

LAST WORDS OF JESUS

"Secondo le Scritture", Brescia 1972 p. 63.

Agua PŽrez, Agust'n. 1985. "El m'etodo midr'asico y la ex'egesis del Nuevo Testamento". Vol. 4, Biblioteca Midr'asica. Valencia p. 133 ss.

Daniel Rian~o Rupilanchas

From: <peterry@megalink.net>

Date: Sun Mar 31, 2002 2:50 am

Subject: [bbst] Last words of Jesus on the cross

[ptyz](#)

 Offline

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Dear friends:

I just opened an email from another list and simply had to share it with you immediately. It records the words of 'Abdu'l-Baha about the experience of Jesus on the cross and His last words:

"An Interview with 'Abdu'l-Bahá," by Mary Hanford Ford, Star of the West Vol. 24, p. 105:

"UPON MY arrival in 'Akka my mind was filled with pain caused by the vivid description I had heard in Paris of another terrible martyrdom of Baha'is that had occurred in Persia. These martyrdoms continued from the period of the Bab's Declaration until the advent of the present Shah of Persia, who put an end to all religious persecutions.

"The description of these particular atrocities was so detailed that finally I could bear no more and cried out my protest, exclaiming "but don't you realize that the martyrs are in a state of bliss from the moment the torture begins, and feel none of the pain inflicted upon them."

"Where upon the assembled company turned upon me in deep disgust, and reproached me severely saying: "How dare you say such things! You are taking away all the glory of martyrdom!"

"I remained abashed but not convinced, and felt that I must ask 'Abdu'l Baha for the settlement of this disturbing question, but I never asked it. The first morning that He came into my little room He did not sit down, but walked back and forth in the narrow space and presently remarked, while I listened with awe, 'There are many kinds of martyrdom. How many times have I prayed for it, but instead of that I have lived on in prison as if with the sword of Damocles suspended by a hair over my head! Each morning as I waken I feel that before the day ends I may be dragged to the public square and shot to death. But nevertheless I have been very happy in this long martyrdom, for no victim

suffers from the cruelties inflicted upon him. The instant the torture begins he is in a state of bliss, and feels nothing but the joy of Heaven which surrounds him.'

"He paused, looking out through the wide windows at the blue Mediterranean, the view of which beyond the huge walls seemed to eliminate their imprisoning power. Then he added, 'So Christ never suffered upon the cross. From the time the crucifixion began His soul was in Heaven and He felt nothing but the Divine Presence. He did not say, speaking in Aramaic: "O God; O God why hast Thou forsaken me?" But this word Sabacthani is similar in sound to another which means glorify, and he actually murmured, "O God! O God! How thou dost glorify me."'"

From: "David Friedman" <david_friedman1844@...>

Date: Mon Apr 15, 2002 8:13 am

Subject: Re: [bbst] Last words of Jesus on the cross

[david_friedm...](#)

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Dear Peter,

>"He paused, looking out through the wide windows at the
>blue Mediterranean, the view of which beyond the huge walls
>seemed to eliminate their imprisoning power. Then he added,
>'So Christ never suffered upon the cross. From the time the
>crucifixion began His soul was in Heaven and He felt
>nothing but the Divine Presence. He did not say, speaking
>in Aramaic: "O God; O God why hast Thou forsaken me?" But
>this word Sabacthani is similar in sound to another which
>means glorify, and he actually murmured, "O God! O God! How
>thou dost glorify me."'"

I'm going to assume that 'Abdu'l-Baha said this, and that He expected His audience to accept His apparent meaning. I know that there is a passage in the Writings of Baha'u'llah that touches on this very saying in the Bible. I'm sure someone here has the original source. In this passage Baha'u'llah refers to the saying as though historical, and says that even Manifestations have human moments of anguish. This would, of course, contradict with the explanation here. I would suggest that 'Abdu'l-Baha would often give an explanation that He felt suited the occasion, not necessarily reliable historically. Since the passage from Baha'u'llah says something different it should be given precedence, though you then get into the issue of whether Baha'u'llah is assuming historicity just because it was the easiest thing to do or not. If 'Abdu'l-Baha is correct this would mean that the Bible is wrong. Mark 15:34 and

Matthew

27:46 say that Jesus loudly cried out the words, which is hardly the same as murmuring the words. If Jesus cried out then He can hardly have been misheard.

'Abdu'l-Baha's explanation would apparently require the last words of Jesus to have been heard by Roman(s) who then transmitted the information to Christians.

Historically speaking, none of the last words of Jesus reported in the Gospels

are defensible. The words in Mark and Matthew are taken from a Psalm used to

form the Passion narrative. The words in Luke are different, from another

Psalm. John has different words yet. Who would have heard these words? Were

any followers of Jesus close to Him, and if not, would the Romans have passed on the information?

Regards,

David

From: "MATTHEW MENGE" <MSPMENGE@...>

Date: Mon Apr 15, 2002 11:53 pm

Subject: Re: [bbst] Last words of Jesus on the cross

MSPMENGE@...

[Send Email](#)

>I'm going to assume that 'Abdu'l-Baha said this, and that He expected His

audience to >accept His apparent meaning. I know that there is a passage in the

Writings of >Baha'u'llah that touches on this very saying in the Bible. I'm

sure someone here has >the original source. In this passage Baha'u'llah refers

to the saying as though >historical, and says that even Manifestations have

human moments of anguish.

I have heard stories of Shoghi Effendi that said he had brief flashes of insight

accompanied by periods of infinite suffering in between. I had always assumed

that the same is true of the Manifestations, that their happiness comes in

periodic pulsations. Although these pulsations are not usually related to

material comfort, they are pulsations nonetheless.

Best Regards,

Matt

.....

http://qumran.com/Refuting_Christianity/psalm_22.htm

From: ☺"Steve"

Date: Wed Sep 10, 2003 7:29 am

Subject: Does Psalms 22 Describe the Crucifixion Scenario?

Does Psalms 22 Describe the Crucifixion Scenario?

I. Introduction

A casual reading of Psalms 22, either in the Hebrew or in an accurate translation from the Hebrew, is not likely to raise many eyebrows or draw much attention as having some special and unique significance to Christianity. It is only when reading a Christian rendering, such as that in the King James Version (KJV), that one begins to see why Christians commonly refer to this psalm as the Crucifixion Psalm.

This, in and of itself, is of no consequence to Judaism per se. However, when Christian missionaries attempt to use this psalm to evangelize Jews and claim this to be a prophetic work that foretells the death on the cross of Jesus, a response, in terms of a clear and accurate Jewish perspective, is required.

In this tract the Christian perspective on Psalms 22 is contrasted with the Jewish perspective by analyzing the Hebrew text of several key verses. This analysis will demonstrate that, when read and interpreted in the correct context, this psalm describes a historic account rather than the messianic prophecy that is claimed by Christian apologists and missionaries.

II. Review and Comparison of English Translations of Psalms 22

Table II-1 contains verse-by-verse English renditions of Psalms 22 - the KJV translation on the left, and a Jewish translation on the right. Note that the respective verse numbers are out of synchronization since, in Christian Bibles, the introductory verse, the superscription, is not numbered separately as a verse. Consequently, the notation of verse numbers will indicate the verse number in the Hebrew Bible followed by the corresponding verse number in Christian Bible enclosed in square brackets. The KJV rendition also shows references to several key passages in the New Testament, where the respective portions of this psalm are cross-referenced. These references were taken from the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

Table II-1 - English translations of Psalms 22

Psalms 22

vs.

King James Version

vs.

Jewish Translation from Hebrew

1

[To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David.] My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? [why art thou so] far from helping me, [and from] the words of my roaring?(1)

1

For the conductor, on the Ayeleth HaShakhar, a Psalm of David.

2

My G-d, my G-d, why have You forsaken me? [You are] so far from my salvation, from the words of my loud moaning?

2

O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

3

My G-d, I call out in the daytime, and You do not reply; and at night I do not keep silent.

3

But thou [art] holy, [O thou] that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

4

But You are holy, You await the praises of Israel.

