

"Dogs surround me; a pack of evil ones closes in on me, like lions [they maul] my hands and feet."  
Psalm 22:17 (16)  
Jewish Publication Society

Christians often translate the portion of the passage about the lions mauling the hands and feet as Jesus having his hands and feet pierced by crucifixion. However, this theme of lions being compared to enemies is used quite often in scripture. One example is in Numbers 23:24 where it states "Behold, a people rises like a lioness, and as a lion it lifts itself; it will not lie down until it devours the prey, and drinks the blood of the slain." Other examples can be found in Numbers 24:9, Psalms 7:1-2 and Isaiah 38:13. The translation of the word is less important than the context surrounding it. Clearly this is a physical enemy that Gd delivers David or Israel from and not a picture of a crucifixion of someone.

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## Crucifixion or Misinterpretation? Decide for Yourself.

### KOL CHESED HATORAH

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## Introduction: The Debate

Much debate has occurred over the translation of the passage of Psalm 22:17 (16 in some translations). The Christian interpretation of this passage is that this is one of the greatest fulfilled prophecies of the crucifixion of Jesus. Some believers in the Christian interpretation have claimed that the Rabbis have concealed the correct reading of this passage in order to hide that Jesus crucifixion was written in the Jewish scriptures.

The purpose of presenting the following information is to provide a fair and scholarly analysis of the translation of the text and interpretation of the passage. This is not an apologetic attempt to persuade the reader to any one specific interpretation of the passage. This pamphlet is simply a way to provide the reader with some helpful resources to gain a better understanding of the historical development of the translation and rabbinic understanding of the passage of Psalms 22 within its context.

## Translation Differences

Masoretic Text (225 BCE – 70 CE) : “For dogs have encompassed me; a company of evil-doers have enclosed me; like a lion, they are at my hands and my feet.” (Abegg 518; Taylor 2013)

Dead Sea Scroll-Essenes (100-25 BC): There is large debate on this translation. The following translation is from the Psalms scroll found at Nahal Hever (5/6 H.evPs) “For dogs are all around me; a gang of evil doers encircles me. They have pierced my hands and my feet.” (Abegg 518-519)

Targums (Aramaic paraphrase 1st century AD): “Because the wicked have surrounded me, who are like many dogs; a gathering of evildoers has hemmed me in, tearing my hands and feet like a lioness.” (Sefaria.org, 2018)

Septuagint (Greek translation LXX 175-150 BCE): “Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet.” (Abegg 518; Brenton, 1995)

JPS 1983: “Dogs surround me; a pack of evil ones closes in on me, like lions [they maul] my hands and feet. (Sefaria.org, 2018)

## Context Matters:

Jewish tradition interprets this entire passage of Psalm 22 to be a lament by David over the future exile of Israel (Rashi) and the confrontation with Israel’s enemies. Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb of the Orthodox Union explains that Israel is crying out to Gd and asking that He not distance Himself from them during troublesome times. The enemies are surrounding Israel and like lions they are at their hands and feet. The enemies of Israel circle around Israel and entrap them. The final portion of the psalm states that after Israel is delivered by Hashem they will be able to tell others about what Gd has done for them. This is similar to how the Jewish people retell the stories of the other victories of the Jewish people during Hanukkah, Purim and Pesach. In continuing to retell the story and not forget about when Hashem protected and delivered Israel from the hands of their enemies, this will result in the whole world praising Gd. There is a Jewish custom to read this passage during Purim.