubious; it is only found here in this verse			
keçeph (כֶּסֶף) [pronounced KEH-sef]	<i>silver, money</i>	masculine singular noun; pausal form	Strong's #3701 BDB #494

Translation: *Castigate the community* [or, *life, living thing, animal*] *of stalks* [or, *reeds*], *the congregation of mighty ones, with calves of people trampling down* [or, *prostrating themselves with*] *bars of silver*;... I must admit again to being at a loss to understand and therefore, to explain what is going on here. Although I might be willing to explain what a *congregation of mighty ones* are, I have no clue as to what a *community of stalks* or *calves of people* are.

The Emphasized Bible references Jer. 46:20–21: *Egypt is a beautiful heifer, but coming a stinger comes out of the north. Also her hired ones are in the midst of her like calves of the stall; for they also have turned back, fleeing together. They did not stand because the day of their calamity had come on them, the time of their punishment.*

Psalm 68:30b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
bâzar (בָּזַר) [pronounced bāw-ZAHR]	<i>to scatter, to disperse</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Piel perfect	Strong's #967 BDB #103
BDB suggests that this should read bazzêr (בָּזֵר) [pronounced bahz-ZAIR] instead, which is the 2 nd person masculine singular, Piel imperative. The difference in the Piel forms is only the vowel points, which were added long after the text was written. The Septuagint, Syriac and Vulgate all have the 2 nd person, Piel imperative; the MT has the 3 rd person, Piel perfect.			
‘ammîym (עַמִּים) [pronounced ġahm-MEEM]	<i>peoples, nations; tribes [of Israel]; relatives of anyone</i>	masculine plural collective noun	Strong's #5971 BDB #766
qerâb (קֶרֶב) [pronounced ker-AW ^h V]	<i>battle, war, hostile approach</i>	generally a masculine singular noun; here in feminine plural form	Strong's #7128 BDB #898

This is according to BDB and Gesenius. The word itself is actually a feminine plural noun here.

Owen has, instead:

Psalm 68:30b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
q ^o râbôwth (קִרְבּוֹת) [pronounced <i>kraw-BOHTH</i>]	<i>an approach; a drawing near; nearness</i>	feminine plural noun	Strong's #7132 (#7138?) BDB #898
châphêts (חָפֵּץ) [pronounced <i>khaw-FATES</i>]	<i>to will, to desire, to take pleasure in, to delight in, to long to, to be inclined to</i>	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #2654 BDB #342

Translation: ...scatter [these] people, [for] they delight in war [possibly, *He scatters (them); the people desire to draw near*]. There were 3 sets of people/things listed in the previous portion of this verse. It is not clear exactly who they are or if they are all part of this or that group; or even if we are speaking of people (what the hell is *calves of people*?). However, there are some groups of people who actually do like war; they delight in battle, and the psalmist is calling upon God to scatter these people.

At this point, I don't know what is the difference between scattering these people or why David does not call upon God to simply wipe them out. Another understanding of the verse, seems to indicate that God will scatter those people who want to draw near and do obeisance to Him with their calves and silver. This does not make much sense either.

The most common way to understand this verse is, ...scatter [these] people who delight in war; or, *He scatters the people who delight in war*. A friend of mine, who was hostile toward Christianity, did not understand how believers in Jesus Christ could support our soldiers and support our war efforts. The psalmist writes *I am for peace, But when I speak, they are for war* (Psalm 120:7). And James tells us: *Where do wars and violent disputes among you come from? Don't they come from your passions that war in your members?* (James 4:1). The preference of the believer is to live in peace with our neighbors, even if those neighbors are Muslims, Jews, Catholics or Jehovah Witnesses. Most believers understand that believing in Jesus Christ is a matter of free will, and it is a decision which cannot be coerced; therefore, subjugating a group of people to a *Christian nation* is not a reasonable thing to do. We might send them missionaries, but people cannot be conquered and then forced to believe in Jesus Christ. Nowhere in Scripture are we encouraged to function in this way. However, there are circumstances which require military intervention.

Application: The analogy I like is, imagine that you are walking by 5 men raping a woman. Now, if you have a cell phone, the best thing you can do is call 911 on her behalf; however, if you are carrying a gun, you can become more intimately involved and stop the rapists right then and there; after having dialed 911. As the most powerful nation in the world, the United States is analogous to walking by 5 thugs raping a woman, and carrying a very large gun. We have the power to act. Therefore, now and again, we, as a nation, must act, particularly when such an action is in our own ultimate national interest.

Application: Our world is in the midst of a propaganda war which is mind-boggling. I have a relative who shared with me a cartoon which compared Islamic terrorists and suicide bombers to American soldiers, pointing out *similarities* such as, a devotion to God, unthinking obedience to orders, a promise of reward in the afterlife, etc. I wrote back and said, *surely you don't believe this, do you?* He indicated that he did. I've chatted with Muslims all over the world and with people in Asian countries. A significant percentage of them see the United States as an imperialist country which constantly abuses its power. I ask them, *which countries has the United States invaded and taken over in the past 100 years?* I remind them that we obtained an unconditional surrender from Germany and Japan, and, although we keep troops there, it is clear that these are sovereign nations whose politics are their own. I hear these mistaken notions from friends in the Philippines who talk about American soldiers on their soil and I ask them, *what are we doing there?* Our soldiers are there training Filipino soldiers to root out and to destroy terrorists who are eating away at their country from the inside. Some cite Iraq, and I have

to point out that, of the top 20 killers of the 20th century, Saddam Hussein comes in at #13. He killed somewhere between 300,000–600,000 of his own people. He gassed his own people. He gassed neighboring countries. Removing him from power was a good thing. There are people dying today, as I write this, in Iraq. The largest percentage of people dying are innocents who are intentionally targeted by suicide and terrorist bombers and the 2nd largest percentage of those dying in Iraq are the terrorists themselves. We have people who think that somehow peace will be achieved if the United States removes itself from Iraq, despite what history has told us and despite what every legitimate analyst has said. We will leave behind two uneasy factions, one stable faction, and a number of foreign and local insurgents. Caught in the middle of this will be innocent people. Achieving a moderate democracy, given these factors, cannot be done apart from force, and it cannot be accomplished in a few years. The purpose of our soldiers being there is to achieve peace and democracy; the purpose of insurgents there is to restore some tyrannical rule, which could emanate even from Syria or Iran.

Now that I have gone off on a tangent, let me bring you back: this particular portion of v. 30, although it makes the most sense, seems least fitted to its context, and seems entirely removed from v. 30 in particular.

The alternate reading, where God is called upon to [scatter \[those\] people who desire to draw near](#), is so difficult to make sense out of, that almost no translation takes that approach. Perhaps the sense is, [Scatter them](#) [those previously mentioned]. [The people \[of God\] desire to draw near \[to You\]](#). Here, the idea is, we break this up into two parts; it is those previously mentioned whom God is called upon to scatter. In contrast, His people desire to draw near to Him. This idea requires the insertion of several words, but it is more in keeping with the context.

Now, we are going to start from scratch on this verse, and go through it line by line, as various commentators put in their two cents. I should warn you up front that, despite the great minds at work here, the end result is, you are going to be left wanting for a reasonable explanation. The final table, which gives a summary of this verse, might be helpful, but getting this summary from the sum of its parts is an amazing feat indeed.

Let me show you what other commentators came up with. For the most part, you can skip over Gill; I did not find his remarks to be very helpful. Although I don't know that I bought into the interpretation of any of the individual phrases, the final overall explanation by Barnes, seems to be reasonable.

The first phrase literally reads: [Rebuke](#) [or, *castigate*] [a community](#) [or, *living thing, animal, life, organisms, life form; appetite*] [of stalk](#) [or, *reed*];... Even with the alternate meanings, the meaning of this verse is difficult to ascertain.

The Commentators Comment on “Rebuke the beast of the reeds”

Commentator	Explanation
Barnes	<i>This phrase, “the beast of the reeds,” would properly denote a wild beast, as living among the reeds or canes that sprang up on the banks of a river, and having his home there. It would thus, perhaps, most naturally suggest the crocodile, but it might also be applicable to a lion or other wild beast that had its dwelling in the jungles or bushes on the banks of a river. The comparison here would, therefore, denote any powerful and fierce monarch or people that might be compared with such a fierce beast. There is no particular allusion to Egypt, as being the abode of the crocodile, but the reference is more general, and the language would imply that fierce and savage people - kings who might be compared with wild beasts that had their homes in the deep and inaccessible thickets - would come bending with the tribute money, with pieces of silver, in token of their subjection to God.</i>
Clarke	<i>the wild beast of the reed - the crocodile or hippopotamus, the emblem of Pharaoh and the Egyptians; thus all the Versions.</i> ¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:30.

The Commentators Comment on “Rebuke the beast of the reeds”	
Commentator	Explanation
Gill	<i>Rebuke the company of spearmen,.... Or, "of the reed"; that is, men that use and fight with spears, like to reeds, as Kimchi and Ben Melech interpret it. Aben Ezra says, that spears are so called in the Kedarene or Arabian language; and the Arabians use a sort of reed for a spear, as Mr. Castel out of Avicenna observes, and Pliny says they are used spears: or rather the words should be rendered, "rebuke", restrain, destroy "the wild beast", or "beasts of the reed"; as the Syriac, Septuagint, and Vulgate Latin versions, and others, render it: the allusion is to such kind of creatures as lions in the thickets of Jordan; or as the crocodile in the river Nile, and other rivers of Egypt, which abounded with flags and reeds, in which such creatures lay; perhaps the hippopotamus, or river horse, is referred to; so may design an insidious, cruel, and tyrannical prince; such an one as Pharaoh king of Egypt (Isa. 27:1); a type of antichrist, and who seems to be here meant; for as Rome, for its wickedness, cruelty, and idolatry, is spiritually called Egypt (Rev_ 11:8); so the Romish antichrist is the beast ascending out of the bottomless pit; and is an insidious creature, lies in wait to deceive, puts on the mask and visor of Christianity; has two horns, like a lamb in his ecclesiastic capacity; lies covered with the reeds of the traditions, inventions, and the doctrines of men; and teaches men to trust in the staff of a broken reed, in their own merits, and the merits of others. Jarchi interprets it of Esau, who is like to a wild boar that dwells among the reeds; and the Talmud interprets it of a beast that dwells among reeds, and the gloss explains it of the nation of Amalek; the Turks, according to some, are meant.</i>
Keil and Delitzsch	The reed is an emblem of Egypt (Isa. 36:6, which does use the same word). They go on to say that the crocodile and the hippopotamus are large beasts which represent Egypt, the problem being that, the word here does not undeniably mean <i>beast</i> . <i>Egypt appears here as the greatest and most dreaded worldly power.</i> ¹⁸⁶
Kukis	Allowing that <i>reed</i> is a reference to Egypt, we may allow that the psalmist is asking God to castigate the community of Egypt here. The problem with taking this stance is, I don't quite see how this easily fits with the context of this verse; and I do not recall Egypt playing a great role in the life of David. However, since the earlier portion of this psalm is clearly historical, Egypt does have an historic relationship with Israel.
NET Bible®	<i>The Hebrew verb ga'ar is often understood to mean "rebuke." In some cases it is apparent that scolding or threatening is in view (see Gen 37:10 Ruth 2:16 Zech 3:2). However, in militaristic contexts such as Ps 68 this translation is inadequate, for the verb refers in this setting to the warrior's battle cry, which terrifies and paralyzes the enemy. Note the use of the verb in Ps 106:9 and Nah 1:4, as well as the related noun in Job 26:11; Pss 18:15; 76:6; 104:7; Isa 50:2; 51:20; 66:15. The wild beast of the reeds probably refers to a hippopotamus, which in turn symbolizes the nation of Egypt.</i>
Wesley	<i>Chastise those that will not bring presents to You.</i>

I should warn you that, even tearing this verse apart phrase by phrase and letting you hear the greatest theological minds interpret it is not going to guarantee that you will hear an explanation which rings true.

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Even though I believe that I put together some good ideas as to what belongs here, I am having a difficult time, even using alternate readings, to make this verse mean that which would fit. Therefore, I am going to turn this over to several commentators, and let them weigh in:

¹⁸⁶ Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword; Psalm 68:30.

This portion of the verse literally reads [\[Rebuke\] a congregation](#) [or, company, assembly] [of mighty ones](#) [or, valiant ones, bulls; powerful ones; noble ones; chiefs]... As above, there is no overriding reason to place an animal here. In both cases, there are Hebrew words which could have been used which clearly mean *beasts* or *bulls*.

The Commentators Comment on “the multitude of bulls”

Commentator	Explanation
Barnes	<i>The multitude of the bulls - Fierce and warlike kings, who might be compared with bulls.</i>
Gill	<i>the multitude of bulls [refers to] the secular powers of the beast of Rome; the anti-Christian states, their kings and princes, comparable to these creatures for their great strength, power, and authority, and for their fierceness and furiousness in persecuting the people of God: these are horned creatures, the ten horns of the beast, in his civil and secular capacity, with which he pushes at the saints, casts them down, and tramples upon them (see Psalm 22:13 compared with Rev. 19:18).</i>
Henry	<i>The company of spearmen, that stand it out against Christ and his gospel, that are not willing to be ruled by him, that persecute the preachers and professors of his name, that are furious and outrageous as a multitude of bulls, fat and wanton as...</i>
Spurgeon	<i>“The multitude of the bulls,” the stronger foes; the proud, headstrong, rampant, fat, and roaring bulls, which sought to gore the chosen nation, - these also need the Lord's rebuke.</i>
Wesley	<i>The bulls are fierce and furious adversaries of God, and of His people.</i>

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This literally reads: [in](#) [or, with, among, against] [calves of peoples trampling \[down\]](#) [or, submitting] [in](#) [or, with, among, against] [bars of silver](#);

The Commentators Comment on “With the calves of the people”

Commentator	Explanation
Barnes	<i>With the calves of the people - That is, the nations that might be compared with the calves of such wild herds - fierce, savage, powerful. Their leaders might be compared with the bulls; the people - the multitudes - were like the wild and lawless herd of young ones that accompanied them. The general idea is, that the most wild and savage nations would come and acknowledge their subjection to God, and would express that subjection by an appropriate offering.</i>
Gill	<i>with the calves of the people; or the people, comparable to calves for their weakness, folly, and stupidity; these are the common people under the government and influence of the kings and princes of the earth; the people, multitudes, nations, and tongues, over whom the anti-Christian harlot sits, rules, and reigns: this phrase shows that the whole is to be taken, not in a literal, but figurative, sense.</i>
Henry	<i>the calves of the people” is a description of those Jews and Gentiles that opposed the gospel of Christ and did what they could to prevent the setting up of his kingdom in the world.</i>
Kukis	<i>Oddly enough, this is the only phrase which has a clear reference to animals, and the phrase where such a use makes the least amount of sense.</i>

The Commentators Comment on “With the calves of the people”

Commentator	Explanation
NET Bible®	<i>[Sound Your battle cry against] and the nations that assemble like a herd of calves led by bulls! [The Hebrew reads:] “an assembly of bulls, with calves of the nations.”</i> The NET Bible® simply takes their interpretation of the first phrase and plays it to a logical end, even though this is not what is found in the Hebrew.
The Open Bible	<i>Rebuke these enemy nations— these wild animals lurking in the reeds, this herd of bulls among the weaker calves.</i> The hippopotamus symbolize Egypt. Bulls symbolize rulers of other neighboring nations. ¹⁸⁷
Spurgeon	<i>“With the calves of the people.”</i> The poorer and baser sort are equally set on mischief, but the divine voice can control them; multitudes are as nothing to the Lord when he goes forth in power; Whether bulls or calves, they are but cattle for the shambles when Omnipotence displays itself. The gospel, like the ark, has nothing to fear from great or small; it is a stone upon which every one that stumbles will be broken.
Wesley	<i>The calves are the people or soldiers depending upon the bulls.</i>

Wesley comments are from John Wesley; *Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible*; courtesy of e-sword, Psalm 68:30.

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The Commentators Comment on “Till every one submit himself with pieces of silver”

Commentator	Explanation
Barnes	<i>Till every one submit himself with pieces of silver</i> - The word here rendered “submit” means properly to tread with the feet, to trample upon; and then, in the form used here, to let oneself be trampled under feet, to prostrate oneself; to humble oneself. Here it means that they would come and submissively offer silver as a tribute. That is, they would acknowledge the authority of God, and become subject to him.
Gill	<i>till everyone submit himself with pieces of silver</i> ; that is, rebuke them by Your word, or by Your providences, until they become sensible of their sins, repent of them, and submit themselves to Christ; and bring with them their wealth and substance, and lay it at his feet for the use of his interest, testifying to their subjection to him: but as this is not to be expected from the persons before described, at least not from everyone of them, the words require another sense, and are to be considered as a continued description of the persons to be rebuked, and may be rendered, even everyone <i>“that treads with pieces of silver”</i> ; that walks proudly and haughtily, being decorated with gold and silver on their garments; so the Romish antichrist is said to be decked, his popes, cardinals, and bishops, with gold and precious stones (see Rev. 17:4); or <i>“everyone that humbles himself for pieces of silver”</i> , as the word is rendered in Prov. 6:3; that lies down to be trampled upon for the sake of temporal advantage; and so it describes the parasites and flatterers of the man of sin, who crouch unto him, take his mark in their hands or foreheads, that they may be allowed to buy and sell; all these, it is desired, God would rebuke, not in love, but with flames of fire, as he will sooner or later; for when the kings of the earth are become Christians, as in Psalm 68:29, God will put it into their hearts to hate the whore, and burn her flesh with fire.

¹⁸⁷ *The Open Bible*; the New Living Translation; Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN; ©1996, p. 763 (footnote) (edited).

