



## Why does the AENT Bible feature the Hebrew Alef Tav on the front cover?

Most are familiar with (A) Alpha and (W) Omega in Revelation, however a literal translation is: **"I am Alap, also Tav," says the Master YHWH, Elohim; who is, and was, and is to come, the omnipotent.**" To the Hebrew mind Alef Tav takes us back to the very first verse in the book of Genesis.

Alef Tav are the first and last letters of the Hebrew alphabet (in Aramaic vav is pronounced with a "wuh" sound). In simple terms, Alap-Taw (את) is a direct object pointer. Its purpose is to show the part of a Hebrew sentence that receives an action, as in the first part of Genesis 1:1:

בראשית ברא אלהים את השמים ואת הארץ  
**Beresheet bara Elohim et hashamayim v'et ha'aretz**  
(In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth)

In English characters the key phrase is **et hashamayim v'et ha'aretz** and could literally be thought of in total as "In the beginning, **Elohim** sent creation to the heavens and the earth". Alef Tav is "the energy force" behind Creation Who reveals Himself in the name of YHWH (Yahweh)!

Alap-Taw is simply one eccentricity of expression in the 5,000 year old development of the Hebrew language. While it's true that Alap-Taw does not appear as a functionary in any Aramaic dialect, there is one huge exception where this rule is broken that speaks volumes on its deeper usages.

## The Deeper Message Begins

The most relevant fact about this word is also the most obvious: Alap and Taw are the first and last letters of the Hebrew-Aramaic alphabet and, just like the English phrase "from A to Z" suggests a full spectrum of thought, Alap-Taw does the same thing in Hebrew and Aramaic. This must especially be borne in the mind because it appears inside the creative act and affirms YHWH's authorship of creation as "the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End".

It is also notable that the first time YHWH appears in the Torah, it is with the **Elohim** title and the Alap-Taw appears right after that! We call this in Hebraic study a **remez** or "deep hint" that extends beyond the grammar of the sentence and into the mystical relationship of YHWH and His Nature, that He is literally the Beginning and the End.

But here's something that also hints at the deep linkages even more strongly, and it comes from an unlikely place:

ברשית ברא אלהא ית שמיא וית ארעא  
*Barasheet<sup>1</sup> bara Alaha eyt shamayim w'eyt araiā*

Here is the Aramaic version of Genesis 1:1. Now, even though the word is spelled ית in this dialect rather than Alap-Taw, we find this surprising fact according to the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon: <http://cal1.cn.huc.edu/>.

**yt, yt** (yāt, yātā) n.m. **essence**

1 essence *Syr.*; 2 w suff = refl pron --> ית prep. *Syr.*;

**3 sign of dir obj.** --> ית prep. *Syr.*

Babylonian Jewish scholars made an exception and adapted the Hebrew Alap-Taw into Aramaic, but phonetically spelled in their dialect, which at that time had no vowels. The only way they could approximate the way *ET* sounded was to substitute the **Ⲭ** with the letter י. Aramaic has no “sign of the direct object” except here. Such is also borne out by the fact that the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon lists all the dialects a word is used in—and there are quite a few—and here only lists “Syriac”, the dialect of the Peshitta Tanakh. What’s more, this passage is the only place the word appears in Tanakh (Old Testament)!

We should also observe here that the main reading CAL offers is “essence”, and indeed this is one of the main meanings of *miltha* (see John 1:1) as well! As a result, even the alternate meaning reflects the normative understanding of why to import Alap-Taw from Hebrew.<sup>2</sup>

The second meaning, a reflexive pronoun/preposition<sup>3</sup>, is also relevant here. Broadly speaking a reflexive pronoun is a pronoun bound to its antecedent, or the subject that comes before it. In English terms, a reflexive pronoun would be like either “himself” or “herself”, and these would be bound to a him or her previously. In this case, that him/her is YHWH Himself, called here Elohim. As a result, Alap-Taw is linked both grammatically and spatially to the Source, rather than solely “the heavens and the earth” as it would be in pure Hebrew. It is a depth of mystical treasures that is literally only possible in Aramaic, though the word is of Hebrew origin!

But of course the most relevant meaning is #3, the sign of the direct object itself that normally is never mentioned. The reason it is here is, I believe, to do honor to the Hebrew original Tanakh that the Babylonian Jews venerated, as well as a way to pass this esoteric depth on to future scholars.

In the end, we adapted the Hebrew אֵת to do justice to all these meanings, both prosaic and profound, both grammatical and poetic, as well as to do justice to the linkage and linguistic transference of these ideas from Hebrew and into Aramaic. Languages cross-pollinate and cross-influence one another over the long distances in place and time from which the Biblical record is drawn. As Israel went into Captivity from a Hebrew speaking country to an Aramaic one, Babylonian and Hebrew followers of YHWH took the best of the ideas from each camp and emerged stronger. Then, as we also move forward in our study and faith walks together, we come to the final and most important usage of this key word in the Renewed Covenant:

"I am Alap, also Taw," says the Master YHWH, Elohim; who is, and was, and is to come, the omnipotent." -Revelation 1:8 (AENT)

In the end, the Aramaic here is evoking the greatest statement about YHWH ever told, namely the He calls Himself **Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh**, I am Who I am, I was Who I was, and I will be Who I will be.

May we all realize the full blessing and depth then that YHWH the Eternal has provided for us in His Word, as well as the Word made flesh to **manifest** (Miltha) in Mashiyach (Messiah) with us and for us.

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<sup>[1]</sup> Hebrew grammarians when transliterating the Aramaic add the *alap* after "bar"; Aramaic lacks this letter but carries over the "ah" sound from the א.

<sup>[2]</sup> The Peshitta Tanakh, unlike its NT with the same name, is admitted by all scholars who produced it to be a translation from Hebrew sources. The Peshitta NT, by contrast, is hailed as original text by all the ancient Aramaic assemblies that preserved it, even after these same groups denounced each other.

<sup>[3]</sup> But as a suffix, or on the end of a word, not at the beginning.