New Covenant Originally Written in Hebrew, not Greek

Summary

What language did the New Covenant's authors actually think in? This article makes the case for Hebrew — and shows what gets lost in translation when that's forgotten.

- Internal Scriptural evidence (verses explicitly naming Hebrew phrases), coin and manuscript evidence, patristic testimony, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.
- Numerous "Hebraisms" in the surviving Greek text that only make full sense read back into Hebrew.
- The competing Greek and Aramaic theories traced to centuries of Christian anti-Jewish sentiment.
- Historical instances of Christian antisemitism (including the Inquisition and the writings of Martin Luther) as part of a case for recovering the New Covenant's Hebrew and Israelite character.

The full article begins on the next page.

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Every language possesses an inner structure, a specific flavour, and unique idioms reflecting a cultural background. These elements shape the way of thinking of those speaking or reading it. A language's idioms are only fully comprehended by people learned in that language. To translate language idioms directly into another language often makes it absurd and reveals the foreign origins of it.

Take the problem of idioms, for instance. What does "taking my hair" mean in English? Nothing at all, since it is from an idiom in Spanish, "tomar el pelo", meaning "to pull one's leg." In order to translate it dynamically, then, one must first know it was an idiom of speech, originally written in Spanish. Only then one may try to find an equivalent idiom in English.

On the other hand, what would happen if we assumed "tomar el pelo" was taken from the French? We would be at a loss to find in French anything such as "prenez les cheveaux." We would conclude, erroneously, that the original came from a poor French, or some assumption like this. For this is exactly what happened with the New Covenant language, as we shall demonstrate.

The New Covenant's original language was neither Greek nor Aramaic, as popular wisdom goes, but Hebrew. The same Hebrew as the Tanach; the "Old" Covenant was written in. It is only natural that it should be Hebrew, since we are dealing with the same country, only in a latter period of its history.

Furthermore, Yah'shua was living in Judea, surrounded by Hebrew disciples, who had as their sacred text, a Tanach written almost entirely *(except for a few chapters in Daniel (2:4-7), in Hebrew).*

Internal proofs for Hebrew being the original language spoken by Yah'shua are direct and convincing. We can take the New Covenant and prove this right away, in our own native language, be it English or Spanish or any other. There is no need for "experts" to tell us what to believe.

First, Scripture itself says the language of Yah'shua and His disciples was Hebrew - not Greek, nor Aramaic/Aramit. Luke 23:38: "And a superscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, THIS IS THE KING OF THE HEBREWS." If "Yah'shua spoke Aramaic" as many have been led to believe, why does it not list Aramaic here in Holy Scripture itself, since the sign was to the common folk, the vast majority of whom were Hebrew speaking Israelites?

John 5:2: "Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches." Notice that the Greek says here, as in every one of the quotations below, "hebraisti," *(obviously)*, "Hebrew."

John 19:13: “When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Yah’shua forth, and sat down on the judgment seat in a place that is called the Pavement, but in the Hebrew, Gabbatha.”
John 19:17: “And He bearing his stake went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew Golgotha.”

John 19:20:” Many of the Hebrews then read this title: for the place where Yah’shua was nailed was near to the city: and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.”

Acts 21:40: “And when he had given him permission, Saul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand to the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying…”

Acts 22:2: “*(And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept the more silence: and he saith,)*”

Acts 26:14: “ And when we had all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking to me, and saying in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the goads.”

Revelation 9:11: “And they had a king over them, who is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew language is Abaddon, but in the Greek language he hath his name Apollyon.”

Revelation 16:16: “And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Har Meguido *(Mount Meguido)* /’Armageddon’.”

Whom will we trust: man or Yah’shua Himself? Yah'shua spoke in Hebrew to Paul. Paul said so! These verses state directly that Hebrew was the spoken language. What did Yah’shua refer to when He said in Mat. 5:18: “…not a jot/“yoot” nor a tittle *(the little “crown” on top of the yoot)* will pass…” Both refer to the Hebrew alphabet. Would He have referred to aspects of the Hebrew alphabet with an audience who spoke Aramaic or Greek, and thus would not have understood Him?