The Commentators Comment on “Till every one submit himself with pieces of silver”

Commentator	Explanation
Henry	<p>“Lord, rebuke them, abate their pride, assuage their malice, and confound their devices, till, conquered by the convictions of their consciences and the many checks of providence, they be every one of them brought, at length, to submit themselves with pieces of silver, as being glad to make their peace with the church upon any terms.” Even Judas submitted himself with pieces of silver when he returned them with this confession, I have betrayed innocent blood. Also see Rev. 3:9 (<i>Behold, I give of the synagogue of Satan, of those who say they are Jews, and they are not, but lie. Behold, I will make them to come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you</i>).</p>
NET Bible®	<p><i>They humble themselves and offer gold and silver as tribute.</i> [The Hebrew reads] “humbling himself.” The verb form is a Hithpael participle from the root rafas (“to trample”). The Hithpael of this verb appears only here and in Prov 6:3, where it seems to mean, “humble oneself,” a nuance that fits nicely in this context. The apparent subject is “wild beast” or “assembly,” though both of these nouns are grammatically feminine, while the participle is a masculine form. Perhaps one should emend the participial form to a masculine plural (mitrapim) and understand “bulls” or “calves” as the subject.</p> <p>The Hebrew reads “with pieces [?] of silver.” The meaning of the Hebrew term ratsey is unclear. It is probably best to emend the text to betser vŷkhasef (“[with] gold and silver”).</p>
Spurgeon	<p><i>“Till every one submit himself with pieces of silver.”</i> The Lord is asked to subdue the enemies of Israel, till they rendered tribute in silver ingots. Blessed is that rebuke, which does not break but bend; for subjection to the Lord of hosts is liberty, and tribute to him enriches him that pays it. The taxation of sin is infinitely more exacting than the tribute of religion. The little finger of lust is heavier than the loins of the law. Pieces of silver given to God are replaced with pieces of gold.</p>

The NET Bible® quotations have been edited slightly and are from *The Net Bible*®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 68:30.

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What would seem to be the most easily explained phrase of this verse is quite difficult, insofar as, *why doesn't David ask God to just destroy these opposing armies?*

The Commentators Comment on “He scatters the people that delight in war”

Commentator	Explanation
Barnes	<p><i>He scatters the people that delight in war</i> - The reference is to God. The psalmist sees the work already accomplished. In anticipation of the victory of God over his foes, he sees them already discomfited and put to flight. The mighty hosts which had been arrayed against the people of God are dissipated and driven asunder; or, in other words, a complete victory is obtained. The people that “<i>delighted in war</i>” were those that had a pleasure in arraying themselves against the people of God - the enemies that had sought their overthrow.</p>

The Commentators Comment on “He scatters the people that delight in war”

Commentator	Explanation
Gill	<i>scatter the people that delight in war; as antichrist, and the antichristian states, do: they take delight in making war with the saints, and in slaying of them, to whom power has been given so to do; with whose blood they have been made drunk, and have took as much pleasure in the shedding of it as a drunken man does in indulging himself to excess in liquor; but these in God's own time shall be scattered, when Christ the Lamb shall fight against them with the sword of his mouth, and shall utterly destroy them (see Rev. 13:7).</i>
Henry	<i>Scatter the people that delight in war, who take such a pleasure in opposing Christ that they will never be reconciled to him. This may refer to the unbelieving Jews, who delighted in making war upon the holy seed, and would not submit themselves, and were therefore scattered over the face of the earth. David had himself been a man of war, but could appeal to God that he never delighted in war and bloodshed for its own sake; as for those that did, and therefore would not submit to the fairest terms of peace, he does not doubt but God would scatter them. .</i>
Kukis	<p>If we take the verse as it stands (the position of virtually every translation), in order for this to fit into the context, we must reasonably assume that the previous phrases refer to Israel's enemies. In this way, David can call upon God to scatter these who delight in war.</p> <p>If we observe even casually the continuous attacks of radical Muslims against innocent citizens (their primary target), it is easy to understand that these are men who delight in war. The armies of Hitler and Communist armies which have attempted to increase the size of their territory are those who delight in war. Conversely, even though we have great men and women who volunteer for the armed forces of the United States, I can guarantee you that 99% of them would prefer to act as a deterrent to war, as opposed to having to go to war against another army.</p>
Kukis	The alternate reading, where God is called upon to <i>scatter [those] people who desire to draw near</i> , is so difficult to make sense out of, that almost no translation takes that approach. Perhaps the sense is, <i>Scatter them</i> [those previously mentioned]. <i>The people [of God] desire to draw near [to You]</i> . Here, the idea is, we break this up into two parts; it is those previously mentioned whom God is called upon to scatter. In contrast, His people desire to draw near to Him. This idea requires the insertion of several words, but it is more in keeping with the context.
Spurgeon	<i>God's people were peace-men, and only desired the crushing of oppressive nations, that war might not occur again. Let the battles of peace be as fierce as they will; heap coals of fire on the heads of enemies, and slay their enmity thereby. That "they who take the sword should perish by the sword," is a just regulation for the establishment of quiet in the earth. What peace can there be, while blood-thirsty tyrants and their myrmidons are so many? Devoutly may we offer this prayer, and, with equal devotion, we may bless God that it is sure to be answered, for "he breaks the bow and cuts the spear in sunder, he burns the chariot in the fire."</i>

One might suppose that this portion of v. 30 summarizes all that has gone before. Although it is difficult to precisely determine the meaning of the previous phrases, we are probably dealing with Israel's enemies, and David here calls for God to scatter his enemies.

Spurgeon's quotations are slightly edited and taken from Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 68:30.

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One final look at a very literal rendering of this verse:

Rebuke [or, *castigate*] **a community** [or, *living thing, animal, life, organisms, life form; appetite*] **of stalk** [or, *reed*];
a congregation of mighty ones
in calves of peoples trampling [down] in [or, *submitting with*] **bars of silver;**
scatter peoples; wars they delight in.

The Commentators Comment on All of Psalm 68:30

Commentator	Explanation
Barnes	<i>The meaning of the whole verse, though there is much difficulty in interpreting the particular expressions, is, that the most formidable enemies of the people of God, represented here by wild beasts, would be subdued, and would be made to show their submission by bringing presents - by "pieces of silver," or, with tribute. Thus the idea corresponds with that in the previous verse, that "kings would bring presents."</i>
Henry	<i>Some shall submit for fear (Psalm 68:30); others shall submit willingly (Psalm 68:29, 31).</i>
J a m i e s o n , Fausset and Brown	<i>The strongest nations are represented by the strongest beasts.¹⁸⁸ The biggest problem with this interpretation is, there is only one word in this verse which undeniably refers to an animal, and that is calf.</i>

Barnes' comments are from Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:30.

Gill's comments are from Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:30 and they were edited down somewhat (but not enough). He made a lot of references, but I personally did not find these references to be helpful (and, quite frankly, I did not find Gill to be very helpful either).

Matthew Henry's comments are from Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:30.

Possibly the idea is, some submit to God more or less willingly, and others must be made to submit to Him with great pressure—here, seen as military pressure.

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It is frustrating for me to spend so much time thinking, examining and presenting the commentaries, and not really coming up with very much by way of substantive meaning. However, again, let me point out that, we are dealing with manuscripts which are a thousand years old, which are copies of copies of copies of manuscripts which are thousands of years old. We are dealing with a dead language and with manuscripts originally written without vowels. The upshot is, it is amazing that we understand as much about the Bible as we do. The fact that I have essentially thrown my hands up in the air with 2 verses from this difficult psalm is amazing, inasmuch as, I rarely have this much frustrating in dealing with the meaning of a verse. Oft times, I may not feel as though I have completely plumbed this depths of this or that verse; however, most of the time I feel as though I have given a reasonable translation of said verse, and a reasonable explanation as well. The fact that a verse which seems impenetrable occurs so infrequently is another testimony to the power and the reality of God's Word.

**Come ambassadors from Egypt;
Ethiopia [Cush] bring quickly his hands unto
Elohim.**

Psalm
68:31

**Ambassadors from Egypt come;
His hands quickly bring Ethiopia unto Elohim.**

¹⁸⁸ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; from e-sword, Psalm 68:30.

**Ambassadors from Egypt come to Him in Jerusalem;
His hands quickly bring in Ethiopians to God.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	Come ambassadors from Egypt; Ethiopia [Cush] bring quickly his hands unto Elohim.
Septuagint	Ambassadors shall arrive out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall hasten to stretch out her hand readily to God.
Significant differences:	Although the LXX adds <i>to stretch out</i> , several English translations did this as well. The LXX also added <i>readily</i> . The Latin and Syriac agree with the Greek. In the second line in the Hebrew, it appears that the subject is <i>his hands</i> (feminine singular noun), which matches with the feminine singular verb.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Force the Egyptians to bring gifts of bronze; make the Ethiopians hurry to offer presents..
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	The government of Egypt will send people and the people from Cush will lift up their hands to (praise) God.
Good News Bible (TEV)	Ambassadors will come from Egypt; the Ethiopians will raise their hands in prayer to God.
New American Bible	Exact rich tribute from lower Egypt, from upper Egypt, gold and silver; make Ethiopia extend its hands to God.
New Living Testament	Let Egypt come with gifts of precious metals, let Ethiopia bow in submission to God.
Revised English Bible	Envoys will come from Egypt; Nubia will stretch out her hands to God.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	Kings will give you offerings, they will come out of Egypt; from Pathros will come offerings of silver; Ethiopia will be stretching out her hands to God.
JPS (Tanakh)	Tribute-bearers shall come from Egypt; Cush shall hasten its gifts to God.
NET Bible®	They come with red cloth from Egypt, Ethiopia voluntarily offers tribute to God.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall hasten to stretch out her hands [with offerings of submission] to God.
A Conservative Version	Rulers shall come out of Egypt. Ethiopia shall hasten to stretch out her hands to God.
Hebrew Names Version	Princes shall come out of Egypt. Kush shall hurry to stretch out her hands to God.
LTHB	Let nobles be brought out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall run up her hands to God.
New King James Version	Envoys will come out of Egypt;

NRSV	Ethiopia will quickly stretch out her hands to God. Let bronze be brought from Egypt; let Ethiopia hasten to stretch out its hands to God.
Updated Bible Version 2.11	Bronze will come out of Egypt; Ethiopia will bring her hands [with tribute] in a hurry to God.
A Voice in the Wilderness	Ambassadors shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall hurry with gifts in her hands unto God.
Young's Updated LT	Come fat ones out of Egypt, Cush causes her hands to run to God.

What is the gist of this verse? Envoys from Egypt will come to the King; people from Ethiopia will come with gifts and tribute.

Psalm 68:31a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʾâthâh (אָתָּה) [pronounced aw-THAWH]	to come, to arrive; to happen to anyone, to come upon; to go, to pass by	3 rd person masculine plural, Qal imperfect	Strong's #857 BDB #87
chash ^e man (חֲשֹׁמָן) [pronounced khahsh-MAHN]	those who are fat; [rich] nobles, ambassadors, magistrates, officials; bronze [Owen]	masculine plural noun	Strong's #2831 BDB #365

The word rendered "princes" here - chashmaniym - occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures. It means, according to Gesenius (Lexicon), the fat; then, the rich; the opulent; nobles. It is the word from which the name "Hasmonean" (or Asmonean), which was given by the Jews to the Maccabees, or Jewish princes in the time of the Jewish history between the Old and New Testaments, is supposed to have been derived. The Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Syriac, render it "legates" or "ambassadors." Luther renders it "princes." The reference is undoubtedly to men of station or rank.¹⁸⁹

Jamieson, Fausset and Brown write: *literally, "fat ones," the most eminent from the most wealthy, and the most distant nation, represent the universal subjection.*¹⁹⁰

On the other hand, the NET Bible® renders this portion of the verse: *They come with red cloth from Egypt...* and they write: *This noun, which occurs only here in the OT, apparently means "red cloth" or "bronze articles" (see HALOT 362 s.v. cf. חֲשֹׁמָן NEB "tribute"). Traditionally the word has been taken to refer to "nobles" (see BDB 365 s.v. חֲשֹׁמָן cf. NIV "envoys"). Another option would be to emend the text to hashmannim, "the robust ones," i.e., leaders).*¹⁹¹

The Updated Bible has *bronze* being brought from Egypt, the idea being that this is tribute from Egypt.

minnîy (מִן) [pronounced min-NEE]	from, off, away from, out from, out of, from off; on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
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¹⁸⁹ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:31.

¹⁹⁰ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset and David Brown; *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*; from e-sword, Psalm 68:31.

¹⁹¹ *The Net Bible®*; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 68:31.

Psalm 68:31a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
Mitz ^e rayim (מִצְרַיִם) [pronounced mits-RAH-yim]	<i>Egypt, Egyptians</i>	proper noun; pausal form	Strong's #4714 BDB #595

Translation: [Ambassadors from Egypt come;](#)... In the previous and difficult verse, people are scattered; here, princes or magistrates come from Egypt. Owen suggests that this word may refer to *bronze objects*; indicating that this is what is brought to Jerusalem from Egypt. It is similar to a word for *brass made smooth* (Strong's #2830). Like many words in this psalm, it is found just this one time in this one psalm.

Barnes writes: *Princes shall come out of Egypt - That is, [these princes will] come and acknowledge the true God. Egypt is referred to here as one of the most prominent of the foreign nations then known; and the idea is, that the distinguished men of foreign nations - the rulers and princes of the world - would come and submit themselves to God, and be united to His people.*¹⁹²

Psalm 72:8–11 reads: [He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before Him; and His enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the coasts shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him: all nations shall serve Him. Isa. 19:18–25 reads: In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of hosts; one shall be called, The city of destruction. In that day shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at its border to the LORD. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the LORD because of the oppressors, and He shall send them a Savior, and a Mighty One, and He shall deliver them. And the LORD shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day, and shall make sacrifice and offering; yea, they shall vow a vow unto the LORD, and perform it. And the LORD shall strike Egypt: He shall strike and heal it: and they shall return even to the LORD, and He shall be entreated by them, and shall heal them. In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance. Isa. 60:6–22: The multitude of camels will cover you, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba will come; they will bring gold and frankincense, and will proclaim the good news of the praises of Yahweh. All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered together to You, the rams of Nebaioth will minister to you; they will come up with acceptance on my altar; and I will glorify the house of my glory. Who are these who fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? Surely the isles will wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, for the name of Yahweh your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because He has glorified you. And foreigners will build up your walls, and their kings will minister to you: for in my wrath I struck you, but in my favor I have had mercy on you. Your gates will also be open continually; they will not be shut day nor night; that men may bring to You the wealth of the nations, and their kings led captive. For that nation and kingdom that will not serve You will perish; yes, those nations will be completely wasted. The glory of Lebanon will come to You, the fir-tree, the pine, and the box-tree together, to beautify the place of My sanctuary; and I will make the place of My feet glorious. And the sons of those who afflicted you will come bending to you; and all those who despised you will bow themselves down at the soles of your feet; and they will call you The city of Yahweh, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel. Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no man passed through you, I will make you an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. You will also be nursed with the milk of the nations, and will be nursed with the breast of kings; and you will know that I, Yahweh, am your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. For bronze I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood bronze, and for stones iron. I will also make your officers peace, and your exactors righteousness. Violence](#)

¹⁹² Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:31.

will no more be heard in your land, desolation nor destruction inside your borders; but you will call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise. The sun will no more be your light by day; neither will the moon give light to you for brightness: but Yahweh will be to you an everlasting light, and your God your glory. Your sun will no more go down, neither will your moon withdraw itself; for Yahweh will be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning will be ended. Your people also will all be righteous; they will inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. The little one will become a thousand, and the small one a strong nation; I, Yahweh, will hurry it in its time. Isa. 66:19: And I will set a sign among them, and I will send those who escape from them to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, drawers of the bow; to Tubal, and Javan, to the far away coasts that have not heard My fame, nor have seen My glory. And they will declare My glory among the nations.

Psalm 68:31b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
kûwsh (כּוּשׁ) [pronounced <i>koosh</i>]	This word is translated variously as <i>Ethiopia</i> , <i>Cush</i> , <i>Cushi</i> and <i>Cushite</i> (it is all the same word)	Proper masculine noun/location	Strong's #3568 BDB #468
Nowhere else can Cush be seen as the subject of a verb; so I was unable to find an instance where this masculine noun might take on a feminine singular verb.			
rûts (רָוַט) [pronounced <i>roots</i>]	<i>to cause to run; to hastily lead up, to cause to hasten; to bring quickly</i>	3 rd person feminine singular, Hiphil imperfect	Strong's #7323 BDB #930
I confirmed in the Hebrew text that this is a feminine singular; most of the time I simply take Owen's word for it.			
Several literal translations rendered this <i>hastened to stretch out</i> ; however, this is based upon the idea the Cush is the subject and <i>his hand</i> is the object.			
The NET Bible® notes: <i>The Hebrew reads "causes its hands to run," which must mean "quickly stretches out its hands" (to present tribute).</i> ¹⁹³			
yâd (יָד) [pronounced <i>yawd</i>]	<i>hand</i>	feminine plural noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #3027 BDB #388
Because so many generally literal texts rendered this phrase <i>Cush stretched out her hands to God</i> , I also double-checked the Hebrew text to make certain that this had a masculine singular suffix instead of a feminine singular suffix. I would prefer to give this line the most common translation, as that is easier to explain; however, this sentence literally reads: <i>His hands quickly bring Ethiopia unto God</i> .			
ʿel (עַל) [pronounced <i>e</i>]	<i>unto, in, into, toward, to, regarding, against</i>	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
ʾĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced <i>el-o-HEEM</i>]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43

¹⁹³ The Net Bible®; © 1996-2006 by Biblical Studies Press (BSP); taken from e-Sword; also found at <http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>, Psalm 68:31.

Translation: ...His hands quickly bring Ethiopia unto Elohim. Here, determining the translation of the verse itself is key. Although I like what I read in other translations more, I am matching a feminine singular noun here with a feminine singular verb (*Ethiopia* is generally seen as a masculine noun). This makes the explanation more difficult. However, I need to point out that this verb is not the common verb used to mean *to bring* nor is it the common verb used to mean *to stretch out*. In fact, BDB does not give *to stretch out* as a meaning of this verb in any stem. So the translations which say *Ethiopia stretches out its hands to God* (or words to that effect) are taking two liberties with this verse: they are not properly matching the noun and the verb; and they are not using the verb in its most common sense (and this verb is found many times in Scripture).

