Ps. lxxvii begins as a lament (Gunkel). The psalmist describes his distress in verses 2-10. Verse 6 tells how he thought of times in the past, and verses 8-10 speak about the problem:

8 Will my Lord spurn for ever,  
and show favour no more?
9 Has his faithful love ceased permanently,  
has his word come to an end for all generations?
10 Has God forgotten to be gracious,  
has he closed up his compassion in anger?

In verses 12-15 the psalmist says that he will recall God's wonderful deeds, and verses 16-21 recount the deliverance of the Israelites at the Red Sea. The tone of the psalm thus changes from sorrow and lament to praise of God for what he has done in the past.

Between the lament and the praise comes verse 11:

And I said, It is my -?-  
the right hand of the Most High.

Two words raise problems in this verse: hallati and šnôt, which is ambiguous. Let us begin with the latter. šnôt can be understood as either the construct plural of šānā, "year", or the infinitive construct qal of šānā, "to change". If the existence of another verb šānā, with the meaning "to be, or become, high or exalted in rank; or to shine" is recognized, then there is yet another possibility to be considered; but, as far as I am aware, nobody has suggested its presence in this verse.

1 I am grateful to Dr Katharine Dell and Dr G.I. Davies for their comments on drafts of this article.
The versions (LXX, Aquila, Symmachus, Theodotion, Quinta, Jerome, Peshitta and Targum) all explain inwt as a form of šāndā, “to change”, although in verse 6 all that are extant (LXX, Symmachus, Jerome, Peshitta and Targum) ascribe the meaning “years” to the homograph in keeping with the unambiguous needs of the context.

ḥallōtî is a more complicated problem. Some have derived it from ḫālal and some from ḫālā. First, there is a verb ḫālal, “to be pierced, wounded” (cp. Ps. cix 22). ḥallōtî looks like the first-person singular perfect qal, but that is difficult to reconcile with the fact that the following word is the pronoun ʾhp, which imples that hallōtî is either a noun or an infinitive construct with the first-person singular suffix. Perhaps, however, we have here an example of the infinitive construct piʾel of a double ḋāʿin verb assimilated to the form of a lamedh-he verb, like ḥannot from ḥānān in verse 10 (unless ḥannot comes from ḥānā, which is perhaps a by-form of ḥānān). Symmachus understands hallōtî to be derived from ḫālal in the rendering τρῶσις μου.

There is another verb ḫālal meaning “to pollute, defile”, but it is not attested in the qal. In any case, it is not easy to suppose that the psalmist says that his troubles are an act of polluting or being polluted. The LXX understands the form of the verb in this verse to be the first-person singular with the meaning “to begin”: ḥēzāμη. That meaning would require the hiphil. But it does not necessarily follow that the LXX’s Vorlage had ḥhlwt, for it is possible that the translator was simply trying to make sense of a Vorlage identical with the MT. The presence of the pronoun ḫw caused no difficulty for the translator, who took it (wτη) with what follows instead of with what precedes. The LXX’s understanding of the syntax is improbable, because to take ḫw with the second part of the verse makes the first part too short.

The second way of understanding hallōtî is to derive it from ḫālā, of which the qal means “to be sick, weak”. It looks like the infinitive construct piʾel of the verb with a first-person singular suffix. The piʾel is used in Deut. xxix 21 of bringing disease upon a land. If a similar meaning is intended in Ps. lxxvii 11, then the suffix denotes the object of the verb (GK § 115 c). But this use of the suffix is unusual, and the translation “it is to make me ill” or “weak” is awkward. We should expect the distress described in verses 3-5 to be called his weakness or even his illness rather than