

UNICORNS

Is the word “unicorn” an erroneous translation in the King James Bible? The English word unicorn occurs nine times in the KJB, and is found in Numbers 23:22; 24:8; Deut. 33:17; Job 39:9,10; Psalms 22:21; 29:6; 92:10; and Isaiah 34:7. It is translated from the Hebrew word reem, which comes from a verb used only once, and found in Zechariah 14:10 “Jerusalem, and ‘it shall be lifted up’ and inhabited in her place.” This animal is characterized by something lifted up or high and in a prominent position. It is very strong - “God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn.” Num. 23:22. It is also used in a symbolic way in our Lord’s prophetic prayer as recorded in Psalms 22:21 “Save me from the lion’s mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.” There was no literal lion present when Christ died, but Satan, as a roaring lion, was present, for it was his hour and the power of darkness. There were no literal unicorns present either, but they symbolically or spiritually were present and assisted our Lord Jesus in His greatest hour of need.

This animal was untamable, as can be seen in Job 39:9 - 12, where God asks Job “Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee? Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great? or wilt thou leave thy labour to him? Wilt thou believe him, that he will bring home thy seed, and gather it into thy barn?” This passage shows that the unicorn, whatever it was, could not be tamed at all, nor used in farming to plow the fields like an ox can. This, as well as other verses soon to be discussed, shows that many modern versions, like the NKJV, NIV, and NASB, are incorrect in their rendering of this word as “wild ox”. The wild ox is nothing more than a “wild guess” and pure speculation on the part of the modern bible editors. A wild ox is like a wild horse. It can be tamed, by castration or placing a yoke on its neck, and bind him with his band in the furrow to bring home thy seed. God’s question to Job is intended to produce a definite NO, not a ‘Yeah, I can do that.’

Those who criticize the KJB’s unicorns try to muster a group of “scholars” who give their opinion as to what this animal was. But listen carefully to their words. Henry Morris - “The Hebrew word translated unicorn is believed by most Hebrew scholars to refer to the huge and fierce aurochs, or wild ox now extinct.” W. L. Alexander (Pulpit Commentary) “the reem is supposed to be the aurochs, an animal of the bovine species, allied to the buffalo, now extinct.” Charles Spurgeon wrote “The unicorn may have been some gigantic ox or buffalo now unknown and perhaps extinct.” William Houghon “we think that there can be no doubt (how is that for certainty !) that some species of wild ox is intended.”

Eastons’ Bible dictionary says: “The exact reference of the word is doubtful. Some have supposed it to be the buffalo, others the white antelope called by the Arabs rim. Most probably, however, the word denotes Bos Primigenius, which is now extinct.”

All of this is pure speculation. The fact is the modern bible translators do not know what this animal was, and many of them say that whatever it might have been, it is now extinct. Wild oxen

still exist, and they can be tamed and domesticated. In fact some bibles like Darby's, Rotherham's 1902 Emphasized bible and the Spanish of 1960 translate this word as "buffalo", while the Douay Rheims of 1610 read "unicorn" (Deut. 33:17) but the revised Douay-Rheims of 1821 and 1950 have "rhinoceros" (Deut. 33:17) but "unicorn" in some of the other verses. Young's 'literal' translation shows that he simply did not know what the animal in question referred to, so he merely transliterated the Hebrew word, and did not translate it at all. His version consistently reads "the rheem", while the Ferrar Fenton translation done in 1910 had "bulls". Let's see now...unicorns, buffaloes, rhinoceros, rheem and bulls. Yep, all pretty much the same things, right? ;-) Whenever you hear the phrase "All scholars agree" you should know right away that the guy has no idea what he is talking about.

I recently discovered something that I think is very interesting and quite enlightening about how modern scholars are changing the definitions that words once had. I have in my study two different printings of the well known Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon. One is from 1887 and the other one is from 1976, which was a reprint of the 9th edition of 1940. The more modern Liddell and Scott defines the word monokeros as "a wild ox". However the 1887 edition gives only one definition of the word - A UNICORN!!!. Now, it should be obvious that Liddell and Scott themselves were not alive in 1976 so that they could suddenly change their minds about what this word meant. So who changed the definition of this word for future generations?

Using the Correct Definition

Unicorn means literally, "one - horned"; it was a one horned animal. **If you look in Websters' 1828 Dictionary of the English Language for the definitions of these two words - unicorn and rhinoceros - here is what you find.**

unicorn

U'NICORN, n. [L. unicornis; unus, one, and cornu, horn.]

