

WAKE UP!

The Aleph Tav
– a careful scrutiny
on critical reactions



ARNO LAMM &
EMILE-ANDRE VANBECKEVOORT

God's
Prophetic Calendar

**WAKE
UP!**

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This document is an attachment to the book Wake Up! God's Prophetic Calendar in Timelines and Feasts. It should therefore be studied together with the book, since this document contains many references to subjects covered there.

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For Bible references the translator has used the New King James Bible throughout this document, unless mentioned otherwise

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The Aleph Tav – a careful scrutiny on critical reactions

In *Wake Up!* we include some commentary on the special position of the Aleph Tav in the Old Testament's text. The commentary includes the question of whether this unpronounced letter combination **אָ**, which was never to be left out by copyists, refers to Christ? Already in the early ages, famous Jewish rabbis claimed that this **אָ**-combination had to be God's unpronounceable name, which had been included in the text of the Bible. This statement is often dismissed in our current times due to scholars who now claim that **אָ** is merely a grammatical emphasis of the direct object¹ in a sentence, and therefore, has no deeper spiritual meaning. However, this linguistic definition of **אָ** doesn't seem to be conclusive, which leads us to believe that the final answer cannot be not found in grammar. The document on this topic is interesting for advanced students in particular.

John starts his argumentation of the Gospel with these words:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him,
and without Him nothing was made that was made.*²

John 1:1 starts with the announcement that Christ was there in the beginning and that all things were made through Him (!). The Bible contains many examples of Christ's presence in the Old Testament, as well as many references to it in the New Testament. At the end of his life, John had a large-scale vision that we can read about in the last book of the Bible, Revelation. At the beginning of that vision, Jesus tells John:

*I am the Alpha and the Omega... who is, and who was,
and who is to come, the Almighty.*³

It might seem that this verse refers to the first and last letter of the Greek alphabet. Although the New Testament was originally written in Greek, John was not Greek, which makes it very unlikely that Jesus would be talking to John in Greek. It is therefore much more likely that Jesus told John:

"I am the Aleph and the Tav"

¹ Without this comment, it can be unclear what the subject is, and what the direct object pointer is in the Hebrew text.

² John 1:1 . Also see Col. 1:15-17.

³ Rev. 1:8, but also see verses 1:17, 21:6, 22:13.

referring to the first and last letter of the Hebrew Aleph-Bet. Thus the question arises regarding what Jesus wanted to convey here; is it more than His merely being the beginning and the end? If Jesus states that He was and is the Aleph Tav and that He has been here from the beginning when He created the heavens and the earth, we must go back to Genesis 1, where it is literally written:

בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ
*In the beginning God **אֵת** created the heavens and the earth.*

Most modern translators have noticed something remarkable: each time texts were copied or translated in ancient times, they frequently encountered the letter combination **אֵת**. While that combination was never translated or pronounced, the copyists were not to forget even the smallest sign, symbol or character, even if they didn't understand its function.

Because the Aleph Tav combination was not translated or read out aloud, scholars have thought that the addition of these **אֵת** letters had to have a different function. It was obvious that it was a sign that stressed the direct object in the sentence and that could indeed apply to Genesis 1:1¹. However, that "formula" should then be true for all occurring cases in order to make it a conclusive explanation. This is not the case. One opinion states that it indeed refers to the direct object, but that **אֵת** is only added when that direct object is an entity in itself², if it is not, then the **אֵת** is not included³. The Jews have always been convinced of one thing though: whether we understand it or not, each word was specifically chosen and destined to be part of His Word. In God's Word, every jot and title is meaningful. The Bible says that the Torah has become flesh and that He has instructed us through His example. If Christ is indeed that living Torah, we should be careful with the sign that refers to his omnipresent engagement and involvement.

The Jewish rabbi Hirsch⁴ made an intriguing statement on this subject, "The wise deduct laws from the Bible parts where **אֵת** is included in the text. Generally, this symbol apparently refers to a content that goes beyond the strict meaning of both letters."

