

PIERCING THE AMBIGUITIES OF PSALM 22:16 AND THE MESSIAH'S MISSION

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I. INTRODUCTION

For centuries, the Psalms have comforted, blessed, and warned God's people. A primary theme in the Psalms is the promised arrival of God's Messiah or Anointed One. Understandings, Jewish and Christian, have changed over the centuries. When Jesus lived on earth, the Jews believed that the Messiah would be a conqueror who would remove the yoke of the hated Roman oppressor. After his death, Christians pointed to many OT passages, notably Psalm 22, Psalm 69, and Isaiah 52–53, where God's Servant was made to suffer intensely and even die. Today, many Jews understand themselves as a people being God's Suffering Servant in these and other passages. However, following a hermeneutic Jesus applied to himself, Christians see these passages as applying to Jesus' death, achieving salvation.

We will focus on Psalm 22, a psalm Christians recognize as fitting this Suffering Servant/Messiah genre. Many aspects of Jesus' suffering and death on the cross find parallels in this psalm. We will survey these, but we will focus on verse 16. It is "the one that got away." Several textual traditions for verse 16 describe a piercing of the hands and feet. This text could have readily been applied to Jesus' situation, but no NT writer appears to quote or allude to this.

We need to outline the nature of this data. Today's traditional Hebrew (Masoretic) text does not say anything about piercing the hands and feet. Rather, it says, "like a lion my hands and my feet." This is, of course, a very difficult reading to explain. English translations demonstrate that there is no consensus as to how it should be rendered. Our readings of "piercing" the hands and feet come to us from the Greek Septuagint (LXX) of around 150 BC, and from the Latin Vulgate translated by Jerome around AD 400. Since both works were translated from the Hebrew, scholars have speculated that the original Hebrew manuscript or *Vorlage* once had the "pierced" reading. Such an ancient Hebrew manuscript from the Dead Sea area has now been identified and translated. The difference between "like a lion" and "they pierced" is just one letter.

II. NEW TESTAMENT CONTEXT

Again, we cannot point to a specific text in the NT that quotes or directly alludes to Ps 16:22's "piercing." Jesus' crucifixion is described in Matt

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27:33–44, Mark 15:22–32, Luke 23:33–43, and John 19:17–24. However, there are no NT descriptions of how Jesus' hands and feet were pierced. In Luke 24:39 Jesus says, "look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself" (NRSV). Most believe that Jesus here refers to the recent wounds in his hands and feet from the crucifixion process. In John 20:20, Jesus "showed them both His hands and His side" (NASB). In John 20:25, Thomas says, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe" (NRSV). This is the clearest NT reference that nails were used to pierce Jesus' hands.

The only piercing we see in connection with Jesus' crucifixion is found in John 19:32–37 (NASB):

³²So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him; ³³but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. ³⁴But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear. . . . ³⁶For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, "NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN." ³⁷And again another Scripture says, "THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM THEY PIERCED."

John is more focused on the piercing of Jesus' side than other Gospels, using this to link with Zech 12:10 (second quote in caps). Why did he not also quote Ps 22:16? He already is quoting and linking together two disparate OT passages. In fact, in John 19:24 he quotes Ps 22:18. The NT quotes other verses from Psalm 22. This is central to our discussion, showing that NT writers were well acquainted with this psalm. Indeed, "no psalm is quoted more frequently in the NT."¹ Archer and Chirichigno note that both Psalm 22 and Psalm 110 are quoted seven times in the NT.² In fact, in all but one instance where the NT quotes Psalm 22, we see an intimate involvement with Jesus' crucifixion!

Ps 22:1a reads, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (NRSV). Matt 27:46 and Mark 15:34 quote this exactly. Similarly, Ps 22:18 says, "they divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots" (ASB). Matt 27:35, Mark 15:24, and Luke 23:34 all refer to Jesus' garments being divided by lots, but John 19:24 precisely quotes verse 18. Psalm 22:22 reads, "I will tell of Your name to my brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will praise You" (NASB), which Heb 2:12 quotes.

We now come to Ps 22:16. In the NASB it reads, "for dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet." We will attempt to show that this is the correct reading from a text-critical view. We will first examine Psalm 22 in its OT context.

III. OLD TESTAMENT CONTEXT

The immediate OT context is, of course, Psalm 22. We should consider the entire Psalter and ultimately any portion of the OT that describes a suf-

¹ *The Zondervan NASB Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999) 760 (Introduction to Psalm 22).

² Gleason L. Archer and G. C. Chirichigno, *Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament: A Complete Survey* (Chicago: Moody, 1983) 64–67, 82–83.

fering Messiah to be our OT context. Some regard only those passages that contain the Hebrew word מָשִׁיחַ to relate to the Messiah. We will broaden this application to include those passages which Jesus and the apostles quoted and alluded to in the NT as applying to Jesus. Their hermeneutic is valid today.

For well over 1,000 years, the text of the Hebrew Bible has been considered to be relatively static. Textual differences with the Greek Septuagint were noted, but the Greek translation was regarded as secondary and sometimes inept. This view changed with the textual discoveries at Qumran beginning in 1947. These texts contribute important insights to our understanding of the Hebrew Bible, and the Psalter in particular.

The Qumran Psalters provide insights in canonical areas. Searchers found fragments of 40 psalms scrolls in 11 caves in the Dead Sea or Qumran area between 1947 and 1965. They found more copies of the book of Psalms than any other biblical book. These documents follow the same order of psalms from 1 through 90. From 91 to 150, the order of psalms varies with each scroll, with none being in the order we know today. In addition, 9 new psalms were found. The Qumran Scrolls were copied from older texts between 250 BC and AD 70. By this time, Psalms 1–90 were already established as having canonical, scriptural authority. Jewish scholars still wrestled with the rest of the Psalter, which psalms would be included, which readings, and in what order. Thus, the Hebrew text between Psalm 1 and Psalm 90 of any manuscript which dates to 250 BC–AD 70 will be more standardized than would be an older scroll, or one from Psalm 91 to 150, or an extrabiblical text. Our text precisely fits these criteria.