Even though we stumbled on the previous verse, it should be clear that this line is in contrast to the final line of the previous verse. God *scattered* nations which delighted in war; here, God the Son brings Ethiopia to God the Father. Obviously, God does not bring the country *Ethiopia*, but its citizenry.

There is the possibility that we are speaking of Jews in other countries which come back to their King in Israel, as per Isa. 11:11: *It shall happen in that day, that the Lord will set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, who shall remain, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea*. Bear in mind that this is the gathering of the believing Jews and, we might reasonably assume, believing Gentiles as well.

It is obvious that I keep thinking that, if I lay these translations out side-by-side, one of them is going to make clear sense.

Various Translations of Psalm 68:31 and Their Interpretations

Translation	Interpretation
Ambassadors shall arrive out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall hasten to stretch out her hand readily to God (LXX, Latin and Syriac).	Somehow, through events which would transpire, heathen nations would turn to God. The implication is, Jesus Christ would rule from Israel and these nations would come to Him in Israel.
Kings will give you offerings, they will come out of Egypt; from Pathros will come offerings of silver; Ethiopia will be stretching out her hands to God (BBE).	The Bible in Basic English inexplicably adds an additional line, but the idea is the same—people from foreign nations will come to the Temple (I assume) to worship Jehovah Elohim.
Nobles shall come from Egypt; Cush shall hasten to stretch out her hands to God (ESV).	The translation is the same as above, and therefore, so is the interpretation.
Let bronze be brought from Egypt; Let Ethiopia (Cush) hasten to stretch out her hands to God (Owen). Bronze will come out of Egypt; Ethiopia will bring her hands [with tribute] in a hurry to God (Updated Bible Version 2.11).	Although Owen translates this differently, the idea is roughly the same—obedience is paid to Jehovah Elohim from surrounding nations. This is parallel to Zeph. 3:10: <i>From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia My worshipers, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring My offering</i> .
Ambassadors from Egypt come; His hands quickly bring Ethiopia unto Elohim (Kukis).	The big change is, the feminine singular noun <i>hands</i> is matched to the verb, which means <i>to quickly bring, to cause to run, to quickly lead out</i> . Because we have <i>unto God</i> at the end of this line, <i>to quickly bring</i> seems to be the best fit. Gifts are not being brought here; but someone (Jesus Christ?) is bringing Ethiopia to God.

Unlike the previous verse, this one is fairly easily explained and the translations are in general agreement with one another.

It is also easy to tell why most translators took the route that they did with the final line; it is easier to explain that those from Ethiopia bring tribute to God, and it is to explain that someone else brings Ethiopia to God.

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Bullinger adds that the stretching out of *her hands to God* indicates that Ethiopia will bring presents, as per v. 29, this being a continuation of that thought. Stretching out the hands is a metonym for bringing presents to God.¹⁹⁴ However, Bullinger later suggests that stretching out the hands to God is a reference to praying to God.¹⁹⁵ In any case, this refers to Ethiopians rather than to the country of Ethiopia. The place is a metonym for the inhabitants of the place (an extremely common type of metonym). However, bear in mind that Bullinger is basing his interpretation here upon the English and not upon the Hebrew, where the verb probably does not mean *to stretch out*.

In any case, the gospel message goes out to all the nations, and those who respond are God's; and those who respond and remain alive during the Tribulation will be brought to God in Jerusalem. Throughout Scripture, we have men (and women) from other countries turning to Jesus Christ, the God of David. There is the Queen of Sheba who comes to Solomon to hear his wisdom; there are the Egyptians who were present on the Day of Pentecost when God sent His Spirit; and there is the Ethiopian eunuch mentioned in Acts 8:27.¹⁹⁶ Tradition, by the way, has Mark going to Egypt to evangelize the population there, and Matthew and Matthias going to Ethiopia to evangelize there.¹⁹⁷

In a similar vein, Spurgeon writes: *"Princes shall come out of Egypt." Old foes shall be new friends. Solomon shall find a spouse in Pharaoh's house. Christ shall gather a people from the realms of sin. Great sinners shall yield themselves to the scepter of grace, and great men shall become good men, by coming to God. "Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." Cush shall hasten to present peace offerings. Sheba's queen shall come from the far south. Candace's chamberlain shall ask of Him who was led as a lamb to the slaughter. Abyssinia shall yet be converted, and Africa become the willing seeker after grace, eagerly desiring and embracing the Christ of God. Poor Ethiopia, your hands have been long manacled and hardened by cruel toil, but millions of your sons have in their bondage found the liberty with which Christ made men-free; and so your cross, like the cross of Simon of Cyrene, has been Christ's cross, and God has been your salvation. Hasten, O Lord, this day, when both the civilization and the barbarism of the earth shall adore you, Egypt and Ethiopia blending with glad accord in your worship! Here is the confidence of your saints, even your promise; hasten it in your own time, good Lord.*¹⁹⁸ Obviously, Spurgeon bases part of his interpretation upon the more common rendering of this verse.

What follows in the next verse is more of a transition verse, rather than a verse which can be neatly placed with this or the next section.

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Sing Praises to God Again

¹⁹⁴ *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; pp 547–548.

¹⁹⁵ *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*; E. W. Bullinger; ©originally 1898; reprinted 1968 Baker Books; p 607.

¹⁹⁶ Clarke offered these 3 examples. Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:31.

¹⁹⁷ As per Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:31.

¹⁹⁸ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 68:31.

Kingdoms of the earth, sing unto Elohim;
Sing praises [to] Adonai!
Selah.

Psalm
68:32

Sing, you kingdoms of the earth, to Elohim;
Sing praises [to] Adonai!
[Musical Pause] [lit., *selah!*].

All kingdoms of the earth, sing praises to God
and praise the Lord!
[Musical interlude]

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	Kingdoms of the earth, sing unto Elohim; Sing praises [to] Adonai! Selah.
Septuagint	Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth; sing psalms to the Lord. Pause.

Significant differences: The slight differences appear to be based upon an interpretation of the second verb.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Now sing praises to God! Every kingdom on earth, sing to the Lord!.
Good News Bible (TEV)	Sing to God, kingdoms of the world, sing praise to the Lord.
New Jerusalem Bible	Kingdoms of the earth, sing to God, play for...

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	Make songs to God, you kingdoms of the earth; O make songs of praise to the Lord; Selah.
God's Word™	You kingdoms of the world, sing to God. Make music to praise the Lord. Selah
JPS (Tanakh)	O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God; chant hymns to the Lord,...
NET Bible®	O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God! Sing praises to the Lord, (<i>Selah</i>)

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

WEB	Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth; O sing praises to the Lord. Selah.
Young's Updated LT	Kingdoms of the earth, sing to God, Praise the Lord. Selah.

What is the gist of this verse? All the kingdoms of the earth are called upon to sing praises God.

Psalm 68:32a

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
mam ^l lâkâh (מַמְלָכָה) [pronounced mahm ^o -law-kaw]	kingdom, national government; sovereignty, dominion, reign, dynasty; used to refer to both the royal dignity and to the country of a king	feminine plural construct	Strong's #4467 BDB #575
ʿerets (אֶרֶץ) [pronounced EH-rets]	earth (all or a portion thereof), land	feminine singular noun with the definite article	Strong's #776 BDB #75
shîyr (שִׁיר) [pronounced sheer]	to sing	2 nd person masculine plural, Qal imperative	Strong's #7891 BDB #1010
ʿel (עַל) [pronounced el]	unto, in, into, toward, to, regarding, against	directional preposition (respect or deference may be implied)	Strong's #413 BDB #39
ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Translation: Sing, you kingdoms of the earth, to Elohim;... We have mentioned several territories in Israel; and then both Egypt and Ethiopia were spoken of; and now, David calls upon all of the kingdoms of the earth to sing to God. Presumably, they would be singing praises to God.

This verse seems to be paralleling v. 4. However, we seem to have a wider application here, where it is applied to all kingdoms of the earth. In v. 4, it is unclear as to whom is called upon to praise God. This also pulls in the references to other nations in vv. 29 and 31. For this reason, this verse transitions us between the nations which God brings to Himself in the previous verses to *why* man ought to sing to God, which is explained in the verses which follow.

By the way, in the Jewish Old Testament, there are many times when the nations are called upon to praise God: Psalm 67:3–4: Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples thank You. O let the nations be glad and sing for joy; for You shall judge the peoples righteously and govern the nations on earth. Psalm 100:1–2: Make a joyful noise to Jehovah, all you lands. Worship Jehovah with gladness; come before His presence with singing. Psalm 117:1–2: O praise Jehovah, all nations; praise Him, all peoples. For His merciful kindness is great toward us; and the truth of Jehovah endures forever. Praise Jehovah! Deut. 32:43: Rejoice, O, nations, with His people; for He will avenge the blood of His servants, and will render vengeance to His foes and will be merciful to His land, to His people. This theme is found in the New Testament as well, of course. Rom. 15:10–11 quotes two of these passages: And again He says, "Rejoice, O nations, with His people." And again, "Praise the Lord, all the nations, and praise Him, all the peoples." (Deut. 32:43a Psalm 117:1). Rev. 15:4: Who shall not fear You, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You only are holy. For all nations shall come and worship before You, for Your righteousnesses were made known.

Psalm 68:32b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
zâmar (זָמַר) [pronounced zaw-MAHR]	<i>to sing; to make music in praise of God, to make melody; properly to cut off (i.e., to divide up [a song] into its various parts)</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Piel imperative	Strong's #2167 & #2168 BDB #274
`ădônây (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced uh-doh-NAY]	<i>Lord, Master, my Lord, Sovereign; can refer to the Trinity or to an intensification of the noun; transliterated Adonai</i>	masculine plural noun with the 1 st person singular suffix	Strong's #113 & #136 BDB #10

This is a form of Strong's #113, where there are three explanations given for the yodh ending: (1) this is a shortened form of the plural ending, usually written -îym (יִם) [pronounced eem], an older form of the *pluralis excellentiæ* (the plural of excellence), where God's sovereignty and lordship are emphasized by the use of the plural; (2) this is the actual, but ancient, plural of the noun, which refers to the Trinity; or (3) this is the addition of the 1st person singular suffix, hence, *my Lord* (the long vowel point at the end would distinguish this from *my lords*).

There are points of grammar which speak to the options above, but not so that we may unequivocally choose between the three. (1) When we find `ădônay (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced uh-doh-NAH] (note the difference of the vowel ending), it always means *my lords*. (2) Jehovah calls Himself `ădônây (אֲדֹנָי) [pronounced uh-doh-NAY] in Job 28:28 Isa. 8:7; however, many of the Job manuscripts read *Y^ehowah* and 8 ancient Isaiah manuscripts read *Y^ehowah* instead. This suggests, that either ancient Scribes were confused about this form of *Adonai* or that they simply substituted *Adonai* for *Y^ehowah*, which was not an abnormal practice (in oral readings, the ancient Tetragrammaton was not spoken, but *Lord* was said instead). And even if every manuscript read *Adonai*, then we may also reasonably conclude that one member of the Trinity is addressing another member of the Trinity (although the idea of God saying *my Lord* would be theologically confusing, even if addressing another member of the Trinity; although Jesus did refer to God the Father as *our Father*).

Almost every single translator renders this *Lord, the Lord, or Adonai*. I am not aware of any, off the top of my head, who typically render this *my Lord*.

Translation: ...Praise Adonai! We may insert that David is speaking to all the kingdoms of the earth, which is supplied by the principle of ellipsis. We find masculine plural imperatives used in both cases, so, it would make sense that these imperatives are meant for the same persons; in this case, the kingdoms of the earth.

A friend of mine used to object to God calling for Himself to be praised, indicating that God must be some sort of an insecure egomaniac to require our praise. Therefore, there are a couple of things which you need to understand: our praise for God should not be perfunctory, something which we give up because we have to. Our praise should be a normal response to Who God is. When we recognize His holiness, His faithfulness and His grace, and we recognize our own behavior, it is obvious that God deserves praise and we do not. This friend of mine primarily attended charismatic churches where a lot is based upon their feelings, and, they are often quite demonstrative during their services (calling out to God, speaking in tongues, raising their hands in the air).¹⁹⁹ No doubt, there were days when my friend attended these churches where he did not feel like praising God. No doubt, he thought about the idea of praising God when he simply did not feel like it. And, no doubt, when emotion is valued over truth, you have fewer reasons to praise God—you have no foundation for praising God, unless you just happen to feel really good.

¹⁹⁹ I have no idea if his church behaved in this way; I am basing this upon several charismatic churches that I have attended.

The alternative to glorifying God is glorifying man—I know of very few people, particularly myself, who deserve any sort of praise. However, there are times during which we glorify man, and sometimes for good reason. We might honor a teacher who has taught for 30 or 40 years by naming a school after him. We might honor a soldier who has returned from Iraq after risking his life repeatedly to attempt to bring peace to that region. We might even honor an athlete, who, despite his shortcomings, has no doubt spent his entire life conditioning himself in order to be among the best. We might honor a scientist or a researcher who discovers a cure for this or that disease. Now, what God has done is infinitely superior to any of these things. God created all that exists in our world, something which is far more complex than any doctor or scientist can conceive of. God the Son came to this earth and for 30 years endured all that we endure, and yet was without sin. God the Son then died on our behalf, enduring the equivalent of billions of eternities in hell, having taken upon Himself our sins. Now, if we can praise and celebrate certain people for various achievements in their lives, certainly we can praise and celebrate the Prince of Glory Who has done so much more. However, this takes doctrine in the soul to recognize just what God has done on our behalf.

A king is commonly honored throughout his kingdom, and kings or national rulers are often honored in a parade or in a procession. David is involved in the procession of the Ark of God, which represents Jesus Christ on this earth; and those in attendance are called upon to praise God, just as the nations in the Millennium, will be gathered before Jesus Christ, and they will praise Him as well.

Psalm 68:32c

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
çelâh (חֶלֶאָה) [pronounced seh-LAW]	<i>to lift up, to elevate, to exalt [with one's voice], to gather, to cast up [into a heap]; it is transliterated Selah</i>	interjection	Strong's #5542 BDB #699

The verbal cognate is 'âlâh (עָלָה) [pronounced saw-LAW], which means *to lift up and toss aside*. In the Piel stem, it means *to weigh*, which involves lifting up the object and placing it upon the balance. Gesenius gives the meaning of çelâh as *rest, silence, pause*, as çelâh does not necessarily have to match the meaning of its cognates. My thinking, which is a combination of BDB and Gesenius, is that the voices build up to a crescendo here, and, very likely, they are then followed by a vocal (but not necessarily, musical) silence. This would reconcile the points made by Gesenius and still make this compatible with its cognates.²⁰⁰ Another very reasonable possibility is that the instruments *are lifted up* for a musical interlude. The NLT translation of *Interlude* is very good.

Translation: [\[Musical\] Pause](#) [or, musical interlude; lit., *Selah!*] As described in the exegesis, this word çelâh comes from a verb which means *to lift up*. It is reasonable to assume that those who are playing musical instruments are to lift up these instruments and play during a pause in the singing. I believe that this is called the *bridge* in modern music? Keil and Delitzsch suggest: *The music, as Sela directs, here becomes more boisterous; it gives intensity to the strong cry for the judgment of God; and the first unfolding of thought of this Michtam is here brought to a close.*²⁰¹ Let me suggest that this also is a time where David takes a break from writing, and concentrates on his run. Obviously, he is formulating this as he runs; he does not stop to scratch out a few verses on a rock or a tree; but this represents a break in his thinking, and the music intensifies as he simply runs.

At this point, the psalmist tells us about the One we ought to praise, which will continue to the end of the psalm.

²⁰⁰ For more discussion, see H.W.F. Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament*; ©1979 by Baker Books; p. 588.

²⁰¹ Keil & Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*; ©1966 Hendrickson Publishers, Inc.; Vol. 5, p. 404.

To the rider in [two] heavens, [two] heavens
ancient;
Lo! He gives in His voice a voice of might.

Psalm
68:33

[Sing praises] to the Rider of the heavens,
[those] ancient heavens;
Listen, He sends forth [lit., gives] His voice,
[His] mighty voice .

Sing praises to the Rider of the heavens, those ancient heavens.
Listen, for He sends for His voice, His mighty voice.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	To the rider in [two] heavens, [two] heavens ancient; Lo! He gives in His voice a voice of might.
Septuagint	Sing to God who mounts on the heaven of heaven, eastward: lo, he will utter a mighty sound with his voice.
Significant differences:	The LXX inserts the phrase <i>to God</i> ; this is not found in the Hebrew, Latin or Syriac. Although it may appear that <i>eastward</i> in the Greek is a different word, it is a legitimate translation of <i>ancient</i> . So, essentially, there is no significant difference between the Greek and Hebrew after the first few words.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Praise the one who rides across the ancient skies; listen as he speaks with a mighty voice.
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	(Sing) to the One that Rides on the Clouds and on the heavens that have always been there! He is shouting with a powerful voice.
Good News Bible (TEV)	...to him who rides in the sky, the ancient sky. Listen to him shout with a mighty roar.
New Jerusalem Bible	...[Play (music) for] the Rider of the Heavens, the primeval heavens. <i>Pause</i> Then he speaks, with a voice of power!.
Revised English Bible	...[make music to the Lord], to him who rides on the heavens, the ancient heavens. Listen! He speaks in the mighty thunder.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	To him who goes or the clouds of heaven, the heaven which was from earliest times; he sends out his voice of power.
God's Word™	God rides through the ancient heaven, the highest heaven. Listen! He makes his voice heard, his powerful voice.
JPS (Tanakh)	...to Him who rides the ancient highest heavens, who thunders forth with His mighty voice.
NET Bible®	...to the one who rides through the sky from ancient times! Look! He thunders loudly.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	<i>Sing praises</i> to Him Who rides upon the heavens, the ancient heavens; lo, He sends forth His voice, His mighty voice.
English Standard Version	...to him who rides in the heavens, the ancient heavens; behold, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice.