1 Sometimes **אֵת** repeatedly occurs in one sentence, but sometimes it doesn't for many sentences in a row. In some chapters, **אֵת** isn't mentioned at all.

2 E.g. in the texts 'God created the heavens and the earth (Gen. 1) or took the royal city (2 Sam. 12:26) or So she called his name Joseph' (Gen. 30:24) you can find the Aleph Tav pointing to the direct object.

3 'So Leah conceived and bore a son (Gen. 29:32), 'if I have now found favor in Your sight' (Gen. 18:3).

4 Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888).

Hirsch continues to point out that ‘Aleph Tav’ is related to the word ‘oth’ which means ‘sign’ (אֹת)¹. In other words, this letter combination represents much more than itself. It’s a Godly symbol. The rabbis Nahum of Ginzo, Simeon, and Akiva² premised that the Aleph Tav is a ‘sign’, a reinforcement of the text and a “godly invitation to study the text to discover the next layer with a deeper meaning” (this contradicts the obvious, literal meaning in no way). Famous rabbis considered the Aleph Tav to be the “*mark*” of the “*divine hand*” for thousands of years.

John states that Christ has been there from the beginning and that He is the Creator as well. Jesus says that He is the Aleph Tav. Taking this into account, our focus should be on the fact that Aleph Tav as an untranslated word not only occurs in Genesis 1, but also in thousands of other places in the Old Testament. His point of view comes forth specifically from the lack of a definite explanation, but perhaps it is also simply the correct interpretation. To respond to this question, we need to take a closer look at some of the critics who have wanted to limit the Aleph Tav issue to a linguistic phenomenon.

Critique of the אַב-combination as a reference to Jesus Christ

Of course, the information on אַב is not new, but there are Bible scholars who find it hard to believe that this sign has been enclosed in the text of the Bible as a reference to Christ. They probably consider it to be too mysterious that this sign is locked up in the text. They agree that it’s very well possible that Jesus is making Himself known as the Aleph Tav instead of the Alpha and Omega, but as written above, they limit the significance of this idea by arguing that this letter combination occurs in the Old Testament thousands of times and each time stresses, or refers to, the direct object in the sentence.

However, this rule can only be considered as truth when it is proven that in each of those thousands of cases, this unpronounced letter combination indeed only refers to the direct object in the sentence, nothing more, nothing less. In this case, it would be a ‘coincidence’ that Jesus explicitly refers to this letter combination אַב in the Book of Revelation. In such a case, it could just as well have been any other letter combination. However, textual research shows us that in many cases, this letter combination is not

1 E.g. see Gen 9:12 en 13: the sign (אֹת) of the covenant.

2 The famous rabbi Akiva (50-135 Anno Domini) was convinced that the Aleph Tav is God’s hidden sign. *The Aleph Tav Messianic Scriptures MATS* – William H. Sandford, p. Xv. Also see *Collected writings of Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch*. Hirsch stated that Aleph Tav embodied more than itself, meaning: it meant more than the limited.

the direct object and thus this premise *cannot* stand. And if this premise cannot stand, we should investigate other explanations. If many Jewish scholars agree that there is no concrete answer, and therefore assert that the **א** in fact refers to God's unpronounceable name, then other Hebraists cannot simply deny the validity of this argument by merely referring to the direct object theory. The Bible tells us not to set aside even the smallest letter, nor the least stroke of a pen; he who does that, will be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven. If **א** only serves as a reference to the direct object, we could just as well (linguistically) leave out that **א** marker in many places, since both the sentence and its context already make clear what that direct object is. Why then has it been explicitly forbidden to leave out even the smallest letter? We refer those of you interested in further researching the meaning of **א**, to William H. Sanford's *The Messianic AlephTav Scriptures*, one of the most extensive studies in this field.

Sanford published *The Messianic AlephTav Scriptures (MATS)* both for Hebrew and Paleo-Hebrew. His explanation is not the one of a rabbi, but one of a scholar who believes in Jesus Christ.

