

THE TRUTH ABOUT ALEF-TAV

It has sometimes been said by well-meaning Bible teachers that the Hebrew word, *alef-tav* (אָת) is one of the many names for God found in the Hebrew Scriptures. Here is how the thinking goes: Alef is the first letter of the Hebrew *alef-bet* (alphabet), so it signifies the fact that God (or Yeshua) is the First, the Beginning. Tav is the final letter of the Hebrew *alef-bet*, therefore, God (or Yeshua) is the Last, the End. Those who hold to this view often cite Genesis 1:1 as an example where we can see that right from the beginning of creation, God is the First and the Last, since *alef-tav* is used in the very first verse of the Bible.

All of this sounds good except there is a big problem. The big problem is that *alef-tav* simply does not mean “the first and the last” or “the beginning and the end.” In passages like Genesis 1:1, *alef-tav* serves as a point in Hebrew grammar. It is related to the Hebrew word for “sign” (*oat*, אֹת). Because of this relationship, *alef-tav* is used in Hebrew grammar to designate which word in the sentence is the direct object. As such, it is, therefore, simply the “sign” of the direct object, when a sentence has a direct object. It is nothing more and nothing less. As the sign of the direct object, *alef-tav* is not to be translated. It has no translated meaning. It merely serves to show which word in a Hebrew sentence is the direct object of the verb.