4

Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

5

Our ancestors trusted in You; they trusted, and You rescued them.

5

They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

6

They cried out to You, and they escaped; they trusted in You, and they were not shamed.

6

But I [am] a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

7

But I am a worm, and not a man; a reproach of man and despised by the people.

7

All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, [saying],

8

All those who see me will mock me; they will open their lip, they will shake their head, [saying],

8

He trusted on the LORD [that] he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

9

He should cast his trust upon the L-rd so that He will rescue him; He will save him because he delights in Him.

9

But thou [art] he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope [when I was] upon my mother's breasts.

10

For You took me out of the womb; You made me secure upon my mother's breasts.

10

I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou [art] my God from my mother's belly.

11

Upon You, I was cast from the womb; from my mother's belly, You are my G-d.

11

Be not far from me; for trouble [is] near; for [there is] none to help.

12

Do not distance Yourself from me, for distress is near; for there is none to help.

12

Many bulls have compassed me: strong [bulls] of Bashan have beset me round.

13

Great bulls have surrounded me; the mighty ones of Bashan surrounded me.

13

They gaped upon me [with] their mouths, [as] a ravening and a roaring lion.

14

They opened wide their mouths at me, [like] a ravening and a roaring lion.

14

I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

15

I was spilled like water, and all my bones were separated; my heart was like wax, melting within my innards.

15

My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

16

My strength became dried out like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my palate; and You set me down in the dust of death.

16

For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

17

For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers encompassed me; like a lion [they are at] my hands and my feet.

17

I may tell all my bones: they look [and] stare upon me.

18

I can count all my bones. They look and stare at me.

18

They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture. (2)

19

They divide my garments among themselves, and cast lots for my raiment.

19

But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.

20

But You, O L-rd, do not distance Yourself; my strength, hasten to my help.

20

Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

21

Save my soul from the sword; my only one from the grip of the dog.

21

Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

22

Save me from the lion's mouth; for You have answered my call from the horns of the wild oxen.

22

I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. (3)

23

I will declare Your Name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation will I praise You.

23

Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.

24

You who fear the L-rd, praise Him; all the seed of Jacob, honor Him; and fear Him, all the seed of Israel.

24

For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried

unto him, he heard.

25

For He has neither despised nor loathed the suffering of the poor; neither has He hidden His countenance from him; and when he cried to Him, He hearkened.

25

My praise [shall be] of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

26

Because of You is my praise in the great congregation; I will pay my vows in the presence of those who fear Him.

26

The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.

27

The humble shall eat and be sated; they shall praise the L-rd, those who seek Him; may your heart live forever!

27

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

28

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the L-rd, and all the families of the nations shall prostrate themselves before You.

28

For the kingdom [is] the LORD'S: and he [is] the governor among the nations.

29

For the kingship is the L-rd's; and He rules over the nations.

29

All [they that be] fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.

30

They shall eat all the best of the earth and prostrate themselves; before him shall kneel all those who descend to the dust, and He will not quicken his soul.

30

A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

31

The seed that worships Him shall be the L-rd's, as told to the next generations.

31

They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done [this].

32

They shall come and declare His righteousness to a newborn people, for He has done [this].

1. Matthew 27:46(KJV) - And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli,

lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou

forsaken me?

Mark 15:34(KJV) - And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama

sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou

forsaken me?

2. Matthew 27:35(KJV) - And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it

might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my

garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.

John 19:23-24(KJV) - (23) Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his

garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also [his]

coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

(24) They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast

lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which

saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did

cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

3. Hebrews 2:12(KJV) - Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the

church will I sing praise unto thee.

III. Christian and Jewish Interpretations of Psalms 22

A. The Christian Interpretation

Only an overview of the Christian perspective is presented here. Standard Christian sources, commentaries by Matthew Henry and Jamieson, Fausset, & Brown, provide more detailed verse-by-verse Christian interpretations of Psalms 22, which are beyond the scope of this essay.

The Church has long regarded Psalms 22 as a prophetic messianic psalm that describes the agony of the Passion (Ps 22:2[1]), the Crucifixion (Ps 22:17[16]), and Resurrection (Ps 22:23[22]) of Jesus, the Messiah of Christianity. These passages are "quoted" in the New Testament as "evidence" of the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies allegedly contained in this psalm. Perhaps the most notable "quote" from this psalm found in the New Testament is its opening verse, one that is used by the authors of the Gospels of Matthew (Mt 27:46) and Mark (Mk 15:34) as the passionate statement of the crucified Jesus and his last words as he was dying on the cross. In the Gospels of Matthew (Mt 27:35) and John (Jn 19:24), verse 19[18] is "quoted" in the "Crucifixion narrative"; while the author of the Book of Hebrews (He 2:12) "quotes" Psalms 22:23[22] to explain why Jesus needed to suffer for humanity.

These passages will be revisited later on in the analysis segment. It is interesting to note that one of the most important verses in this psalm, from the Christian perspective - Psalms 22:17[16], is not cited by any of the New Testament authors. Their silence on this verse may suggest that this verse may have not had the same form as that found in most Christian translations.

B. The Jewish Interpretation

As was done with the Christian perspective, this will be a summary of the Jewish interpretation. A detailed analysis & commentary, on a verse-by-verse basis, is beyond the scope of this presentation.

The Jewish perspective rests in the context as well as on the consistency of the themes described throughout the psalm with the rest of the Hebrew Bible. A reading (in the original Hebrew or in a correct translation) of this psalm reveals that King David is its author and the one speaking throughout as he describes his own pain, anguish, and longing as he remained a fugitive from his enemies - the opening verse explicitly names King David as the author. Consequently, this is a historical psalm rather than a messianic one. The author does not consider himself someone who can provide

salvation, and certainly not one who is divine! Rather, he calls himself a worm (Ps 22:7[6]) whose only salvation can come from G-d.

King David is talking about the powerful empires that have constantly tried to conquer his kingdom Israel and take his mantle of royalty for themselves. He utilizes a series of metaphorical references to what he endured (Ps 22:12-22[11-21]); this is similar to Isaiah's use of a series of metaphorical references to what King Hezekiah experienced during his illness (Is 38:12-14). King David consistently uses an animal motif to describe his adversaries - notice the repeated references to the lion, dogs, and bulls/bison. Such metaphors are not unique to this psalm, and similar metaphors are used by King David on many other occasions (e.g., Ps 17:11,12, 35:17, 59:2-7,15).

The overall theme of Psalms 22 - the entire psalm - is the plight of the Jew who, speaking as an individual, prays for an end to Israel's long exile from its land and Temple.

IV. The Christian Perspective on Psalms 22 vis-à-vis the Hebrew Text

A comparison of the Christian and Jewish perspectives on Psalms 22 makes it quite evident that both cannot be valid simultaneously. The question is, "Which of the two is the one that is consistent with the Hebrew Scriptures (and history)?"

Let us start our investigation by considering the verses being "quoted" in the New Testament. The respective renditions of each verse are taken from the complete psalm given in Sec. II above, and are augmented by the corresponding Hebrew text.

A. Psalms 22:2[1]

vs.

King James Version

vs.

Jewish Translation from Hebrew

Hebrew Text

1

[To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David.] My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? [why art thou so] far from

helping me, [and from] the words of my roaring?

1

For the conductor, on the Ayeleth HaShakhar, a Psalm of David.

2

My G-d, my G-d, why have You forsaken me? [You are] so far from my salvation, from the words of my loud moaning?

As noted, this verse is cited in both the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark as follows:

Matthew 27:46(KJV) - And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Mark 15:34(KJV) - And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Now, let us compare these two verses - first against each other and, then, against the Hebrew text, and finally also against the context of the complete verse.

The variations between the two Gospels' renditions are rather minor, with perhaps - Eli vs. Eloi - showing the most variance. This is, however, only a superficial problem since,

§ some of the old manuscripts have either Eli or Eloi or a mix in both sources and,

§ this is a transliterated word from the Hebrew (or Aramaic), and transliteration is not an exact science.