Sanford points out that:

- **א** *can* indeed grammatically refer to the direct object in a sentence.
- However, this is not a general rule since it often doesn't refer to the direct object.¹
- Not even the smallest letter nor the least stroke of a pen can be removed from God's Word, because **א** indeed has an independent meaning.

But... readers who want to maintain a one-sided application of Aleph Tav as a grammatical reference to the direct object, should also be able to answer to a number of Sanford's probing questions and/or theses to defend their own thesis:

- If the **א** in Paleo-Hebrew texts only refers to the direct object and has no spiritual meaning whatsoever, then why isn't **א** mentioned in **each** verse that contains a direct object? After all,
- There are thousands of verses that contain a direct object, but do not mention **א**. Is there a conclusive explanation for this phenomenon?
- There are sentences in which **א** occurs more than once². Why is that?

¹ The book *Messianic AlephTav Scriptures* makes clear that it often precedes a verb, an adjective, a preposition or adverb, while specifically there the direct object would ask for it, but it mostly refers to the theme of the verse.

² E.g. see 1 Kings 18:38.

- There are thousands of verses that ask for an Aleph Tav referrer to the direct object, but do not have one. Apparently that means that the theme of that verse in that sentence doesn't need an emphasis of the "Aleph Tav marker."
- There are complete chapters¹ (!) in the Torah in which א is not mentioned at all. Why is Aleph Tav only incorporated in 26%² of all Tanakh's verses, and not in the remaining 74%? Could this mean that the presence of the Aleph Tav is probably connected with the subject matter or the theme and not per se with the grammar of the sentence, even if in some cases it does refer to the direct object?
- If the above is true, which (grammatical) rules could have applied that Moses left א out in some places, and in others indeed included it? Who can answer that question?
- How is it possible that א both refers to the name of Esau and Jakob, but that in Genesis 27:1, we see א in front of Esau's name for the last time and that after he sold his birthright, this symbol is not seen next to his name anymore, although his name is mentioned in the Torah 78 times more? Is that a coincidence?
- Ruth's name is mentioned 12 times in the Book of Ruth. The first ten times, the Aleph Tav symbol is not included in front of her name. After Boaz redeems her, the symbol is placed in front of her name. How can we explain this?
- The reader who does more thorough research, will notice that whenever a verb expresses action or transmission and at the same time answers the question *who's* taking the action or *what* is being transferred, א isn't so much or systematically referring to the direct object (noun or pronoun), but it is used each time to refer to the One who takes the action, and/or to the covenant commitment of Father and Son. In those cases Aleph Tav doesn't only occur in the context where the noun is the direct object, but as such can also be related to adjectives, prepositions and adverbs.
- From a number of commentaries, we can also learn that א is not only related to the direct object. Things that are related to 'creation', 'connection', 'judgment', 'atonement', 'blessing' and 'temple objects' are typically connected to

¹ If you use the Interlinear Scriptural Analyzer (ISA) you find more than 170 chapters: there are 172 chapters in the Tanakh that don't include any aleph tav, and probably hundreds of chapters that only contain 1 aleph tav. In the Torah, Leviticus 12 doesn't mention any aleph tav, neither does Numbers 12. The same counts for Judges 5, 1 Chr. 3, 2 Chr. 19, Ezra 2, 4, 5, Neh. 11, Job 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 39, Psalms 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 17, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 30, 32, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 50, 52, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 81, 82, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 93, 95, 96, 97, 99, 101, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 118, 120, 122, 124, 128, 129, 131, 139, 149, 150, Prov. 2, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 30, 31, Eccles. 6, Song of S. 4, Jes. 12, 16, 17, 18, 25, 31, 32, 35, 42, 43, 46, 54, 57, 58, 60, 61, Lament. 3, 5, Ez. 19, 38, Dan. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, Hos. 11, 13, 14, Joel 1, Micha 1, 2, Nah. 1

² Namely 5883 out of 23145 verses.

the Aleph Tav symbol and also, as mentioned before, to the events that are related to God's intervention or His covenant commitment.

