

# LION HANDS

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Once upon a time there was a very handsome young prince. His father, the king, ruled his kingdom with love, mercy, justice and righteousness, but there were many people in the realm that did not accept his rule and rebelled against him. The king was hard pressed as to what to do. Any other monarch would have squashed the rebellion by killing all the rebels, but the king loved his people very much and did not want to destroy them.

The prince loved his father dearly, and also the people. He devised a plan and took it to his father for approval. Upon hearing it the father gasped in pain and sadness. The son spoke of an idea to appeal to the *heart* of the rebels. The son reasoned that only something that could *pierce* the heart, would ever have a possibility of turning the hearts of the rebels back to the king. The prince would take upon himself the punishment of death for all the rebels, thus revealing his heart for them and freeing them from punishment, to be able to return to the king. The prince said that if they could understand that the king had given up his most precious possession for them to be forgiven of their rebellion, they would come to see the great love that the king and the prince had for them, and they would return in humility. And so the two of them set out to do just that.

Fairy tale? Hardly! Just the opposite. A divine tale of love that will take eternity to comprehend and experience. The greatest story of all time. You can read about it in the Book. It's all there—God's love for us; our perverse, stubborn and rebellious hearts, and the sacrifice that He paid to win back our hearts, that we might return to Him and receive His gracious forgiveness and life-giving love. Sadly, though, there have been rebels who have rejected what He has done. Some of them have even twisted and distorted His Word, causing many to pass over aspects of the Story and think nothing of it. One such place is Ps. 22:17:<sup>1</sup>

'For dogs have compassed me; A company of evil doers have inclosed (sic) me; *Like a lion*, they are at my hands and my feet.'<sup>2</sup>

Psalm 22 is about a righteous man being brutally murdered (v 10-11, 15-16, 20, 23) at the hands of rebels (v 13-14, 17-18), seemingly forsaken by God (v 2-3, 7-9). Yet, the man's trust in God is so strong (10-11, 20-22) that he believes that God will raise him back to life so that he may declare God's love and righteousness to Israel and the nations (23-32).

I've italicized '*Like a lion*' above because it's one word in Hebrew and on this word hinges the proper meaning of the verse that intentionally has been hidden from us. As it traditionally stands we might think that the 'company of evil doers' were 'like a lion' or with the power and fury of a lion, at the man's hands and feet, but what could that mean? Were they slapping his hands and his feet? Were they biting his hands

<sup>1</sup> Hebrew Bibles list it as verse 17. Christian Bibles have it as verse 16. The reason for the difference is because the Hebrew Bibles count the heading 'For the leader...' or 'For the director of music' in the Psalms as verse one. The Christian rendering for the verse begins with, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' Because of this the misalignment, being 'off' by one verse, is common in the Psalms. I list the Psalm from the Hebrew.

<sup>2</sup> תורה נביאים וכתובים (Torah, Nivi'im and Kituvim: The Law, Prophets and Writings): *The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text*, vol. 2 (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, thirteenth printing, 1982), p. 1572. Note well: there is no alternate reading given by the publishers, yet, there are alternate renderings. The Masoretic texts were written about 1,100 to 1,400 years ago (600–900 A.D).

and his feet? Were they growling at his hands and his feet?

The awkwardness of the translation is further compounded by realizing that the translators have been sloppy in their presentation of ‘like a lion.’ The Hebrew word *kah’ah’ree* כַּהֲאֵהֲרֵי should normally be translated ‘like *the* lion.’ This isn’t a major difference, but when seen in the context that the words, ‘they are at’ (as in, ‘Like a lion, *they are at* my hands and my feet’) are not in the Hebrew text, either, we have an extremely awkward sentence, even for Hebrew. Literally, it reads, ‘*Like the lion my hands and my feet.*’

Now, we see that the subject or action shifts from the evil men being at the man’s hands and feet (which the placing of ‘they’ had led us to assume; ‘like a lion, *they are at* my hands and my feet’) to the man himself. Is one to think that the man, who is surrounded by those evil men, has the strength of a lion in his hands and his feet? Lion hands? This can hardly be what King David meant for one who was obviously dying. Reading the two previous verses brings out that the man has absolutely no strength:

‘I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax. It is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd<sup>3</sup> and my tongue cleaves to my jaws. And You lay me in the dust of death’<sup>4</sup> (Psalm 22:15-16).

