

Psalm 2 – A Mistranslation?:

I would like to raise an issue brought to the attention of a recent Prayer Meeting of The Olive Tree Connection in Brisbane, Australia. This issue is the mistranslation of Psalm 2 v 6 and was illuminated to us by Frank Selch, the President of The Olive Tree Connection (www.theolivetreeconnection.com)

While there are over 300 prophecies that relate to Jesus as the Messiah and perhaps another 500 which relate to his Second Coming, which of these prophecies tell us specifically that he was going to be sacrificed as a lamb, as our Passover Lamb, and thus, that his blood would be poured out on the Holy Hill of Zion?

The New Testament states that our Messiah died according to the Scriptures. (*1 Cor 12:3 "For I delivered to you at the first that which I also received: that Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures,"*). When the Apostle Paul made this statement there was no New Testament so he was referring to the Tanak or Hebrew Bible (OT). So the simple question is where does the OT prophesise this?

The prophecies that appear to relate specifically to Jesus' death are:

*Zec.12:10 They will look on me, the one they have **pierced**, and they **will mourn for him** as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son.*

Comment: 'pierced' doesn't necessarily mean killed, but 'mourn for him' would seem to imply this.

*Ps.22:15-16 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**. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have **pierced my hands and my feet**.*

Comment: the 'dust of death' seems to clearly indicate being very close to death, although this verse may refer to being bitten by dogs.

*Daniel 9:26 After the sixty-two 'sevens,' **the Anointed One will be cut off** and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. [Or 'off and will have no one'; or 'off, but not for himself']*

Comment: This verse does not necessarily indicate death, although the period of time mentioned (the 483 years), especially in Dan 9:25 and the possible reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD does tend to support the inference that this prophecy was referring to the Messiah Jesus' death.

*Isa 53:7 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.*

*Isa.53:45-, 10-12 Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he **was pierced** for transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed...*

*Yet it was the LORD's will **to crush him** and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD **makes his life a guilt offering**, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. After **the suffering of his soul**, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities. Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because **he poured out his life unto death**, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

Of all these, Isaiah 53 is the clearest prophecy that indicates the fact that the Messiah would be killed; that his blood would be poured out. Given the reference here to a lamb being led to the slaughter, it seems fair to conclude that the Messiah would imitate the Passover Lambs in his death and in the

atonement that it would provide. While this prophecy may be sufficient for most of us, many Jews would not accept this as their scriptures make it very clear that national Israel is a servant of God and even a 'suffering servant'.

Thus, it seems we have few references in the OT that are reasonably clear (at least in hindsight!) that the Messiah would be slain.

Let us now look at the very explicit reference to Psalm 2 in Acts 13:29-33 and the context of Acts 13:

*When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead, and for many days he was seen by those who had travelled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people. "We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the **second Psalm**: "You are my Son; today I have become your Father."*

Is Luke referring to just this portion of Psalm 2 or the whole Psalm? I would suggest the whole Psalm, as it is the whole Psalm that contains the amazing promise from God of the coming age, the kingdom of God. He tells us that Jesus became the Son of God by his death and resurrection (although, we know that the angel Gabriel told Mary that her child would be called the Son of God because of his conception by the power of God's Spirit.)

So why Psalm 2? Look at the version below which includes the Strong's Concordance numbers.

Psalm 2

¹Why^{H4100} do the heathen^{H1471} rage^{H7283}, and the people^{H3816} imagine^{H1897} a vain^{H7385} thing?
²The kings^{H4428} of the earth^{H776} set^{H3320} themselves, and the rulers^{H7336} take counsel^{H3245} together^{H3162}, against^{H5921} the LORD^{H3068}, and against^{H5921} his anointed^{H4899}, saying,
³Let us break^{H5423} their bands^{H4147} asunder, and cast^{H7993} away their cords^{H5688} from us.
⁴He that sitteth^{H3427} in the heavens^{H8064} shall laugh^{H7832}: the Lord^{H136} shall have them in derision^{H3932}.
⁵Then^{H227} shall he speak^{H1696} unto them in his wrath^{H639}, and vex^{H926} them in his sore displeasure^{H2740}.
⁶Yet have I set^{H5258} my king^{H4428} upon my holy^{H6944} hill^{H2022} of Zion^{H6726}.
⁷I will declare^{H5608} the decree^{H2706}: the LORD^{H3068} hath said^{H559} unto me, Thou art my Son^{H1121}; this day^{H3117} have I begotten^{H3205} thee.
⁸Ask^{H7592} of me, and I shall give^{H5415} thee the heathen^{H1471} for thine inheritance^{H5159}, and the uttermost^{H657} parts of the earth^{H776} for thy possession^{H272}.
⁹Thou shalt break^{H7489} them with a rod^{H7626} of iron^{H1270}; thou shalt dash^{H5310} them in pieces like a potter's^{H3335} vessel^{H3627}.
¹⁰Be wise^{H7919} now^{H6258} therefore, O ye kings^{H4428}: be instructed^{H3256}, ye judges^{H8199} of the earth^{H776}.
¹¹Serve^{H5647} the LORD^{H3068} with fear^{H3374}, and rejoice^{H1523} with trembling^{H7460}.
¹²Kiss^{H5401} the Son^{H1248}, lest^{H6435} he be angry^{H599}, and ye perish^{H6} from the way^{H1870}, when^{H3588} his wrath^{H639} is kindled^{H1197} but a little^{H4592}. Blessed^{H835} are all^{H3605} they that put their trust^{H2620} in him.