If I would try to tell an English speaking audience for example, that “Yah’shua” should be “accented” on the “u,” very few people would understand since accents are almost nonexistent in English, except for a very few words like “attaché case” which are borrowed from other languages.

Despite this ample scriptural proof, various translations, especially the NIV, have falsified the original “Hebraisti” *(which does not require one to be a Greek scholar to understand it says "Hebrew")* substituting it with "Aramaic."

Why? Is it the same reason they have changed the name of Yah’shua´s half-brother Yaakov to “Saint James”? In honor of England’s King James, who was about to supply the monies for the translation of the Bible, and finally did not. Prior to this time in history, the letter “J” did not even exist.

Notwithstanding the internal proofs in the New Covenant itself, those from the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Talmud and those of Josephus, there are coins and inscriptions from the time of Yah’shua that nail "the

Aramaic coffin" shut once and for all, for those who are after facts, and not biased, anti-Semitic-laden opinions. "The evidence provided by coins is also important in trying to evaluate the linguistic situation in the time of the Messiah.

Yaakov Meshorer, curator of the Numismatic Department of the Israel Museum, and its numismatic expert, has listed 215 Jewish coins in his catalogue. Of these, 99 have Hebrew inscriptions, only one has an Aramaic inscription! From the fourth century B.C. *(later Persian Period)* until the end of the Bar-Cochba Revolt in 135 A.D., the entire history of Jewish coinage, only one Jewish coin, minted during the reign of Alexander Jannaeous *(103-76 B.C.)* is inscribed in Aramaic." *(Our emphasis)*

"At Masada, Herod`s stronghold overlooking the Dead Sea, archaeologists excavated from 1963 to 1965 under the direction of Professor Yigael Yadin. The epigraphical evidence is staggering: fragments of 14 scrolls, over 4,000 coins, and more than 700 ostraka *(inscribed pottery fragments)* in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, and Latin. Here too, the ratio of Hebrew to Aramaic is overwhelming." 1. Bivin and Blizzard Jr., op cit. pp. 55-56, 59-60.

In addition, there are over 5366 manuscripts of the New Covenant in Greek, each differing from the other and containing several hundred variants. However, in each one of these manuscripts there are idioms which are almost meaningless in Greek or Aramaic or in any language except in Hebrew! How can such a thing be explained unless it is because the original language was indeed Hebrew?

There are many of these Hebraisms, one of the most common of them being "Son of man". What does "Son of man" mean in English, Spanish, German, in any language? Absolutely nothing! The expression "Ben Adam" means literally "son of Adam" and by extension "son of man", and "man", Adam being of course the first of mankind. In any street corner in Israel you may hear "here comes this Ben Adam", meaning "here comes this man." This example, which occurs no less than 92 times in the Tanak *(the Hebrew Scripture)* and 43 times in the New Covenant *(Cruden's Concordance) i*s obviously the same Hebrew idiom.

It is said that the New Covenant was written in Koine Greek, “common Greek,” because it is found to be a poor or inferior kind of Greek. When we find as many of these Hebraisms as there are there, we begin to understand that it is not Koine Greek written in the substratum of the text, but a Hebrew original which was almost literally translated into Greek, a process resulting in making it sound like some poor or inferior form of Greek. Further, there is little, if any evidence that such an inferior form of Greek language even existed at the time, particularly one that would account for the very complex use of grammar that is otherwise common throughout the New Covenant.

Let us take another example, the idiom "Peace be to you", appearing twelve times in the New Covenant. What kind of a greeting is "Peace be to you" in English, Spanish, French, or any other language? It is meaningless, again. Only in Hebrew does it make any real sense. This is the most common, everyday greeting in Israel today. The world famous "shalom", meaning literally "peace", is really an everyday

greeting meaning anything from "Hi", to "How are you?" according to the intonation and the mood of the speaker.

The third and last internal proof of the Hebrew character of the New Covenant is the use of two very Hebrew ways of speaking: that of repeating things twice, and the answering of a question with another question. Yah'shua did both quite often. In Matthew 27:46: "...My Elohim, my Elohim, why hast thou forsaken me?" and in Luke 20:2-3: "And spake unto him, saying, Tell me, by what authority doest thou these things? or who is he that gave thee this authority? And he answered and said unto them, I will also ask you one thing and answer me..." What is important to stress is that these two characteristics, especially the former, comes uniquely with the Hebrew. It does not appear in English, or in any European language, for instance.

