

MONOCEROS, THE UNICORN

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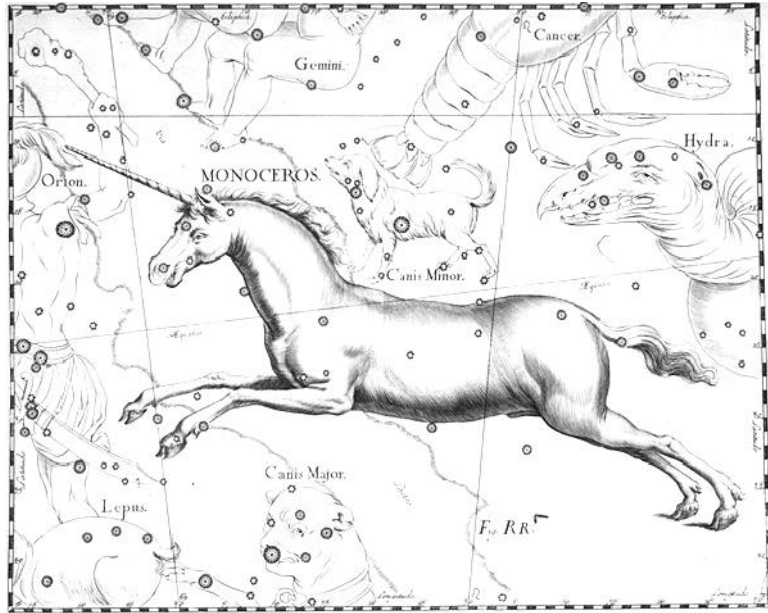


Figure 1: Polish astronomer, Johannes Hevelius' (1611-1687), depiction of Monoceros. The view is from the exterior of the celestial sphere so that west is to the right and east to the left. The view as seen from earth is that when the figure is flipped left to right. The equator runs from left center to upper right center.

In an apparently vacant area of the sky where the earth's equator crosses the Milky Way's equator; surrounded by Orion, Gemini, the Little Dog (Canis Minor), the serpent Hydra,¹ and the Big Dog (Canis Major) lies the faint constellation of Monoceros the unicorn. The brightest star in the constellation, α is a star of magnitude 3.6. The star is too faint to have a name; it has only a few designations such as Fl. 30, which means it is star number thirty in John Flamsteed's (1646-1719) list of stars for the constellation.

Monoceros is not one of the constellations found in the Greek and Arabian constellation lists. That also means there is no mythology as-

¹ Bouw, G. D., 2002. "Hydra the Serpent," *B.A.*, 12(101):92.

sociated with it, either. Most scholars believe that the constellation of Monoceros is a recent invention, first charted in 1624 by the German astronomer Jakob Bartschuis (or Bartsch) as *Unicornu*. Christian Ludwig Ideler (1766-1846) and Heinrich Willhelm Matthias Olbers (1758-1840), however, say that the constellation is much older. Ideler notes a reference to Monoceros dating from 1564 as, “the Horse south of the Twins and the Crab.”² Joseph Justus Scaliger (1540-1609) found it on a Persian sphere, which is probably the source of Bartschuis’ 1624 figure and also the source of Ideler’s 1564 quote. On that assumption, we include the constellation in the list mentioned in Scripture.

Unicorns in Scripture

Unicorns are referred to nine times in Scripture, namely: Numbers 23:22; 24:8;³ Deuteronomy 33:17;⁴ Job 39:9, 10;⁵ Psalm 22:21;⁶ 29:6;⁷ 92:10,⁸ and Isaiah 34:7.⁹ The mention of unicorns in Scripture gives theologians and Bible apologists apoplexy because the scholars they want to please, the world’s scholars, have banned unicorns to the realm of mythology. But before we look at the wishful thoughts of those scholars, let us see what Scripture says of unicorns.

The reader who reviews the aforementioned references will note several things. First, unicorns are powerful; God’s strength is compared to the unicorn’s from our perspective (Numbers 23:22; 24:8). Second, unicorns play a role in the judgment of the nations (Numbers 24:8b; Deuteronomy 33:17; Isaiah 34:7). Third, unicorns symbolize the seat of God’s and kings’ power (Psalm 22:21; 92:10). Fourth, unicorns cannot be domesticated (Job 39:9-10) and fifth, Deuteronomy

² Ideler, Christian Ludwig, 1815. *Sternkunde der Chaldaer*.

³ Numbers 23:22, 24:8a—God brought them out of Egypt; he hath as it were the strength of an unicorn. (Balam’s prophecy against Balak.)

⁴ Deuteronomy 33:17—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: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh. (Moses blesses Joseph.)

⁵ Job 39:9, 10—Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? ¹⁰ Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? or will he harrow the valleys after thee? (God speaks directly to Job.)

⁶ Psalm 22:21—Save me from the lion’s mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns. (Jesus speaks from the cross of the throne of God.)