Now, let us compare the transliterated phrase in these two citations - "... Eli/Eloi, Eli/Eloi, lama sabachthani ..." with the Hebrew text. The Hebrew text reads, (Eli, Eli, lama azavtani). The question here

is, "Does sabachtani have the same meaning as (azavtani)?" The root of (azavtani) is (azav), [he] abandoned/forsook/left. However, the word sabachtani exists neither in Hebrew nor in Aramaic. There are two possibilities here:

§ The closest Hebrew/Aramaic term to sabachtani would be (zevakhtani), which is not used in the Hebrew Bible, the root of which is (zavakh), [he] sacrificed/slaughtered [a sacrificial animal], which would render this phrase as My G-d, My G-d, why have you slaughtered me?. Clearly, the two terms and, therefore, the phrases, are not equivalent. So, one could speculate that the usage of sabachtani in the two Gospels had the intent of portraying the scene of the Passion as a sacrificial offering.

§ The Targum Yonathan (one of several ancient translations of the Hebrew Bible into the Aramaic vernacular) has (Eli, Eli, metul mah shevaqtani). (metul mah) is probably interchangeable with (lama), why. (shevaqtani) comes from the Aramaic root verb (shevaq), [he] left/forsook. Now, since Greek does not have the sh sound, the Hebrew/Aramaic (shin) is usually transliterated as s. Moreover, the use of ch for the (qof) is possible, since Greek had lost the actual alphabetic cognate for the (qof) - the koppa, not the K (kappa) - centuries earlier, and the letter C (chi) was used here instead.

Within this perspective, then, one could conclude that, even though the Greek original may not be precise or consistent in its transliterated form of Aramaic, the Aramaic (shevaqtani) became sabachtani when transliterated in the Greek text.

When one accepts the latter perspective, the conclusion drawn from the former view does not necessarily survive.

But placing this verse into the mouth of a dying Jesus creates more theological difficulties for the Christian perspective. For example, we find in the Psalms the following statement by King David:

Ps 37:25(KJV) - I have been young, and [now] am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

This would then imply that, since Jesus complained to G-d about being forsaken, he was not righteous, i.e., he was not without sin.

Yet another problem is the conflict between this verse, which indicates that Jesus had things to say during the Passion, and the common claim by Christian apologists and missionaries that, according to Isaiah 53, in which the Suffering Servant is alleged to be Jesus, Jesus was silent:

Is 53:7(KJV) - He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

Some additional questions that demand answers here would be:

§ Why would Jesus, whom Christianity considers part of its godhead, be complaining that " ... G-d is so far from helping me?"

§ How could G-d (the Father), the first person of the Trinity, not hear the cries of G-d (the Son), the second Person of the Trinity?

§ To whom is this god complaining?

§ How can G-d not understand his own predicament?

Finally, even the four Gospels do not agree on the last words of the dying Jesus on the cross. We have already seen above the quotes from the Gospels of Matthew and Mark. Here are the corresponding quotes from the Gospels of Luke and John:

Luke 23:46 - And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

John 19:30 - When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

In summary, as has been demonstrated above, attributing this verse to the dying Jesus on the cross is problematic in many respects, to say the least.

What is the correct context of this verse? The speaker, King David, is bemoaning that G-d is not listening to him day and night, and questions his feelings of abandonment when enumerating the times that G-d had listened and intervened for his ancestors.

Psalms 22:19[18]

vs.

King James Version

vs.

Jewish Translation from Hebrew

Hebrew Text

18

They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

19

They divide my garments among themselves, and cast lots for my raiment.

According to the Gospel of John, this verse contains a prophecy that was fulfilled when Jesus was on the cross.

John 19:23-24 - (23) Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also [his] coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. (24) They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did.

Now, how is the verse viewed within the context of the Hebrew Bible? Looking at the previous verse, Psalms 22:18[17], it is evident that the person whose clothes are being divided takes count of his bones while those who are taking his garments look on and gloat. Clearly, this man is starving - so skinny that his bones can be seen and

counted. This is still King David speaking, as he does throughout the psalm, and uses the taking and dividing of his garments as a metaphorical reference to the desires of his enemies to take away his mantle of royalty and make it theirs.

Psalms 22:23[22]

vs.

King James Version

vs.

Jewish Translation from Hebrew

Hebrew Text

22

I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

23

I will declare Your Name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation will I praise You.

This verse is "quoted" by the author of Hebrews 2:12 in order to explain why Jesus needed to suffer for humanity. However, recall that the one who speaks here is the same person who speaks throughout the psalm, including Psalms 22:7[6], where he calls himself a worm. Is Jesus calling himself a worm? Yet, we find the worm reference elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (KJV rendition given here to eliminate a possible claim of tampering):

Isaiah 41:14(KJV) - Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

So, the Jewish people are likened to a worm, and the comparison here indicates that David was writing about the plight of the Jew - he was writing about his own people.

The theme in Psalms 22:23[22], praising G-d's name for being so good and benevolent, is expressed by King David quite often in his other psalms (e.g., Ps 9:3, 54:8, 61:9, 69:31).

Psalms 22:17[16]

vs.

King James Version

vs.

Jewish Translation from Hebrew

Hebrew Text

16

For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

17

For dogs have surrounded me; a band of evildoers encompassed me; like a lion [they are at] my hands and my feet.

This is, perhaps, one of the most frequently "quoted" verses from the Christian Old Testament by Christian apologists and missionaries, who claim that the crucifixion of Jesus was foretold. Yet, as was noted above in the summary of the Christian perspective, this apparently important verse in the Christian apologists' and missionaries' portfolio is never referenced in the New Testament. We will take a close look at this verse, since it serves as a good example of possible revisionism of the Hebrew Bible by the Church.

The key word in this verse, (ka'ari), like a lion, is highlighted. When the two translations above are compared, the major discrepancy occurs at the translation of this term - the typical Jewish translation has like a lion, while the KJV (typical of most Christian translations) renders it they pierced. The question is, "Which rendition is the correct one?"

To help answer this question, it is worthwhile to do a short word study on the Hebrew word (ka'ari), and see how the KJV renders all other instances of it in the Hebrew Bible. For simplicity, let us consider only those instances where the identical form appears, i.e., excluding conjugation of the root noun (ari) in the singular and plural, and combinations with various prepositions other than that which occurs here [the (ka-) here is the Hebrew preposition equivalent to like/as]. There are three other instances of (ka'ari) present in the Hebrew Bible in addition to that found in Psalms 22:17 [16], and all instances are shown in Table IV.D-1 below along with their respective KJV translations. There is also a single instance of the term (vecha'ari), which is the equivalent of (ka'ari) with the preposition (ve-), and, in front of it to make it, and like a lion. This term is included in Table IV.D-1 for completeness since

it contains the original term (ka'ari), though it is not critical for illustrating the point to be made here:

Table IV.D-1 - Comparisons of KJV renditions of (ka'ari) in the Hebrew Bible

Reference
KJV Rendition
Comment

Numbers 23:24
(vecha'ari), and ... as a young lion
Correct

Numbers 24:9
(ka'ari), like a lion
Correct

Isaiah 38:13
(ka'ari), like a lion
Correct

Ezekiel 22:25
(ka'ari), like a lion
Correct

Psalms 22:17[16]
(ka'ari), they pierced
Incorrect

According to the above information, it appears that the KJV translators had some special reason to render the term (ka'ari) at Psalms 22:17[16] differently from the way they translated it in the other cases. The question is: "Why did the KJV translate the Hebrew term (ka'ari) as like a lion in all places except for Psalms 22:17 [16], where they translated it as they pierced?" In order to come up with some answers, let us examine the relevant Hebrew terminology.

The Hebrew word (ari), lion, is related to another Hebrew word for lion, (aryeh). There are several Hebrew verbs used in the Hebrew Bible to describe an act of piercing: (daqar; e.g., Zech 12:10), (khadar; e.g., Ezek 21:19), (naqav; e.g., Hab 3:14), (palakh; e.g., Job 16:13), and (ratza; e.g., Exod 21:6). It does not take any knowledge of Hebrew to recognize that none of these root verbs even remotely resembles the term (ka'ari).