The traditional Jewish translators have added the words ‘they are at’ in v. 17 to make it sound better in English, but those words aren’t in the sentence. The traditional Jewish placing of ‘they’ might be seen being ‘borrowed’ from the previous phrase, as it’s indirectly there; ‘Evil doers (*they*) have inclosed me,’<sup>5</sup> but this doesn’t properly belong to the phrase, either. Also, there are no words to give us ‘are at.’ All this has been added by the translators. The sentence, ‘Like the lion my hands and my feet’ makes little sense in Hebrew or English.

There is an alternate translation in the Septuagint, the Hebrew Bible translated into Greek about 250–200 B.C. This was made for Jews living outside the Land of Israel whose Hebrew was poor or non-existent. Because of Alexander the Great (330 B.C.), Greek was the *lingua franca* of the day. The Jewish sages who wrote the Septuagint translated the Hebrew word in Psalm 22:17 (that traditionally stands as ‘like a lion’) into a Greek word that means ‘they pierced.’<sup>6</sup> The Greek word those ancient Jewish sages used was  $\omega\upsilon\sigma\iota\alpha\nu$ <sup>7</sup> *oh’rooks’sahn*. It comes from the verb  $\omega\upsilon\sigma\sigma\omega$ <sup>8</sup> *oh’roos’so*.

Those Jewish men knew the Hebrew text as, ‘*They pierced my hands and my feet*’<sup>9</sup> for them to use that Greek word. Those Jewish scholars didn’t translate it as ‘like a lion’ because they saw a *vav* in the word, not a *yod*. This dramatically clashes with the traditional Jewish text of today. ‘*They pierced my hands and my feet*’ is how the ancient Jewish people understood Psalm 22:17, in Hebrew and Greek, 200 years before the Prince had His hands and feet pierced to a tree in Jerusalem—for you my friend.

<sup>3</sup> Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 25th printing, 1976), p. 877. A potsherd is ‘a fragment of an earthen vessel.’ It’s figuratively used of ‘that which is very dry.’ This parallels the man’s tongue cleaving to his jaws, as one would expect when extremely thirsty or dehydrated.

<sup>4</sup> These two verses, along with verse 17, offer us a powerful description of what one would experience if they were being crucified. The whole Psalm is about the Prince being crucified. Verse 7-9, 13-14 and 17-18 are almost a word for word account of what will happen to the Prince of Peace in Mt. 27:35, 39-43 and Mark 15:24, 29-32.

<sup>5</sup> R. L. Harris, Editor; Gleason Archer, Jr. and Bruce Waltke, Associate Editors, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), p. 439. There are 32 occurrences of ‘dog’ in the Tanach, ‘none of them positive.’ For ‘one’s body to be eaten by dogs was the ultimate in tragic ends to a life.’ The evil men enclosing the Prince (verse 17) is paralleled by the first phrase, ‘For dogs have compassed me’.

<sup>6</sup> Sir Lancelot C. L. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English* (USA: Hendrickson Publishers, sixth printing, February, 1997), p. 710.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Wesley J. Perschbacher, Editor, *The New Analytical Greek Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publications, 1990), p. 297. ‘To dig, excavate,’ see also p. 445.

<sup>9</sup> Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha*, p. 710.

## The Pierced Prince

With the ‘clipping short’ of one Hebrew letter, ‘They pierced’ was changed to ‘Like a lion.’ We see this concept in English with letters that, with the ‘clipping off’ of *part* of the letter, become another letter. The capital English letter G clipped becomes a C; the E an F; and the R turns into a P; etc. In terms of how this effects a word, some permutations are; Gap to Cap; Rat to Pat; and Eat to Fat. The Hebrew letters in question are the *vav* (ו) a straight up and down line, and the *yod* (י) a straight up and down line about half the length of the *vav*. There’s no difference between the two of them except for their length. The *vav* looks like a ‘longer’ *yod*. Without any vowel pointing,<sup>10</sup> the two words look and sound like this: first with the *vav* כָּאָרוּ<sup>11</sup> *kah’ru*; and now with the *yod* כָּאָרִי *kah’ah’ree*.