What accounts for these new renderings, transpositions, and completely new works? A text in the 11QPs^a scroll called “David’s Compositions” provides a clue. Regarding David, it reads, “And the total (of his psalms and songs) was four thousand and fifty. All these he composed through prophecy which was given him from before the Most High.”³ This statement raises two important issues. First, if David wrote 4,050 psalms, we may expect Qumran Psalters to contain previously unknown psalms. Second, we see that the Qumran community granted all 4,050 of David’s psalms a prophetic status. This scroll dates “to the second half of the first century CE.”⁴ Thus, the Jewish Qumran community in AD 50–70 considered David to be an inspired writer. At this same time, NT authors used the Psalms extensively to prove that Jesus was the Messiah. They used the hermeneutics of their Jewish brethren.

We turn to 2 Sam 23:1–7, a passage that the Great Psalm Scroll locates just prior to David’s compositions.⁵ This passage also immediately follows 2 Samuel 22, which is nearly identical to Psalm 18. These two facts bind this passage tightly to the Psalter and its interpretation. Thus, the statement in verse 2, “The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me” (NIV), establishes not

³ Martin Abegg, Jr., Peter Flint, and Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999) 509.

⁴ David C. Mitchell, *The Message of the Psalter: An Eschatological Programme in the Book of Psalms* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

⁵ Abegg, Flint, Ulrich, *Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* 258.

only David's writings as being inspired from God, but the Spirit's involvement in that process. God has inspired all the psalms.

How many of these inspired psalms point to the Messiah, the מָשִׁיחַ? 2 Samuel 23:1 may be translated to read, "now these are the last words of David, the oracle of David, son of Jesse, the oracle of the man God lifted up, concerning the Anointed One of the God of Jacob, the favorite of the psalms of Israel." Thus, the Messiah and his mission are favorite themes in the Psalter! All of David's psalms may pertain to the Messiah. Most psalms should then be seen as messianic, even if they do not use the term מָשִׁיחַ.

Psalm 22 does not use this word "Anointed One," but so many allusions to Christ's crucifixion are found here that most Christians consider this psalm to be messianic. For Christians, three things make a passage messianic: (1) NT citations which are applied to Jesus; (2) parallel passages in the OT (intertextuality); and (3) statements in the same book or section which clearly pertain to Jesus Christ (innertextuality).⁶ We will sample all three aspects to show that Psalm 22 is messianic. An OT link is verse 12's "strong bulls of Bashan" connection to Ezek 39:18. Psalm 22 links to many other psalms. Verse 1's question, "Why are you so far from saving me?" (NIV) links with Ps 10:1. Verse 6's statement, "I am scorned by men and despised by the people" (NIV), links to Ps 31:11, 64:8, 69:19, 109:25, and 119:141.

We have already examined some NT usages of Psalm 22, such as verses 1 and 18. Jesus is "despised by the people" (v. 6, NASB), and in verse 7, "they wag the head, saying, 'Commit *yourself* to the Lord; let Him deliver him.'" Compare this to Matt 27:43, Mark 15:29, 30, and Luke 23:35. The tongue cleaving to the dry mouth (v. 15) indicates Jesus' thirst on the cross, specifically "so that the Scripture would be fulfilled" (John 19:28, NIV). Verse 22 connects directly to John 20:17, Rom 8:29, and Heb 2:12. Finally, verse 31 declares, "He has performed it" (NASB), which echoes Jesus' final words, "It is finished" (John 19:30). In fact, there are so many allusions to Jesus' crucifixion in this psalm that it "has been called the 'fifth gospel' account of the crucifixion."⁷ Even "the . . . scribes and elders employ the words of the psalmist's enemies against Jesus (Ps 22:19; cf. John 19:24; Matt 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34)."⁸

It is well established that some adjacent psalms are related to each other. For example, Psalms 9 and 10 were actually once one psalm. Psalms 120–134 are integrally connected as the ascents of David. Psalm 23 is, of course, the next psalm after 22. If the two are intended to be related, Jesus may have found considerable comfort in his march to the cross with the imagery of walking through the valley of the shadow of death, yet fearing no evil (Ps 23:4).

We will now focus on Ps 22:16, which reads, "for dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers has encompassed me; they pierced my hands and my feet" (NASB). Here Christians see a clear parallel to Christ's hands and feet

⁶ Spiros Zodhiates, *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible* (rev. ed.; Chattanooga, TN: AMG, 1991), note to Ps 22:1–31, 642.

⁷ Peter C. Craigie, *Word Biblical Commentary: Psalms 1–50* (WBC; Waco, TX: Word, 1983) 202.

⁸ *Ibid.*

being nailed to the cross. We have looked at the quotes in John 19:36 of Ps 34:20 and Zech 12:10 and the connections Ps 22:16 has with all three. This is the strongest messianic verse in the entire psalm because it connects with passages in both the OT and NT. Yet NT authors never quoted it directly. Why?

We begin answering this by noting that many English translations have nothing like “pierced” in this verse. The standard Hebrew text does not contain this word. The Stone Edition of the Tanak accurately translates the Masoretic Hebrew here into English: “like [the prey of] a lion are my hands and feet.” At issue is the Hebrew word כָּאֵרִי which is properly translated “like a lion.” Translators preferring this reading attempt to make sense of it. The Revised English reads, “and they have bound me hand and foot,” with a note “*prob. rdg.: Heb like a lion.*” The earlier New English states, “and they have hacked off my hands and my feet,” with the similar added note, “like a lion.” Harrison reads, “like a lion they mangle my hands and feet.” Others move away from the lion in the Hebrew text. Moffatt reads “my hands and feet are all disfigured.” The NRSV reads “my hands and feet have shriveled.” The NAB says “so wasted are my hands and feet,” while the New Jerusalem states, “as if to hack off my hands and my feet.” The original Jerusalem reads, “they tie me hand and foot.” The New Century reads, “they have bitten my arms and legs.” Peterson’s Message reads, “they pin me down hand and foot.”

