

Psalm 22.20

הַצִּילָה מִחַרְבַּב נַפְשִׁי מִיַּד־כָּלֵב יַחֲדָתִי:

My (literal) Hebrew translation: Save from the sword (מַחְרָב) my soul (נַפְשִׁי) *and* from the power/hand of the dog (כָּלֵב) *yichidatiy/my only one.*

My “poetic” re-rendering of the Hebrew: Save my only one and my very soul from the sword and from the power of the evil one!

Note (Ps. 22.20): *natzal* (נָצַל) means save or deliver and is synonymous with *yasa* (עָשָׂה) in verse 21. *Keleb*, (כָּלֵב) translated as “dog,” can be a few of different things. It can be a literal dog, a term used for contempt, figuratively or literally applied to men in general, a pagan sacrifice, a false prophet, or even a male prostitute. Depending on the mindset of the author, we have to try and puzzle out what the author mean when using this word. I am going to go with a translation that will render “dog” as something vile or evil. See: [Strong’s H3611 keleb](#).

Yichidatiy is a cool word. It literally means “my only one,” and could very well be directly related to “my ONLY son” or “My ONLY child”... it is a term of endearment. We see it in the narrative of God commanding Abraham to take his son, his יָחִידִי “only” son in Genesis 22.2 The “ka” suffix (ך) at the end of *yāhîd* shows how the word is used in Gen. 22.2 and indicates that this “only” is in Abraham’s possession. In other words, the *ka* at the end is a possessive pronoun suffix. The root word is *yāhîd* יָחִיד and means “only, and is a really cool word. To me I see this directly related to God’s only son.

The Greek translators left the awesomeness of the text in the verse. Remember, the Greek speaking Jews translated the Hebrew into Greek around 330 BCE. This is known as the Septuagint (LXX):

LXX Ps. 22.20: ῥῦσαι ἀπὸ ῥομφαίας τὴν ψυχὴν μου καὶ ἐκ χειρὸς κυνὸς τὴν μονογενῆ μου

My Greek translation: Deliver my soul (ψυχὴν) and my only begotten child (μονογενῆ) out of the sword (ῥομφαίας) and from the hand of the dog.

So you can really see that the Greek translation (made centuries before Jesus) can render a translation for “Christ-centered,” depending upon your point of view.

Psalm 22.21

הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי מִפִּי אַרְיֵה וּמִקֶּרְנֵי רַמִּים עֲנִיתִנִּי:

My (literal) Hebrew translation: Save me from the mouth (מִפִּי) of the lion (אַרְיֵה) and from the *keren*/horn (קֶרְנֵי)(dual) of the *ramiym* [fierce animal] you have heard/answered (עֲנִיתִ) me.

My “poetic” translation” You have answered my cry! Save me from the mouth of the lion and from the horns of those wild beasts!

Note (Ps. 22.21): *ramiym* (translated unicorns) (רַמִּים) can mean a wild animal, fierce and untamed, resembling an ox, or a wild ass. The Arabic word associates this with a large and fierce species of antelope. The Vulgate unicornis, an animal described by Pliny has long been considered fictitious. Others see this as a buffalo. See: Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon.

עָנָה *anah* can be heard or answered.

LXX of Ps. 22.21:

σῶσόν με ἐκ στόματος λέοντος καὶ ἀπὸ κεράτων μονοκερώτων τὴν ταπείνωσίν μου

My Greek (LXX) translation: Save me from out of the mouth of the lion and away from the *keratone monokeroton* (the horn of the one horned ones!) and from humiliation.

Clearly the Greek translation of a one horned group of animals spawned the idea of translating this text using the word “unicorn.”

I think there are some really provocative things to think about with these verses. Is this God the Father saying “Deliver my only begotten child!” in verse 20?

Could the rest of Ps. 22.20 be the words of the Savior in the temple drama, “save my very soul from the sword and from the power of the evil one!”

Is this part of the temple drama where the individual playing the part of the father is asking the question?

Verse 21 can clearly be seen as Christ, asking to be delivered from the mighty ones and from humiliation. Rome was a LION, so to speak, in Jesus’ time. Horned beasts are used poetically in apocalyptic literature to portray the mighty powers of the ancient world (see Daniel 7 and Revelation 13). These images may represent early apocalyptic thought in the temple during the time of the early monarchy [1000-900 BCE].