Hebrew Names Version	To him who rides on the heaven of heavens, which are of old; behold, he utters his voice, a mighty voice.
New King James Version	To Him who rides on the heaven of heavens, <i>which were</i> of old! Indeed, He sends out His voice, a mighty voice.
Young's Updated LT	To him who is riding on the heavens of the heavens of old, Lo, He gives with His voice a strong voice.

What is the gist of this verse? The psalmist calls upon us to sing to the rider of the heavens, Who speaks with a mighty voice.

Psalm 68:33a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
lâmed (ל) (pronounced ^f)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
râkab (רָכַב) [pronounced raw-KAH ^B V]	<i>the one riding, rider</i>	Qal active participle with the definite article	Strong's #7392 BDB #938
b ^e (ב) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
shâmayîm (שָׁמַיִם) [pronounced shaw-MAH-yim]	<i>heavens, skies</i>	masculine dual noun	Strong's #8064 BDB #1029
shâmayîm (שָׁמַיִם) [pronounced shaw-MAH-yim]	<i>heavens, skies</i>	masculine dual noun	Strong's #8064 BDB #1029
qêdem (קֵדֶם) [pronounced KAY-dem]	<i>east, antiquity, front, that which is before, aforeside; in front, mount of the East; ancient time, aforeside, ancient, from of old, earliest time; anciently, of old; beginning; eastward, to or toward the east</i>	noun/adverb	Strong's #6924 BDB #870

Translation: [Sing praises] to the Rider of the heavens, [those] ancient heavens;... Again, this points back to v. 4, where we saw this word, *the rider*, used already (God was called a rider in the desert). It is an interesting picture to paint, and I am sure that this refers to Jesus Christ.

Clarke explains what it means for God to *ride the heavens*: *He who manages the heavens, directing their course and influence, he formed every orb, ascertained its motion, proportioned its solid contents to the orbit in which it was to revolve, and the other bodies which belong to the same system. As an able and skillful rider manages his horse, so does God the sun, moon, planets, and all the hosts of heaven.*²⁰² So the idea here is, Jesus Christ, as a rider of the heavens, is not like some cowboy on a horse out exploring new territory, but more as an overseer, as the One in control of the heavens and earth and all that is in them.

²⁰² Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:33.

It is possible that this is a reference back to Deut. 33:26: *There is none like God, O Jeshurun, who rides through the heavens to your help, through the skies in His majesty.* As we read through this psalm and put it into its historical context, it is clear that David has read through the Old Testament (up to his point in time) and he seems to be making constant allusions back to the text which he has read. Let me add another verse—Deut. 10:14: *Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it.*

Besides the references in Deuteronomy, from which David probably was inspired, we find similar quotations here and there in Scripture. Psalm 18:9–10: *And He bowed the heavens and came down, and darkness was under His feet. And He rode on a cherub, and flew; yea, He soared on the wings of the wind.* Psalm 104:3: *He lays the beams of His upper rooms in the waters. He sets the clouds as His chariots; He walks on the wings of the wind.* Isa. 19:1: The burden against Egypt: *Behold, Jehovah rides on a swift cloud and comes into Egypt. And the idols of Egypt shall tremble at His presence, and the heart of Egypt shall melt in its midst.* We even find similar language in the New Testament. Matt. 26:64: *Jesus said to him, You said it. I tell you more. From this time you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of the heavens.*

There is a very interesting footnote in the NIV Study Bible: *An epithet of Baal found in Canaanite literature is used to make the point that the Lord (Yahweh, not Baal) is the exalted One who truly makes the storm cloud His chariot.*²⁰³

The heavens here are called ancient, and I believe that I have already made mention of the fact that I believe that God created the heavens and the earth millions of years ago. Verses like this tend to support this idea. Calling the heavens ancient seems to imply to me that we are speaking of more than, say, 6000 years ago. We have similar verbiage in Psalm 93:2 (*Your throne is established from of old; You are from everlasting*) and Psalm 102:25–26 (*Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away*). Calling these heavens ancient also reveals, to me anyway, the sense of humor of God the Holy Spirit. We now know, thousands of years after these words were penned, that, when we look into the heavens, we are seeing things which occurred thousands of years ago and hundreds of thousands of years ago. These things which we see in the sky are so far away, that it takes light thousands of years to reach us, so that, the stars which we observe are not necessarily where we see them or the size and color that we see, as we are seeing them as they were thousands of years ago. So, when we look into the heavens, we are seeing the ancient heavens, as they were in the past. David was probably unaware of this, but God the Holy Spirit knew this, as He was involved in the creative process of the heavens and the earth. So, God the Holy Spirit understood clearly that, when we look into the sky at night, we are observing the ancient heavens.

Now, I have heard in the past mentions of what is called the gospel of the stars, where ancient man could look up into the heavens and see the gospel proclaimed, and that some would look into the sky, follow the symbols, and then believe in Jehovah God. I must admit to having my doubts about this belief, and must further admit that I have only skimmed over the theory (Duane Spencer, among others, was a proponent). If this is the case, then this psalm reasonably alludes to such a presentation of the gospel, speaking of one riding the ancient skies.

Barnes writes: *The highest heavens. The heaven of heaven would properly mean the heaven above that which is heaven to us; that is, the heaven above the sky. This is represented as the special dwelling-place of God.*²⁰⁴

Barnes points out that the Jews spoke of 3 heavens:

²⁰³ *The NIV Study Bible*; ©1995 by The Zondervan Corporation; p. 846 (footnote).

²⁰⁴ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:33.

The Three Heavens	
The Heavens	Description
The 1 st heaven	The aerial heaven, or the region above us, where the birds fly, and the winds blow.
The 2 nd heaven	The starry heavens, or the firmament in which the stars are fixed.
The 3 rd heaven	The heaven above all, the abode of God and of angels.

This is a common distinction which Bob Thieme Jr. has made on a number of occasions. The 3rd heaven does not mean that these are heavens which are simply further out; they could simply refer to a spiritual dimension, as **God is a Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth**. Referring to the abode of God as being the 3rd heaven or as being in the 3rd heavens, is simply language of accommodation. Our imagination cannot even comprehend the concept of the 2nd heaven, which appears to be constantly expanding at some phenomenal rate. How do you comprehend that which appears to be infinite, and yet expanding at the same time? At some point in time, I am confident that the extent of the 2nd heaven will be made known to us (not during our human lives, however). And, at some point in time, the relationship between the 2nd and 3rd heavens will be made clear to us as well (even Satan is able to enter into the 3rd heaven, as we find in the first couple chapters of Job).

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Calling the heavens *ancient* is also quite interesting—as we know, the light we see from stars actually has occurred thousands and even millions of years ago; so the light that we see may be even of stars which are no longer there. So, we are seeing snapshots of the far, ancient past when we look at the stars in the heavens.

As a tangent, you might wonder, how did God create the earth and the universe in 6 days, and yet I speak of the events that we observe in the heavens as being millions of years old. Personally, I believe in the gap theory, that God created the heavens and the earth, and, as a result of Satan's fall, they became trashed and a waste place. God sealed the earth in ice, and, perhaps millions of years later, restored the earth, which is the story of Gen. 1. By the way, I do not take this position in deference to science, which wants to call everything that it digs up a million or two million years old; I take this position from the text and from related texts in Scripture (somewhere in Scripture, we are told that God did not create the earth trashed and a waste place; furthermore, these are odd adjectives to apply to something which God has newly created, as it reads in Gen. 1:2.

Psalm 68:33b			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
hên (הֵן) [pronounced hayn]	<i>lo!, behold, observe, look, look here, get this, listen, listen up</i>	interjection	Strong's #2005 BDB #243
nâthan (נָתַן) [pronounced naw-THAHN]	<i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set; to make</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, Qal imperfect	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
bê (בֵּ) [pronounced b ^{eh}]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
qôwl (קוֹל) [pronounced kohl]	<i>sound, voice, noise; loud noise, thundering</i>	masculine singular noun; with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #6963 BDB #876

Psalm 68:33b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
qôwl (קוֹל) [pronounced kohl]	sound, voice, noise; loud noise, thundering	masculine singular construct	Strong's #6963 BDB #876
ôz (אֹז) [pronounced gohz]	strength, might; firmness, defense, refuge, protection; splendor, majesty, glory praise	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5797 BDB #738

Translation: ...Listen, He sends forth [lit., gives] His voice, [His] mighty voice . Again, this does appear to be in line with the gospel of the stars, where God, from the heavens, sends forth his mighty voice; which is truth revealed from the heavens. However, this could simply mean that, insofar as man is concerned, God appears to live in the 3rd heaven, and yet, He makes His will and His knowledge known to us from so far away.

Barnes speaks about *the voice of the Lord*:

Barnes on the Voice of Jehovah

The voice of Yahweh. There can be no doubt that the expression here, which is seven times repeated in the psalm, "the voice of Jehovah," refers to thunder; and no one can fail to see the appropriateness of the expression. In heavy thunder it seems as if God spake. It comes from above. It fills us with awe. We know, indeed, that thunder as well as the other phenomena in the world, is produced by what are called "natural causes;" that there is no miracle in thunder; and that really God does not "speak" anymore in the thunder than he does in the sighing of the breeze or in the gurgling of the rivulet; but:

(a) He seems more impressively to speak to people in the thunder; and

(b) He may not improperly be regarded as speaking alike in the thunder, in the sighing of the breeze, and in the gurgling stream.

In each and all of these ways God is addressing men; in each and all there are lessons of great value conveyed, as if by His own voice, respecting His own existence and character. Those which are addressed to us particularly in thunder, pertain to His power, His majesty, His greatness; to our own weakness, feebleness, dependence; to the ease with which He could take us away, and to the importance of being prepared to stand before such a God. "Is upon the waters." The word "is" is supplied here by our translators in italics. The whole passage might be read as an exclamation: "The voice of Jehovah upon the waters!" It is the utterance of one who is overpowered by a sudden clap of thunder. The mind is awed. God seems to speak; His voice is heard rolling over the waters. The psalm was most likely composed in view of the sea or a lake - not improbably in view of the Mediterranean, when a storm was passing over it. A thunderstorm is sublime anywhere, in mountain scenery or upon the plains, upon the land or upon the ocean; but there are circumstances which give it special grandeur at sea, when the thunder seems to "roll" along with nothing to check or break it, and when the sublimity is increased by the solitude which reigns everywhere on the ocean.²⁰⁵

Bear in mind that, there are times when God speaks where His voice was audible and understandable. When a few of the disciples were with our Lord on the Mount of Transfiguration, God spoke and what He said was heard, understood and recorded. God first began to speak the 10 commandments to the people of Israel and they called for Moses to act as an intermediary, and to listen to God's voice, and to tell them what God said. The text seems to imply that they understood what God was saying.

²⁰⁵ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 29:3.

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Scripture has many references to the voice of God, and often, these references are to the sound of thunder and the sound of the wind and storms. Much of Psalm 29 is about the voice of God: [The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, over many waters. The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon. He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice of the LORD flashes forth flames of fire. The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness; the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of the LORD makes the deer give birth and strips the forests bare, and in his temple all cry, "Glory!"](#) (Psalm 29:3–9). Ezek. 10:5: [And the sound of the wings of the cherubim was heard as far as the outer court, like the voice of God Almighty when he speaks.](#) And, as I have already pointed out, the voice of God can be audible and intelligible as well.

I think that with this verse, we also have a *touch-back* to Psalm 68:7–9: [O God, when you went out before your people, when you marched through the wilderness, Selah the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain, before God, the One of Sinai, before God, the God of Israel. Rain in abundance, O God, you shed abroad; you restored your inheritance as it languished.](#) I think that part of the key to understanding this psalm is to match it with Old Testament passages which David likely read prior to writing this psalm, and touching back to previous verses in this psalm. I do not know if I will be satisfied with the organization of this psalm when I am finished, but, so far, this project has taken me more than 3 months to complete.

Speaking of such things, so far in the reading and studying which I have done, only Bullinger seems to appreciate how highly organized David's psalms are. Most commentators, like me, begin with a basic outline and work from there. However, this is not how David thinks, and any commentator ought to be aware of that when exegeting a Davidic psalm. However, when putting some organization to a Davidic psalm (or to any psalm), we have to be careful not to force a square peg into a round hole. I come across this time and time again with various commentators (and I have done this myself): they come up with what appears to be a good idea, and one or two words or a handful of verses fit into this notion, and then they try to force everything else into concept, and it does not fit. In fact, this is common with many doctrines of Scripture and many positions which people take.

While I am on this tangent, let me point out that, every verse *has* to mean something. Of course, you are thinking, *duh!* Let me explain: let's say you are sitting down before the Bible and thinking about eternal security versus not having eternal security, and you line up your verses on one side of the other. Now, like Jehovah Witnesses, you may be able to *explain away* this or that verse, but the verses that you have explained away must actually mean something. That is, both the human author and God the Holy Spirit had to have something specific in mind when writing these verses; this intent must fit in with the context, and this must be of some moderate importance to the likely audience of this or that psalm, epistle or narrative. So, even if you are able to explain away a verse which does not fit in with what you believe to be the truth (and, no matter which side of an issue to take, this is going to occur), then that verse still has a purpose, a meaning, a thought which it is conveying, and you must be able to do more than simply explain away the verse; you must be able to explain it as well. Let me give you an example of this: I had a friend and one of the disagreements we had was over eternal security: I believe that once a person is saved, then God keeps them saved no matter how much they screw up. God may take them out of this life under the principle of the sin unto death, but they remain God's. One of the passages he would throw in my face is Heb. 6:4–6: [For it is impossible, in the case of those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, and then have fallen away, to restore them again to repentance, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt.](#) In order for me to hold to eternal security, I must not only be able to explain away this verse, but it has to actually communicate something—some important principle—other than sounding as though, once we are enlightened and fall away, we cannot be restored again to repentance (which sounds like, not only can we lose our salvation, but all we have to do is fall away and it is gone; no way can it be restored). So, when you take a theological position, and you will have to do that time and time again, then you should be able to take the troublesome verses and be able to affix a reasonable meaning to them, which both fits with the context of the passage and fits in to the realm of sound doctrine.

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Proclaim God's Power

**Give glory [or, *praise*] to Elohim;
over Israel [is] His majesty and his strength in
the clouds.**

Psalm
68:34

**Give glory [or, *praise*] to Elohim;
His majesty and His strength [is] in the clouds
over Israel.**

**Give glory to God!
His strength and majesty is in the clouds over Israel.**

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text	Give glory [or, <i>praise</i>] to Elohim; over Israel [is] His majesty and his strength in the clouds.
Septuagint	Give ye glory to God: his excellency is over Israel, and his power is in the clouds.
Significant differences:	None.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV	Tell about God's power! He is honored in Israel, and he rules the skies.
EasyEnglish (Churchyard)	Tell everyone about the powerful God that is the King of Israel. His power is in the skies.
Good News Bible (TEV)	Proclaim God's power; his majesty is over Israel, his might is in the skies.
<i>The Message</i>	Call out "Bravo!" to God, the High God of Israel. His splendor and strength rise huge as thunderheads.
New American Bible	Confess the power of God whose majesty protects Israel, whose power is in the sky.
New Jerusalem Bible	Acknowledge the power of God. Over Israel his splendor, in the clouds his power.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English	Make clear that strength is God's: he is lifted up over Israel, and his power is in the clouds.
Complete Apostles' Bible	Give glory to God: His excellency is over Israel, and His power is in the clouds.
<i>od's Word</i> ™	Acknowledge the power of God. His majesty is over Israel, and his power is in the skies.
HCSB	Ascribe power to God. His majesty is over Israel, His power among the clouds.
NET Bible®	Acknowledge God's power, his sovereignty over Israel, and the power he reveals in the skies!
New International Version	Proclaim the power of God, whose majesty is over Israel, whose power is in the skies.

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

<i>The Amplified Bible</i>	Ascribe power <i>and</i> strength to God; His majesty is over Israel, and His strength <i>and</i> might are in the skies.
<i>Updated Emphasized Bible</i>	Ascribe strength to God, — Over Israel is His majesty, And His strength in the skies, God is to be revered for His sanctuary [so it should be, as per the LXX and the Vulgate].
LTHB	Give might to God over Israel; His majesty and His strength in the clouds.
A Voice in the Wilderness	Ascribe strength unto God over Israel; His majesty and His strength in the clouds.
Young's Updated LT	Ascribe strength to God, Over Israel is His excellency, and His strength in the clouds.

What is the gist of this verse? The psalmist calls upon the reader to recognize God's strength and power and to glorify Him.

Psalm 68:34a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
nâthan (נָתַן) [pronounced naw-THAHN]	<i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set; to make</i>	2 nd person masculine plural, Qal imperative	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
ôz (זֹר) [pronounced gohz]	<i>strength, might; firmness, defense, refuge, protection; splendor, majesty; glory, praise</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5797 BDB #738
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^o)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510
Ēlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Translation: Give glory [or, praise] to Elohim;... We are at the end of this psalm, and we have some parallels with the previous verse, where we find both this verb and this noun, the latter being uses in a different way here. We are called upon to give praise and glory to God.

The verb here is a very common verb, to which the KJV assigned 80–90 different English renderings. In almost every case that I have come across this verb, it seems to simply mean *to give; to place, to put; to make*. Primarily, it appears to mean *to give*, and I have found few if any instances where it cannot be so rendered. Now, the direct object primarily means *strength, might*. However, it makes little sense for us to be called upon by anyone to give strength to God. The direct object also can mean *glory, praise* (although it is less often used in this way), but it does make sense for the psalmist to call upon us to give glory (or praise) to God.

On the other hand, I don't have too many problems with *ascribe strength to God*; except that the verb is not used in this way, for the most part. It is true that we ought to recognize God's power and strength, but it is certainly not something which we can give to Him.