Could there be another linguistic explanation? Two fragments containing this verse, Psalms 22:17[16], were discovered among the

Dead Sea Scrolls (DSS). In the first fragment, 4QPs-f, found at Qumran (known as the Qumran MS), the word in question is not preserved. In the second fragment, HHev/Se 4 (Ps), found at Nahal Hever (known as the Bar Kochba MS), the word is preserved. (It should be noted that the Nahal Hever papyri are dated as late as the 2nd century C.E. according to DSS scholars and researchers; e.g. G. Vermes, *An Introduction to the Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, p. 29.) The fragment HHev/Se 4 (Ps) shows the letters (kaf), (aleph), (resh), and what appears to be a somewhat elongated (yod), which some perceive to be the letter (vav). Thus, the reading of this word would be either (ka'ari) or (ka'aru), respectively. Although the latter of these two renditions of the term has been the focus of much controversy and discussion, it is a fact that no root verb exists which contains the letter (aleph) in it, conjugated in this fashion (3rd-person, plural masculine gender, past tense), with the meaning of they pierced, as most Christian translations render it. Without the letter (aleph), and using for the moment the argument that the last letter [the elongated (yod)] is a (vav), the word would be (karu), for which the Hebrew root verb is (karah), [he] dug [in dirt], as in digging a ditch (e.g., Ps 57:7); in other words, (karu) has the meaning [they] dug [in dirt]. It must also be noted that this verb is never used, either literally or metaphorically, in the context of piercing in any of the 15 instances it appears in the Hebrew Bible.

What could cause such a variation between the two terms - (ka'ari) and (ka'aru), i.e., the letter (yod) being elongated to resemble the letter (vav)? Perhaps the most plausible explanation, considering the linguistic analysis above, is that this discrepancy is simply a case of scribal variation (or error), since the word (ka'aru) does not exist in the Hebrew language.

Another possibility, one that has been alleged by Christian apologists and missionaries, is textual revisionism by the Masorites, who added vowels and melodic trope marks to the Hebrew Bible around the 9th-10th century C.E., i.e., the claim is that the Masorites changed the original (ka'aru) to the current (ka'ari) in order to remove any resemblance to a crucifixion scenario. Given the strict prohibitions in the Hebrew Bible concerning any tampering with its text (e.g., Deut 4:2, Pr 30:6), and the fact that the term (ka'aru) does not exist in the Hebrew language, this is a rather preposterous and unlikely occurrence.

With the above scenario ruled out, another scenario becomes plausible. Given the late dating of the Nahal Hever fragment, the discrepancy could be the result of exactly the reverse of the previous claim. Namely, this could be the result of an attempt by 2nd century C.E. (early) Christians to edit the original (ka'ari) to read (ka'aru) to make it resemble the term (karu), they dug. This would have accomplished the effect of aligning the word with the events of the early 1st century C.E. It is also interesting to note

that in the LXX (the Christian translation into Greek of the Hebrew Bible), where this is Psalms 21:17, the reading is
καρυ (karu),
καρυ (karu),
which stems from κάρω (karō),
to dig,
as in dig a trench.

Liddell & Scott (Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon) do not list a meaning of pierce for this word, and the identical usages occur only in early Christian renditions (Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon of the Greek Testament). This LXX reading could possibly stem from a presumed, though non-existent, Hebrew reading (which makes no sense in context) of (karu) [i.e., without the (aleph) - not the reading (ka'aru)]. As noted above, the Hebrew word (karu) means [they] dug [in dirt], and it is never used in the Hebrew Bible with the context of piercing.

A final clue is found within the New Testament itself. The New Testament authors are silent on Psalms 22:17[16], a verse so central to Christianity in the description of the crucifixion itself. Given its significance to the Church, the question is, "Why is the New Testament silent on this verse?"

One possible answer could be that none of the authors of the four Gospels, all of which provide a narrative of the crucifixion, was familiar with this verse. That answer is not likely, however, since all of them referenced other parts of this psalm. Another possibility could be that none of the authors saw this verse as being significant enough, or even relevant, to their respective crucifixion narratives. But this answer would be inconsistent with the important role this verse has in the Christian perspective. Perhaps the most likely answer is that the common Christian rendition they pierced came after the New Testament was written, i.e., the authors of the New Testament were unaware of this future revision of Psalms 22:17 [16], where the Church attempted to create a better fit with the crucifixion narrative. There was no need to mistranslate the term (ka'ari) in Numbers 23:24, 24:9, Isaiah 38:13, and Ezekiel 22:25, since these passages, unlike Psalms 22:17[16], had no Christological value to the Church - they could not help improve the fit into the Hebrew Bible of any component of Christian theology.

This is a serious charge to make. However, given the hard evidence of tampering by the Church with other passages from the Hebrew Bible, it certainly is a plausible scenario for the disparity between the two renditions of this particular verse.

V. Summary

Given all of the above information, is it possible to derive a plausible explanation for the significant difference between the Jewish and standard Christian perspectives? The linguistic and thematic analyses demonstrate the validity of the Jewish perspective on Psalms 22. The Christian perspective appears to have been created with hindsight, i.e., knowing what the narratives in the New Testament have described, Psalms 22, perhaps enhanced with a little bit of editing, was close enough to be claimed as a template for the prophetic description of the crucifixion that would take place a millennium after these words were recorded.

Whereas the Christian perspective Psalms 22 may be acceptable to Christians, as it is also based on passages from their New Testament, this scenario conflicts with the text of the Hebrew Bible and, therefore, is unacceptable within Judaism.

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Reference is made to the Targum Yonatan, meaning Targum Yonatan ben Uziel, which is also known as Tarum Yerushalmi, which was an Aramaic translation of the Neviim with commentary. It was composed after the Talmud and after the ascent of Islam, so probably between the 8th and 14th centuries of the Common Era. One manuscript in British Library. See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Targum_Pseudo-Jonathan
<http://www.accordancebible.com/about/articles/targ.php>

Targum Onkelos [Unkelos] is the Aramaic translation of the Torah attributed to a convert to Judaism in the 1st century of the Common Era (c. 35-120). According to the Babylonian Talmud, he was a Roman nobleman, nephew of the Caesar Titus, who converted to Judaism as a result of a dream about the afterlife (Gittin 56b). In Avodah Zarah 11a the story is written that three Roman legions were sent to arrest Onkelos, and that he converted all of them to Judaism, so they sent no more legions. Onkelos is said to have composed his targum with interpretation by the Rabbi Eliezer be Hyrcanus. According to the Jerusalem Talmud, another convert to Judaism was named Aquila, and the same stories are told about him. He is said to have translated the Torah into Greek. See: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Onkelos>;
http://www.jewishgates.com/file.asp?File_ID=338
<http://www.accordancebible.com/about/articles/targ.php>

Other Targum in Aramaic is the Targum Neofiti, discovered in the Vatican Library in 1956. See:
<http://www.accordancebible.com/about/articles/targ.php>

Neither Targum Onkelos nor Targum Yerushalmi have translations of Ketuvim, and hence the Psalms were not translated in either of these Targumim. See:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Targum>

Targum of the Psalms has no date but is translated by Edward M. Cook. According to the notes: The text translated is that of Paul de Lagarde in *Hagiographa Chaldaice*. It has been collated with only one other text, the MS published by Luis Diez Merino (Madrid, 1982). See:

http://www.tulane.edu/~ntcs/pss/tg_ps_index.htm

.....
<http://www.ibiblio.org/bgreek/test-archives/html4/1997-12/22342.html>

Dear List members,

thanks for letting me listen in on your very instructive conversations. I have a question about Mk 15,34 versus Ps 22,2, where Jesus is quoting David's words while being on the cross. It might be more of a Hebrew question, and if the question is not appropriate on this list, please pardon me.

I don't know whether to classify the problem as belonging to text criticism or to transcription theory or to something else, since I am very ignorant about many things, including the way these texts were compiled and preserved. Perhaps this is where some of you can educate me?