According to Sanford, the **𐤀** - symbol in Paleo-Hebrew is **first and foremost** a sign of the **'power of the covenant'**, in accordance with the meaning of both letters. But, because the Father, through Christ¹, has entered all covenants, in the end, according to Sanford, **𐤀** points to Christ and that is exactly what John discusses in John 1. This doesn't mean that **𐤀** is always related to positive events. It can also occur in situations that describe a prohibitive situation² or one in which the 'power of the covenant' is opposed. Above all, **𐤀** is a covenant marker.

Let us focus on a few examples: Genesis 15:18 is translated as

'On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram...'

In this case, the translators presumed that **𐤀** wasn't mentioned as an indicator of the direct object, but that it belonged to the word 'with' next to Abram; yet, the direct object here is 'a covenant' and not Abram. It is said that Moses used **𐤀**, provided with vowel points, to say 'with', while at least until the 8th century A.D. there were no vowel points in the Paleo-Hebrew Textus Receptus. By leaving **𐤀** with vowel points untranslated in other places, we can speak of a double standard here.

In this context, Sanford raises the question whether Moses used **𐤀** to emphasize the godly hand and the strength of the covenant that was made **with** Abram, and whether the frequent use of this symbol in the original text isn't an extra confirmation that Father and Son work together in everything?³ It is a fact that, in the same context of Genesis 15 in the previous verse 17, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appears, in which Sanford sees an implicit reference to the Father, working through his Son.

Another example is the original text of Exodus 20:18, which mentions several phenomena, witnessed by the people: thunder, lightning, the sound of the trumpet and the mountain in smoke. In the original text, those 'phenomena' are always accompanied by the **𐤀** symbol. The fact that these aren't just direct objects becomes clear

¹ For all things have been created through him and for him, Col. 1:16.

² E.g. see Lev. 18:22. In this verse Moses is simply expressing that this commandment is divine and placing the symbol as a mark of "covenant". It is as if Moses is using the **𐤀** as a "SEAL" of authority to express emphasis of this commandment and throughout the Torah.

³ Sanford characterizes this working together as the Yah-head.

from the parallel text in Deuteronomy 5:22-27 where – again joined by several **א** symbols – we see that these accompanying events clearly refer to a God Who acts and speaks with humans (covenant). Therefore, you cannot simply mark **א** as a grammatical feature.

In 1 Kings 18:38, **א** appears five times (**וַאֲתֵּן**) and in these cases it is always translated with ‘and’. Does this sentence have five references to a direct object, or is there something else going on here? The translators didn’t translate the Alef Tav (**א**) in **וַאֲתֵּן**, but were only translating the letter ו (vav). Sanford says that this can’t be restricted to a grammatical clarification, because in this sentence, the prophet Jeremiah is giving credit to a miraculous work performed by Yeshua.

Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed וַאֲתֵּן the burnt sacrifice, וַאֲתֵּן the wood, וַאֲתֵּן the stones and וַאֲתֵּן the dust, and it licked up וַאֲתֵּן the water that was in the trench.

It would be a great thing if Hebraists would search along with Sanford, because Sanford has by far completed his search.

The idea that Jesus was *unintentionally* merely referring to the first and last letter with **א**, doesn’t make any sense either when we consider the Book of Hebrews, which says that Christ is the author and finisher¹ of our faith, again referring to the letter *meanings* of Aleph and Tav. Indeed, He was there at the beginning and He is the finisher, and the Bible contains an abundance of examples showing this.

Bill Sanford concludes that, wherever the **א** sign occurs, **this always happens because the subject matter has a relation to the Godhead fulfilling something**, whether this is about the creation, the covenant, reconciliation, judgments or blessings. The **א** also features in verses in the Tanakh that are related to events in which Father and Son are involved in relation to people, persons, places and things, such as temple objects.