Barnes writes: *Ascribe strength unto God* - literally, "give." That is, Acknowledge him as a God of power. Recognize his omnipotence in your worship.²⁰⁶

Gill writes: *[You ascribe strength to God] by attributing works of strength and power to Him: such as the creation of all things; upholding all things in their being; the redemption and preservation of his people; the resurrection of the dead, etc. by applying to Him, and exercising faith on Him for spiritual strength, and giving Him the glory of it.*²⁰⁷

We find almost the exact same language in Psalm 29:1–2 (a psalm by David): *Give to Jehovah, sons of mighty ones; give to Jehovah glory and strength. Give to Jehovah the glory of His name; worship Jehovah in the majesty of holiness.* Similar language is also found in Psalm 96:6–8: *Honor and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary. Give to Jehovah, O families of the people; give to Jehovah glory and might. Give to Jehovah the glory due His name; lift up an offering and come into His courts.* By the way, this is also a Davidic psalm which we will examine as a part of the transporting of the Ark (see 1Chron. 16:28–29).

Psalm 68:34b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿal (עַל) [pronounced <i>gahl</i>]	<i>upon, beyond, on, against, above, over, by, beside</i>	preposition of proximity	Strong's #5921 BDB #752
Yisʿrâʾêl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced <i>yis-raw-ALE</i>]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975
gaʾăvâh (גִּבּוֹרָה) [pronounced <i>gah-uh-VAW</i>]	<i>majesty, magnificence; ornament, splendor; arrogance, pride; a swelling [rising] up [of the seas]</i>	feminine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #1346 BDB #144
wê (or vê) (וְ) [pronounced <i>weh</i>]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ʾôz (אֹז) [pronounced <i>gohz</i>]	<i>strength, might; firmness, defense, refuge, protection; splendor, majesty, glory praise</i>	masculine singular noun with the 3 rd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #5797 BDB #738
bê (בְּ) [pronounced <i>b^{eh}</i>]	<i>in, into, through; at, by, near, on, upon; with, before, against; by means of; among; within</i>	a preposition of proximity	Strong's #none BDB #88
shachaq (שַׁחַק) [pronounced <i>shaw-KHAWK</i>]	<i>dust, fine dust; cloud, thin cloud</i>	masculine plural noun with the definite article	Strong's #7834 BDB #1007

Translation: ...His majesty and His strength [is] in the clouds over Israel. Putting this final phrase together requires a little artful deliberation. The repetition of the two nouns with the 3rd person masculine singular suffix appear to require that they be joined in some way. Then we have a masculine plural noun with could mean *dust* or *duststorm*, but that is not really relevant here. However, God did follow Israel in her trek across the desert in a cloud, so we might reasonably assume that is what is going on here. Now, this does not require God to be a literal cloud, or to manifest Himself as a cloud, but the idea is, God is with Israel in a protective and guiding way;

²⁰⁶ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:34.

²⁰⁷ Dr. John Gill, *John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:34.

and Israel may call upon God for any and all problems, which Israel often did. So, the significance is, God is with Israel at all times, although He is not always seen.

This verse speaks of God's majesty and strength, and associates this with Israel; God—His entire person and His entire essence—are with Israel.

Others have separated this into two phrases: **His majesty [is] over Israel and His strength [is] in the clouds**. For me, this is a little less satisfying, besides the fact that explaining God's strength being in the clouds might be difficult. However, let me suggest that God, in many situations, has used the weather to favor Israel in battle, and perhaps this is the idea here.

Barnes writes: *His excellency is over Israel - His majesty; his glory; his protecting care. The idea is, that his glorious character - his majesty - was manifested particularly in his protection of his people and: And his strength is in the clouds - The idea is, that while his character as Protector was evinced particularly in his care of his people, his "power" was particularly seen in the clouds - the storm - the thunder - the lightning. Thus, all the manifestations of his character, alike in nature, and toward his people, are adapted to produce a deep and solemn impression in regard to his majesty and glory, or to lay the just foundation of praise.*²⁰⁸

Clarke says about the same thing: *His strength is in the clouds - This refers to the bursting, rattling, and pounding of thunder and lightning; for all nations have observed that this is an irresistible agent; and even the most enlightened have looked on it as an especial manifestation of the power and sovereignty of God.*²⁰⁹

The Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge writes: *This refers to the phenomena of thunder and lightning; for all nations have observed the electric fluid is an irresistible agent - destroying life, tearing towers and castles to pieces, rending the strongest oaks, and cleaving the most solid rocks; and the most enlightened nations have justly considered it as an especial manifestation of the power and sovereignty of God.*²¹⁰

Although I don't have a problem with this being split into two phrases, to me, it makes more sense as one phrase.

A feared [and respected] Elohim from Your sanctuary, God [El] of Israel; He gives strength and might [based upon a large population] to the people blessed [of] Elohim.

Psalms
68:35

The God of Israel [is] a feared [and respected] Elohim [or, is an awesome God] [ruling] from Your sanctuary; He gives to the people blessed [by] Elohim strength and might [or, He gives strength and might to the people; blessed [be] God].

From Your sanctuary, the God of Israel is both feared and respected as God; to the people Elohim has blessed, He gives them strength and power and a multitude of people.

Here is how others have translated this verse:

Ancient texts:

Masoretic Text

A feared [and respected] Elohim from Your sanctuary, God [El] of Israel;

²⁰⁸ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:34.

²⁰⁹ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:34.

²¹⁰ *Treasury of Scriptural Knowledge*; by Canne, Browne, Blayney, Scott, and others about 1880, with introduction by R. A. Torrey; courtesy of E-sword, Psalm 68:34.

He gives strength and might [based upon a large population] to the people blessed [of] Elohim.
 Septuagint God is wonderful in his holy places [or, *among His holy ones*], the God of Israel: he will give power and strength to his people: blessed be God.

Significant differences: God is called *wonderful* in the Latin and Greek; *honored* in the Syriac; and *feared and respected* in the Hebrew. The second phrase is quite similar in all ancient languages; and the final phrase (*blessed God*) is the same, although interpreting this phrase explains the differences.

Thought-for-thought translations; paraphrases:

CEV The God of Israel is fearsome in his temple, and he makes us strong. Let's praise our God!.

EasyEnglish (Churchyard) God, how great you are in your temple.
 He is the God of Israel.
 He gives power to his people and makes them strong.
 Say good things about God!

Good News Bible (TEV) How awesome is God as he comes from his sanctuary--- the God of Israel! He gives strength and power to his people. Praise God!

The Message A terrible beauty, O God, streams from your sanctuary. It's Israel's strong God! He gives power and might to his people! O you, his people--bless God!.

Mostly literal renderings (with some occasional paraphrasing):

Bible in Basic English O God, you are to be feared in your holy place: the God of Israel gives strength and power to his people. Praise be to God.

Complete Apostles' Bible God is wonderful in His holy *places*, the God of Israel; He will give power and strength to His people; blessed be God.

God's Word™ God, the God of Israel, is awe-inspiring in his holy place. He gives strength and power to his people. Thanks be to God!

HCSB God, You are awe-inspiring in Your sanctuaries. The God of Israel gives power and strength to His people. May God be praised!

NET Bible® You are awe-inspiring, O God, as you emerge from your holy temple!
 It is the God of Israel who gives the people power and strength.
 God deserves praise!

Literal, almost word-for-word, renderings:

The Amplified Bible O God, awe inspiring, profoundly impressive *and* terrible are You out of Your holy places, the God of Israel, He gives strength and fullness of might to His people. Blessed be God!

A Conservative Version O God, awesome out of thy holy places, the God of Israel, he gives strength and power to [his] people. Blessed be God.

Updated *Emphasized Bible* ...God is to be revered for His sanctuary.
 As for the God of Israel, He is giving strength and abundant might to the people. Blessed be God!

English Standard Version Awesome is God from his sanctuary; the God of Israel--he is the one who gives power and strength to his people. Blessed be God!

New King James Version O God, *You are* more awesome than Your holy places.
 The God of Israel *is* He who gives strength and power to *His* people.
 Blessed be God!

A Voice in the Wilderness

O God, You are awesome out of Your sanctuary; the Mighty God of Israel is He who gives strength and power to the people. Blessed is God.

Young's Updated LT

Fearful, O God, out of Your sanctuaries, The God of Israel Himself, Giving strength and might to the people. Blessed is God!

What is the gist of this verse? Fearing God is associated, in some way, with His holy places. The Mighty God of Israel gives strength and power to His people. Finally, David calls for blessings to God.

Psalm 68:35a			
Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
yârê` (יָרֵא) [pronounced yaw-RAY]	<i>to be feared, to be respected, to be reverence; terrible, dreadful, awesome; venerable, August; stupendous, admirable</i>	Niphal participle	Strong's #3372 BDB #431
ʿĒlôhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	<i>gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim</i>	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43
minnîy (מִן) [pronounced min-NEE]	<i>from, off, away from, out from, out of, from off; on account of, since, above, than, so that not, above, beyond, more than, greater than</i>	preposition of separation	Strong's #4480 BDB #577
mîqʾddâsh (מִקְדָּשׁ) [pronounced mik-DAWSH]	<i>sanctuary, sacred place; possibly a synonym for the Tabernacle of God</i>	masculine plural noun with the 2 nd person masculine singular suffix	Strong's #4720 BDB #874
ʾêl (אֵל) [pronounced ALE]	<i>God, God, mighty one, strong, hero</i>	masculine singular construct	Strong's #410 BDB #42
Yisʾrâʾêl (יִשְׂרָאֵל) [pronounced yis-row-ALE]	transliterated <i>Israel</i>	masculine proper noun	Strong's #3478 BDB #975

Translation: The God of Israel [is] a feared [and respected] Elohim [or, is an awesome God] [ruling] from Your sanctuary;... Although much of this psalm is difficult to understand and to explain,²¹¹ the final verses are relatively easy. These sum up how God should be understood and His relationship to Israel and to the church. In this first half, the God of Israel is said to be *awesome*, in the sense of being *feared and respected* (not in the sense of being *gnarly, dude*). Now, whether you conjure up any sort of emotion at this point is not the issue; you have to simply understand that God has made all of this; everything that you see and touch; and that He is the inventor of time and free will, and that He reigns over all. We are in a universe where things are small beyond our imagination; as well as large beyond our ability to comprehend. There are portions of the universe which are too hot for us to comprehend, and temperatures elsewhere near absolute zero. We live in a world $\frac{2}{3}$ rds covered with water, which is the rarest form of H₂O in the universe (when H₂O is found in the universe, it is in the form of ice or steam; the liquid form is exceedingly rare). Every molecule of our body, in another setting, would be completely and totally without life. Everything that we see is made up of 3 different building blocks: protons, neutrons and electrons (which are all too small to be seen using any kind of microscope); and apparently these are made up of smaller particles as well. The absolute complexity of this universe, which is based upon the most fundamental

²¹¹ If my mental tally is correct, I dealt with a total of two verses which I could not make any sense of.

building blocks of matter, is staggering. A scientist can devote his entire life to learning about one small, tiny aspect of this life, and yet never fully comprehend it.

I once worked for a doctor whose speciality was *hands*, and I remember thinking at the time, *why such a narrow speciality? How can he find patients?* Yet, in retrospect, I realize that, despite his brilliance, his knowledge must have been woefully incomplete. Furthermore, we cannot make anything near as intricate as a hand. I think about one tiny aspect of the use of my hand: I type about 100 words per minute. When I began typing, I thought of each letter and each finger of each hand, and it began as a slow and ponderous process. Now, when I type, the words appear as I think of them. Rarely do I think of individual letters; most of the time, I think of words, and they seem to appear almost as quickly as I think them. For most of my writing, I give little or no thought to the actual typing of what my brain thinks—yet, this process of communication between my brain and my fingers is an incredible process, and something which I doubt that science will ever be able to duplicate in an artificial hand. More impressive are the hands and fingers of a pianist and how the brain interacts with that person's hands and fingers to produce profound, beautiful and melodic notes, strung together and combined in ways that move the souls of others. Again, no matter what aspect of God's creation that we examine, it is wonderfully complex, marvelous, beautiful, and barely comprehensible.

We find a large number of references to God as One to be feared throughout Scripture: Psalm 65:5–6: *You will answer us in righteousness by awesome things, O God of our salvation; the Confidence of all the ends of the earth and the sea, of those afar off. By Your strength the mountains are established, banded together with might.* Psalm 76:11–12: *Vow and pay to Jehovah your God; let all that are around Him bring presents to the Fearful One. He shall cut off the spirit in rulers; He is feared by the kings of the earth.* Nah. 1:5: *And I said, I pray You, O Jehovah, the God of Heaven, the great and awesome God who keeps covenant and mercy for those who love Him and keep His commandments.* Heb. 12:24–29: *[But you have come] to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape, those who refused him that spoke on earth, much more we shall not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from Heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I will not only shake the earth, but also the heavens." And this word, "Yet once more," signifies the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, so that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear, for also, "Our God is a consuming fire." Rev. 6:16–17: And they said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him sitting on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of His wrath has come, and who will be able to stand?*

You will note the combination of the 2nd and 3rd person here. One may ascribe this to simply literary license of the psalmist; or one might see the God of Israel as being Jesus Christ, Who rules from the sanctuary of God. The God of Israel is God, as He shares His essence with God the Father.

When it comes to *God's holy place* here, I think that there are several points to be made:

God's Holy Place

1. First of all, there is an analogy which is being made here: David is transporting the Ark of God, which represents God, to a sanctuary which David himself has designed. The proper place for the Ark is the Holy of Holies, which David had planned upon building, when he built a Temple for God (this is David's plan, but Solomon actually carried it out).
2. God does not live among us, per se. There are manifestations of God, and Jesus Christ, Who is God, walked upon this earth, but God maintains some separateness between Himself and His creation. One primary reason is, we live in a world of sin, a fallen world, in the cosmic system, on a land ruled by Satan; so God does not set up shop, per se, in all His holiness, in a defiled place.
3. God's perfect holiness (His righteousness and justice) cannot come into direct contact with sin; so God maintains distance for that reason.
4. God has, through our souls, provided for our lives on this earth. We can individually have very full and

God's Holy Place

wonderful lives as His instruments, functioning according to His will. This does not make us robots or pod people, and I fully understand how annoying some Christians can be. My point is, God does not need to set up shop in a corner store so that we can go there when facing a dire emergency. God communicates to us through His Word and He is with us daily, indwelling us. It is only through the death of His Son, through the payment made for us sins, because of the cancellation of debt which was against us, that He can indwell us.

5. God's dwelling place is spoken of as the 3rd heaven. As I have already suggested, this does not mean that, far, far out there, past the farthest star, is the 3rd heaven. We do not know exactly how it is related to the universe physically, or if there is any sort of physical relationship between the Throne Room of God and the universe within which we live. However, there does appear to be some sort of place where God meets with Satan and Satan accuses believers, as we find in Job 1. This may reasonably be some sort of parallel plane of existence, wherein the angels dwell; separate from our physical universe. However, given that we cannot comprehend the nature of the universe within which we live, which is made up of only 3 particles, there is little that we can say about God's Holy place, apart from it being in a parallel universe or on a different wave length, concepts which barely have any decipherable meaning.

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Psalm 68:35b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
hûw' (הוא) [pronounced hoo]	<i>he, it</i>	3 rd person masculine singular, personal pronoun	Strong's #1931 BDB #214
nâthan (נתן) [pronounced naw-THAHN]	<i>to give, to grant, to place, to put, to set; to make</i>	Qal active participle	Strong's #5414 BDB #678
'ôz (עז) [pronounced gohz]	<i>strength, might; firmness, defense, refuge, protection; splendor, majesty, glory praise</i>	masculine singular noun	Strong's #5797 BDB #738
w ^e (or v ^e) (ו) [pronounced weh]	<i>and, even, then; namely; when; since, that; though</i>	simple wâw conjunction	No Strong's # BDB #251
ta'âtsumôwth (עצמות) [pronounced tah-ġuh-tsoo-MOHTH]	<i>strength, might [based on a large population]; multitudinous</i>	feminine singular noun	Strong's #8592 BDB #783
I based the meaning of this noun partially upon the verb from which ta'âtsumôwth (עצמות) [pronounced tah-ġuh-tsoo-MOHTH] was derived: 'âtsam (צם) [pronounced ġaw-TSAHM], which means <i>to be strong or mighty by virtue of numbers; to become numerous, to be great in size or in number</i> . This particular verb has 2 or 3 basic meanings, but only this one fits with the context of this psalm. Strong's #6105 BDB #782.			
lâmed (ל) (pronounced l ^e)	<i>to, for, towards, in regards to, with reference to, as to, with regards to; belonging to; by</i>	directional/relational preposition	No Strong's # BDB #510

Psalm 68:35b

Hebrew/Pronunciation	Common English Meanings	Notes/Morphology	BDB and Strong's Numbers
ʿam (עַם) [pronounced gahm]	people; race, tribe; family, relatives; citizens, common people; companions, servants; entire human race; herd [of animals]	masculine singular collective noun with the definite article	Strong's #5971 BDB #766
bârak ^e (בָּרַךְ) [pronounced baw-RAHK ^e]	blessed, blessed be [is], blessings to; happiness to [for], happiness [is]	Qal passive participle	Strong's #1288 BDB #138
ʿĒlōhîym (אֱלֹהִים) [pronounced el-o-HEEM]	gods, foreign gods, god; God; rulers, judges; superhuman ones, angels; transliterated Elohim	masculine plural noun	Strong's #430 BDB #43

Translation: ...He gives to the people blessed [by] Elohim strength and might [or, He gives strength and might to the people; blessed [be] God]. There has been, since about 3000 B.C., a special relationship between God and the Jews, a relationship which, by the way, has never been abrogated. Now, although I hate to refer to historical events to back up doctrine, note that the Jews remain a true entity in this world, despite the fact that many of them attempt to assimilate and in spite of the fact that many of them give only passing thought to their heritage. They are often seen as different; they are often persecuted; and the nations which persecute Israel pay for their evil deeds; and nations which support the Jews and support Israel are blessed. The United States has received a double-portion of blessing; we have a significant number of growing and mature believers who reside in the United States—which blesses the country by association; and we treat the Jew no differently than any other subgroup of people and we support the country of Israel. Furthermore, the unreasonable attacks which we see upon the Jews and the level of anger and hatred for the Jews in most Arabic countries should also clue us in as to the significance and importance of the Jew. These realities should indicate to us that God is not through with the Jew; God did not completely cast out the Jew in order to work with the church exclusively. God has set the Jew aside momentarily, but, in no way, is the Jew some old, forgotten entity, once related to God, but now, just another people. The history of the Jew should clearly indicate to us that they have a true and real future in relation to God.