⁷ Psalm 29:6—He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn. (Rejoicing in the Lord’s kingdom.)

⁸ Psalm 92:10—But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with fresh oil. (David’s kingdom restored in the Millennium.)

⁹ Isaiah 34:7—And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness. (A Second Advent reference.)

33:17 equates the horn of Ephraim and of Manasseh each as a unicorn that shall push people to the ends of the earth. The context there is Moses' blessing on Joseph. Finally, the context of Isaiah 34:7 is God's wrath poured out on the nations (v. 2) during which the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll (v. 4; Rev. 6:13-14). The Lord then descends to earth on a white horse (Revelation 19:11 v.f.) with the armies of heaven. According to Isaiah 34:7, unicorns will accompany them.

Attempts to Ban Unicorns from Scripture

Unicorns are an embarrassment to modern scholars of all types. It makes sense, then, that theologians wishing to make Scripture palatable to the world should endeavor to ban unicorns from Scripture. In order to do so, the latest technique is to suppose that God did not mean to say unicorn, or did not say so in the "original autographs" which, as they no longer exist having long since turned to dust, we (conveniently) cannot check. Hence we must examine the linguistic machinations of the scholars regarding the original dust.

The Hebrew word translated "unicorn" (*re'em* H7214 in *Strong's Concordance*) stems from a root word (*ra'am* H7213) meaning to be lifted up. (*Ra'am* occurs in Scripture only once, in Zechariah 14:10.¹⁰) The word after *re'em* in Strong's dictionary also stems from the same root and means "coral" because of its horn-like appearance. That is all the light that the Hebrew sheds on the word translated, unicorn.

Modern versions insist that *re'em* is a "wild ox," or a "bull," or a "rhinoceros." One will not find any reference to unicorns in those. In the Authorized Bible, for some occurrences of unicorn in the text, a margin note offers an alternative translation. (Bear in mind that we are dealing with a single underlying Hebrew word translated consistently as unicorn in the Bible.) There is no margin alternative for the unicorns found in Balaam's prophecy in Numbers, nor for Psalm 22:21 where Christ prays on the cross, nor for Psalm 29:6, 92:10. This is not surprising since prophecy can easily be dismissed as allegorical and the Psalms as poetic license. Although the same could be said for Moses' blessing on Joseph in Deuteronomy 33:17, the A.V. does have a margin note recommending "wild oxen" as an alternate reading. Margin readings in the A.V. suggest "rhinoceros" in Job 39:9 and Isaiah 34:7, but the "skipping" reference of Psalm 29:6 makes this doubtful; besides, rhinos generally have two horns, not one. Job 39:9-12, Psalm 29:16, and Isaiah 34:7 superficially endorse the "wild ox" (N.B., not rhinoc-

¹⁰ Zechariah 14:10—All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place,

eros) margin reading of Deuteronomy 33:17, but the animal mentioned has only one horn.

Every time unicorn is mentioned, the horn is singular, as in Psalm 92:10; if unicorn is plural, then more than one horn is mentioned as in Deuteronomy 33:17 and Psalm 22:21. Why should there be only one horn if this is an ox, which normally has two horns, especially since only half of the ox's power would be indicated by doing so? Besides, Hebrew has another word for ox (*sowr*), so that is hardly a valid alternative in light of the historic interpretation of *re'em* as "unicorn." Furthermore, we find unicorns together with bullocks and bulls in Isaiah 34:7, thus ruling out that *re'em* was a bull or bullock. Unicorns are found in heaven in Psalm 22:21 and in Isaiah 34:7. Also note that it takes more than one unicorn to supply Joseph with enough horns in Deuteronomy 33:17, even though one bullock is involved. Modern scholars deem the unicorn to be an Arabian oryx which has two straight, closely-spaced horns, but it still has two horns and does not answer the above singular-plural argument.

Unicorns in History

Is the unicorn a mythical creature? Sightings of unicorns date as recently as the eighteenth century. Recorded unicorn sightings come from India, Ethiopia, Abyssinia, Mecca, China, Persia, and even Canada. The descriptions do not readily fit any animal alive today, especially given that the horn is reported to be from two to three feet long. There is plenty of anecdotal evidence that these were real creatures. Sixteenth-century European accounts tell of unicorns located in private zoos (there were no public zoos back then). Greek mythology most assuredly has fantastic tales of magical unicorns. But other regions of the world have illustrations of unicorns, some fantastic, and others not. The fantastic depictions could be every bit as fanciful as the Chinese dragons paraded at their new year's celebrations. Other, earlier depictions were more akin to modern dinosaurs. Something similar could have happened to depictions of unicorns, as they are strong, unruly,

If by *re'em* any form of ox or rhinoceros were meant, why would there be a need for a single-horned animal under a special name? Of course, the most likely candidate among living animals is the rhinoceros, of which some have one horn, albeit not two or three feet long. More likely, the animal is unknown to scholars (that is all that is needed for them to deny the existence of anything), or unicorns are now extinct. If they are extinct, the horns of unicorns were believed to heal and were thus ground to powder and we cannot reasonably expect to

find any surviving horns. If not extinct, the animal could well be common in obscure areas of Asia. Such things have happened before.