Where, then, does the “pierced” rendering come from? First, we note that this translation predates the KJV. The Geneva Bible of 1560 states, “they perced mine hands and my feete,” while the KJV reads, “they pierced my hands and my feet.” These readings come from the Greek Septuagint and Jerome’s Latin Vulgate. Psalm 22:16 is one place where the LXX best reflects the original Hebrew *Vorlage* text.

Several English translations from the Geneva to the present read “pierced.” The Revised Version of 1881 and the ASV of 1901 precisely retained the KJV rendering. The RSV of 1947 helpfully reads “they have pierced my hands and feet,” with a note, “Gk. Syr. Jerome: Heb *like a lion.*”

Craigie maintains the Masoretic text “like a lion” can hardly be correct. Yet he also rejects the “pierced” reading, saying it is “best to read a consonantal text כָּאֵרִי or כָּרָר.”⁹ The translation “*they pierced my hands and feet* . . . may perhaps presuppose a verb כָּרָר, ‘to dig,’ or כָּרָר (II), ‘to pierce, bore.’”¹⁰ Dahood translates this passage “piercing my hands,” saying the “much-contested *k’ry* is here . . . analyzed as an infinitive absolute from *kry*, ‘to dig,’ with the archaic ending *-i*, as in Gen. xxx 8.”¹¹

This is where the discussion stood until about 1997. The Qumran Psalters do not contain this verse. However, a scroll from the same era found at nearby Naḥal Ḥever known as 5/6HevPsalms reads, “They have pierced my hands and my feet!”¹² Though the documents were found in 1951 or 52, this reading was not discovered until around 1997! Further, it did not appear in print

⁹ Ibid. 196.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms 1–50* (AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1966) 140–41.

¹² Abegg, Flint, Ulrich, *Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* 519.

until *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* was published in 1999. The implications are enormous. Here we have a Hebrew text over 1,000 years older than the oldest known copy of the standard Hebrew Masoretic text, which supports the reading found in the Greek Septuagint, Syriac, and Vulgate. No longer can Hebrew scholars claim that the LXX, Syriac, and Vulgate are here faulty reflections of the original Hebrew. We see how easily such a change could occur in the Hebrew text when we compare the Hebrew word for pierced, כָּאֵר, ¹³ with the word כְּאֵרִי for “like a lion.” The only difference is the last character: ך vs. ר.

We will therefore expect English translations prepared after this scroll’s reading came to press in 1999 to reflect and cite the reading in the Naḥal Hever scroll. Only three translations of the OT have come out since then, the NET Bible (2001), which does not read “pierce,” and the ESV (2001) and the HCSB (2004), which do. The ESV and HCSB both reference Hebrew manuscripts to support this reading, but they typically say “Dead Sea Scroll” (ESV) or “DSS” (HCSB) when citing Dead Sea Scrolls. Thus, neither ESV nor HCSB is citing 5/6HevPsalms. No English version, then, cites this scroll yet. Future editions of the NRSV, NJB, REB, and NAB may read “pierce,” because they are usually at the forefront of versions that make use of Qumranic readings.

We will now examine all major English translations of this verse. Many English translations use “they pierced,” including these 25: Geneva, KJV, RV, KJV, NKJV, 21st Century KJV, NASB, RSV, NIV, ESV, HCSB, Brenton’s and Thompson’s LXX renderings, Darby, Amplified, Modern Language, LB, NLT, RWB, Webster, YLT, Clear Word, Lamsa’s Syriac, Dahood, and Beck. In addition, Douay reads “they have dug,” Shaw’s Vulgate reads “they have torn holes,” and the NET translation of the LXX reads “they have gouged.” See Table 1 for those translations that use nothing close to “pierce.” Their variety underscores the confusion that has attended the proper rendering of Ps 22:16.

IV. TEXTUAL VARIATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

We will now clarify why there are so many variant English translations of Ps 22:16. We will consider seven different possible readings for the critical “like a lion” or “they have pierced” in Ps 22:16. We begin with basic textual comparisons. We will first compare the Hebrew and LXX Greek texts of Ps 22:16. Note that the Hebrew and Greek numbering is one verse off from the English because they both count the psalm’s superscription as verse 1. The LXX considers this to be ch. 21.

1. *Hebrew text of Psalm 22:17 to Greek LXX text of Psalm 21:17.* The Hebrew Masoretic text of Ps 22:17 and my translation follow:

הַקִּיפוּנִי	מְרַעִים	עֲדַת	כְּלָבִים	סָבְבוּנִי	כִּי
they-encircled-me	evildoers	band-of	dogs	they-surrounded-me	For

¹³ John R. Kohlenberger III, *The Interlinear NIV Hebrew-English Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987) 368.

:לְגַרְגָּרִי יָדַי כְּאֶרְיָן
and-my-feet my-hands like-a-lion

Next, we have the Greek Septuagint rendering of Ps 22:16, with my translation:

ὅτι ἐκύκλωσάν με κύνες πολλοί συναγωγῇ πονηρευομένων
For they-have-surrounded me dogs many assembly of wicked-doers
περιέσχον με ὄρυσαν χεῖράς μου καὶ πόδας
they-have-encircled me they-gouged hands my and feet.

Smoothed out, my Hebrew and Greek translations of Ps 22:16 would read:

H: “For dogs have surrounded me. A pack of evildoers has encircled me.
Like a lion my hands and my feet.”

G: “For many dogs have surrounded me. A pack of evildoers has encircled me.
They gouged my hands and feet.”