Continuing with this theme, it should be clear that God maintains some sort of protection for Jews. In the Middle East, we have a tiny portion of land (about 0.2% of the Middle East) occupied by a virtual handful of Jews (less than $\frac{3}{4}$ ^{ths} of a million, if memory serves) and surrounded by millions of Arabs, a huge number of which absolutely despite the Jews and many of whom believe that the key to all of their misery is the existence of the Jew. Furthermore, these Arabs are not genteel people, for the most part. Television shows aimed at youngsters ages 2 and above, extol the virtues of suicide bombers and disseminate hatred and lied about the Jews; and we know that a significant number of Arabs will kill hundreds of innocent people each and every week, just to make some sort of weird political statement. Given all this, Jews continue to live in that postage stamp of a country, and continue to live throughout a relatively hostile world, despite despots like Stalin and Hitler, who seemed to believe it was their mission to destroy Jews. And again, I cannot overemphasize just how important our relationship to the Jew is here in the United States. We have an incredibly blessed existence, and much of this is based upon our relationship to Israel and to Jews throughout the world.

An interesting tangent here is conservatism and anti-Semitism. When I first began to listen to Bob Thieme Jr., in the early 70's, I primarily listened to tapes from the 60's and he spoke of the great weakness of the conservative party as being anti-Semitism. Back in those days, I used to listen to Liberty Lobby, a conservative radio program. Although, some of the things which they said made complete sense, there was some thinly veiled anti-Semitism and there was a contingent of those who believed in weird, conspiracy theories (do your recall the Trilateral Commission?). I think that there was a shift around the 70's, where the liberals became more and more anti-

Semitic, and this became less and less of a conservative issue. Over the past few decades, the weird conspiratorial theories seemed to disappear from conservative thought, and anti-Semitism along with goofy conspiratorial theories, has seemed to find its way to liberal theology. I have had one liberal friend of mine try to justify horrendous Arab violence by telling me that these people are under pressure, and it's what we should expect. He also forwards to me these weird emails which take various aspect of the Patriot Act and how these things have been distorted to invade the privacy of the individual citizen in the United States. Now, I have never met anyone who has been personally affected by the Patriot Act in some freedom-limiting way, and I don't believe that this liberal has anyone who has either. However, they see the Patriot Act as some great grab for executive power in order to invade our private lives for goodness knows what. I believe that there was a recent survey where over a third of the Democrats believed the George Bush knew about 9/11 in advance,²¹² and I cannot tell you how many crazy liberals I have heard spouting nonsense about how this was a giant pretense so that George Bush could invade Iraq (there are various reasons given: for Haliburton, for oil, for revenge against Saddam, etc.). Along with this are a significant number of people who call themselves *9/11 truthers*²¹³ who believe that explosives were set by our government in at least one of the buildings which came down on 9/11. I listen to a fair amount of conservative radio today, and I never hear weird conspiratorial theories anymore; but, I go to my email, and every month or so, I hear of just one more weird conspiracy engineered by George Bush (or by Dick Cheney) which will somehow destroy all freedom in the USA. I see the same thing on television now and again. I can hardly forget Rosie O'Donnell who seriously looked at her audience from the view, and proclaimed, "And that was the first time that fire melted steel" when referring to the collapse of one of the towers on 9/11 (apparently not grasping the fact that steel is made by heating it with fire).

My point in all of this is, the conservative party in the United States floundered for quite awhile, being wiped out in an election with a marvelous candidate (Barry Goldwater) and winning with one of the most despised presidents of our time, Richard Nixon. However, around the time the conservatives seemed to abandon anti-Semitism and nut-job conspiratorial theories, and at a time when liberals began to embrace anti-Semitism (as seen with President Jimmy Carter), the conservatives began to turn things around, and we have had a conservative in the White House for 20 of the past 28 years (with a conservative Congress) during a large portion of Clinton's administration. Furthermore, conservative radio talk shows have blossomed and prospered. I've listened to both conservative and liberal talk shows, and it seems like the lion's share of liberal talk shows are simply places for the hosts and various callers to vent their anger and hatred of George Bush. Liberal talk radio at its best, simply justifies and excuses their primary guys (and gals) with very little criticism of any liberal being offered. Conservative radio, on the other hand, rarely deals with hatred or venting; continually presents ideas and opinions as its primary focus (and personalities, in the case of Rush Limbaugh), and they will criticize a Republican just as fast as they will criticize a Democrat; and they will praise Democrats when they do right (Joe Lieberman is a prime example of this).

This is the year 2007 when I write this. The Democratic hopefuls for president are both scary and most of them lack any sort of executive experience (if memory serves, there are 2 of the 8 or 10 Democratic candidates who have any kind of executive experience). On the other hand, with the exception of 1 or 2 goofy Republican hopefuls, any of the candidates would be good choices. Now, this does not mean that we will have a Republican president in the 2008 elections; because, now and again we need a President Carter to remind us how important it is to have a conservative candidate in the Oval Office.

I know that I have gone off on several tangents here, but the key is, anti-Semitism poisons all that is comes in contact with, and those who are my age have seen with their own eyes major changes in our political landscape based upon anti-Semitism.

What this verse sums up is, God has given His people (in context, the Jews, the nation Israel) strength and power [based upon numbers]. In the ancient world, a key factor in power was population. A nation with a low population was likely to be conquered and made subservient to a larger nation. Therefore, God blessed Israel in several ways, one of which included a large population. This should help to explain to us some portions of the Law, which

²¹² See http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=55562.

²¹³ One of their many websites is <http://911scholars.org/>.

seem to be confusing. Obviously, there are portions of the Law which are symbolic and which teach salvation through faith in the God of Israel; and all of this is closely associated with a blood sacrifice. However, there are other laws—dietary laws, specifically—which were designed to keep Israel's population strong, healthy and growing. Now, I love bacon and ham and pork chops, and I can easily preserve these meats in my freezer or refrigerator; and the chance of my becoming sick because I eat pork is pretty much nil. However, in the ancient world, this type of meat was, apparently, a lot less safe to preserve and eat, and, for that reason, God restricted the diet of the Jews (this is one of many examples). The restricted diet resulted in a healthy and growing population, which is one of God's blessings upon the Jews.

That God gives us strength and gives strength to the Jews is found throughout His Word: Psalm 29:11: **Jehovah will give strength to His people; Jehovah will bless His people with peace.** Isa. 40:30–31: **Even the young shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall; but those who wait on Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.** Eph. 3:14–19: **For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God.** Philip. 4:13: **I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.** Col. 1:9–12: **For this cause we also, since the day we heard, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that you might walk worthy of the Lord to all pleasing, being fruitful in every work and increasing in the knowledge of God, being empowered with all power, according to the might of His glory, to all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness, giving thanks to the Father, who has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.** See also Zech. 10:12.

If there are two separate thoughts presented here, with the final one being *Blessed is God*, Barnes comments are apropos: *"Blessed be God." For all that he is, for all that he has done. This is the language of joy and praise in view of the contemplation of his character as depicted in the psalm. At the close of every right contemplation of his character, his government, his plans, his claims, his law, his gospel, the heart that is right will say, "Blessed be such a God." To one endowed with "such" attributes, praise - everlasting praise - is due.*²¹⁴

Clarke writes: *Blessed be God - He alone is worthy to be worshipped. Without him nothing is wise, nothing holy, nothing strong; and from him, as the inexhaustible Fountain, all good must be derived. His mercy over his creatures is equal to his majesty in the universe, and as he has all good in his possession, so is he willing to deal it out, to supply the utmost necessities of his creatures. Blessed be God! The Arabic adds, Alleluiah!*²¹⁵

In this vein, here is what we find in Rev. 5:6–12: **And I saw, and behold, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, was a Lamb standing, as having been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, having been sent out into all the earth. And He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him sitting on the throne. And when He took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty four elders fell down before the Lamb, each one having harps, and golden bowls full of incenses, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sing a new song, saying, **Worthy are You to receive the scroll, and to open its seals, because You were slain, and by Your blood purchased us to God out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign over the earth.** And I saw, and I heard a sound of many angels around the throne, and the living creatures, and the elders, and their number was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a great voice, **Worthy is the Lamb having been slain to receive the power and riches and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and blessing.** Psalm 72:18–19: **Blessed is Jehovah God, the God of Israel, who alone does wonderful things. And blessed be His glorious name forever; and all the earth is filled with His glory! Amen and Amen.****

²¹⁴ Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Old Testament*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:35.

²¹⁵ Adam Clarke, *Commentary on the Bible*; from e-Sword, Psalm 68:35.

Spurgeon summarizes this final verse: *You inspire awe and fear. Your saints obey with fear and trembling, and Your enemies flee in dismay. From Your threefold courts, and especially from the holy of holies, Your majesty flashes forth and makes the sons of men prostrate themselves in awe. “The God of Israel is he that gives strength and power unto his people.” In this you, who are Israel’s God by covenant, are terrible to your foes by making your people strong, so that one shall chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to fight. All the power of Israel warriors is derived from the Lord, the fountain of all might. He is strong, and makes strong: blessed are they who draw from His resources, they shall renew their strength. While the self-sufficient faint, the All-sufficient shall sustain the feeblest believer. “Blessed be God.” A short but sweet conclusion, Let our souls say Amen to it; and yet, again, Amen.*²¹⁶

Psalm 68 Addendum

You know, one of the things that has been fascinating with this psalm is, I feel as though I have uncovered a great deal of important spiritual information from this psalm, despite the fact that there were at least two verses which I did not feel that I explained well at all, and perhaps another half-dozen verses where I felt like I gave a half-reasonable explanation for them, but that I could not come by a full and complete understanding. And yet, despite this, I feel as though I have come up in this psalm with some of the most important spiritual information that I have ever come up with on any chapter of the Bible that I have worked on (which better be the case, as I spent 3 months on this chapter).

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[Exegetical Studies in the Psalms](#)

It may be helpful to see this chapter as a contiguous whole:	
A Complete Translation of Psalm 68	
A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase
Inscription	
To the preeminent one, of David; a psalm; a song.	For the choir director by David; a psalm to be put to music.
The Ark is Carried in a Procession; God Scatters His Enemies	
God rises up [and] He scatters [or, breaks into pieces] His enemies; and those who hate Him flee from Him. Just as smoke is blown away, You dispel [them]; [and] just as wax is melted by fire, so the corrupt are destroyed because of Elohim [or, before Elohim].	God rises up and He scatters His enemies; those who Hate God flee from Him. Just as smoke is blown away, in the same manner, You dispel them; and just as fire melts wax, in the same manner the corrupt are destroyed by God.
Rejoice and Prepare the Way for Him	

²¹⁶ Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *A Treasury of David*; e-Sword, Psalm 68:35 (edited and updated).

A Complete Translation of Psalm 68

A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase
The righteous will rejoice; they will exhibit [or, <i>feel</i>] joy before Elohim; they will leap with joy. Sing unto Elohim, make music which praises His name.	The righteous will be glad and rejoice before God; they will leap for joy. Sing unto God, make music which praises His name.
Construct [a highway] for the one riding in the [desert] Arabah. His name [is] in Yah, Rejoice before Him.	Prepare the way for the one riding in the desert Arabah, His name is in Jehovah, Rejoice before Him.
God is Gracious; Man Can Be Headstrong	
Elohim [is] a Father to the fatherless and an advocate of the widows in His holy habitation. Elohim causes those who are solitary to live in a household;	God is the Father of the fatherless and He is an advocate for the widows in His holy palace. God takes those who are alone and places them into households;
He leads captives [possibly, <i>slaves</i>] into freedom [or, <i>prosperity</i>]; but those who are willful [and headstrong] have settled into a scorched region.	God leads those who are enslaved into freedom and prosperity; however, those who are willful and headstrong choose to live in scorched regions.
God Protects and Provides for His Own in the Desert	
O Elohim, when You went forth before Your people; when You marched in the desert wasteland;.. [Musical] Pause [or, musical interlude; lit., <i>Selah!</i>] The earth quaked; furthermore, the heavens poured down [rain] from Elohim. This Sinai [quaked] because of Elohim, the Elohim of Israel.	O God, when You went out in front of Your people; and when you marched before them in the desert wasteland;.. [Musical interlude]. The earth quaked and the heavens poured down rain from Elohim. In fact, all that occurred in the Sinai desert came from God, the God of Israel.
You have scattered rain freely [or, <i>in abundance</i>], O Elohim; You established Your inheritance, when it [the rain] was wearied.	You have cast down rain in great abundance, O God; You established Your inheritance when the rain stopped.
Your community lived in it [the land]; You, O Elohim, established the humble [or, possibly, <i>the grace oriented</i>] in Your goodness.	Your people then lived in the land; You, O God, established the grace-oriented by means of Your good character.
God Destroys the Enemies of Israel	
Adonai gives a promise [or, <i>mandate</i>]; those [women] who bring good news [or, <i>female messengers</i>] [are] a great army.	After our Lord gives a mandate, a great army of women bring the good news to their land.

A Complete Translation of Psalm 68

A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase
<p>Kings of armies flee—they flee; while [each] female inhabitant of a home divides up [her] recompense [or, <i>spoil</i>]. Though you lay between two stalls (?), the wings of a dove are overlaid with silver and her feathers with a yellowish gold.</p>	<p>While kings of great armies flee, women inhabitants of their homes divide up their spoil. Though you rest between two things, God still provides great recompense, like a dove, whose wings are overlaid with silver and her feathers with a yellowish gold.</p>
<p>When the Almighty scatters kings in her [in the land]; He causes snow [to fall] in Zalmon.</p>	<p>When the Almighty God scatters kings in the land, He also causes snow to fall on Zalmon.</p>
Jehovah Has Chosen to Live on Mount Zion	
<p>O mountain of Elohim, O mountain of Bashan, O mountain of [many] summits, O mountain of Bashan. Why do you look with envy, O mountains, O peaks, [at] the mountain Elohim desires for His dwelling place? Indeed, Y^ehowah will live there forever.</p>	<p>O mountain of Elohim, O mountain of Bashan, O mountain of many summits, O mountain of Bashan. Why do you look on with such envy, O mountains, O peaks, at the mountain which God desires as His own dwelling place? Indeed, Jehovah will live there forever.</p>
<p>The chariot of Elohim [leads] twenty thousand—a myriad of thousands [of angels]— my Adonai [is] among them, [as He was with them at] Sinai, [as He was with them] in the holy place.</p>	<p>The chariot of God leads myriads upon myriads of chariots of angels; my Lord is among them at Sinai as He is with them in the Holy of Holies.</p>
<p>You have gone up on high [or, <i>to the Most High</i>]; You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts in the presence of mankind. And even [in the presence of] the rebellious; Yah Elohim lives [there].</p>	<p>You have gone up to the Most High; You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts in the presence of mankind; and Jehovah God lives there in the presence of the rebellious.</p>
God is our Deliverance; God is our Salvation	
<p>Blessed is Adonai, day [after] day, God bears our deliverance [or, <i>salvation</i>] for us. [Musical] Pause [or, <i>musical interlude; lit., Selah!</i>] Our God [is] a God with respect to [His] acts of salvation; and to Y^ehowah Adonai, with respect to death, [there are] limits [or, <i>the Lord Jehovah is the end with respect to death</i>].</p>	<p>Blessed is the Lord— day after Day, God bears the burden of our deliverance [or, <i>salvation</i>] for us. Musical interlude. Our God is a God who delivers us; and, when speaking of death, the Lord Jehovah sets the limits [or, <i>the Lord Jehovah is the end of death (for us)</i>].</p>
God Utterly Destroys His Enemies	
<p>Surely Elohim will shatter the head of His enemies; the crown of his head—[his] hair brisling up walking around [with evil intent] with his guilt [for wrongdoing].</p>	<p>Surely God will shatter the head of His enemies— those who walk around with evil intent, saturated in their own guilt for their evil actions.</p>

A Complete Translation of Psalm 68

A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase
<p>Adonai has said, "I will bring [them] back from Bashan; I will bring [them] back from the depths of the seas... ...so that you bathe your feet in blood [and] the tongue of your dogs [this blood] from [your] enemies [is] his portion."</p>	<p>The Lord has promised, "I will bring them back from Bashan; and I will bring them back from the depths of the seas; with the result that your feed are wading in blood and the tongues of your dogs lap up this blood of your enemies as its portion."</p>
The Procession of the Ark of God	
<p>They have seen Your solemn processions, O Elohim; [they have seen] the processions of my God, my King, into the holy place. The singers are in front [lit., <i>preceded</i>]; [and] after [them], [are] those who play stringed instruments; in the midst of young women playing timbrels.</p>	<p>They see Your solemn processions, O God; and they have seen the processions of my God, my King, to the holy place. The singers were in front of the procession, and after them were those playing stringed instruments; in the midst of young women who played timbrels.</p>
<p>Bless Elohim in the assemblies, [and blessings to] Y^ehowah from the fountain of Israel.</p>	<p>Bless Jehovah God in the assemblies and call for blessings to Jehovah from the fountain of Israel.</p>
<p>Then [or, <i>there</i>], insignificant Benjamin has dominion over them; the princes of Judah [are] their means of execution [or, <i>means of control</i>; or, <i>are in a group</i>], [along] the princes of Zebulun [and] the princes of Naphtali.</p>	<p>Then, the insignificant tribe Benjamin will lead them, and the leaders of Judah are in their group, then the leaders of Zebulun and Naphtali.</p>
God and Other Nations	
<p>Your Elohim commands your strength [or, <i>protection, glory</i>] [possibly, <i>Summon Your strength, O God</i>]; make secure [or, <i>strong</i>], O Elohim, that which you have done for us.</p>	<p>Your God mandates you to be strong; Further strengthen and secure, O God, that which you have done on our behalf.</p>
<p>Because of Your Temple upon Jerusalem, [in a procession] kings bring presents [lit., <i>a present</i>] to You.</p>	<p>Because of Your Temple, which rests upon Jerusalem, kings bring presents to You.</p>
<p>Castigate the community [or, <i>life, living thing, animal</i>] of stalks [or, <i>reeds</i>], the congregation of mighty ones, with calves of people trampling down [or, <i>prostrating themselves with</i>] bars of silver; scatter [these] people, [for] they delight in war [possibly, <i>He scatters (them)</i>; <i>the people desire to draw near</i>].</p>	<p>Rebuke the community of reeds; rebuke the gathering of mighty ones, whose calves trample down even bars of silver. Scatter those who delight in war.</p>

A Complete Translation of Psalm 68	
A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Reasonably Literal Paraphrase
Ambassadors from Egypt come; His hands quickly bring Ethiopia unto Elohim.	Ambassadors from Egypt come to Him in Jerusalem; His hands quickly bring in Ethiopians to God.
Give Praise to God	
Sing, you kingdoms of the earth, to Elohim; Sing praises [to] Adonai! [Musical Pause] [lit., <i>selah</i> !]	All kingdoms of the earth, sing praises to God and praise the Lord! [Musical interlude]
[Sing praises] to the Rider of the heavens, [those] ancient heavens; Listen, He sends forth [lit., gives] His voice, [His] mighty voice. Give glory [or, <i>praise</i>] to Elohim; His majesty and His strength [is] in the clouds over Israel.	Sing praises to the Rider of the heavens, those ancient heavens. Listen, for He sends for His voice, His mighty voice. Give glory to God! His strength and majesty is in the clouds over Israel.
The God of Israel [is] a feared [and respected] Elohim [or, <i>is an awesome God</i>] [ruling] from Your sanctuary; He gives to the people blessed [by] Elohim strength and might [or, <i>He gives strength and might to the people; blessed [be] God</i>].	From Your sanctuary, the God of Israel is both feared and respected as God; to the people Elohim has blessed, He gives them strength and power and a multitude of people.

