

QEREN & KERAS

THE BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF THE HORN

**Qeren is a projecting prominence.
Something that projects. Something that rises. Something that stands
prominently.**

Why this study

The English word horn is correct, but it can be smaller in our imagination than the biblical image. Hebrew qeren can describe an animal horn, a geographical prominence, an altar projection, a tusk, and even projecting rays. Figuratively, it becomes a vivid vocabulary for strength, dignity, authority, kingship, victory, exaltation, and salvation.

This guide is intentionally exhaustive. It includes all 76 occurrences of Strong's H7161 in the Hebrew Old Testament (69 distinct verses) and all 11 occurrences of Strong's G2768 in the Greek New Testament (10 distinct verses). Counts were checked against Englishman's Concordance. The aim is not to force every occurrence into one meaning, but to let the full range of the image become visible.

The core image

Whether we are looking at the horn projecting from an ox, a rocky prominence rising from the landscape, a horn rising from the corner of an altar, or metaphorically a king whose power God causes to rise, the physical concept is remarkably consistent: a projection or prominence extending from its source.

That is why qeren becomes such an effective biblical image for power, dignity, kingship, victory, and exaltation. Those meanings are not arbitrary labels attached to an animal part; they grow naturally from the physical picture.

HEBREW • קֶרֶן (QEREN)

Pronunciation: QÉ-ren (approximately KEH-ren) — Plural: קֶרְנוֹת (qarnot), approximately kar-NOTE — Strong's: H7161

Concrete range

Use	Representative text	Description
Animal horn	Gen 22:13	Literal horn; a projecting part associated naturally with strength and defense.
Geographical prominence	Isa 5:1	A hill / elevated or projecting landform. This matters for hearing the poetry of passages like Psalm 18.
Altar horn	Ex 27:2	The projections rising from the corners of the altar; "of one piece with it."
Tusk / ivory	Ezek 27:15	A projecting piece of ivory.
Ray / projection of light	Hab 3:4	Projecting radiance; many translations render the form as "rays."
Figurative prominence/power	1 Sam 2:1,10; Ps 75	Strength, dignity, authority, victory, kingship, or exalted standing.

A. Altars, Sacrifice, and Sanctuary

Reference	Use / observation
Exodus 27:2 (2x)	Brazen Altar: horns on its four corners; horns are of one piece with the altar.
Exodus 29:12	Blood of the bull placed on the horns of the altar.
Exodus 30:2	Altar of incense: its horns are of one piece with it.
Exodus 30:3	The incense altar and its horns overlaid with gold.
Exodus 30:10	Annual atonement made on the horns of the incense altar.
Exodus 37:25	Construction of the incense altar; its horns are of one piece with it.
Exodus 37:26	The incense altar and its horns overlaid with pure gold.
Exodus 38:2 (2x)	Construction of the Brazen Altar; four horns, one at each corner, integral to the altar.
Leviticus 4:7	Blood placed on the horns of the altar of incense.
Leviticus 4:18	Blood placed on the horns of the altar before the LORD.
Leviticus 4:25	Blood of the sin offering placed on the horns of the burnt-offering altar.
Leviticus 4:30	Blood placed on the horns of the burnt-offering altar.
Leviticus 4:34	Blood placed on the horns of the burnt-offering altar.
Leviticus 8:15	Moses puts blood on the horns of the altar to purify it.
Leviticus 9:9	Aaron puts sacrificial blood on the horns of the altar.
Leviticus 16:18	Day of Atonement: blood placed on the horns of the altar.
1 Kings 1:50	Adonijah takes hold of the horns of the altar.
1 Kings 1:51	Adonijah is reported as holding the horns of the altar.
1 Kings 2:28	Joab flees to the tent of the LORD and takes hold of the horns of the altar.
Psalms 118:27	The sacrifice is bound with cords to the horns of the altar.
Jeremiah 17:1	Judah's sin is engraved on the horns of its altars.
Ezekiel 43:15	The visionary altar extends upward in four horns.
Ezekiel 43:20	Blood is put on the altar's four horns.
Amos 3:14	The horns of the altar at Bethel will be cut off and fall.

