

Seven Steps to the "Aleph-Tav" Bible: Why You Should Avoid This Approach to "Interpreting" Scripture

by Rob Vanhoff
rvanhoff@torahresource.com
1/29/14

In this short paper I will trace seven "hermeneutical" steps that are behind the assumption that the Hebrew word תא points to Yeshua the Messiah. For those interested in understanding its place in Hebrew grammar and syntax, "תא" (*et*) is used in the Tanakh for 1) the definite direct object marker, 2) a preposition meaning "with," and 3) the second person feminine singular, and even occasionally the second person masculine singular, pronoun. Moreover, the word תא is used in other ancient, non-biblical texts in the languages of Hebrew, Moabite, Edomite, Aramaic, and Ugaritic (Canaanite). In ancient Israel, Hebrew was a living language, and the "תא", with its various vocalizations, has always been an important component of *spoken* Hebrew and other Semitic languages. Encountering an ancient text that has a written תא is not something that should surprise us.

Some Background

I didn't always understand it this way. Back in the early 90's I would listen to Chuck Missler's teachings almost every single day. He was a local teacher (from Post Falls, Idaho at the time with a radio program, weekly "briefings," and a cassette-tape ministry). I was drawn in to Missler's explanations of the secrets of the Torah from the perspective of the "rabbis." It sounded absolutely wonderful. As far as I was concerned, Missler had insights into the Hebrew alphabet and rabbinic mysteries that were essential for getting to the "truth" of the identity of the Messiah... Missler blew my mind when he introduced us to the "AlephTav," (תא), a strange Hebrew word that is not translated into English! That's right, Missler asserted, this little word *cannot be translated!* Yet it's right there in the Hebrew for all to see. I was amazed. Then Missler, to close the deal, cites the Book of Revelation. "I am the Alpha and the Omega"... *the Aleph-Tav*. Sold! I mean that quite literally... I bought the tape set.

But there is some critical background information that I never heard from Missler. For one, the general context of the Northwest Semitic language group listed in the first paragraph. Also, the reason the תא is not translatable into English as a definite direct object marker is because English accomplishes by word order what Hebrew accomplishes with the תא. Take a simple sentence, for example: *The dog bites the man*. If I merely change the word order to *The man bites the dog*, the meaning changes! Not so in basic Hebrew, because the תא goes before the object. *The dog bites תא the man*. I am able to give emphasis to the victim by saying, *תא the man bites the dog*. The hearer (or reader) of our imaginary Hebrew-English sentence would still understand that it's the dog doing the biting, regardless of word order. But as it turns out, Missler is no Hebrew scholar, and when I look back I see what is true for all of us. *We don't know what we don't know*.

As of late, there has been a resurgence of this Missler-esque teaching that identifies Hebrew תא specifically with Yeshua, using the passages from Revelation to back it up. Below is a retracing of the "hermeneutical" decisions required to make that claim look legitimate. It should scare your socks off. I want you to imagine hearing a preacher using this kind of approach when teaching other passages of Scripture... would you stand for it?

The Seven Steps

Step 1) Take Revelation 22:13...

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

This is a solid rendering of the Greek.

Step 2) This is *obviously* referring to the **first** and **last** letters of the alphabet, the **beginning** and **end**. Therefore, since Alpha is the **first** letter of the Greek alphabet, we should replace it with Alef, the **beginning** of the Hebrew alefbet. And since Omega is the **last** letter of the Greek alphabet, we should replace it with Tav, the **end** of the Hebrew alefbet:

I am the ~~Alpha~~ *Aleph* and the ~~Omega~~ *Tav*, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.

Step 3) Now that we've made proper use of Yeshua's words "the first and the last, the beginning and the end," we are at liberty to strike out that two-thirds of the verse:

I am the ~~Alpha~~ *Aleph* and the ~~Omega~~ *Tav*, ~~the first and the last, the beginning and the end.~~

Step 4) Now, just for kicks, let's get rid of the "and" in between (I didn't like it there anyway, but now that we removed the parallels, why keep it?):

I am the ~~Alpha~~ *Aleph* and the ~~Omega~~ *Tav*, ~~the first and the last, the beginning and the end.~~

Step 5) Now let's keep the first "the," but get rid of the second "the" (Since the "and" is no longer there, why should we keep this "the"?)

I am the ~~Alpha~~ *Aleph* and the ~~Omega~~ *Tav*, ~~the first and the last, the beginning and the end.~~

Step 6) Now put those letters together and make a completely new sentence.

I am the *Aleph-Tav*.

Step 7) Now tell people that this is none other than the Hebrew word $\alpha\omega$. Therefore, I'll need to add some information to make it just right:

I am the $\alpha\omega$ you see every so often in the Hebrew Scriptures.

In such a way Yeshua's precious words have been twisted and distorted by teachers.