Now, in my copy of the GNT (which is a Nestle-Aland 26), the quote is:

ELWI ELWI LEMA SABAXQANI

My first question is: I suppose this is really supposed to be Hebrew and not Aramaic?

My second question regards why the Greek text is not exactly the same as what I read in my Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia? There, I find:

>LJ >LJ LMH <ZBTNJ

where my three main troubles are the absence of of any O sound in the call on "my God" in the Hebrew, the absence of any leading e sound in the Greek text (which is under the ayin in the Hebrew), and lastly the absence of any palatal sound, aspirated or otherwise, between the Beth and the Tav in the Hebrew.

Regarding the absence of the e sound in the Greek, which is under the ayin in the Hebrew, can this be put down to rules of pronunciation of

Hebrew which we no longer know? Does the ayin distort the vowel so much that it can't possibly be written and said by Greek-speaking persons?

Now, in the apparatus in my NA 26, I find that some manuscripts do indeed have HLI instead of ELWI. This helps a bit, but not much, since never having been trained in using the apparatus, much less assigning importance to the various pericopes or manuscripts, I find that this information is not of much use to me. Along the same lines, I find that some manuscripts have ZAFQANI, which seems a bit closer to the Hebrew, but I still can't decide what importance should be put on those manuscripts.

Perhaps what we have in the GNT is a transcription of an earlier version of the Hebrew text than what we have from the Masoretes?

Can anyone help me resolve this one?

Thanks. And Happy Holidays *<:-)} }

Ulrik Petersen
student of computer science
University of Aarhus, Denmark
e-mail: ulrikp@daimi.aau.dk

<http://www.ibiblio.org/bgreek/test-archives/html4/1997-12/22343.html>

Brian Wilson wrote;

>**I have been unable to find a commentary which states that the cry in
>Mark 15:34 is not in Aramaic.**

>

The old unabridged Grimm Wilke translated and enlarged by Thayer gives the reading of ELWi as Syriac.

Carlton L. Winbery
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<http://www.ibiblio.org/bgreek/test-archives/html4/1997-12/22344.html>

Ulrik Petersen wrote SNIP:

>*I have a question about Mk 15,34 versus Ps 22,2, where
>Jesus is quoting David's words while being on the cross.
>... in my copy of the GNT (which is a Nestle-Aland 26), the quote is:*

>

>ELWI ELWI LEMA SABAXQANI

>

>My first question is: I suppose this is really supposed to be Hebrew
>and not Aramaic?

According to Vincent Taylor, the words are ** a transliteration of a
Hebraized Aramaic original **. According to W. D Davies and Dale C.
Allison, ** We think Mark's entire line Aramaic. ** According to Donald
Hagner, ** ELWI ** in Mark is ** Aramaic **. According to Morna Hooker,
** the quotation is given in Aramaic **. According to F. W. Beare **
The cry of Jesus...is given in Aramaic. ** According to Sherman E.
Johnson, ** The quotation from Psalm xxii.1 is in Aramaic, not Hebrew.
** According to Hugh Anderson, the ** Marcan form of Jesus' cry ** is
given ** in Aramaic. ** According to Robert H Mounce, ** ELWI ** is **
Aramaic **. According to David Hill, ** ELOI ** in Mark is ** Aramaic **
. According to E. P. Gould, ** Jesus used Aramaic ** in the cry.
According to B. H. Branscomb, Mark gives the cry ** entirely in
Aramaic. **

I have been unable to find a commentary which states that the cry in
Mark 15:34 is not in Aramaic.

Hope this helps.
BRIAN WILSON

<http://www.ibiblio.org/bgreek/test-archives/html4/1997-12/22345.html>

Dear Ulrik and others,

Let us first compare the three texts:

Psalm 22:1 has `ELI `ELI LAMA `AZABTANI

Matt 27:46 has ELI ELI LEMA SABACQANEI

Mark 15:34 has ELWI ELWI LAMA SABACQANEI

There are some variation in the NT manuscripts as you note between ELWI and
ELI.

It is clear that the verb `AZAB is Hebrew and SHABAQ is Aramaic; thus the
verb of Ps 22:1 is Hebrew while the verb used by both Matthew and Mark is
Aramaic. It is further clear that ELI is Hebrew (`EL "god" and I "my"). The
form ELWI is more difficult. Most commentators view it as Aramaic because
the verb of the clause is Aramaic. However, the normal Aramaic form would
have been `ELAHI with a Greek transcription ELAI. The letter "a" (qamets)
in Aramaic was realized as "o" in Hebrew, so it may be that Aramaic `ELAHI
was pronounced as `ELOHI and transcribed in Greek as ELWI. On the other

hand is there a Hebrew word for God «ELOAH which together with "my" would be `ELOHI with a Greek transcription ELWI. So whether ELWI is Aramaic or Hebrew cannot be decided with certainty, but most commentators view it as Aramaic, as Brian has shown.

We should also note that LEMA is Aramaic while LAMA is Hebrew. Mark`s use of LAMA together with ELWI (if this is the correct reading) can suggest a Hebrew approach on the part of Mark rather than an Aramaic one. When Grimm Wilke/Thayer says that ELWI is Syriac I suppose "Syriac" is used in the sense for which we would use "Aramaic". In the Syriac Peshitta we find the following text:

Matt 27:46 `EL `EL LEMANA SHABAQTANI (`EL is written as `EYL)
Mark 15:34 `ALAH I `ALAH I LEMANA SHABAQTANI

Regards
Rolf

Rolf Furuli
University of Oslo
furuli@online.no

<http://www.ibiblio.org/bgreek/test-archives/html4/1997-12/22346.html>

Rolf,

Thanks for your comments on Mk 15:34. I wonder if it does not go beyond the bounds of B-Greek to ask about the *intention* of the *Markan* Jesus in uttering the phrase in question? If memory serves, commentators are often wont to see here an actual cry of despair, as if Mark is emphasizing Jesus' sense of utter abandonment. I have always sensed that the utterance is, on the contrary, one of affirmation, for the Psalm which, according to Mark, Jesus is quoting in either Hebrew or Aramaic, ends up with the speaker of "my God, etc." proclaiming his absolute confidence in God's covenant faithfulness towards his elect, and as C.H. Dodd argued, in the NT, quotations of single lines of a biblical text were often intended to be taken as if the whole text from which the line came was being cited.

Shall we bat this one around? If so, some things to consider are: (1) Is what Dodd claimed was often true Mark's usual practice? and (2) Does Mark here employ, as context for the utterance, the themes taken from Wisdom 2, and thus present Jesus as the righteous sufferer who even when apparently abandoned remains confident in God's intentions to do his elect good in the end?

If this is indeed out of bounds, then reply to me off list. I would like to see what arguments can be adduced for both conclusions.

Jeffrey Gibson
jgibson@acfsysv.roosevelt.edu

<http://www.ibiblio.org/bgreek/test-archives/html4/1997-12/22347.html>

>On Mon, 22 Dec 1997, STORYBROWN wrote:

>

>> In a message dated 97-12-21 20:03:21 EST, jgibson@acfsysv.roosevelt.edu
>> writes:

>>

>> << C.H. Dodd argued, in the NT, quotations of single lines of a biblical
>>text

>> were often intended to be taken as if the whole text from which the
>>line came

>> was being cited. >>

>>

>> Do you recall where he makes this argument?

>>

>

>Without checking, I believe it is in his little book According to the
>Scriptures.

>

>Yours,

>

>Jeffrey Gibson

Seems that I remember it in his little book "The Bible Today" (an old one).

Carlton L. Winbery
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winbery@andria.lacollege.edu

<http://www.ibiblio.org/bgreek/test-archives/html4/1997-12/22348.html>

In a message dated 97-12-21 20:03:21 EST, jgibson@acfsysv.roosevelt.edu
writes:

<< C.H. Dodd argued, in the NT, quotations of single lines of a biblical text
were often intended to be taken as if the whole text from which the line came
was being cited. >>

Do you recall where he makes this argument?

Merry Christmas!