1. an animal with one horn; the monoceros. **this name is often applied to the rhinoceros.**
2. The sea unicorn is a fish of the whale kind, called narwal, remarkable for a horn growing out at his nose.
3. A fowl.

fossil unicorn, or fossil unicorn's horn, a substance used in medicine, a terrene crustaceous spar.

Notice there is no mention of a mythical horse like creature.

rhinoceros

RHINOC'EROS, n. [L. rhinoceros; Gr. nose-horn.]

A genus of quadrupeds of two species, one of which, **the unicorn**, as a single horn growing almost erect from the nose. This animal when full grown, is said to be 12 feet in length. There is another species with two horns, the bicornis. They are natives of Asia and Africa.

Treasury of Scripture Knowledge

"The Reem, most probably denotes the Rhinoceros, so called from the horn on its nose. In size he is only exceeded by the elephant; and in strength and power inferior to none. He is at least twelve feet in length, from the snout to the tail; six or seven feet in height; and the circumference of the body is nearly equal to his length. He is particularly distinguished from all other animals by the remarkable and offensive weapon he carries on his nose; which is very hard horn, solid throughout, directed forward."

Jamieson-Fausset-Brown

"Israel is not as they were at the Exodus, a horde of poor, feeble, spiritless people, but powerful and invincible as a Reem - that is, a Rhinoceros."

Check out this fascinating short You Tube video about the correct definition of a unicorn
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWHJMz2Neog&feature=player_embedded

The King James Bible is not at all alone in translating this specific Hebrew word as unicorn. In fact the word unicorn is found in Wycliffs translation 1395, Tyndale 1525 (he translated part of the Old Testament before he was killed), Coverdale's Bible 1535, Taverner's Bible, the Great Bible 1540, Matthew's Bible 1549, the Bishops Bible 1568, the Geneva Bible 1599, the so called Greek Septuagint version, the Italian Diodati 1649, Las Sagradas Escrituras of 1569 by Cassiodoro de Reina, as well as the Spanish Reina Valera of 1602, all of which preceded the King James Bible. Today, other more modern versions that contain the word unicorn are the Spanish Reina Valera of 1909, the Spanish Las Sagradas Escrituras 1999 edition "unicornio", the 2004 Spanish Reina Valera Gomez bible, the Portuguese A Bíblia Sagrada - Job 39:9-10 "Querer-te -á servir **o unicórnio** ou ficará na tua cavalaria? **IO** Ou amarrarás **o unicórnio** ao rego com uma corda, ou estorroará após ti os vales?", the French Martin 1744 "licornes", Luther's German 1545 (Einhorn) and the updated Luther German Bible of 1912 "einhornshomer", the Russian Synodal Translation 1876, the Modern Greek translation of the Old Testament "monokeros" (not to be confused with the so called LXX), the Catholic Douay version of 1950, Darby's translation of 1870, Brenton Translation 1851, English Jubilee Bible 2000, The Word of JAH 1993, the 21st Century King James Version 1994, the Third Millenium

Bible 1998, Daniel Webster's translation of the Bible 1833, Lamsa's 1933 Bible translation of the Syraic Peshitta, and in the 1936 edition of the Massoretic Scriptures put out by the Hebrew Publishing Company of New York.

The Modern Greek Bible (totally different from the so called Greek Septuagint) has the word monokeros in these same Old Testament passages, and if you look at a Modern Greek dictionary, the word simply means a UNICORN! Here is an online Greek dictionary with both Greek and English. <http://www.kypros.org/cgi-bin/lexicon> Just type in the word monokeros for Greek to English, or on the other side (English to Greek) type in the word unicorn. There you will clearly see that the way to say unicorn is this same Greek word, and the Modern Greek Bible has unicorns in these same Old Testament passages. You can see the Modern Greek Bible at this site here: <http://unbound.biola.edu/>

Here is what the Modern Greek translation looks like in Job 39:9-10 where the unicorn is mentioned twice - Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow?

Job 39:9 Θελει ευχαριστηθη ο μονοκερωσ να σε
δουλευη, η θελει διανυκτερευσει εν τη
φατνη σου;

Job 39:10. Δυνασαι να δεσης τον μονοκερων με τον
δεσμον αυτου προς αροτριασιν;

The Greek Septuagint (LXX). Regardless of when you think this Greek translation of the Old Testament was made or by whom, this version is chock-full of satyrs, devils, dragons, and unicorns. The word unicorns is found in Numbers 23:22; Deuteronomy 33:17; Job 39:9; Psalms 22:21; 29:6; 78:69, and 92:10.