The two words are identical except for their *last* letter, the *vav* or the *yod*. (Hebrew is read from right to left, just the opposite of English.) With the *vav* (*kah’ru*) the word is, ‘They pierced.’ If we accept the *yod* of the Masoretic text (*kah’ah’ree*) it reads, ‘Like the lion.’ The ancient sages who wrote the Septuagint must have seen a *vav* as the last letter of the Hebrew text that they had. The *vav* makes the word *kah’ru* (‘they pierced’). This solves our grammar and translation problems. We now have a verb (‘pierced’) and a pronoun (‘they’). ‘*They pierced my hands and my feet*’ is the way the Hebrew sentence must have originally read and should read. The evil men pierced the hands and feet of the Prince.

The traditional Jewish text of today may have been a deliberate attempt on the part of the Masoretes<sup>12</sup> to destroy the messianic meaning with its full implications of *a Pierced Prince*. In copying text it was common, over many scribal copies, for the shorter *yod* to be lengthened, to become the longer *vav*, as one scribe would make the *yod* slightly longer and the next scribe might think it was a *vav*,<sup>13</sup> but it’s extremely unlikely that the longer *vav* would be made shorter over time and thought to be a *yod*. Such a reversal, the *vav* being ‘mistaken’ for the shorter *yod*, could only be intentional on the part of the revisers of the text, especially as there are ample texts to properly determine the Hebrew word.

The Hebrew word with the *vav*, *kah’ru* (‘they pierced’) also appears in other Hebrew manuscripts, as well as the Syriac Bible for Psalm 22:17.<sup>14</sup> By no means does the traditional Jewish translation of the text go un-

<sup>10</sup> Hebrew vowels, mostly dots and dashes, are generally placed under the Hebrew letters. Originally they weren’t in the Scriptures. They were inserted by the Masoretes about 1,200 years ago to help with pronunciation, but the vowels weren’t ‘God-given.’ King David wrote this Psalm about 3,000 years ago (1,050 B.C.). The Masoretes knew of Messiah Yeshua being crucified and intentionally altered the text. ‘The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran, dating from c.150 BC–75 AD, shows however that in this period there was not always the scrupulous uniformity of text that was so stressed in later centuries. The scrolls show numerous small variations in orthography, both as against the later Masoretic text, and between each other. It is also evident from the notings of corrections and of variant alternatives that scribes felt free to choose according to their personal taste and discretion between different readings.’ Menachem Cohen, *The Idea of the Sanctity of the Biblical Text and the Science of Textual Criticism in HaMikrah V’anachnu*, ed. Uriel Simon, HaMachon L’Yahadut U’Machshava Bat-Z’mananu and Dvir, Tel-Aviv, 1979.

<sup>11</sup> Dr. Francis Brown, Dr. S. R. Driver, Dr. Charles A. Briggs, based on the lexicon of Professor Wilhelm Gesenius; Edward Robinson, Translator and E. Rodiger, Editor, *The New Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Lafayette, IN: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1978), p. 468. The verb is translated as ‘to bore or dig or hew.’ Dr. Brown translates verse 17 as, ‘they have bored (dugged, hewn) my hands and my feet.’ Also, in the word, the *vav* will change from its consonantal ‘v’ sound to its vowel sound of ‘ou.’ The ‘ou’ attached to the verb (*kah’ru*) then becomes the personal pronoun (they), a common occurrence in Hebrew.

<sup>12</sup> Whether the Masoretes did the ‘clipping’ of the *vav* or those before them, is not important. What is significant is that the text was altered. It now has two variant readings. One that makes sense (with the *vav*), and the other that makes absolutely no sense at all (with the *yod*). Obviously, someone tampered with the Hebrew text some time after the Septuagint was written.