It was mentioned earlier that ancient depictions of unicorns survive to this day. One is a seal, pictured at right,¹¹ found in the ruins of Mohenjo-Daro, a ruined city of Pakistan in the Indus River Valley northeast of Karachi. The ruins date from about 1700 B.C., based on a published carbon



date of 3000 B.C., which has been corrected for decay of the earth's magnetic field. The seal is a bit over an inch (29 mm) on each side (which is about half the size of the illustration), and is made of fired steatite. Steatite is a soft rock, easily carved, that hardens when fired. The picture here has been flipped left to right so that the image is as it would appear impressed on sealing wax. The lettering above is in an unknown Indus script, yet to be deciphered. The unicorn depicted has some characteristics of a rhinoceros but it has a long tail and the horn is on the forehead instead of on the nose. The horn is also inordinately long for a rhinoceros. Of course, the animal on the seal is not directly identified as an unicorn.

Conclusion

We include Monoceros as a constellation mentioned in Scripture because it is named in the highest density of constellation names in Scripture, which is in the blessings of Balaam whom Balak hired to curse Israel. Monoceros is, these days, dismissed from the group of classic constellations under the assumption that it was first invented circa 1625. Although it was unknown to the Greeks and Arabs, it does seem to be an ancient constellation because Scaliger found the constellation depicted on a Persian globe. It is clear from archeological finds that unicorns were more prevalent in Asia than in Europe or Africa. It is thus not surprising that the Western world would not maintain a constellation, particularly not a faint one, of an animal of which it knew little. The constellations are now widely recognized as originating from Mesopotamia, which includes Persia (Iran). We conclude that Monoceros the unicorn is an authentic ancient constellation, preserved in Asia while lost elsewhere, and that it represents the throne of God

¹¹ Courtesy, www.harappa.com.

and the earthly powers, particularly the descendants of the sons of Joseph, that will serve as God's instruments of judgment.

There is thus no reason to doubt the reading in the Authorized Bible, especially given that the unicorn will return to earth when Christ comes from heaven to judge the nations.

We also noted the possibility that unicorns may be extinct on earth at the time of the Second Coming, when they will return with the armies of heaven (Isaiah 34:7).

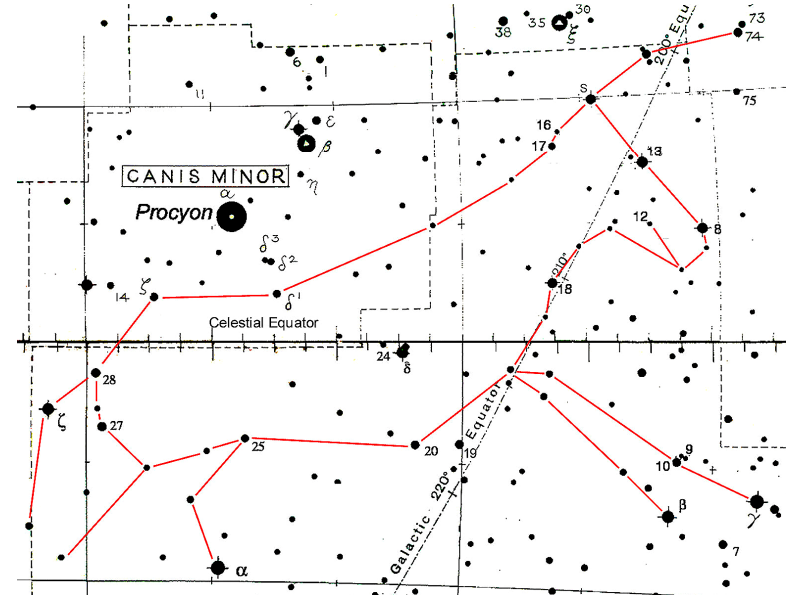


Figure 2: The constellation Monoceros under the assumption that ancient eyes were superior to modern electric light-blinded ones. Compare this with the figure on the seal. Note the Galactic and Celestial Equators. The Celestial Equator is the earth's equator projected onto the sky.

CAUSE FOR CONCERN!

A Washington, DC airport ticket agent offers some examples of why our country is in trouble! Here's one:

A senior Vermont Congressman called, furious about a Florida package we did. I asked what was wrong with the vacation in Orlando. He said he was expecting an ocean-view room. I tried to explain that's not possible, since Orlando is in the middle of the state. He replied, "Don't lie to me, I looked on the map and Florida is a very thin state!"