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Puluka in his paper claims that this psalm falls within a particular literary genre and goes into some detail on this (see <http://www.puluka.com/psalm68/default.asp>). I don't know that this is helpful in understanding the psalm, insofar as he lists the three parts as being a *pronounced introduction*, the *main portion*, and the *conclusion*. Although this break down of the psalm is not earth-shattering (the further breakdown is more interesting), Puluka does indicate that this psalm falls into the tradition of Ex. 15, a psalm by Moses. Now, this would be an interesting and an apt comparison, as David no doubt spent a good deal of time in the Word studying prior to moving the Ark the second time. That he used the formula which Moses used would not be out of the question.

Exodus 15		
Section	Text	Commentary
Introduction	I will sing unto the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider has he thrown into the sea.	David's introduction has much more going on; one might even question whether this is a proper introduction. It appears as though Moses jumps right into the subject from the very beginning.

Exodus 15		
Section	Text	Commentary
Main Portion	<p>The LORD is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation: he is my God, and I will prepare him a habitation; my father's God, and I will exalt him.</p> <p>The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his host has he cast into the sea: his chosen captains also are drowned in the Red sea. The depths have covered them: they sank to the bottom as a stone.</p> <p>Your right hand, O LORD, has become glorious in power: your right hand, O LORD, has dashed in pieces the enemy. And in the greatness of your excellency you have overthrown them that rose up against you: you sent forth your wrath, which consumed them as stubble. And with the blast of your nostrils the waters were gathered together, the floods stood upright as a heap, and the depths were congealed in the heart of the sea.</p> <p>The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. You did blow with your wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters.</p> <p>Who is like unto you, O LORD, among the gods? who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders? You stretched out your right hand, the earth swallowed them. You in your mercy have led forth the people whom you have redeemed: you have guided them in your strength unto your holy habitation.</p> <p>The people shall hear, and be afraid: sorrow shall take hold on the inhabitants of Philistia.</p> <p>Then the chiefs of Edom shall be amazed; the mighty men of Moab, trembling shall take hold upon them; all the inhabitants of Canaan shall melt away.</p> <p>Fear and dread shall fall upon them; by the greatness of your arm they shall be as still as a stone; till your people pass over, O LORD, till the people pass over, whom you have purchased. You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance, in the place, O LORD, which you have made for you to dwell in, in the Sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established.</p>	<p>What these songs do have in common is Israel facing her enemies, which both speaks of Israel's general history, so that we would expect to find these themes in Israel's literature, both secular and non-secular.</p> <p>Also, unmistakable in both psalms is, the close involvement of Jehovah God in Israel's survival.</p>
Conclusion	The LORD shall reign forever and ever.	Puluka mentions a repetition of the elements of the introduction; however, even though we find that in Psalm 68, we do not find it here.

I had to force this to fit Puluka's basic outline of the ancient cult songs or hymns. To be fair, he takes this from form critics, many of whom begin with particularly weird concepts of the Bible, and then they force various portions of Scripture into their preconceived notions. This is how this feels to me.

The benefit, however, is to see that there are some similarities between what Moses wrote and what David wrote. However, the overall structure is not one of these similarities.

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This was a rugged chapter to examine, and I know that I went off on a lot of tangents and I also revealed, possibly too many times, my thinking process along with too many irrelevant theories. Therefore, allow me to give a nutshell exposition of this psalm.

A Brief, Verse-by-Verse Exposition of Psalm 68

A Reasonably Literal Translation

A Short Exposition of Each Verse

Inscription

To the preeminent one, of David; a psalm; a song.

David writes this psalm for the expressed purpose of it being sung when he moves the Ark the 2nd time.

The Ark is Carried in a Procession; God Scatters His Enemies

God rises up
[and] He scatters [or, *breaks into pieces*] His
enemies;
and those who hate Him flee from Him.
Just as smoke is blown away,
You dispel [them];
[and] just as wax is melted by fire,
so the corrupt are destroyed because of Elohim [or,
before Elohim].

The first verse of this psalm are the exact words which Moses spoke in Num. 10:35 when the Ark of God was to be moved (along with the congregation of Israel).

Those who are enemies of God would be scattered to the wind or destroyed by fire (judgement) as the Jews advanced toward the Land of Promise. God sometimes did this by His own means and sometimes He used the Jews to destroy His enemies.

Rejoice and Prepare the Way for Him

The righteous will rejoice;
they will exhibit [or, *feel*] joy before Elohim;
they will leap with joy.
Sing unto Elohim,
make music which praises His name.

Those who have believed in Jesus Christ will jump for joy and they will express their emotion and appreciation with music that praises God.

Construct [a highway] for the one riding in the
[desert] Arabah.
His name [is] in Yah,
Rejoice before Him.

This huge column of Jews marching along the desert made a highway for God, the One riding in the desert Arabah. As a congregation might march before a mighty king, calling out his name; so Israel was to march before Jehovah God.

God is Gracious; Man Can Be Headstrong

A Brief, Verse-by-Verse Exposition of Psalm 68

A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Short Exposition of Each Verse
<p>Elohim [is] a Father to the fatherless and an advocate of the widows in His holy habitation. Elohim causes those who are solitary to live in a household;</p>	<p>The God of Israel is a personal God, Who acts as a Father to those who are without fathers; a God Who will act as an advocate for the helpless and for those who have no voice. He even brings solitary individuals into a household.</p> <p>Throughout the Law of Moses, it is made clear time and time again that God's laws looked out for the helpless and the powerless.</p>
<p>He leads captives [possibly, <i>slaves</i>] into freedom [or, <i>prosperity</i>]; but those who are willful [and headstrong] have settled into a scorched region.</p>	<p>God leads those who have been captives into freedom and prosperity; those who believe in Him were once enslaved to their sin nature and to the consequences of their fallen nature are taken by God into freedom. Of the Exodus generation, this would refer to the Generation of Promise, who believed God and took the Land of Promise.</p> <p>Those who are headstrong and wilful will spend eternity in hell. From the Exodus generation, this would refer to Gen X, those who complained about Moses time and time again, whose bodies dropped dead in the desert wilderness until God had removed each and every one of them.</p>
God Protects and Provides for His Own in the Desert	
<p>O Elohim, when You went forth before Your people; when You marched in the desert wasteland;.. [Musical] Pause [or, musical interlude; lit., <i>Selah!</i>] The earth quaked; furthermore, the heavens poured down [rain] from Elohim. This Sinai [quaked] because of Elohim, the Elohim of Israel.</p>	<p>God led His people through the desert wilderness, revealing His power in the rain and with earthquakes.</p> <p>Rain was required in that desert wilderness in order to keep Israel alive.</p>
<p>You have scattered rain freely [or, <i>in abundance</i>], O Elohim; You established Your inheritance, when it [the rain] was wearied.</p>	<p>Israel marched through the desert wilderness and possibly parked themselves in a desert area for several decades. God provided water for them over that 40 year period of time.</p>
<p>Your community lived in it [the land]; You, O Elohim, established the humble [or, possibly, <i>the grace oriented</i>] in Your goodness.</p>	<p>God established the grace oriented in the Land of Promise. This means, those who believed in Him and, further, used faith rest, were brought into the land and blessed</p>
God Destroys the Enemies of Israel	
<p>Adonai gives a promise [or, <i>mandate</i>]; those [women] who bring good news [or, <i>female messengers</i>] [are] a great army.</p>	<p>God promised Israel that they would take the land from the heathen who inhabited it. When a victory was achieved, the women of Israel began to celebrate these victories, proclaiming them to the congregation.</p>

A Brief, Verse-by-Verse Exposition of Psalm 68

A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Short Exposition of Each Verse
<p>Kings of armies flee—they flee; while [each] female inhabitant of a home divides up [her] recompense [or, <i>spoil</i>]. Though you lay between two stalls (?), the wings of a dove are overlaid with silver and her feathers with a yellowish gold.</p>	<p>Israel's ever relentless taking of the land caused kings to flee while the inhabitants of Israel divided up the spoil that they left behind. In fact, as we read in Scripture, the Jews inherited homes that they did not build and wells which they had not dug.</p> <p>The final phrase is an enigma. However, a dove may speak of the resultant peace in the land; the silver may speak of Christ's recompense for us; and the gold may refer to our Lord's divine nature.</p>
<p>When the Almighty scatters kings in her [in the land]; He causes snow [to fall] in Zalmon.</p>	<p>The same God Who scatters the snow on Mount Zalmon similarly scatters the kings before Israel's advance in the land.</p>
Jehovah Has Chosen to Live on Mount Zion	
<p>O mountain of Elohim, O mountain of Bashan, O mountain of [many] summits, O mountain of Bashan. Why do you look with envy, O mountains, O peaks, [at] the mountain Elohim desires for His dwelling place? Indeed, Y^ehowah will live there forever.</p>	<p>David chose Mount Zion for a permanent home for the Ark of God. Although David did not build this Temple himself, he had ever intention of doing so when he brought the Ark into Jerusalem.</p> <p>It is David's human decision to make the Ark's permanent home on Mount Zion which also meant that Jesus Christ would rule in the Millennium from Mount Zion. This stanza speaks of the jealousy of other mountains that God chose Zion.</p>
<p>The chariot of Elohim [leads] twenty thousand—a myriad of thousands [of angels]— my Adonai [is] among them, [as He was with them at] Sinai, [as He was with them] in the holy place.</p>	<p>God leads a myriad of angels—those angels who were with Him on Mount Sinai and will continue to be with Him.</p>
<p>You have gone up on high [or, <i>to the Most High</i>]; You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts in the presence of mankind. And even [in the presence of] the rebellious; Yah Elohim lives [there].</p>	<p>Jesus Christ leads those who were captive to their fallen natures to the Most High, God the Father. These are gifts given in the presence of all mankind.</p> <p>Jesus Christ would also take up human residence among those who rebel against Him.</p>
God is our Deliverance; God is our Salvation	
<p>Blessed is Adonai, day [after] day, God bears our deliverance [or, <i>salvation</i>] for us. [Musical] Pause [or, <i>musical interlude; lit., Selah!</i>] Our God [is] a God with respect to [His] acts of salvation; and to Y^ehowah Adonai, with respect to death, [there are] limits [or, <i>the Lord Jehovah is the end with respect to death</i>].</p>	<p>God, Who has provided salvation for us, is blessed. We sing and play music concerning His salvation.</p> <p>Jesus Christ is the end of death to those who believe in Him.</p>

A Brief, Verse-by-Verse Exposition of Psalm 68

A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Short Exposition of Each Verse
God Utterly Destroys His Enemies	
Surely Elohim will shatter the head of His enemies; the crown of his head—[his] hair brisling up walking around [with evil intent] with his guilt [for wrongdoing].	God will destroy all of His enemies in the end, including Satan, who may be in view here—his hair bristling up on the crown of his head, waling about with evil intent.
Adonai has said, “I will bring [them] back from Bashan; I will bring [them] back from the depths of the seas so that you bathe your feet in blood [and] the tongue of your dogs [this blood] from [your] enemies [is] his portion.”	There is nowhere that God’s enemies can flee from Him. He will destroy so many of His enemies in the Tribulation that we will walk through their blood as we walk though a stream of water.
The Procession of the Ark of God	
They have seen Your solemn processions, O Elohim; [they have seen] the processions of my God, my King, into the holy place. The singers are in front [lit., <i>preceded</i>]; [and] after [them], [are] those who play stringed instruments; in the midst of young women playing timbrels.	God returns to speaking of this great procession of the Ark of God, as it is carried to Jerusalem. There are musical instruments and many singers celebrating the moving of the Ark.
Bless Elohim in the assemblies, [and blessings to] Y ^e howah from the fountain of Israel.	The Jews in this procession, and us by application, are called upon the celebrate God and His blessings to us.
Then [or, <i>there</i>], insignificant Benjamin has dominion over them; the princes of Judah [are] their means of execution [or, <i>means of control</i> ; or, <i>are in a group</i>], [along] the princes of Zebulun [and] the princes of Naphtali.	In this procession, we find all of the tribe participating, including the smallest (Benjamin) and the largest, as well as ruling tribe (Judah). Even the tribes from the far north (Zebulun and Naphtali) participate.
God and Other Nations	
Your Elohim commands your strength [or, <i>protection, glory</i>] [possibly, <i>Summon Your strength, O God</i>]; make secure [or, <i>strong</i>], O Elohim, that which you have done for us.	God is called upon to make Israel secure.
Because of Your Temple upon Jerusalem, [in a procession] kings bring presents [lit., <i>a present</i>] to You.	The Temple spoke of Jesus Christ and was a witness to God’s redemption of mankind. People from all over came to Israel to pay obeisance to Him.

A Brief, Verse-by-Verse Exposition of Psalm 68

A Reasonably Literal Translation	A Short Exposition of Each Verse
Castigate the community [or, <i>life, living thing, animal</i>] of stalks [or, <i>reeds</i>], the congregation of mighty ones, with calves of people trampling down [or, <i>prostrating themselves with</i>] bars of silver; scatter [these] people, [for] they delight in war [possibly, <i>He scatters (them); the people desire to draw near</i>].	This is one of the two verses which I struggled with and did not come up with a satisfactory explanation for it. God will rebuke those who reject His redemption (represented by the bars of silver) and those whose hatred of God is so great that they continually attack Israel (<i>they delight in war</i>). God will scatter them; God will rebuke them.
Ambassadors from Egypt come; His hands quickly bring Ethiopia unto Elohim.	On the other hand, there will be those from all over the world who will come to Israel to pay obeisance to God.
Give Praise to God	
Sing, you kingdoms of the earth, to Elohim; Sing praises [to] Adonai! [Musical Pause] [lit., <i>selah!</i>].	This is a transitional verse, were those who are positive toward Him sing praises throughout the earth to Jesus Christ, Who rules from Mount Zion.
[Sing praises] to the Rider of the heavens, [those] ancient heavens; Listen, He sends forth [lit., gives] His voice, [His] mighty voice. Give glory [or, <i>praise</i>] to Elohim; His majesty and His strength [is] in the clouds over Israel.	We sing praises to the Rider of the Heavens, Who is the God of Israel, Whose majesty and strength are revealed by His relationship to Israel.
The God of Israel [is] a feared [and respected] Elohim [or, <i>is an awesome God</i>] [ruling] from Your sanctuary; He gives to the people blessed [by] Elohim strength and might [or, <i>He gives strength and might to the people; blessed [be] God</i>].	God is to be feared and respected. He rules from His sanctuary in Mount Zion and He gives His people strength and might as well.

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[Exegetical Studies in the Psalms](#)

Psalm 68 was written by David after a thorough study of the Old Testament, as it existed in his day. Although I have made allusion to these verses when we found parallels, I think that it might be important to see them side-by-side Psalm 68: Whenever David clearly took a passage from Scripture and adapted it to his psalm, I indicated that with a darker background.