There are three differences between the Hebrew Masoretic text and the Greek text in Rahlfs’s critical edition. First, the LXX Greek adds the adjective πολλοί or “many” to modify “dogs.” It seems that the LXX translator was not sure if the Hebrew *‘adat* or “band of” applied to the dogs or the evildoers. To be safe, he covered both bases. We thus have “many dogs” and “assembly” or “pack.” Here, Dahood observes that *‘adat* is frequently translated “assembly.” In fact, the LXX translators saw this as the proper meaning, by using the Greek συναγωγῇ, which also means “assembly” or “gathering.” I use “pack” for both, since Dahood sees here “the imagery being that of the chase,” so “*‘adat*, ‘council, assembly,’ rather takes on the nuance ‘pack.’”¹⁴ Some doubt that “this verse refers to the chase, but the early (Aquila, Theodotion, Jerome) vocalization of MT *kʿlabim*, ‘dogs,’ as *kallabim*, ‘hunters,’ makes serious inroads into” this position.¹⁵

The third difference is that Hebrew has “my hands” and “my feet,” while the Greek only has “my hands and feet.” There are, however, some LXX manuscripts that read “my feet” as well, notably Alexandrinus. This would align the Greek with the Hebrew here.

We return to the second difference, that between כְּאֶרְיָן “like a lion” in the Hebrew and ὄρυσαν “they have gouged” or “dug” in the Greek. This is the main focus of our discussion. Brenton translated the Septuagint here as “they pierced.” The root Greek verb is ὀρύσσω. Liddell and Scott define this to mean “*dig* . . . II. *dig up* . . . III. *dig through*, i.e. *make a canal through* . . . IV. *bury* . . . V. of a wrestler, *dig into*, *gouge a tender part* . . . *gouge out*.”¹⁶ This word appears in numerous grammatical forms in the LXX. Most describe digging, as in digging a well, or tunneling (Sir 48:17). The specific lexical

¹⁴ Dahood, *Psalms 1–50* 140.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon With a Revised Supplement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) 1257d.

Table 1. *English Translations of Ps 22:16 Divergent from “Pierced”*

BBE	Dogs have come round me: I am shut in by the band of evil-doers; they made wounds in my hands and feet.
NAB	Many dogs surround me; a pack of evildoers closes in on me. So wasted are my hands and feet
JB	A pack of dogs surrounds me, a gang of villains closes me in; they tie me hand and foot
NJB	A pack of dogs surrounds me, a gang of villains closing in on me as if to hack off my hands and my feet.
NEB	The huntsmen are all about me; a band of ruffians rings me round, and they have hacked off my hands and my feet.
REB	Hounds are all about me; a band of ruffians rings me round, and they have bound me hand and foot.
NRSV	For dogs are all around me; a company of evildoers encircles me. My hands and feet have shriveled;
Moffatt	For a pack of curs encircle me, a gang of villains surround me; my hands and feet are all disfigured,
Message	Now packs of wild dogs come at me; thugs gang up on me. They pin me down hand and foot,
Craigie	For dogs have surrounded me; a pack of thugs have encompassed me; my hands and my feet were exhausted.
Gwyn	Dogs and evil men beset me on every side, tearing hands and feet.
Harrison	A pack of dogs surrounds me, a mob of ruffians rings encircles me—like a lion they mangle my hands and feet.
Gd News	A gang of evil men is around me; like a pack of dogs they close in on me; they tear at my hands and feet.
NCV	Evil men have surrounded me. Like dogs they have trapped me. They have bitten my arms and legs.
NET	Yes, wild dogs surround me—a gang of evil men crowd around me; like a lion they pin my hands and feet to the ground.
JPS (1917 45)	For dogs have encompassed me; a company of evil-doers have inclosed me; like a lion, they are at my hands and my feet.
TNK 85	Dogs surround me; a pack of evil ones closes in on me, like lions <i>they maul</i> my hands and feet.
Stern	Dogs are all around me, a pack of villains closes in on me like a lion [at] my hands and feet.
Harkavy	For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: like a lion <i>they threaten</i> my hands and my feet.
Stone	For dogs have surrounded me; a pack of evildoers has enclosed me, like [the prey of] a lion are my hands and my feet.

form under consideration here, ὄρυξαν (aorist, active, indicative, third person plural) would usually be translated “they dug.” It occurs 10 other times in the LXX (Table 2): Gen 26:15, 26:18, 26:19, 26:25, and 26:32 (all referring to Abraham’s or Isaac’s men digging wells); Exod 7:24 (Egyptians digging for water); Num 21:18 (princes digging a well); Tob 8:10; Ps 56:7 (digging a pit for a trap); and Jer 2:13 (God’s people hewing broken cisterns). Only in Ps 21:17 (LXX numbering) do we see the translation “pierce.” This holds true for all the other lexical forms as well.¹⁷ Therefore, I have translated it “gouge,” as in gouging through or out.

2. *Possible emendations of the Hebrew text.* It is very clear that the Hebrew document the LXX translator of Ps 22:16 had before him did not read כְּאֵרִי or “like a lion.” How did the original Hebrew read this verse? We detail this and six other possibilities.

a. כְּאֵרִי—“like a lion.” This is the Masoretic text reading. It consists of the particle article כּ which means “like” or “as” and the noun אֵרִי, which means “lion.” This combination shows up three other times in the Hebrew Bible: Num 24:9, Isa 38:13, and Ezek 22:25. In addition, this word shows up in the fuller spelling כְּאֵרִיָּה 11 additional times.¹⁸ The difficulty here is the challenge of arriving at a sensible interpretation. The NET Bible notes the grammatical difficulties here, that “perhaps its awkwardness is by rhetorical design.”¹⁹ The broken syntax may project the panic and terror of the author. The “psalmist may envision a lion pinning the hands and feet of its victim to the ground with its paws, a scene depicted in ancient Near Eastern art.”²⁰

This is a persuasive argument. In fact, it fits the chapter’s context very well. In verse 13, the author laments that “they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion” (NASB). Further, in verse 21, we read “save me from the mouth of the lion!” (NRSV). We thus already have the threat of attacking lions twice in Psalm 22. The Hebrew Scriptures use several words for “lion,”²¹ but in both verses 13 and 21, the Hebrew word for “lion” is אֵרִיָּה, the same as in verse 17. This may seem to strengthen the argument for “like a lion” being the original reading. However, if an OT author uses the word “lion” more than once in close proximity, different synonyms are often chosen. Psalm 17:12, for example, uses אֵרִיָּה and כְּפִיר. The NET and all 5 Jewish translations cited utilize this reading.