H5258 'naw-sak' A primitive root; to pour out, especially a libation, or to cast (metal); by analogy to anoint a king:—cover, melt, offer, (cause to) pour (out), set (up).
Libation : The pouring of a liquid offering as a religious ritual. The liquid so poured.

Another version (from: <http://stonge.intheway.org/documents/Psalm%20Study.pdf> Page 5):

PSALM 2: FROM THE HEBREW

¹For what purpose are the Gentiles in commotion over you, and the people growling in vain?

²The kings of the earth station themselves and the ruling ones are found united against the Lord and against Messiah.

3. "Let us tear away their bonds and let us throw from us their fetters."
4. The one sitting in heaven laughs, the Lord (Adonai) scoffs at them.
5. Then he speaks out to them by his nostrils and with his anger terrifies them.
6. "I pour out (as a libation) my king on Zion, my holy hill."
7. Let me tell (recount, rehearse) of a decree: The Lord says to me "My Son (are) you, I today have begotten you.
8. Ask! From me and I will personally deliver the Gentiles for your inheritance, and for your possession (inheritance synonym) the extremities of the earth.
9. You will break (be displeasing to) them by your rod of iron, like a fashioned vessel you will pulverize (Piel) them."
10. So now, kings consider, and be admonished (by the Lord – passive) governors of the earth.
11. Serve! The Lord (YHWH) with reverence and rejoice/tremble! With trembling.
12. Kiss the Son lest he be angry and you (plur.) perish in the way when he begins to burn a little from his nostrils, blessed (are) all seeking refuge in him.

Lexicon Results for nacak (Strong's 05258)	
Hebrew for 05258	
נָסַךְ	
Pronunciation Guide	
nacak {naw-sak'}	
TWOT Reference	Root Word
TWOT - 1375,1377	a primitive root
Part of Speech	
v	
Outline of Biblical Usage	
1) to pour out, pour, offer, cast a) (Qal) 1) to pour out 2) to cast metal images 3) to anoint (a king) b) (Niphal) to be anointed c) (Piel) to pour out (as a libation) d) (Hiphil) to pour out libations e) (Hophal) to be poured out 2) to set, install a) (Qal) to install b) (Niphal) to be installed	
Authorized Version (KJV) Translation Count — Total: 25	
AV - pour out 12, pour 4, cover 3, offer 2, melteth 1, molten 1, set 1, set up 1; 25	
Hebrew Lexicon (Help)	
I. נָסַךְ i. q. נָסַךְ (compare No. 3) ΤΟ ΠΟΥΡ, ΤΟ ΠΟΥΡ ΟΥΤ, Isa. 29:10, specially— (1) in honour of a god, to make a libation, σπένδειν, Ex. 30:9; Hos. 9:4. Whence Isa. 30:1, נָסַךְ הַכֶּבֶד σπένδουσθαι σπονδῆν, to make a covenant, be- MORE (40 KBytes)	

Note that almost all translations use 'set' or 'installed' in verse 6, even though the primary meaning of the Hebrew word 'nacak' is 'to pour out' and in this context seems to be correctly rendered 'to pour out a libation'.

Given Luke's reference in Acts 13 to this Psalm and the context of his reference to it, I would suggest that Luke understood verse 6 to refer to the sacrifice of the Messiah – the pouring out of his blood, on the Holy hill of Zion.

Note also in Leviticus 4:27-35 that the blood of the sin-offering had to be poured out at the base of the altar. The blood of Jesus (what was left after the scourging) was poured out on the cross and ran down to the base of the cross (altar of sacrifice) – an almost literal fulfilment of Leviticus.