Through all of this, Sanford wonders whether the **א**-symbol first and foremost shouldn’t remind us of the Godly presence and/or the hand/strength of the Covenant-God. He observes that denying the deeper meaning of this symbol or brushing it aside is convenient for those who deny Christ’s divinity. This is especially applicable to the later Jewish rabbis, who have adhered to the explanation of the direct object, after which this was included in the regular linguistic education. We learn

¹ Hebr.12:1-3.

something completely different from Genesis 1, John 1:1 and Revelation 1:17: Christ is the first and the last, the Aleph and the Tav through Whom God acted ‘in the beginning’¹, “*because the Word was with God and the Word was God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*” Thereby the Holy Scriptures themselves are included, because He is the Word and the many Aleph Tav’s are His seal. Could it be the case that we are only starting to see the truth regarding what “the Scriptures speak of Him?”

In Western theology we often see people react suspiciously when the issue of a deeper meaning in a text is brought up. The thought of a deeper layer is almost immediately dismissed as ‘suspicious.’ We agree that the text of the Bible is not destined to find extra-Biblical codes to use for future predictions. That is incorrect and we should refrain ourselves from this type of interpretation. However, the Bible certainly contains mysteries and deeper layers of meaning. For example, if we list the names of the first ten forefathers in the Bible, a meaningful sentence referring to Christ as the coming Messiah occurs, based on the meaning of those names:

- Adam: man
- Seth: appointed
- Enos: mortal
- Kenan: grief
- Mahalelel: the blessed Elohim
- Jered: coming down
- Henoch: instruction
- Methuselah: His death will bring
- Lamech: the desperate
- Noah: comfort/rest

This layer of meaning isn’t visible when reading the texts in Genesis, but it does become clear from the names of these forefathers. This good news was already there in the book of Genesis.

Sanford doesn’t only counter the thesis that Aleph Tav is an exclusively grammatical reference to the direct object, but he also investigated אַח as a part of words², and אַח in the reversed order (חא). This word, Tav Aleph in itself means ‘room’, but only in the Book of Ezekiel where it refers to the room in the temple.

¹ Gen. 1:1.

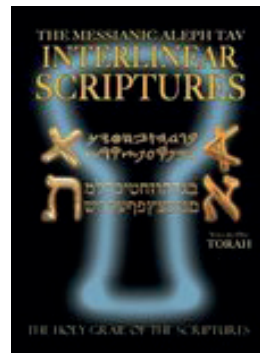
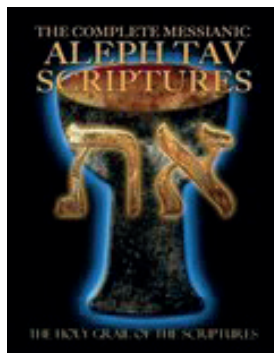
² E.g. Truth = אמת.

The investigations of Bill Sanford in the Messianic Aleph Tav Scriptures are profound and the examples are almost inexhaustible. Sanford also investigated the 10 different offerings in the temple. Each one of them has a specific meaning and purpose. Of all these offerings, the sin offering¹ is the only offering that has an Aleph Tav in the Hebrew word.

חטאת

This Hebrew word² shows a picture of the condition of the offender being separated from the Yah-head because of sin. Only this sin offering was able to atone and purify and it made the offender guiltless. Sanford wonders whether this isn't an amazing type and foreshadow of the work Yeshua would do on Calvary? Indeed, this word incorporates אֵת while the two other letters חֵ and תֵ refer³ to the separation from God because of that sin. However, the Bible teaches us that Yeshua was made a sin offering⁴ for us. That sin offering was brought outside the city or camp, just as Golgotha was outside the city as well.

The interested reader is referred to an English introductory document on William H. Sanford's book which can be found in the library on the *Wake Up!* website. We advise interested students to read and test *The Complete Messianic Aleph Tav Scriptures MATS*. It is available both in Hebrew as in Paleo-Hebrew (English) at amazon.com.



1 Hebr.: Chattaah of chattath (חַטָּאת), Strong's 2401, 2403.

2 King James Version: 182 times translated as 'sin' and 116 times translated as 'sin offering' (blueletterbible.org).

3 חֵ (Chet) means Outside, divide in half [Sin divides us from God] and תֵ (Tet) - Mud (Sin makes us dirty).

4 Isa. 53:10, Hebr. 10:18.