Some King James Bible critics hypocritically tell us that the KJB translators followed the so called Greek Septuagint (LXX) when they translated the word as "unicorn". This objection is both hypocritical and false. Hypocritical because all modern versions like the NASB, RSV, ESV, NIV frequently reject the clear Hebrew readings and follow one of the various LXX readings, and false because in Deut. 33:17 where the KJB and others rightly have the plural "unicorns" the KJB margin says: "HEBREW - an unicorn". Notice that it does NOT say "LXX - an unicorn".

One other verse that puts the lie to the modern versions use of "wild ox", besides the reference in Job, is Psalms 92:10. 'But my HORN shalt thou exalt like the HORN of AN UNICORN.'" The NASB, NIV, NKJV read: "You have exalted my HORN like THAT OF A WILD OX." Now, I ask you a simple question. How many horns does a wild ox have? Not one, but two.

Psalm 92:10 Wycliffe 1395 - And myn horn schal be reysid as an vnicorn; and myn eelde in plenteuouse merci.

Bishop's Bible 1568 - But my horne shalbe exalted lyke the horne of an vnicorne: for I am

annoynted with excellent oyle.

Coverdale 1535 - But my horne shalbe exalted like the horne of an Vnicorne, & shal be anoynted with fresh oyle.

The Great Bible 1540 - "Psalm 92:10 But my horne shalbe exalted like the horne of an Unicorne, for I am anoynted with fresh oyle."

Matthew's Bible (John Rogers) 1549 - "Psalm 92:10 But my horne shalbe exalted like þe horne of an Vnicorne, & shalbe anoynted wyth fresh oyle.

Geneva Bible 1599 - But thou shalt exalt mine horne, like the vnicornes, and I shalbe anoynted with fresh oyle.

Third Millenium Bible 1998 - But my horn shalt Thou exalt like the horn of a unicorn; I shall be anointed with fresh oil.

Some would criticize the KJB in Deut. 33:17 where Moses is blessing Israel. He says: "His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his HORNS are like the HORNS OF UNICORNS: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth." The Oxford and Cambridge KJB editions say in the marginal note: Hebrew - unicorn. This is a masculine singular absolute noun. Yet it is rendered as a plural "unicorns" not only by the KJB but also by Lamsa's 1936 translation of the Syriac Peshitta - "his horns are like the horns of unicorns", Websters Bible 1833, the Third Millenium Bible 1998 and the 21st Century KJV 1994. Those who criticize the KJB for rendering a singular noun as a plural are showing their selective use of the Hebrew language.

All Bible translations frequently translate a singular masculine absolute noun as a plural. In this same book of Deuteronomy, in just the first 10 chapters, the NKJV, NIV and NASB do this very thing. Deut. 8:15 "nachash" & "aqrab" (singular nouns) are translated by all as "serpents & scorpions", in Deut. 1:19, 20 "har" is mountains in the NKJV, Deut 1:1, 2:37 "bahar" and "har" as hills or mountains in NKJV, KJB, and NIV. Deut. 1:23, 35 and in many other places "ish" as "men"; Dt. 3:3 "sarid" as survivors in NIV, NKJV; Deut. 5:15 "ebed" slaves in NIV, Deut. 7:9 "dowr" generations in NIV & NKJV; Deut. 8:8 "rimmown" as pomegranates in NASB, NIV and NKJV; Deut. 9:11, 18, 25 "layil" as "nights" in NASB, NIV and NKJV; and Deut. 10:19 "gare" as strangers or aliens in NIV, NKJV, and NASB.

So the person who tries to attack the KJB for rendering a singular noun as a plural, just doesn't know what he is talking about. Because of the "horns" plural, the KJB has made the singular noun as plural in the context. There are many words like this in English which can be either singular or plural like: deer, sheep, moose, elk, fish and trout etc.

The historic rabbinic commentary (Ibn Ezra, Radaq, Rashi, Saadi Gaon et. al.) views on Deuteronomy 33:17, and the re'em question in general support the King James reading in Deuteronomy. As an example Radaq (Kimchi) is considered, historically, as the single most important Hebrew linguist and grammatical expert. Go to the link (it is still active as of Feb. 2010) and scroll down to Discussion #115 where he talks about the Lion and the Unicorn.

<http://britam.org/proof3.html>

Rabbi David Kimchi (Safer HaShorashim, RAEM): His horns are like the horns of unicorns (Deuteronomy 33:17). "It is intended to mean that his horns are like the horns of (several) unicorns for the Raem has only one horn."