There are several external sources, i.e., outside of Scripture, pointing to Hebrew as the written language of the New Covenant, as many outstanding scholars have most eloquently attested. These sources are: the testimony of the Church fathers and the Dead Sea Scrolls. We will examine these two external sources, albeit briefly.

Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, c. 150 A.D. said: "Matthew put down the words of the Lord in the Hebrew language, and others have translated them, each as best he could." Irenaeus *(120-202 A.D.)* Bishop of Lions, France. "Matthew, indeed, produced his Gospel written among the Hebrews in their own dialect."

Origen *(c. 225 A.D.)* said: "The first Gospel composed in the Hebrew language, was written by Matthew...for those who came to faith from Judaism." Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea *(c. 325 A.D.)* "Matthew had first preached to the Hebrews, and when he was about to go to others also, he transmitted his Gospel in writing in his native [Hebrew] language" *(Ecclesiastical History III 24, 6).* And, also, Ephiphanius, Jerome, translator of the Scripture into Latin, the so-called Vulgata version, said the same.

The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered by an Arab shepherd boy in the caves of Qumran, in the Judean wilderness in 1947, contain a treasure load of Scripture: some 40,000 fragments of rolls, with 600 partial manuscripts, both scriptural as well as non-scriptural. "Of the ten major non-biblical scrolls published to date, only one, the Genesis Apocryphon, is in Aramaic.

The most recently published scroll, and the longest to date *(28 feet, equivalent to over 80 Old Covenant chapters)*, is the now famous Temple Scroll, also written in Hebrew. If we compare the total number of pages in these ten sectarian scrolls, we again find an overwhelming ratio of Hebrew to Aramaic *(179 pages in the nine Hebrew scrolls to 22 pages of Aramaic in the Genesis Apocryphon)*."1

In a translation of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the early authors falsely state: "Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the dominant view of the Semitic languages of Palestine in this period was essentially as follows: Hebrew had died; it was no longer learned at mother's knee. It was known only by the educated classes through study, as educated medieval Europeans knew Latin. Rabbinic Hebrew...was considered a

sort of scholarly invention…artificial, not the language of life put to the page. The spoken language of the Jews had in fact become Aramaic….

"The discovery of the Scrolls swept these false linguistic notions into the trash bin…the vast majority of the scrolls were Hebrew texts. Hebrew was manifestly the principal literary language for the Jews of this period. The new discoveries underlined the still living, breathing, even supple character of that language…proving that late Second-Temple Jews used various dialects of Hebrew."2 *(Our emphasis)*

Says a noted Jewish scholar—with no ax to grind: "What was the language of ordinary life of educated native Jews in Jerusalem and Judea in the period from 400 BCE to 150 CE? The evidence presented by Mishnaic Hebrew and its literature leaves no doubt that that language was Mishnaic Hebrew." *(Our emphasis)*

The Dead Sea Scrolls were so determinant and the evidence so overwhelming that no less an authority than The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian *Church*, in its first edition, in 1958, stated that "Hebrew had ceased to be a spoken language around the fourth century B.C."3 However, in its third edition, in 1997 that had changed completely to: "Hebrew continued to be used as a spoken and written language…in the New Covenant period.

"To the Jewish people, it was Hebrew that was the 'Holy Tongue' whereas Aramaic was seen as 'the language of the Evil Force.'"2 The Talmud states: "Four languages are of value: Greek for song, Latin for war, Aramaic for dirges, and Hebrew for speaking".3 Thus, HEBREW WAS FOR SPEAKING, just as the New Covenant says in over a dozen verses above.

"A father was to speak to his sons in Hebrew and to teach him the Torah. Not to do so, would be "as if he had buried him."4 "Whoever makes personal requests *(in prayer)* in Aramaic, the ministering angels pay no attention, since angels do not understand Aramaic."5 The same Rabbi Gamaliel who was spoken of in Maasim ha Shlichim/Acts of the Sent ones/"Acts" 5:34-40, is quoted in the Talmud. When shown an Aramaic translation of Yov/"Job" he told the person who brought it: "bury it under the rubble."6 Such was the low opinion of Jewish scholars of Aramaic vis-à-vis

Hebrew.