B. Literal Horns, Instruments, and Containers

Reference	Use / observation
Genesis 22:13	The ram caught in the thicket by its horns.
Deuteronomy 33:17 (2x)	Joseph's majesty and force compared to the horns of a wild ox.
Joshua 6:5	The ram's horn sounded at Jericho.
Psalms 22:21	The horns of wild oxen.
1 Samuel 16:1	Samuel is told to fill his horn with oil.
1 Samuel 16:13	Samuel takes the horn of oil and anoints David.
1 Kings 1:39	Zadok takes the horn of oil and anoints Solomon.
Ezekiel 34:21	Strong sheep push the weak with their horns.

C. Strength, Dignity, Exaltation, and Salvation

Reference	Use / observation
1 Samuel 2:1	Hannah: "My horn is exalted in the LORD."
1 Samuel 2:10	The LORD will exalt the horn of His Anointed.
2 Samuel 22:3	The LORD is "the horn of my salvation."
1 Chronicles 25:5	God gives Heman sons "to exalt the horn."
Job 16:15	Job lays / thrusts his horn in the dust - humiliation and defeat.
Psalms 18:2	The LORD is "the horn of my salvation," surrounded by rock/fortress/stronghold imagery.
Psalms 75:4	The boastful are warned not to lift up the horn.
Psalms 75:5	Do not lift up your horn on high.
Psalms 75:10 (2x)	The horns of the wicked are cut off; the horns of the righteous are exalted.
Psalms 89:17	By God's favor "our horn is exalted."
Psalms 89:24	In God's name the king's horn will be exalted.
Psalms 92:10	"You have exalted my horn like the wild ox."
Psalms 112:9	The righteous person's horn is exalted in honor.
Psalms 132:17	God will cause the horn of David to sprout/grow.
Psalms 148:14	God has lifted up a horn for His people.
Jeremiah 48:25	The horn of Moab is cut off.
Lamentations 2:3	Every horn of Israel is cut off.
Lamentations 2:17	The horn of Zion's adversaries is exalted.
Ezekiel 29:21	God causes a horn to sprout for the house of Israel.
Amos 6:13	Israel boasts of having taken "horns" by its own strength.
Micah 4:13	Zion's horn is made iron.

D. Kings, Kingdoms, and Political Power

Reference	Use / observation
1 Kings 22:11	Zedekiah makes iron horns as a sign of military victory.
2 Chronicles 18:10	Parallel account of Zedekiah's iron horns.
Daniel 8:3 (2x)	The ram has two high horns.
Daniel 8:5	The male goat has a conspicuous horn.
Daniel 8:6	The ram is described as possessing the two horns.
Daniel 8:7	The goat shatters the ram's two horns.
Daniel 8:8	The great horn is broken.
Daniel 8:9	A little horn emerges and grows.
Daniel 8:20	The ram's two horns are identified with the kings of Media and Persia.
Daniel 8:21	The great horn is identified with the first king of Greece.
Zechariah 1:18	Zechariah sees four horns.
Zechariah 1:19	The horns are powers that scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.
Zechariah 1:21 (3x)	The craftsmen come against the horns of the nations; the nations had lifted up the horn against Judah.

E. Other Concrete Extensions

Reference	Use / observation
Isaiah 5:1	A geographical qeren - a fruitful hill / projecting elevation.
Ezekiel 27:15	"Horns of ivory" - ivory tusks.
Habakkuk 3:4	Qarnayim from God's hand - projecting rays / radiance.

THE GREEK BRIDGE • κέρας (KERAS)

Pronunciation: approximately KEH-rahs Strong's: G2768 New Testament: 11 occurrences in 10 distinct verses.

The Septuagint (LXX) regularly uses keras as the Greek counterpart of Hebrew qeren. This matters because the Old Testament's horn imagery enters the New Testament through an established biblical vocabulary, not through an unrelated new metaphor.

All New Testament occurrences

Reference	Use / observation
Luke 1:69	A "horn of salvation" raised up for us in the house of David.
Revelation 5:6	The slain Lamb has seven horns - complete/sovereign power.
Revelation 9:13	The four horns of the golden altar before God.
Revelation 12:3	The dragon has ten horns.
Revelation 13:1 (2x)	The beast has ten horns; ten diadems are upon those horns.
Revelation 13:11	Another beast has two horns like a lamb.
Revelation 17:3	The scarlet beast has ten horns.
Revelation 17:7	The mystery includes the beast and its ten horns.
Revelation 17:12	The ten horns are explicitly interpreted as ten kings.
Revelation 17:16	The ten horns act against the harlot.