Guy Story Brown, Dallas & LA
storybrown@aol.com

<http://www.ibiblio.org/bgreek/test-archives/html4/1997-12/22349.html>

On Mon, 22 Dec 1997, STORYBROWN wrote:

> **In a message dated 97-12-21 20:03:21 EST, jgibson@acfsysv.roosevelt.edu**
> **writes:**
>
> << **C.H. Dodd argued, in the NT, quotations of single lines of a biblical text**
> **were often intended to be taken as if the whole text from which the line came**
> **was being cited. >>**
>
> **Do you recall where he makes this argument?**
>

Without checking, I believe it is in his little book *_According to the Scriptures_*.

Yours,

Jeffrey Gibson

<http://www.ibiblio.org/bgreek/test-archives/html4/1997-12/22350.html>

On Mon, 22 Dec 1997, Carlton Winbery wrote:

> >**On Mon, 22 Dec 1997, STORYBROWN wrote:**
> >
> >> **In a message dated 97-12-21 20:03:21 EST, jgibson@acfsysv.roosevelt.edu**
> >> **writes:**
> >>
> >> << **C.H. Dodd argued, in the NT, quotations of single lines of a biblical**
> >>**text**
> >> **were often intended to be taken as if the whole text from which the**
> >>**line came**
> >> **was being cited. >>**
> >>
> >> **Do you recall where he makes this argument?**
> >>
> >
> >**Without checking, I believe it is in his little book *_According to the***
> >**Scriptures_.**
> >
> >**Yours,**

> >

> > **Jeffrey Gibson**

> **Seems that I remember it in his little book "The Bible Today" (an old one).**

>

It may very well be the case, Carlton. But as I have never read this work of Dodd (and therefore cannot be "whence I found it", perhaps he made the argument in both works!.

Does not Barnabas Lindars also discuss it in his *_New Testament Apologetic_*?

Jeffrey Gibson

jgibson@acfsysv.roosevelt.edu

<http://www.ibiblio.org/bgreek/test-archives/html4/1997-12/22351.html>

> **In a message dated 97-12-21 20:03:21 EST, jgibson@acfsysv.roosevelt.edu**

> **writes:**

>

><< **C.H. Dodd argued, in the NT, quotations of single lines of a biblical text**

> **were often intended to be taken as if the whole text from which the line came**

> **was being cited. >>**

>

> **Do you recall where he makes this argument?**

>

I think it is "Secondo le Scritture", Brescia 1972 p. 63. A very interesting and complete discussion of this question in: del Agua PŽrez, Agust'n. 1985. "El m'etodo midr'asico y la ex'egesis del Nuevo Testamento". Vol. 4, Biblioteca Midr'asica. Valencia p. 133 ss.

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28010-Madrid

Espan~a

e-mail: danielrr@mad.servicom.es

<http://www.ibiblio.org/bgreek/test-archives/html4/1997-12/22352.html>

I wrote:

> **I think it is "Secondo le Scritture", Brescia 1972 p. 63.**

This is, of course, the italian traduction of "According to the Scriptures", London 1952

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.....
http://www.masud.co.uk/ISLAM/bmh/BMH-YP-cry_on_the_cross.htm

<http://www.v-a.com/bible/matthew-5.html>

http://poshka.bizland.com/text1/peshitta_matthew_1_7.htm

<http://www.omniglot.com/writing/aramaic.htm>

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aramaic_alphabet

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syriac-alphabet>

http://www.syriac-br.org/indexi.c_religiao_texto2.htm

.....
<http://www.lcc.cc/tlc/lxvii1/eli.htm>

The Liberal Catholic, Easter 1999:

Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachtani never meant "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?", but meant, indeed, originally, the reverse. They are the sacramental words used at the final initiation in old Egypt, as elsewhere, during the Mystery of the putting to death of Chrêstos in the mortal body with its animal passions, and the resurrection of the spiritual man as an enlightened Christos in a frame now purified (the "second birth" of Paul, the "twice-born" or the Initiates of the Brahmans, etc.). These words were addressed to the Initiate's "Higher Self", the Divine Spirit in him (let it be called Christ, Buddha, Krishna, or by whatever name), at the moment when the rays of the morning sun poured forth on the entranced body of the candidate and were supposed to recall him to life, or his new rebirth. They were addressed to the Spiritual Sun within, not to a Sun without, and aught to read, had they not been distorted for dogmatic purposes:

"My God, my God, how thou dost glorify me!"

Collected Writings, Volume IX,
H.P. Blavatsky

<http://www.lcc.cc/tlc/lxvii2/elieli.htm>

In the Easter 1999 issue of The Liberal Catholic, Mrs. Blavatsky's comments on the words "Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani" (Mt 27;47) are quoted. These are the

words Jesus said just before He died, according to the gospel of Matthew. She claims that these words have a mystical, Egyptian origin. A right interpretation of these words would be: My God, my God, how hast Thou exalted me, instead of the original meaning: My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me.

Doubting the validity of her comments I researched the subject at the theological faculty of the University of Nijmegen, where I am reading theology. My New Testament professor, Prof. Dr. S. van Tilborg explained to me that the words "Eli, Eli, lama sabachtani" are a quotation from Psalm 22. In Hebrew it says: Eli, Eli, lama azaftani. A correct translation of these words is "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me." But the quotation in Matthew says sabachtani, not azaftani. Did Matthew make a mistake?

The word sabachtani is a conjugation of a verb. Sabachtani comes from the infinitive sabach. Sabachta is the second person singular of the tense "qatal", which is something like our present perfect. In Semitic languages the object of a verb is attached to the end of the verb. To sabachta you would add the object: "-i", which means "me". In Semitic languages you can not connect two vowels to one another, so an extra "n" is required making it sabachta-n-i. With azaftani the same rule applies. Azaftani is Hebrew. The verb is azaf. Azaf means to forsake. The verb sabach, meaning to exalt, also exists in the Hebrew language. But there is one problem: the Hebrew sabach is conjugated differently. It would be sibachtani in stead of sabachtani.. So sabachtani is not Hebrew. What language is it then?

When Matthew wrote his gospel, he used a lot of elements from the gospel of Mark. Mark 15;34 says "Eloï, Eloï, lama sabachtani". Eloï isn't Hebrew either, but Aramaic. It means my God. So perhaps the verb sabachtani is Aramaic as well. In the Targum, the Aramaic translation of the Hebrew bible, Psalm 22 reads "Eloï, Eloï, metoel mah sabachtani". This is the original translation of the Hebrew "Eli, Eli, lama azaftani", which means "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me". But why didn't Mark use the whole Aramaic version instead of just the first two words and the last one?

To explain this, we should realise that Mark probably did not speak Hebrew. In the first century AD very few Jews spoke Hebrew. In the synagogue the people, who read the scriptures for the community, read them in Hebrew and translated them directly into Aramaic, the main language of Palestine in that period. Mark had heard that verse when the reader translated it to the community. When he wrote his gospel, he did not have a written Hebrew or Aramaic bible with him to quote from. He quoted from what he knew by heart. The result is a mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic. We should also realise that Hebrew and Aramaic are as closely related to each other as Dutch and German. It does not take much to make a mixture of these languages. The words "Eloï, Eloï, lama sabachtani" are therefore probably a mixture of Aramaic and Hebrew quotations.

When Matthew used Mark's gospel he also used his quotation. He only changed Eloï into the Hebrew version Eli. It is assumed that he wanted to make it sound more like Eli, the prophet.

This is why I am of the opinion that these words do not have a mystical, Egyptian origin, but are quoted from Psalm 22. There are more verses quoted from this psalm in the account of the crucifixion, e.g. Matt 27;35 [Psalms 22:18-19]

and 27;39. The evangelist wanted the reader to think of this psalm when reading these verses. The beginning of Psalm 22 is an exclamation of despair. It starts with "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me". But the psalm ends with trust in God. Although the situation is desperate now, God will save us eventually. For Jesus the situation was desperate too, but He also puts His trust in God. Everything will be all right. Jesus might die now, but He will rise in glory.