¹⁷ The other occurrences of this verb in its various forms follow. For aorist, ὄρυξαν is in Gen 26:18, 21, and 22 (well digging); 2 Chr 16:14 (digging a grave); Ps 7:16 (digging a pit); Tob 8:10 (digging a grave); Sir 48:17 (tunneling rock), and ὀρύξατε (righteous digging a pit) is in Isa 51:1. Present active forms are in Deut 23:14; Prov 16:27; 26:27; 29:22; Eccl 10:8; Ezek 8:8; Zech 3:9 (the only occurrence in the pure lexical form—“I am digging a trench”); Tob 2:7; 8:11; and Sir 27:26.

¹⁸ This spelling occurs in Gen 49:9; Ps 7:3; 10:9; 17:12; Jer 2:30; 12:8; 49:19; 50:44; Dan 7:4; Hos 11:10; and Mic 5:7.

¹⁹ *THE HOLY BIBLE: THE NET BIBLE (New English Translation), Second Beta Ed.* (Biblical Studies Press, 2003) 878.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ The Hebrew words meaning “lion” and their frequency in the Hebrew OT are אֵרִי (35), אֵרִיָּה (44), לְבִיא (11), לֵישׁ (3), כְּפִיר (30), and שָׁחַל (7).

Table 2. *All Occurrences of ὄρυξαν in the Septuagint*

<i>Text</i>	<i>Grk LXX Verb</i>	<i>Brenton Translation</i>	<i>Heb MT Verb</i>	<i>Parsing</i>	<i>Translation</i>
Gen 26:15	ὄρυξαν	“they had dug”	חָפְרוּ	qal, pft., 3cp	“they had dug”
Gen 26:18	ὄρυξαν	“they had dug”	חָפְרוּ	qal, pft., 3cp	“they had dug”
Gen 26:19	ὄρυξαν	“they dug”	וַיִּחְפְּרוּ	qal, imp., 3mp	“and they dug”
Gen 26:25	ὄρυξαν	“they dug”	וַיִּכְרוּ	qal, imp., 3mp	“and they dug”
Gen 26:32	ὄρυξαν	“they had dug”	חָפְרוּ	qal, pft., 3cp	“they had dug”
Exod 7:24	ὄρυξαν	“they dug”	וַיִּחְפְּרוּ	qal, imp., 3mp	“and they dug”
Num 21:18	ὄρυξαν	“they digged”	חָפְרוּהָ	qal, pft., 3cp	“which they dug”
Tob 8:10	ὄρυξαν	“they dug”	NA	NA	NA
Ps 21:17 (22:16)	ὄρυξαν	“they pierced”	כָּאָרִי כָּאָרוּ (DSS)	not a verb qal, pft., 3cp	“like a lion” “they pierced”
Ps 56:7 (57:6)	ὄρυξαν	“they have dug”	כָּרוּ	qal, pft., 3cp	“they dug”
Jer 2:13	ὄρυξαν	“they have hewn out”	לְחַצֵּב	qal inf. const.	“they have hewn out”

Again, this reading has two problems. The first is the difficulty of making sense of “like a lion my hands and my feet.” As Craigie previously noted, this MT reading “presents numerous problems and can scarcely be correct.”²² Strawn prefers this reading, but says that it “would only make sense if a verb has dropped out.”²³ Yet there is no evidence for this in the oldest existing Greek or Hebrew manuscripts.²⁴ Second, we have the witnesses of the LXX, some Syriac texts, and the Vulgate, which all use “they have pierced” here. Thus, the original Hebrew likely read “pierced.”

b. כָּרָה—“he has dug.” This verb is used 14 times in the Masoretic Hebrew Bible. In most cases, the verb is used for digging something: a well (Gen 26:25, Num 21:18), a grave (Gen 50:5; 2 Chr 16:14, hewing out of stone), or, most often, a pit (Exod 21:33; Job 6:27; Ps 7:15; 57:6; 94:13; 119:85; Prov 26:27; Jer 18:20, 22). Other uses include Ps 40:6, referring to opening ears and Prov 16:27 for digging up (plotting) evil. Each of these cases does involve the concept of digging or opening. The NET Bible states that “if one were to insist on an emendation of כָּאָרִי . . . to a verb, the most likely verbal root would be כָּרָה (‘dig’; see the LXX).”²⁵ This verb best fits the Greek word ὄρυξαν. In fact, many of these verses use a variant of ὄρυξαν in the LXX, as above. This is compelling data.

²² Craigie, *Psalms 1–50* 196.

²³ Brent A. Strawn, “Psalm 22:17b: More Guessing,” *JBL* 119 (2000) 445.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 448, n. 41.

²⁵ *NET Bible* 878.

The meaning of the Hebrew word here aligns well with the primary meaning of the Greek word used in the LXX, and with the Vulgate. Like any Hebrew verb, כָּרַה will take several different lexical forms. The expected form of כָּרַה here would correspond to “they-have-dug,” which is *qal* stem, perfect tense, 3rd common plural. This would take the form כָּרוּ, a form that occurs four times in the Masoretic Hebrew Scriptures: Ps 57:7 (57:6 in English Bibles), Ps 119:85, Jer 18:20 and 22. In one of these passages, Ps 57:7, the corresponding Greek word in the LXX is ὤρυσαν, the very same Greek word, in the same lexical form used in Ps 22:16. The textual changes needed to get from כָּארי to the form כָּרו are dropping the *aleph* (א) and converting the *yod* (י) to a *vav* (ו).

Two factors make this comparison even more probable. First, ancient Hebrew sometimes had a fuller (*plene*) spelling than what exists in today's Hebrew text. This included adding alephs (א) to assist in vocalization, before the vowel pointing system. Second, the *yod* (י) and *vav* (ו) resemble each other in the proto-modern Hebrew scripts used when the LXX translators were doing their work. It would thus be easy to confuse one with the other. So we may be looking merely at the difference between כָּארי and כָּארו. These two forms are so close that scribal error could very easily account for the discrepancy.