A correction worth noting

The 11th Greek occurrence is the second use in Revelation 13:1 ("on his horns ten diadems"), not a second use in Revelation 17:16. That distinction is easy to miss when counting verses instead of lexical occurrences.

The linguistic bridge

Psalms 18:2 uses Hebrew qeren yish'i - "the horn of my salvation." The Greek Old Testament renders the same core image as keras sōtērias mou. Then Luke 1:69 announces that God "has raised up a keras sōtērias - a horn of salvation - for us in the house of His servant David."

HORN • RAISED UP • SALVATION • DAVID

Following the image through Scripture

Hannah - 1 Samuel 2:1: her horn is exalted in the LORD. God has raised her from humiliation into dignity and vindication.

Hannah's prophecy - 1 Samuel 2:10: God will exalt the horn of His Anointed. The image moves toward kingship.

David - 2 Samuel 22:3 / Psalm 18:2: God is the horn of his salvation. The phrase sits inside a landscape of rock, fortress, shield, high place, and stronghold.

Psalm 132:17: God will make David's horn sprout/grow. The Davidic line is pictured as rising into divinely given prominence.

Luke 1:69: God has raised up a Horn of Salvation in David's house. The Old Testament language reaches forward into the arrival of Messiah.

THE BRAZEN ALTAR AND THE HORN

The Brazen Altar had four qarnot rising from its corners. Exodus 27:2 emphasizes that they were not separate ornaments: “its horns shall be of one piece with it.” Then the sacrificial system repeatedly places blood upon those horns.

We should not claim more than Scripture says. The Bible never explicitly states, “The horns of the Brazen Altar prophetically represent Jesus as the Horn of Salvation.” That direct equation is not given to us.

What we can responsibly observe is the canonical pattern: the horn repeatedly carries ideas of prominence, strength, exaltation, kingship, victory, and salvation; the altar has four qarnot rising from the place of sacrifice and marked with blood; Hannah anticipates the exalted horn of God's Anointed; David calls God the horn of salvation; God promises that David's horn will grow; and Luke announces a Horn of Salvation raised up in David's house.

The slain Lamb

Revelation 5:6 adds one final, striking image: a Lamb “as though it had been slain” possesses seven horns. Sacrifice and sovereign power are not opposites. The Lamb is slain, yet the Lamb is victorious.

Why the geological use matters

If we hear qeren only as an animal horn, we can miss some of the poetry. Isaiah 5:1 proves the word can describe a geographical prominence. In Psalm 18, David surrounds “horn of my salvation” with rock, fortress, refuge, shield, and stronghold language. It would be too strong to say David simply meant “mountain peak,” but the wider semantic range lets the poem remain visually coherent rather than forcing the reader out of the landscape.

“Horn” is the right translation. But qeren is a bigger picture.

Final thought

A qeren can be the horn of an ox, a rocky prominence rising from the landscape, an altar projection, a tusk, a ray of light, or a metaphor for a person or kingdom raised into strength. Across Scripture, that physical picture becomes a magnificent vocabulary for strength, dignity, authority, kingship, victory - and ultimately salvation.

Sources & verification

Occurrence counts and reference lists were checked against Englishman's Concordance / Strong's entries H7161 (76 occurrences) and G2768 (11 occurrences). Representative lexical observations were compared with standard Hebrew and Greek usage as reflected in those concordance entries and the biblical contexts. For sermon use, this guide intentionally distinguishes explicit textual statements from broader canonical resonance.

Suggested deep-dive passages: Exodus 27:1-8; Leviticus 4; 1 Samuel 2:1-10; 2 Samuel 22; Psalm 18; Psalm 75; Psalm 89; Psalm 118; Psalm 132; Isaiah 5:1; Daniel 8; Habakkuk 3:4; Zechariah 1:18-21; Luke 1:67-79; Revelation 5:6; 9:13; 17:12.