<sup>13</sup> A number of errors in the Hebrew Bible relate to this phenomenon.

challenged by ancient sources. Therefore, it's not just 'the Septuagint versus the Masoretic' version of the text, which would have been overwhelming evidence *against* the Masoretic version anyway.<sup>15</sup> With many texts available to the translators, there is no justifiable reason to print, 'Like a lion' *except to maliciously hide the Pierced Prince*. Against all these other manuscripts, the traditional Hebrew Bible of today finds itself alone in its incompetent and perverse translation of, 'Like a lion my hands and my feet.'

The only 'lion hands' that we find in the text are those lyn' hands that corrupted it. There have always been rebels who have hated the sacrificial love of the King and His Son. In their arrogance they despise what the King has done for them. Those rebels have done their utmost to keep you from knowing the truth about your God and your Prince.

Two thousand years ago God sent the Prince to be pierced. It was Their plan. I know that there have been many vicious anti-Semites who have accused us Jews of being 'Christ killers.' Many of us have been murdered, tortured and persecuted because of that satanic lie. The divine truth is that the Prince said that no one could take His life. He *willingly* laid down His life (John 10:18) that we stubborn rebels, every Jew (and every Gentile), could be forgiven of our sins and great rebellion against the King.

The human side of this truth is that *both* Jew and Gentile pierced the Prince. Our highest authority, the Sanhedrin, declared that the Prince was a blasphemer (Matthew 26:65). Our High Priest placed the Prince under oath and demanded to know if He was the Prince, the Son of the King. Yeshua (Jesus) said that He was and the High Priest accused the Prince of blasphemy! Our Sanhedrin condemned Him to death, but we Jews at that time didn't have the authority to kill anyone. That right had been taken out of our hands by the Roman Empire. Pontius Pilate, representing Rome, and symbolically all the Gentile world, ordered the death of the Prince, thus implicating every Jew and Gentile in the most sinister murder that the Heavens have ever witnessed.

Psalms 22, written 800 years before the Romans made crucifixion a means of death, is a perfect picture of a man being crucified. King David, who wrote the psalm, was prophesying. He described what the Messiah, *the Pierced Prince*,<sup>16</sup> would go through for us as He cried: 'My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?' (Psalm 22:2, Matthew 27:46).

Have you ever felt forsaken and abandoned by God, surrounded and crushed by evil? Our Prince felt that too, so that you would know that He is able to feel and to comfort you in your pain and confusion. He's also able to heal and to save you (Isaiah 35:1-10; 53:1-12; 61:1, Acts 3:15; 5:31, etc.). His Father, the King, has given all authority to Him for Judgment Day and eternal life (Mt. 28:18; Jn. 5:19-30; 17:2-3).

Fairy tale or divine drama? Once upon a time there was this handsome Prince who was *pierced* so that your heart might be, also. If you ask Him to come into your heart, you'll know why He's called the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6). Yeshua has made a way for you to come Home.

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<sup>14</sup> John Kohlenberger III, Editor, *The NIV Interlinear Hebrew-English Old Testament*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Corporation, 1979), p. 368. Footnote n states, 'Some Hebrew manuscripts, Septuagint and Syriac' have *kah'ru* (they pierced), while 'most Hebrew manuscripts' have *kah'ah'ree* (like the lion). This means that there are a number of reliable texts that translate the word as 'they pierced,' including Hebrew manuscripts and the Syriac Peshita, a direct translation from the ancient Hebrew Bible, like the Septuagint. Also, just because there may be more Hebrew manuscripts with the reading 'like the loin,' majority in this case doesn't mean it's correct. Copying an error hundreds of times doesn't give the text authoritative.

<sup>15</sup> This is because the Masoretic text offers an exceptionally poor grammatical structure and a completely unsatisfactory translation for verse 17.

<sup>16</sup> Isaiah 53:6 speaks of the Servant of Yahveh (Is. 52:13), the Prince of Peace, being pierced through, but the English text of the Jewish Bible fails to bring this out, substituting the word 'wounded' instead. Zechariah 12:10 also writes of this Prince being pierced ('thrust him through'), but the Jewish translation and subsequent note (a) obliterate the true meaning that the divine text tries to convey.