This is, I think, the message the evangelist wanted to give by using this quotation. There are also biblical scientists who think that these words are historical. According to professor Van Tilborg there are not enough arguments for or against this thesis. It does not seem strange that Jesus, who knew the Scriptures and was in despair, prayed this psalm.

The verse has always raised the question: Why did the Son of God feel forsaken by His God. Is the Son not one with the Father? Mrs. Blavatsky proposed a solution for this problem, but I believe her translation to be incorrect. To me the understanding that it refers to the intention of Psalm 22 is a more reasonable explanation of this verse than the one given by her.

Editor's

note:

As was the case when H.P. Blavatsky made the commentary referred to above, modern day science is still not able to prove for 100% that the crucifixion actually took place, leave alone determine with accuracy the actual words that are said to have been spoken during this event. Many still believe that Jesus was stoned, not crucified and many hold as earlier, as much as 100 years earlier, the time of His death. For the Liberal Catholic searching for the hidden meaning in the scriptures, however, there remains the remarkable similarity between the account of the crucifixion and one of the ultimate initiatory rites of Egyptian times, inasmuch these are known to us. Again quoting HPB: *"And if we are asked the reason why the early Church Fathers resorted to falsification, the answer is plain: Because the sacramental words belonged in their true rendering to Pagan temple rites. They were pronounced after the terrible trials of initiation, and were still in the memory of some of the 'Fathers' when the gospel of Matthew was edited into the Greek language. Because, finally, many of the Hierophants of the Mysteries, and many more of the Initiates were still living in those days, the sentence rendered in its true words would class Jesus directly with the simple Initiates. The words 'My God, my Sun, thou hast poured thy radiance upon me!' were the final words that concluded the thanksgiving prayer of the Initiate, 'the Son and the glorified Elect of the Sun'."* [quoted from H.J. Spierenburg's compilation: The New Testament Commentaries of H.P. Blavatsky]

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From the "English-Hebrew Dictionary" of Israel Efros, Judah Ibn-Shmuel Kaufman, Benjamin Silk, Tel Aviv: Dvir Publishing Company, 1956, p. 297:

GLORIFICATION, n. ha'aretzah, Tehilah, shevach, @idur, hidur
GLORIFY, v.t. romem, 'aleh, gedel, nese@, hadar, hanivah, halel, shabeach, paer, kaved, ha@der, ha'aretz

p. 280:

FORSAKE, v.t. 'atzov, harpeh, natsh, zanoach

Ben Yehudah's English-Hebrew/Hebrew-English Dictionary:

'aZaV (Hebrew) means "to leave, abandon"

Hence, with the ending -tani, meaning "you have to me":

'aZaVTaNY (Hebrew) means "you have forsaken me" (Hebrew verb in Psalm 22:2)

SHiBaKH (Hebrew) means "to praise, glorify"

Hence, with the ending -tani, meaning "you have to me":

SHiBaKHTaNY (Hebrew) means "you have glorified me", "you have praised me"

LaMaH (Hebrew) means "why, wherefore" in the form of a question

KaMaH (Hebrew) means "how much, how many"

A reconstruction of the Hebrew could be as follows:

ELY, ELY, KaMaH SHiBaKHTaNY [shin-bet-khet-tav-nun-yod] (My God, My God, how greatly dost Thou glorify Me!)

Instead of David's plaint in Psalm 22:1

ELY, ELY LaMaH [לָמָה] 'aZaVTaNY [עֲזַבְתָּנִי]? (My God, My God, why have you left me?)

The Targum in Aramaic of Psalm 22:1 -

שבקתני מה מטול אלי אלי

Ely Ely metul mah shabaqtani (My God my God, because of what have you left me?)

[<http://call.cn.huc.edu/showsubtexts.php?subtext=81002&cset=Hebrew>]

First compare with the Peshitta Psalter in West Syriac translation of Psalm 22:1 -

ܫܒܩܬܢܝ ܡܗ ܡܬܘܠ ܐܠܝ ܐܠܝ

Elih elih [alep-lamadh-heh] lamna [lamadh-meem-nun-alep] shabaqtani [shin-bet-qop-taw-nun-yod] (Elih, Eli, why have you left me?)

[edited by William Emery Barnes, DD, Cambridge University Press, 1904.]

Note on this version of the text: in the Syriac language, [elih] means “to him” or “to her” and not “My God”. In Aramaic, as found repeatedly in the book of Daniel and of Ezra, ܐܠܗܝܢ means God. See Brown Driver Riggs¹

And compared with the Syriac renditions of Mark and Matthew in the Peshitta:

Mark 15:34 has ܐܠܗܝܢ ܐܠܗܝܢ ܠܡܢܢܐ ܫܒܩܩܬܢܝ

`ALAH I `ALAH I LEMNA SHABAQTANI

Matt 27:46 has ܐܠܗܝܢ ܐܠܗܝܢ ܠܡܢܢܐ ܫܒܩܩܬܢܝ

`EYL `EYL LEMNA SHABAQTANI [shin-bet-qop-taw-nun-yod] (God, God why have you left me?)

Mark 15:43 has in the Greek transliteration of the Aramaic:

Ἐλωὶ Ἐλωὶ λαμὰ σαβαχθανεὶ

ELWI ELWI LAMA SABAKHTHANEI [σαβαχθανεὶ transliterated in Greek; translated as ἐγκατέλιπες in Greek]

Matt 27:46 has in the Greek has the Greek translation of the Aramaic:

Ἡλεὶ Ἡλεὶ λεμὰ σαβαχθανεὶ

ELI ELI LAMA SABAKHTHANEI [σαβαχθανεὶ transliterated in Greek; translated as ἐγκατέλιπες in Greek]

Note on transliteration of σαβαχθανεὶ into Greek – Greek has no letter for shin, and the closest to this letter is the sigma; Greek also has no letter for qop, and apparently the chi was chosen to take its place; finally, in Greek transliterations from Semitic languages, it seems that Τ (tau) was used for ܘ [tet], while Θ/θ (theta) was used for ܢ [tav or taw]. This practice was continued by English translators of the Bible, as they rendered many Hebrew words ending with [tav], such as תִּמְנָחַךְ and תִּבְשֵׁ with the English equivalent of (theta) which is (th).

When we compare the Greek of the Septuagint version of Psalm 21:1 (which is the same psalm)

Ο ΘΕΟΣ, ὁ Θεός μου, πρόσχεσ μοι ἵνα τί ἐγκατέλιπές με

Compare them both with what is preserved in the Greek renditions of Matthew and Mark [[Nestle GNT 1904](#)]:

Matt 27:46 has Θεέ μου θεέ μου, ἵνα τί με ἐγκατέλιπες

Mark 15:34 has Ὁ Θεός μου ὁ Θεός μου, εἰς τί ἐγκατέλιπές με

These are abbreviations of the Septuagint, which includes the extra words πρόσχες μοι

A Compendious Syriac Dictionary
by Robert Payne Smith
(Oxford: Clarendon 1903), p. 557

<http://www.tyndalearchive.com/tabs/PayneSmith/>

Shabaq = to leave, to go away

Shabaqtani=Passive participle

II. [שָׁבַח] **verb Pi`el laud, praise** (late Aramaism, compare Aramaic (including Old Aramaic) שָׁבַח, **ܫܒܚܐ**, Pa`el **praise** see Schw^{Idioticon 91} Schulth^{Lex: —}

1 laud, praise; God.(י'): **Imperfect**3masculine plural sf **ישָׁבְחוּמְדָה**; **Psalm 63:4** ("ברך"); **Imperative** feminine singular **שָׁבְחִי** **Psalm 147:12**, masculine plural sf **שָׁבְחוּהוּ** **Psalm 117:1**(both "הלל"); his works, **Imperfect**3masculine singular **ישָׁבַח** **Psalm 145:4** ("הגיד")

Psalm 63:3

HEB: מְחַיִּים שְׁפִתַי יִשְׁבְּחוּנְךָ:

NAS: life, My lips will praise You.

KJV: than life, my lips shall praise thee.