The Unicorn was a one horned animal of some kind. I don't think we know for sure what it was, but it was not a wild ox as the NKJV, NASB, NIV have it. It could not be tamed (Job 39: 9, 10) and Psalm 92:10 is speaking of a one horned animal, while the "wild ox" of the NKJV, NIV, NASB has two horns; not just one.

One definite possibility is the Indian rhinoceros, of which there are still about 2000 alive today. They used to cover large areas, but are now limited to India and Nepal. They weigh about 4,500 pounds, can run at over 20 miles an hour; they have one large horn on the snout and their scientific name is Rhinoceros UNICORNIS.

In the original 1611 edition of the KJB, the editors placed "or Rhinoceros" in the margin of Isaiah 34:7 where it reads: "And the unicorns shall come down with them." It is still in the modern editions of the KJB. So the KJB editors were not ignorant of the possibility of the unicorn being a rhinoceros. I do not know, nor does any one else but God, what the unicorn was or is.

Jerome in the 4th century translated the Hebrew word Reem as Rhinocerotis five times and Unicornis four times. Jerome studied Hebrew under the Jews before he began his translation of the OT, thus it is from the Jews directly that Jerome derived his definitions.

The Unicorn was a one horned animal of great strength; it could not be tamed, and it is always used in a good and positive sense in Scripture. The KJB is not in error by translating this word as unicorn, but the modern versions are just taking a wild guess with their "wild oxen" and the other scriptures show their wild guess to be wrong.

Will Kinney

See also the related article called "Satyrs, Dragons, Unicorns and Cockatrices

<http://brandplucked.webs.com/satdragunicorns.htm>

Return to Articles - <http://brandplucked.webs.com/articles.htm>

Additional Notes - At one of the internet Bible clubs a man posted that the unicorn could not have been a rhinoceros because there never where rhinoceros in Israel. Well, the man is clearly wrong.

Rhinoceros in Israel? Yes.

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

The Skhul/Qafzeh hominids or Qafzeh-Skhul early modern humans[1] are human fossils from Qafzeh and Es Skhul Caves, Israel. Skhul Cave is on the slopes of Mount Carmel, while Qafzeh Cave is a rockshelter in Lower Galilee.

Qafzeh cave opens onto a wall of Wadi el Hadj in the flank of Precipice Mountain. Excavation of the cave by René Neuville began in 1934 and resulted in the discovery of the remains of 5 individuals in the Mousterian levels, which was then called the Levallois-Mousterian.[19] (see Levalloisian). The lower layers of the cave were later dated to 92,000 years ago,[20] and a series of hearths, several human graves, flint artifacts (side scrapers, disc cores, and points[21]), animal bones (gazelle, horse, fallow deer, wild ox, AND RHINOCEROS [22]), a collection of sea shells, lumps of red ochre, and an incised cortical flake were found.[23]

<http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20100801154608AAZr8FT>

Has anyone found rhinoceros fossils in Israel?

Best Answer - Chosen by Voters

yes, Israel was populated by big mammals like in Africa.

I remember from time ago a tour I had to the north (Israel) in my paleontologic course, we spent a whole day in a site which has FOSSILS OF RHINOS, elephants, hippopotamus and others.

<http://books.google.com/books?id=dBFFSwNID24C&pg=PA250&lpg=PA250&dq=fossils+of+rhinoceros+in+Israel&source=bl&ots=xk66UOCJja&sig=igOL8pqy0dVI4J0NtfrO1uNuk7c&hl=en#v=onepage&q=fossils%20of%20rhinos%20in%20Israel&f=false>

In his book, Bones of Contention, Marvin L. Lubenow, quotes: "Qafzeh, Israel, dated at about 98,000 years of age. Animal fossils found in association are RHINOCEROS, fallow deer, wild ox, gazelle and wild horse."

<http://dinosaurs.about.com/od/mesozoicmammals/p/Stephanorhinus.htm>

About Stephanorhinus:

For a megafauna mammal that dominated the plains of Pleistocene Eurasia for well over a million years, Stephanorhinus remains fairly obscure, especially compared to its more famous

cousin *Coelodonta* (aka the Woolly Rhino). The remains of this prehistoric RHINOCEROS have been found in a startling number of countries, ranging from France, Spain, Russia, Greece, China, and Korea to (possibly) ISRAEL AND LEBANON. *Stephanorhinus* was a bit larger than modern rhinos, and it was distinguished by its two horns: a long, narrow, bony one on the tip of its snout and a shorter one, further up toward its eyes, made of hardened skin. No one knows exactly why *Stephanorhinus* went extinct, though it probably succumbed to competition from better-adapted (and better-insulated) rhinos during one of Eurasia's periodic cold snaps.