So it appears that here in Psalm 2:6 we have another specific prophecy to the crucifixion of Jesus.

In viewing the rest of Psalm 2 it appears that it cannot apply to any other King of Israel – it can only apply to the Messiah, after he has returned and inaugurated the Kingdom of God. Verse 8 tells us that the Messiah, the Son of God will be given the whole earth, thus it would not appear to be a description or prophecy of any other King of Israel.

Perhaps, even more telling is the reference to Psalm 2 by the Apostle Peter in Acts 4:23-28

23 And being let go, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them. 24 So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: "Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, 25 who by the mouth of Your servant David have said:

*' Why did the nations rage,
 And the people plot vain things?
 The kings of the earth took their stand,
 And the rulers were gathered together
 Against the LORD and against His Christ.'*

27 "For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together 28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done

Note particularly the reference here to Herod, etc doing the will of God. Peter is linking Psalm 2 to the crucifixion of Jesus and indicating that the crucifixion was God's plan. Clearly then, Peter saw a link between the two, a link that makes perfect sense if his understanding of Psalm 2 verse 6 was that it described God pouring out His libation on His Holy Hill.

So it seems most intriguing, that having looked at, at least 10 Bible Commentaries, I can find no author who addresses this issue or who recognizes the significance of verse 6.

Having made a reasonably exhaustive search of articles on the Internet, I also found very few articles that recognize this issue re verse 6. The 3 sites listed below appear to acknowledge it without fully recognizing its importance.

http://www.calvin.edu/worship/services/series/lent_journey/04_16_06.php#_fn31
<http://www.christianhomesite.com/pottersville/OT/Psa020112.html>
<http://stonge.intheway.org/documents/Psalm%20Study.pdf>

If the translations we have of this verse have mostly been based on translations out of the original Hebrew **before** the time of Jesus (for example the Septuagint (LXX)¹ written around 280 BC), then this might help explain this use of secondary meanings of 'nacak', such as 'set' and 'install', as very few, if any before the death of Jesus, would have anticipated that the Messiah would be sacrificed to become the ultimate 'once for all' Passover Lamb and the 'last Adam' who, through his obedience unto death, would restore all things.

So the question still stands. Is there another reason? Why has the Hebrew 'nacak' been translated into its secondary meanings of 'set' or 'install' and why have so few recognized this apparent error?

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Septuagint: Psalm 2

1 inati efruacan eqnh kai laoi emelethsan kena
2 parethsan oi basileis ths ghs kai oi arxontes sunhxqhsan epi to auto kata tou kuriou kai kata tou xristou autou diayalma
3 diarrhcwmen tous desmous autwn kai aporriywmen af hmwn ton zugon autwn
4 o katoikwn en ouranois ekgelasetai autous kai o kurios ekmukthriei autous
5 tote lalhsei pros autous en orgh autou kai en tw qumw autou taracei autous
6 egw de katestaqhn basileus up autou epi siwn oros to agion autou
7 diaggellwn to prostagma kuriou kurios eipen pros me uios mou ei su egw shmeron gegennhka se
8 aithsai par emou kai dsw soi eqnh thn klhronomian sou kai thn katasxesin sou ta perata ths ghs
9 poimaneis autous en rabdw sidhra ws skeuos keramews suntriyeis autous
10 kai nun basileis sunete paideuqhte pantes oi krinontes thn ghn
11 douleusate tw kuriw en fobw kai agalliasqe autw en tromw
12 dracasqe paideias mh pote orgisqh kurios kai apoleisqe ec odou dikaias otan ekkauqh en taxei o qumos autou makarioi pantes oi pepoiqotes ep autw

Psalm 2 - Septuagint - Andersen's Translation

1 Why did the nations rage, and the people imagine vain things?
2 The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers gathered themselves together, against the LORD, and against his Christ,
3 saying, "Let us break through their bonds, and cast away their yoke from us."
4 He who dwells in the heavens will laugh them to scorn, and the LORD will mock them.
5 Then he will speak to them in his anger, and trouble them in his fury.
6 But I have been made king by him on Zion, his holy mountain,
7 declaring the ordinance of the LORD: the LORD said to me, "You are my son, today I have begotten you.
8 Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for your possession.
9 You will shepherd them with an iron rod; you will dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel."
10 Now therefore understand, you kings; be instructed, all you who judge the earth:
11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice in him with trembling.
12 Accept correction, lest at any time the Lord should be angry, and you perish from the righteous way, whenever his wrath might be suddenly kindled; blessed are all they who trust in him.