As a witness to the Second Temple period, the historian Josephus says that when news of the death of Tiberius is given to Aggrippa, the news is given "in the Hebrew tongue" *(glosse te Hebraion (Gr.). (Antiquities 18, 228).*

In another part he writes: "Adam…in Hebrew means…" *(Ant. 1:34)* and "Israel…in the Hebrew tongue…"7 In sum, as far as the external evidence is concerned, both the Church Fathers as well as the recently discovered Dead Sea Scrolls state quite clearly and without any subtlety that Hebrew WAS the language spoken and written at the time of Yah'shua. If this is so, you will ask yourself, how did it come about that it

is "known" by alleged *Christian* theologians that the New Covenant was originally written in Greek or Aramaic?

There are many false assumptions and prejudices leading to both the Greek and Aramaic theories. First of all, let us say that the issue of the New Covenant being written in Greek or Aramaic was non-existent prior to the Fourth or Fifth Century A.D. It has been a rather modern theory.

The question is: What basis does the "Aramaic theory" have? What are its external and internal proofs? The answer, quite un-believably is: Almost none! There are a few, isolated borrowed words in Aramaic present in the New Covenant, which are far outweighed by its Hebrew words. It is like I would go about claiming that in Paraguay, the historically Spanish Speaking country in South America, that English is in fact the main language, simply because they have adopted or borrowed the English expressions of "weekend," and "O.K."!

"Aramaisms" were exaggerated and still are, as noted Jewish lexicographer Moses Segal states: "Aramaic influence on the Mishnaic Hebrew vocabulary has been exaggerated...it has been the fashion among writers on the subject to brand as an Aramaism any infrequent Hebrew word...Most of the 'Aramaisms' are as native in Hebrew as they are in Aramaic."1 1. Segal, Moses, Mishnaic Hebrew Grammar, p. 8.

J. Lee demolished the so-called "Aramaism" in Luke 6:7, maintained by scholars like Black, Fitzmayer and Wilcox to be an "Aramaic construction," quoting "23 parallel constructions in Greek literature of the period!" as author Brent Minge tells it. Time and again the Aramaic assumption has turned out to be a lemon, prompting Semitist Kenneth Kitchen to observe that "some 'Aramaisms' are actually Hebraisms in Aramaic."

"What is more, merely because a word does not appear in the Old Covenant Hebrew Bible, does not automatically make it a candidate for the Aramaic club. 'Hosanna' and 'gehenna' are words not found in that form in the Hebrew Old Covenant. Yet both occur in Mishnaic Hebrew, and are found, in identical form, in the modern Hebrew dictionary. Yet they were once erroneously claimed to be 'Aramaic.'"1

Finally, the in-famous ""Talitha cumi!" in Mark 5:41. "Kumi" *[cumi]* is the imperative form of the Hebrew verb "laakum." "Talitha" has nothing in itself that makes it "Aramaic"!

The late Professor David Flusser says, regarding Aramaic, in David Stern´s commentary on this expression: "On this subject Professor David Flusser, an Orthodox Jewish scholar in Jerusalem, writes: "Until recently, it was believed by numerous scholars that the language spoken by *Jesus*' disciples was Aramaic.

It is possible that *Jesus* did, from time to time, make some small use of the Aramaic language. But during that period Hebrew was both the daily language and the language of study. The Gospel of Mark contains a few possible Aramaic words, and this was what misled early scholars. Today, after the discovery of the Hebrew Ben Sira *(Ecclesiasticus) [a book of the Apocrypha]*, of the Dead Sea Scrolls, and of the Bar Kokhba Letters, and in the light of more profound studies of the language of the Jewish Sages, it is accepted that

most people were fluent in Hebrew." 2 *(Our emphasis)* 2. Minge, Brent, *Jesus* spoke Hebrew *(Busting the "Aramaic" Myth).*

It can even be argued that what Yah'shua actually meant by that expression is: "Taalít, Talitha, takumi!" *(Get up, Talitha, arise!)* in Hebrew in the imperative tense and with a certain sense of urgency, hence the repetitious nature of the words.