The Parallel Passages		
Psalm 68	Old Testament References	Comment
<p>God rises up [and] He scatters [or, <i>breaks into pieces</i>] His enemies; and those who hate Him flee from Him.</p>	<p>And it happened when the ark pulled out, Moses said, Rise, O Jehovah, and Your enemies shall be scattered, and those hating You shall flee from Your presence (Num. 10:35).</p>	<p>This verse sets the time and the place for this psalm. David had already tried unsuccessfully to move the Ark, using essentially the same method as the heathen Philistines used. He studies God's Word and determines the proper way to move the Ark.</p>
<p>Just as smoke is blown away, You dispel [them]; [and] just as wax is melted by fire, so the corrupt are destroyed because of Elohim [or, <i>before Elohim</i>].</p>	<p>But the wicked shall perish; yea, the enemies of Jehovah shall be like the beauty of pastures; they are consumed; like smoke, they vanish (Psalm 37:20). The mountains melted like wax before the face of Jehovah, before the face of Jehovah of the whole earth (Psalm 97:5).</p>	<p>I don't find anything in the Pentateuch which closely matches this phrase.</p>
<p>The righteous will rejoice; they will exhibit [or, <i>feel</i>] joy before Elohim; they will leap with joy. Sing unto Elohim, make music which praises His name.</p>	<p>And you shall rejoice before Jehovah your God, you and your sons, and your daughters, and your male slaves, and your female slaves, and the Levite within your gates because he has no portion or inheritance with you (Deut. 12:12).</p>	<p>Unlike the first verse, there is nothing which matches very closely to David's words here.</p>
<p>Construct [a highway] for the one riding in the [desert] Arabah. His name [is] in Yah, Rejoice before Him.</p>	<p>For Jehovah your God has blessed you with all the work of your hands; He has known your walking through this great wilderness. Jehovah your God has been with you these forty years; you have lacked nothing (Deut. 2:7).</p>	<p>Again we do not find a precise parallel verse, but Moses here recounts how God has always been with the Jews in their desert wanderings.</p>
<p>Elohim [is] a Father to the fatherless and an advocate of the widows in His holy habitation. Elohim causes those who are solitary to live in a household;</p>	<p>He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, to give to him food and clothing (Deut. 10:18).</p>	<p>God is a God of all, even of the helpless.</p>
<p>He leads captives [possibly, <i>slaves</i>] into freedom [or, <i>prosperity</i>];</p>	<p>And Jehovah shall prosper you in goods, and in the fruit of your body, and in the fruit of your livestock, and in the fruit of your ground in the land which Jehovah swore to your fathers to give it to you (Deut. 28:11).</p>	<p>God promised a litany of blessings and cursings to Israel. I do not know that David had this passage in mind here, but those in Israel were slaves and they were led into freedom and prosperity.</p> <p>David is possibly thinking of Joseph, who was in slavery, but whom God placed into freedom.</p>

The Parallel Passages		
Psalm 68	Old Testament References	Comment
but those who are willful [and headstrong] have settled into a scorched region.	And your heavens over your head shall become bronze, and the earth under you iron. Jehovah shall make the rain of your land be dust and ashes. It shall come down on you from the heavens until you are destroyed (Deut. 28:23–24).	Again, this may not have been the verse that David was thinking of. However, on several occasions, God promised blessing to Israel on the one hand, and cursing to Israel on the other. Whether they were blessed or cursed depended upon their volition. David may have been specifically thinking of that rebellious generation (Gen X) who died in the desert before God took Israel into the Land of Promise.
O Elohim, when You went forth before Your people; when You marched in the desert wasteland;	And Jehovah was going before them by day in a pillar of cloud, to lead them in the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give light to them, to go by day and by night. The pillar of cloud did not cease by day, and the pillar of fire by night, before the people (Ex. 13:21–22).	That God led His people in the desert wilderness was an historical fact to Israel. Although David may not have had this particular verse in mind, David certainly believed in the historicity of the Mosaic documents.
[Musical] Pause [or, musical interlude; lit., Selah!] The earth quaked; furthermore, the heavens poured down [rain] from Elohim. This Sinai [quaked] because of Elohim, the Elohim of Israel.	O Jehovah, when You went forth out of Seir, when You marched out of the fields of Edom, the earth trembled, and the heavens dropped. Yea, the clouds dropped water. The mountains quaked before the face of Jehovah, this Sinai quaked from before Jehovah the God of Israel (Judges 5:4–5).	There are many parallels between these two passages, and I believe that David had Deborah's song in mind when writing this psalm. David was probably familiar with Ex. 19:18 20:18 Deut. 4:11–12 , it is clear that he paraphrased Deborah in this case.
You have scattered rain freely [or, <i>in abundance</i>], O Elohim; You established Your inheritance, when it [the rain] was wearied.	For the land to which you are going, to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from where you came, where you sowed your seed and watered it with your foot, as a garden of herbs. But the land which you are entering to possess it is a land of hills and valleys, drinking water from the rain of the heavens; a land which Jehovah your God cares for; the eyes of Jehovah your God are always on it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year (Deut. 11:10–12).	Although not a clear parallel, God obviously did provide the rain that Israel needed in order to prosper.

The Parallel Passages		
Psalm 68	Old Testament References	Comment
<p>Your community lived in it [the land]; You, O Elohim, established the humble [or, possibly, <i>the grace oriented</i>] in Your goodness.</p>	<p>And now if listening you will listen to My voice, and will keep My covenant, you shall become a special treasure to Me above all the nations, for all the earth is Mine (Ex. 19:5). And He has brought us to this place, and has given to us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey (Deut. 26:9).</p>	<p>In eternity past, God determined that the Jews would occupy the Land of Promise. God did all that would be required in order for Israel to live there.</p>
<p>Adonai gives a promise [or, <i>mandate</i>]; those [women] who bring good news [or, <i>female messengers</i>] [are] a great army.</p>	<p>And the sister of Aaron, Miriam the prophetess, took the timbrel in her hand, and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances (Ex. 15:20).</p>	<p>Miriam and the women of Israel celebrated God's care and guidance.</p>
<p>Kings of armies flee—they flee; while [each] female inhabitant of a home divides up [her] recompense [or, <i>spoil</i>]. Though you lay between two stalls (?), the wings of a dove are overlaid with silver and her feathers with a yellowish gold.</p>	<p>And He took off the wheels of their chariots, and made them drive with difficulty. And the Egyptians said, I will flee from the face of Israel, for Jehovah is fighting for them against the Egyptians (Ex. 14:25). And they killed the kings of Midian, besides the rest of their slain: Evi, and Rekem, and Zur, and Hur, and Reba, five kings of Midian. They also killed Balaam the son of Beor with the sword. And the sons of Israel took the women of Midian captive, and their infants, and all their livestock, and all their possessions. And they plundered all their wealth...And you shall divide the prey between those skilled in war, that went out to battle, and all the congregation. (Num. 31:8–9, 27). And these five kings fled, and were hidden in a cave at Makkedah (Joshua 10:16).</p>	<p>As Israel conquered more and more of the Land of Promise, some kings fled, and the Israeli women divided up the spoil taken in war.</p>

The Parallel Passages		
Psalm 68	Old Testament References	Comment
<p>When the Almighty scatters kings in her [in the land]; He causes snow [to fall] in Zalmon.</p>	<p>And Israel sent messengers to Sihon king of the Amorites, saying, Let me pass through your land; we will not turn into a field or into a vineyard; we will not drink waters of a well; we will go in the king's highway until we have passed over your border. And Sihon would not allow Israel to pass through his border. And Sihon gathered all his people and went out to meet Israel in the wilderness, and they came to Jahaz and fought against Israel. And Israel struck him by the mouth of the sword and seized his land, from Arnon to Jabbok, to the sons of Ammon. For the border of the sons of Ammon was strong. And Israel took all these cities. And Israel dwelt in all the cities of the Amorite, in Heshbon and in all its daughter villages. For Heshbon was the city of Sihon king of the Amorites. And he had fought against the former king of Moab and had taken his land out of his hand, to Arnon (Num. 21:21–26).</p>	<p>The passage given is but one example of God scattering the kings which stood in the way of Israel.</p>
<p>O mountain of Elohim, O mountain of Bashan, O mountain of [many] summits, O mountain of Bashan. Why do you look with envy, O mountains, O peaks, [at] the mountain Elohim desires for His dwelling place? Indeed, Y^ehowah will live there forever.</p>	<p>But you shall seek to the place which Jehovah your God shall choose out of all your tribes; for you shall seek His dwelling, to put His name there. And you shall go there. And it shall be the place which Jehovah your God shall choose to cause His name to dwell there, there you shall bring all that I am commanding you, your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice freewill offerings which you vow to Jehovah (Deut. 12:5, 11).</p>	<p>To be accurate, God would have Israel set up the Tent of God in various cities over the years, but there would only be one Ark and one Tent of God. David chose for Jerusalem to be a permanent place of residence for God.</p>
<p>The chariot of Elohim [leads] twenty thousand—a myriad of thousands [of angels]— my Adonai [is] among them, [as He was with them at] Sinai, [as He was with them] in the holy place.</p>	<p>And he said: Jehovah came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir for them; He shone forth from Mount Paran, and He came from the myriads of holy ones. At his right hand a law of fire went forth to them (Deut. 33:2).</p>	<p>Even in the Old Testament, there is clear mention of the angelic conflict, and God leading a myriad of angels.</p>

The Parallel Passages		
Psalm 68	Old Testament References	Comment
<p>You have gone up on high [or, to the Most High]; You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts in the presence of mankind. And even [in the presence of] the rebellious; Yah Elohim lives [there].</p>	<p>Awake, awake, Deborah! Awake, awake, utter a song! Rise, Barak, and lead your captives captive, son of Abinoam (Judges 5:12).</p>	<p>Although David only took a few words from this passage in Judges, the previous passage that David clearly brought into this psalm came from Judges 5 as well.</p> <p>The idea is, Israel has taken the land through God.</p>
<p>Blessed is Adonai, day [after] day, God bears our deliverance [or, salvation] for us. [Musical] Pause [or, musical interlude; lit., Selah!] Our God [is] a God with respect to [His] acts of salvation; and to Y^ehowah Adonai, with respect to death, [there are] limits [or, the Lord Jehovah is the end with respect to death].</p>	<p>See now that I, I am He, and there is no other God with Me. I kill, and I keep alive. I wound and I heal, and there is no deliverer from My hand (Deut. 32:39).</p>	<p>God is all powerful, but God is gracious.</p>
<p>Surely Elohim will shatter the head of His enemies; the crown of his head—[his] hair brisling up walking around [with evil intent] with his guilt [for wrongdoing].</p>	<p>You went forth for the salvation of Your people, for the salvation of Your anointed. You struck the head from the house of the wicked to bare the foundation to the neck. Selah (Habak. 3:13).</p>	<p>Interestingly enough, I could not find any previous passages even similar to this one. However, the nearest parallel verse actually comes from a later text, which also incorporates the previous line of this psalm.</p> <p>It suggests to me, as the only parallel passage to be found comes from a prophet in the future, that we are now into the prophetic portion of this psalm.</p>
<p>Adonai has said, "I will bring [them] back from Bashan; I will bring [them] back from the depths of the seas so that you bathe your feet in blood [and] the tongue of your dogs [this blood] from [your] enemies [is] his portion."</p>	<p>So says the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I will lift up My hand to the nations, and will set up My banner to peoples. And they shall bring your sons in the bosom, and your daughters shall be carried on the shoulder (Isa. 49:22). For I will take you from the nations and gather you out of all the lands and bring you into your land (Ezek. 36:24). And they rinsed the chariot by the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood when they had washed the armor, according to the Word of Jehovah that He spoke (1Kings 22:38).</p>	<p>Again, the only possible parallel passages come from future prophets (future from David's time). However, they speak of God gathering Israel and it is not clear in the psalms if God is gathering Israel's enemies or the Jews themselves.</p> <p>The passage from 1Kings is just an example of dogs licking up the blood of one who has fallen.</p>

The Parallel Passages		
Psalm 68	Old Testament References	Comment
<p>They have seen Your solemn processions, O Elohim; [they have seen] the processions of my God, my King, into the holy place.</p> <p>The singers are in front [lit., preceded]; [and] after [them], [are] those who play stringed instruments; in the midst of young women playing timbrels.</p>	<p>And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that carried the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah, the master of the song with the singers. David also had an ephod of linen on him. And all Israel was bringing up the ark of the covenant of Jehovah with shouting, and with the sound of a horn, and with trumpets, and cymbals, sounding aloud with lyres and harps (1Chron. 15:27–28).</p> <p>And it happened as they came in, as David returned from striking the Philistine, the women came out from all the cities of Israel to sing with the dancers, to meet Saul the king with tambourines and with joy and three-stringed instruments (1Sam. 18:6).</p>	<p>We seem to be describing the celebratory procession now.</p> <p>Does does, however, seem to parallel celebrations from the past, when Israel would win a victory, and the women would dance and sing in celebration (which takes us back to v. 11 of this psalm).</p>
<p>Bless Elohim in the assemblies, [and blessings to] Y^ehowah from the fountain of Israel.</p>	<p>None is like the God of Jeshurun, riding the heavens for your help, and the clouds in His majesty. The God of old is a refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. And He shall cast the enemy out from before you, and shall say, Destroy! And Israel shall live alone in safety; the fountain of Jacob in a land of grain and wine; and his heavens drop down dew (Deut. 33:26–28).</p>	<p>Although taken from Scripture clearly written before his time, this verse looks into the future, when God rules over Israel, and Israel lives in safety and prosperity.</p>
<p>Then [or, there], insignificant Benjamin has dominion over them; the princes of Judah [are] their means of execution [or, means of control; or, are in a group], [along] the princes of Zebulun [and] the princes of Naphtali.</p>		<p>Although I could not find any possible parallel passages here, that Benjamin was the least of the tribes is found in Gen. 42:32 Judges 20:35 21:6–25 1Sam. 9:21</p>

The Parallel Passages		
Psalm 68	Old Testament References	Comment
<p>Your Elohim commands your strength [or, <i>protection, glory</i>] [possibly, <i>Summon Your strength, O God</i>];</p> <p>make secure [or, <i>strong</i>], O Elohim, that which you have done for us.</p>	<p>The ones waiting for Jehovah shall renew power; they shall go up with wings as the eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not be faint (Isa. 40:31). Jehovah will perfect His work in me; O Jehovah, Your mercy endures forever; You will not forsake the works of Your hands (Psalm 138:8). And He said to me, My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Therefore, I will rather gladly boast in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may overshadow me (2Cor. 12:9).</p>	<p>Although there are some later passages which are similar, there is nothing which David read which parallels this passage.</p>
<p>Because of Your Temple upon Jerusalem,</p> <p>[in a procession] kings bring presents [lit., <i>a present</i>] to You.</p>	<p>And all the earth was seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom that God had put into his heart; and they were each one bringing his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and garments, and armor, and spices, horses, and mules, a year by year matter (1Kings 10:24).</p>	<p>After Solomon built the Temple to God, kings came to him with presents.</p>
<p>Castigate the community [or, <i>life, living thing, animal</i>] of stalks [or, <i>reeds</i>],</p> <p>the congregation of mighty ones, with calves of people trampling down [or, <i>prostrating themselves with</i>] bars of silver;</p> <p>scatter [these] people, [for] they delight in war [possibly, <i>He scatters (them); the people desire to draw near</i>].</p>		<p>Because this verse was so difficult to translate and then to interpret, I am not sure that I could find any passages before or after David's time which parallel this verse.</p>

The Parallel Passages		
Psalm 68	Old Testament References	Comment
Ambassadors from Egypt come; His hands quickly bring Ethiopia unto Elohim.	He shall also rule from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. Those dwelling in the desert will bow before Him, and His enemies will lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before Him; all nations shall serve Him (Psalm 72:8–11). From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, My worshipers, the daughter of My scattered ones, shall bring My food offering (Zeph. 3:10). So says Jehovah, The labor of Egypt, and the goods of Ethiopia, and of the Sabeans, men of stature, shall come to you; and they shall be yours. They shall come after you; they shall cross in chains; and they shall bow to you; they shall plead to you. Surely God is in you, and there is none else, no other God (Isa. 45:14; see also Isa. 60:6–7 66:19).	Again, we are looking into the future from David's time.
Sing, you kingdoms of the earth, to Elohim; Sing praises [to] Adonai! [Musical Pause] [lit., <i>selah!</i>].	That Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations. Let the peoples thank You, O God; let all the peoples thank You. Oh let the peoples be glad and sing for joy; for You shall judge the peoples uprightly and govern the peoples on earth. Selah. Let the peoples give thanks to You, O God; let all the peoples give thanks to You (Psalm 67:2–5).	As before, there are a number of parallel passages written after David's time, but nothing that he read while studying his own Bible.

The Parallel Passages		
Psalm 68	Old Testament References	Comment
<p>[Sing praises] to the Rider of the heavens, [those] ancient heavens; Listen, He sends forth [lit., gives] His voice, [His] mighty voice. Give glory [or, <i>praise</i>] to Elohim; His majesty and His strength [is] in the clouds over Israel.</p>	<p>None is like the God of Jeshurun, riding the heavens for your help, and the clouds in His majesty (Deut. 33:26). The voice of Jehovah is on the waters; the God of glory thunders; Jehovah is above many waters. The voice of Jehovah is in power; the voice of Jehovah in majesty. The voice of Jehovah breaks the cedars; yea, Jehovah breaks Lebanon's cedars. He also makes them skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young wild ox. The voice of Jehovah is cutting through the flame of fire. The voice of Jehovah shakes the wilderness; Jehovah shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. The voice of Jehovah causes the does to calve; and He uncovers the forests. And in His temple it all is saying, Glory (Psalm 29:3–9)!</p>	<p>We can now return to the writings of Moses as well as look into the psalms for some passages which are parallel to this stanza.</p>
<p>The God of Israel [is] a feared [and respected] Elohim [or, <i>is an awesome God</i>] [ruling] from Your sanctuary; He gives to the people blessed [by] Elohim strength and might [or, <i>He gives strength and might to the people; blessed [be] God</i>].</p>	<p>Come and see God's works, who is feared in His acts toward the sons of men. He turns the sea into dry land; they go through the river on foot; there we will rejoice with Him. He rules by His power forever; His eyes search out the nations; let not the rebels exalt themselves. Selah. Bless our God, O peoples, and make heard the voice of His praise (Psalm 66:5–8).</p>	<p>Some claim that Psalms 66–68 were written together at the same time.</p>

To be frank, what I was expecting was to find more than just a couple of passages which were obviously lifted by David and placed into his psalm. However, it is interesting that we find passages which David probably read and thought about as he wrote this psalm in the first half of this psalm; but, in the second half, there are very few previously written passages which seemed to come into David's mind (although we find reasonable parallels from passages still to be written future from David's time).

I think that, altogether, there are 3 and perhaps 3 verses which David intentionally lifted from passages he had read: the words that Moses spoke when he was about to move the Ark; and a few lines from Deborah's psalm.

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1. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*; James Orr, Editor, ©1956 Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.; © by Hendrickson Publishers; from E-Sword; Topic: Arabah.