By Jesus' time, “the transition . . . to the square letters which are used in existing Hebrew MSS and in the printed Bibles must have been practically complete.”²⁶ In fact, Swete notes that the change to the modern script “had begun in the MSS employed by the Alexandrian translators” of the LXX, shown by how “they repeatedly confuse letters which are similar in the square character but not in the archaic.”²⁷ Driver notes that the Hebrew “alphabet of the MSS. was a transitional one, in which ו and י, כ and מ, ה and ח, ט and ס, as well as ב and כ, ד and ר, were . . . difficult to distinguish.”²⁸ Driver's list of these phenomena includes our “Ps xxi. (xxii.) 17 ὤρυσαν (כָּארו, for כָּארי).”²⁹

c. כָּרַה—“shriveled, shrunken.” This is identical in appearance to the verb “to dig” that we just reviewed. Craigie discusses this as a possibility, based on later Akkadian and some Syriac readings.³⁰ The NRSV uses this reading. In addition, the NAB's “so wasted are my hands and feet” may derive from this. The textual changes to get from כָּארי (“like-a-lion”) to כָּארו (“they-have-dug”) above apply here as well, yielding “they-have-shriveled.” However, we are then moving away from the witness of the LXX, Vulgate, and Syriac. In addition, this root form does not otherwise appear in the Hebrew Bible.

d. כָּרו—“pierced, bored.” Craigie notes this option as support for the “they have pierced” reading. This preserves the alignment with the LXX's ὤρυσαν, as does כָּרַה. However, this verb does not otherwise appear in the Hebrew Bible.

²⁶ Henry Barclay Swete, *Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1914; repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1989) 320.

²⁷ *Ibid.* 321.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Craigie, *Psalms 1–50* 196.

e. אָרָה—“to pluck, pick clean,” prefixed by כ. Craigie notes this option, citing Dahood’s and Tournay’s extensive coverage of this idea.³¹ This verb does not occur elsewhere in the OT. The Good News’s rendering, “they tear at my hands and feet,” may utilize this emendation.

f. כָּלוּ—“to be exhausted,” transformed to כָּרוּ. The original verb “is a form of כָּלָה (3 plur. perf.),” which nuances into “to be exhausted.” Craigie adopts this, noting the interchange between ל and ר in Hebrew. Under this theory, today’s Masoretic כָּאָרוּ was originally כָּלוּ.

g. כָּרַךְ—“to be bound.” Symmachus’s Greek translation here reads “bind,” likely based on “a verbal root כָּרַךְ, which is attested in later Hebrew and Aramaic and means ‘to encircle, entwine, embrace.’”³² Strawn notes Kaltner’s Arabic evidence that כָּאָרוּ could mean “to bind.”³³ The Jerusalem Bible reads “they tie me hand and foot,” while the REB reads “they have bound me hand and foot.”

3. *The 5/6HevPsalms Scroll.* The deciphering of the contents of the 5/6HevPsalms Scroll has changed the tenor of all future discussions of the Hebrew text underlying Ps 22:16. This scroll is part of a collection of five that was first discovered in 1951 or 1952 by Bedouins at Nahal Hever in Israel.³⁴ Scholars did not examine this scroll until the mid-1990s. It is one of three Psalms scrolls found outside the Qumran (Dead Sea) area.³⁵ This scroll is written in a Herodian bookhand dating between AD 50 and 68.³⁶ Flint believes that the scroll originally contained all 150 psalms known in today’s Bible,³⁷ but only portions from Psalms 7–18, 22–25, and 28–31 survive today.³⁸ This Psalms scroll has “very few variant readings against \mathfrak{M}^L [Leningrad Codex] as in BHS.”³⁹ In fact, Flint notes that “because of its close textual affinity with \mathfrak{M}^L and its stichometric structure, the missing portions of 5/6HevPsalms may be reconstructed with a high degree of confidence.”⁴⁰

This scroll’s surviving text relevant to our discussion is found in col. XI, which contains Ps 22:4–9, 15–21. First, we show the text from the Leningrad Codex (BHS), the leading Masoretic text. Then follows the Nahal Hever scroll’s text. Brackets indicate missing text. (To facilitate comparisons, we have removed the pointing from the Masoretic text and highlighted the variants in a larger font.)

Masoretic Heb: כִּי סִבּוּנוֹי כְּלָבִים עֵדַת מְרַעִים הִקִּיפוּנִי כֹאֲרֵי יָדַי וְרַגְלֵי

5/6HevPsalms: כִּי סִבּוּנוֹי כְּלָבִים] עֵדַת מְרַעִים הִקִּיפוּנִי כֹאֲרוֹ יְדֵיהֶם וְרַגְלֵיהֶם

³¹ Ibid.

³² *NET Bible* 878.

³³ Strawn, “Psalm 22:17b” 440.

³⁴ Peter Flint, “Biblical Scrolls from Nahal Hever and ‘Wadi Seiyal’: Introduction,” in James Charlesworth *et al.*, *Miscellaneous Texts From the Judaean Desert, Discoveries in the Judaean Desert, Vol. XXXVIII* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000) 133.

³⁵ Flint, “5/6HevPsalms,” *DJD* XXXVIII, 141.

³⁶ Ibid. 143.

³⁷ Ibid. 142.

³⁸ Ibid. 145.

³⁹ Ibid. 144.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 145.

The Naḥal Ḥever scroll reads כִּאֲרוֹ, which is in precise agreement with emendation 2 (and 3) above. Thus, the support for this reading, translated “they have dug” or “gouged” or “pierced,” is not only reinforced by the Septuagintal reading, but by the oldest extant Hebrew manuscript as well.

4. *Confirmation of the Septuagint.* We have already discussed some of the readings from the Septuagint relative to “digging” in emendations 2.a and 2.b above. Now we will show that the Septuagint overwhelmingly corroborates and strengthens the כִּאֲרוֹ reading from 5/6HevPsalms.