INT: life my lips will praise

Psalm 106:47

HEB: לְשֵׁם קְדוֹשְׁךָ לְהִשְׁתַּבַּח בְּתִהְלֹתֶיךָ:

NAS: name And glory in Your praise.

KJV: name, [and] to triumph in thy praise.

INT: name to your holy and glory your praise

Psalm 117:1

HEB: כָּל־גּוֹיִם שִׁבְּחוּהוּ כָּל־הָאֲמִיּוֹת:

NAS: all nations; Laud Him, all peoples!

KJV: all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.

INT: all nations Laud all peoples

Psalm 145:4

HEB: דָּוָר לְדָוָר יִשְׁבַּח מִצְעָשֶׁיךָ וּגְבוּרַתֶיךָ:

NAS: One generation shall praise Your works
KJV: generation shall praise thy works
INT: generation to another shall praise your works your mighty

Psalm 147:12

HEB: שִׁבְחֵי גְרוֹשָׁלַם אֶת־
NAS: Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem!
KJV: Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem;
INT: Praise Jerusalem the LORD

1 Samuel 2:30 "Therefore the LORD, the God of Israel, declares: 'I ...

... But now saith the Lord: Far be this from **me**: but whosoever shall **glorify me** [מְכַבְּדֵי], him

will I **glorify** [אֶזְכְּבֵד]: but they that despise **me**, shall be despised. ...
[//biblehub.com/1_samuel/2-30.htm](http://biblehub.com/1_samuel/2-30.htm) - 22k

Psalm 34:3 Glorify the LORD with me; let us exalt his name ...

Glorify [גִּדְּלוּ] the LORD with **me**; let us exalt his name together.
[//biblehub.com/psalms/34-3.htm](http://biblehub.com/psalms/34-3.htm) - 16k

Psalm 50:15 and call on me in the day of trouble; I will deliver ...

... and call upon **me** in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall **glorify me** [וַיִּתְכַבְּדוּנִי].” ...
[//biblehub.com/psalms/50-15.htm](http://biblehub.com/psalms/50-15.htm) - 17k

Psalm 50:23 Those who sacrifice thank offerings honor me, and to ...

... The sacrifice of praise shall **glorify me** [יִכְבְּדוּנִי]: and there is the way by which I will shew him the salvation of God. ...
[//biblehub.com/psalms/50-23.htm](http://biblehub.com/psalms/50-23.htm) - 17k

Psalm 91:15 He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be ...

... He shall cry to **me**, and I will hear him: I am with him in tribulation, I will deliver him, and I will **glorify** him [אֶזְכְּבֵדְהוּ]. ...
[//biblehub.com/psalms/91-15.htm](http://biblehub.com/psalms/91-15.htm) - 17k\\

Isaiah 29:13 The Lord says: "These people come near to me with ...

... And the Lord said: Forasmuch as this people draw near **me** with their mouth, and with their lips **glorify me** [כִּבְדוּנִי], but their heart is far from **me**, and they have feared ...
[//biblehub.com/isaiah/29-13.htm](http://biblehub.com/isaiah/29-13.htm) - 19k

Isaiah 43:20 The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls ...

... "The beasts of the field will **glorify Me** [תִּכְבְּדוּנִי]

, The jackals and the ostriches ...
[//biblehub.com/isaiah/43-20.htm](http://biblehub.com/isaiah/43-20.htm) - 18k

[Isaiah 49:3 He said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I ...](#)

... And he said unto **me**, Thou art my servant, Israel, in whom I will **glorify** myself
[אַתְּפָאֵר]. ...

[//biblehub.com/isaiah/49-3.htm](http://biblehub.com/isaiah/49-3.htm) - 17k

[Isaiah 60:21 Then all your people will be righteous and they will ...](#)

... And thy people shall be all just, they shall inherit the land for ever, the
branch of my planting, the work of my hand to **glorify me** [לְהַתְּפַאֵר] ...

[//biblehub.com/isaiah/60-21.htm](http://biblehub.com/isaiah/60-21.htm) - 18k

[John 8:50 I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who ...](#)

... And though I have no wish to **glorify** myself, God is
going to **glorify me**. He is the true judge. ...

[//biblehub.com/john/8-50.htm](http://biblehub.com/john/8-50.htm) - 17k

[John 8:54 Jesus replied, "If I glorify myself, my glory means ...](#)

... But it is my Father who will **glorify me**. You say, 'He is our God,'

[//biblehub.com/john/8-54.htm](http://biblehub.com/john/8-54.htm) - 18k

[John 16:14 He will glorify me because it is from me that he will ...](#)

He will **glorify me** because it is from **me** that he will
receive what he will make known to you. ...

[//biblehub.com/john/16-14.htm](http://biblehub.com/john/16-14.htm) - 17k

[John 17:5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the ...](#)

And now, Father, **glorify me** in your presence with the
glory I had with you before the world began. ...

[//biblehub.com/john/17-5.htm](http://biblehub.com/john/17-5.htm) - 17k

[John 21:19 Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which ...](#)

... (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to **glorify** God.)
And after saying this he said to him, "Follow **me**." ...

[//biblehub.com/john/21-19.htm](http://biblehub.com/john/21-19.htm) - 18k

ⁱ Brown-Driver-Briggs [<http://biblehub.com/hebrew/426.htm>]

⁹⁴ אֱלֹהִים **noun masculine god, God** (= Biblical Hebrew אֱלֹהִים (p. 43), see also √ I. אלה); — א' absolute [Daniel 2:28](#) +, construct [Daniel 2:18](#) +; emphatic אֱלֹהֵי [Daniel 2:20](#) +; suffix אֱלֹהֵי [Daniel 6:23](#), הָ- [Ezra 9:14](#) +, הָ- [Daniel 6:6](#) +, הָ- [Ezra 5:5](#); [Ezra 7:16](#), הָ- [Daniel 3:28](#) (twice in verse); [Daniel 3:29](#), הָ- [Ezra 7:17](#), etc.; plural absolute אֱלֹהֵיךָ [Daniel 2:11](#) +, emphatic הִנֵּי- [Jeremiah 10:11](#), construct הִי- [Daniel 5:4,23](#), suffix הִי- [Daniel 3:14](#), etc. [with prefix אֱלֹהֵיךָ [Daniel 5:23](#), לְאֱלֹהֵיךָ [Daniel 3:14](#), etc.; but not in singular absolute or construct, e.g. לְאֱלֹהֵיךָ [Ezra 5:12](#), etc.]; —

1 god, in General [Daniel 6:8](#); [Daniel 6:13](#); heathen deities [Jeremiah 10:11](#); [Daniel 2:11](#); [Daniel 3:15](#)+ 15 t. Daniel (made of gold, etc. [Daniel 5:4,23](#)) + בְּרִאֲלֵהֶיּוֹן [Daniel 3:25](#).(see [בר](#)).

2⁷³ God (of Israel), [Daniel 2:28](#); [Ezra 5:2](#) +; phrase יְאֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל [Ezra 5:1](#); [Ezra 6:14](#); [Ezra 7:15](#); יְרוּשָׁלַם יֵא [Ezra 7:19](#); אֲבָהֶתִי יֵא [Daniel 2:23](#); שְׁמִיָּא [Ezra 5:11](#) (+ וְאֶרְעָא), [Ezra 5:12](#); [Ezra 6:9,10](#); [Daniel 2:18](#); [Daniel 2:19](#) 6t. (see **2** [שְׁמִים a](#)); רַב יֵא [Daniel 2:45](#); אֱלֹהֵיּוֹן יֵא [Daniel 2:47](#); אֱלֹהֵא עֲלִיָּא [Daniel 3:26](#); [Daniel 3:32](#); [Daniel 5:18,21](#); חִזָּא יֵא [Daniel 6:21](#); [Daniel 6:27](#); also בֵּית אֱלֹהֵא [Daniel 5:3](#); [Ezra 4:24](#); [Ezra 5:2](#) 16t. Ezra; יַעֲבִידֵת א [Ezra 6:18](#).