Let us examine the correspondence between the Hebrew and Greek words for each occurrence of ὄρυξεν in the Hebrew Bible. In Table 2, we have the eleven occurrences of the Greek verb ὄρυξεν, as found in Ps 21:17, to see what the corresponding Hebrew words are. כִּאֲרוֹ is one of three Hebrew verbs the LXX translates with ὄρυξεν (text citations in bold). The other two verbs are חָפַר and חָצַב. The lexical form of the verb ὄρυξεν is ὀρύσσω and occurs 24 other times in the LXX in various forms. The additional Hebrew words that ὀρύσσω translates are: גָּרָה (“stir up”), פָּתַח (“open, engrave”), נָקַר (“dig”) and חָתַר (“bore, dig”). We make our point stronger by reversing this, looking in Table 3 at all 14 occurrences of the Hebrew verb כָּרַה in the Hebrew Masoretic text (excluding Ps 22:16). In 9 of the 10 instances where the LXX translators correctly translated the meaning of digging, they used some form of ὀρύσσω. ὀρύσσω does translate other Hebrew verbs besides כָּרַה. However, nearly every time the LXX properly translates כָּרַה in the Hebrew, it is with a form of ὀρύσσω. The linkage between כָּרַה and ὀρύσσω is thus considerably strengthened.

When we look at Table 2 we can see how out of place, in relation to ὄρυξεν, כִּאֲרוֹ is in Ps 22:16. It is the only “non-verb” in the lot. If the other 28 occurrences of ὀρύσσω in the LXX translate a Hebrew verb, we should expect one in Ps 22:16 as well. Which Hebrew verb is most likely? Of the six Hebrew verb synonyms that mean “dug” (כִּאֲרוֹ, חָפַר, חָצַב, פָּתַח, נָקַר, and חָתַר), we see that only כִּאֲרוֹ resembles the reading of כִּאֲרִי, “like a lion,” in the Masoretic text. This Hebrew *Vorlage*, then, must have read כִּאֲרוֹ, just as does the “5/6HevPsalms” scroll.

Individually, the data from the LXX and from the Naḥal Ḥever scroll are compelling. With only the Psalm scroll data reading כִּאֲרוֹ, we can still argue for “binding” and “shrinking,” rather than “piercing.” With only the LXX’s ὄρυξεν reading, we can argue that the Hebrew verb it represents could be one of the other five Hebrew synonyms for “piercing.” Together, however, they are virtually conclusive. This textual evidence strongly supports the conclusion that “they have pierced,” not “like a lion,” was the reading of the Hebrew manuscript used by the LXX translator. Only a very early textual corruption, a mistaken reading based on the similarity of the *yod* and *waw*, or intentional revision by the LXX translator could modify this conclusion.

V. HERMENEUTICAL USAGE

This textual discovery is so new that it is not yet seriously considered in scholarly discourses on Ps 22:16. The only reading of “they have pierced my

Table 3. All Occurrences of כָּרַח in the Masoretic Hebrew Bible

<i>Text</i>	<i>Heb MT Verb</i>	<i>Parsing</i>	<i>Translation</i>	<i>Greek LXX Verb</i>	<i>Parsing</i>	<i>Brenton Translation</i>
Gen 50:5	כָּרַחְתִּי	qal pft. 1cs	"I dug"	ὄρυξα	aor. act. in 1s	"I dug"
Ps 40:6	כָּרַחְתָּ	qal pft. 2ms	"you have opened"	κατηρτίσω	aor. md. in 2s	"you have prepared"
Ps 7:15	כָּרַח	qal pft. 3ms	"he has dug"	ὄρυξεν	aor. act. in 3s	"he has dug"
2 Chr 16:14	כָּרַח	qal pft. 3ms	"he had hewn"	ὄρυξεν	aor. act. in 3s	"he had dug"
Jer 18:20	כָּרוּ	qal pft. 3cp	"they have dug"	συνελάλησαν	aor. act. in 3p	"they have spoken"
Jer 18:22	כָּרוּ	qal pft. 3cp	"they have dug"	ἐνεχείρησαν	aor. act. in 3p	"they have formed"
Ps 57:6 (56:7)	כָּרוּ	qal pft. 3cp	"they dug"	ὄρυξαν	aor. act. in 3p	"they dug"
Ps 119:85	כָּרוּ	qal pft. 3cp	"they have dug"	διηγήσαντό	aor. md. in 3p	"they told"
Num 21:18	כָּרוּהָ	qal pft. 3cp + 3ms sfx	"they dug it"	ὄρυξαν	aor. act. in 3p	"they dug"
Prov 16:27	כָּרַח	qal ptcp. ms	"he digs"	ὀρύσσει	pr. act. ind 3s	"he digs up"
Prov 26:27	כָּרַח	qal ptcp. ms	"he who digs"	ὀρύσσων	pr. act. nom ptcp. 3s	"he that digs"
Exod 21:33	יִכְרֶה	qal imp. 3ms	"he digs"	λατομήσῃ	aor. act. sb 3s	"he digs"
Gen 26:25	וַיִּכְרוּ	qal wc pft. 3mp	"they dug"	ὄρυξαν	aor. act. in 3p	"they dug"
Ps 94:13	יִכְרֶה	nip imp. 3ms	"he is dug"	ὀρυγῆ	aor. psv. ind 3s	"he is digged"

hands and my feet" to result from this textual confirmation appeared in print in 1999 in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*, translated by Abegg, Flint, and Ulrich. In 2000, Strawn noted that "this fragment has not yet been formally published and the picture of it . . . in facsimile editions . . . is so faint as to be unreadable."⁴¹ He further notes that "ו" and ן are quite similar, though generally distinguishable in this manuscript."⁴² The first observation was quickly outdated, with the appearance of volume 38 in Oxford's *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* series, also published in 2000. Flint, the text's editor,

⁴¹ Strawn, "Psalm 22:17b" 448, n. 41.

⁴² *Ibid.*

had access to the original scroll and was thus able to definitively distinguish the proper reading of כָּאָרוּ in this passage.

Thus, the scholarly emendations other than כָּאָרוּ considered by Dahood (1966), Craigie (1983), and other scholars are now largely muted, perhaps even rendered obsolete. The NET Bible's (2001, 2003) extensive notes are the most recent writings on this subject, but show no awareness of this find.

What responses may we expect, as scholars digest the import of this discovery? Abegg and Flint realized the significance of this find immediately upon discovering it.⁴³ The textual issues of Ps 22:16 are famous in scholarly circles. Some will maintain that "like a lion" is the original reading. Since Christianity existed for at least 20 years before the 5/6HevPsalms scroll was copied in AD 50–68, some may suggest that its "piercing" reading is a Christian contamination. On the other hand, we have strong pre-Christian Septuagintal support for "pierced" here, as detailed above. The LXX helps us evaluate which hermeneutical view is best supported by the ancient Hebrew and Greek texts.

Accepting or rejecting the reading "they have pierced my hands and my feet" does not change the basic hermeneutic of Psalm 22 as applying to Christ's crucifixion. Reading "they have pierced" or "gouged" here merely strengthens the connection to Christ's passion already present. Rejecting this reading forces one to accept one of a bewildering array of alternate readings and emendations. This rejection also entails discounting the oldest Hebrew witness of this text. We also must then disregard the close affinity this reading shares with the Septuagint, Jerome's Vulgate translation, and the Syriac. No responsible scholar can ignore this evidence. With the new evidence from Naḥal Ḥever, concluding that Ps 22:16 originally read "they have pierced my hands and my feet" is virtually inescapable.

Once we accept the reading "they have pierced my hands and my feet" in Ps 22:16, intriguing new possibilities present themselves. Perhaps John alluded to Ps 22:16. John does not often quote directly from the OT. In fact, John's gospel has fewer OT quotes than any other gospel: 14.⁴⁴ Contrast this with 60 quotes in Matthew,⁴⁵ 31 in Mark,⁴⁶ and 30 in Luke.⁴⁷ No, John prefers subtle "soft quotes." Revelation contains hundreds of allusions to the OT, but only 8 direct quotes.⁴⁸

We have seen John's emphasis on Jesus' being pierced when he quotes Zech 12:10 in John 19:37. He again stresses this in Rev 1:7 with "every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him." Rev 1:7 also alludes to Zech 12:10. John fleshes out Thomas's unbelief regarding Jesus' wounds in John 20:25–27. Indeed, John takes pains to point out that Jesus knew in advance what

⁴³ Discussions with Martin Abegg on 18 Aug. 2000, BAS Seminar, Franciscan Renewal Center, Portland, OR.

⁴⁴ Archer and Chirichigno, *OT Quotations in the NT*, xx.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* xix.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* xix–xx.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* xx.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* xxii.

form of death he would suffer (John 18:32). Jesus' piercing is integral to John's hermeneutic.

VI. THEOLOGICAL USAGE

The connections between Psalm 22 and Jesus' crucifixion are well established without Ps 22:16. Rather, what we see when we restore the "pierced" reading is a deeper exploration of the ore of spiritual truth waiting for today's readers of the OT to apply to a proper understanding of the NT.

If NT authors did not utilize Ps 22:16, an important point is illustrated. The OT is so full, so rich with clarifications regarding the Messiah's ministry that the NT is too small to use them all. This empowers us to continue extracting OT riches when seeking to better understand the mission of Jesus Christ. Even those who are reluctant to glean such data from OT chapters not used by NT authors will recognize how deep and rich is the vein in Psalm 22. Psalm 22 is quoted all over the NT. These quotations allow even the most cautious reader to connect this to Calvary.

In Ps 22:16, we see a prophecy regarding the nature of Jesus' death that was penned centuries before the event took place. Imagine the impact on apostolic-era Jewish and Christian theological understandings. Crucifixion was the most shameful death possible. Even though such a practice did not exist in David's day, he penned these words under God's inspiration to strengthen the Jewish understanding that their Messiah would suffer. Because they did not properly understand Psalm 22, Psalm 69, Isaiah 53, and several other chapters, Jews were looking for a Messiah who would bring temporal honor and military victory from oppression. In fairness, there are many passages that speak of a conquering Messiah. But the Jews were unwilling to accept Jesus as a suffering Messiah.

Theology means "a knowledge of God." Jesus was, is, and always will be God. In his "Complete Jewish Bible," Stern notes that ancient versions "such as the Greek Septuagint" can "infer the existence of alternative underlying Hebrew texts, vowel pointing or punctuation."⁴⁹ He cites Ps 22:16 as the prime example of this. Though he renders the text "like a lion [at] my hands and feet" in faithfulness to the Masoretic text, he also includes Ps 22:16 in a list of OT prophecies fulfilled in the NT.⁵⁰ He notes that few textual differences "are as important for Messianic understanding of the Bible."⁵¹

We have not yet linked Ps 22:16 with Isa 53:5. It reads, "he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed" (NIV). Now, the piercing of Ps 22:16 connects to the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 in general, which links Jesus' suffering and death (Isa 53:8-9) and resur-

⁴⁹ David H. Stern, *Complete Jewish Bible: An English Version of the Tanakh (Old Testament) and B'rit Hadashah (New Testament)* (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1998) xxx.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* xlvi.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* xxx.

rection (Isa 53:11: "he shall see light" is a Hebrew euphemism for living). Most scholars, Jewish and Christian, see the servant of Isaiah 53 as vicariously suffering for others' sins. We see this in verse 5 above. In both chapters, the sufferer is despised by humans (Ps 22:7–11 and Isa 53:3) and forsaken by God (Ps 22:1 and Isa 53:10).

For Christians today, correctly reading Ps 22:16 will not alter our theology. Rather, it reinforces the theology we already understand, that Jesus accomplished our salvation by suffering the most barbaric form of execution. This detail was mercifully provided in advance in our verse, for Jesus, for Jews and Christians throughout history, for everyone. Jesus surely read this text and understood his future. Early Christians, Jew and Gentile, understood this verse to confirm and strengthen their faith that someone who died so shamefully actually was the world's deliverer. Today we read this and realize the depths of God's love and his plan thousands of years in advance to save his erring children.