As far as the "Greek theory" is concerned, the only basis one can think of is the fact that the written versions we have left to us are in that language, and that not one single copy remains of its Hebrew originals. One of the last ones *(of Matthew)* was burned publicly in Tours, France, in the mid-fifteenth century. This is admittedly a good enough basis, provided all we have said above would not exist, i.e, the above statements by the *church* fathers, the Hebraisms, the idioms, the discovering from the Dead Sea Scrolls, Josephus, etc.

In sum, what we have are a series of false assumptions by theologians, assumptions and, what is more, assumptions very probably based upon ugly, anti-Semitic prejudices. Historically, the great false *Church* has had a consistent record of being very anti-Semitic. Consider the Inquisition, with hundreds of thousands of "Jews" *(and professing Christians)* tortured and slaughtered simply because of their being followers of the Hebrew faith.

Consider the anti-Semitic statements by the fathers of the *Church*, such as Chrysosthom, Eusebius, Origen, Cyril, Hyppolitus, and, yes, Martin Luther, the father of the Reform. "The Jews deserve the most severe penalties. Their synagogues should be razed to the ground, their homes destroyed. They themselves should be exiled to living in tents, like the gypsies. Their religious writings [the Old Covenant and the Talmud] should be taken away from them. The Rabbis should be forbidden to teach the Torah *(the Torah)*. They should be forbidden to do any profession. Only the hardest, most strenuous work should be allowed to them. Their fortunes should be confiscated from them..." "A Jewish heart is as hard as a stick, a stone, as iron, as a devil." *[Eric W. Gritsch, Was Luther an Anti-Semite? Christian History Magazine, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 38-39].*

The famous historian, the late William Schirer, author of The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich, in page 294, says one of the two factors explaining the behavior of the German *Church* towards the Jews during the Holocaust is Luther's influence.

Throughout the centuries there has been a satan-led motion away from anything Hebrew using two methods. First, the pretense that "Jewish" is equal to Hebrew. Second, by twisting all things Hebrew into something alleged to be *Christian [Jewish].* In this spirit, the *Church* was forbidden to celebrate Passover on the "Jewish", i.e., scriptural dates set for it - in Hebrew, and had to do it on any other date EXCEPT the Hebrew one. Even today the *Church* celebrates "Easter," not Passover.

Those who insisted on celebrating Pessakh on the correct date were called "quatorcediman", an expression taken from the words meaning "fourteenth day of the first month", where Passover was ordained by Yahweh to be celebrated. The Jewish sages' wisdom in the many-volumed Talmud, from where Yah'shua drew countless parables and examples was condemned by all within the *Church*, including Luther, as we just quoted; not merely condemned but burned and their owners with it. A sustained campaign of dejudaization began which continues to this day. We can only offer some brief highlights here:

*Statements by almost all of the Fathers of the *Church* like Chrysosthom, Hippolytus, Origen, Cyril, Eusebius *("Abraham was a Christian, he was not a Jew".)*, Bishop Agobard, Luther.

*The Jews were accused for twenty centuries of kidnapping *Christian* children and drinking their blood for Passover meals. *(The last time this accusation surfaced--would you believe it?-- was in 1992 in the Soviet Union.)*

*Jews were accused of murdering Yahweh. *[Can you murder Yahweh!]* *All sorts of doctrines were made judenrein *(free of Jews),* as if the New Covenant was never made with "the House of Israel and the House of Judah" but with the *Church*.

*The appropriate name for the land of Israel was obliterated for the last 2,000 years at the bidding of Emperor Julius Caesar who swore to wipe the name of Judea from the face of the earth-- and he succeeded. Even *Christian* authors of today, still erroneously call Israel "Palestine"! Check the maps at the end of your Bible and see for yourself! Go to a *Christian* or Roman Catholic map inside an encyclopedia and check whether the name "Israel" or "Judea" exists. IT DOES NOT! It will say, ALMOST UNANIMOUSLY,"PALESTINE", although that name was imposed by Emperor Hadrian after the year 70 a.M *("after Messiah")*, and should, therefore, not be valid for the period when Yah'shua was living in Israel and Judea.

*The true name of our Lord was "Yah'shua". According to any Hebrew-English dictionary, "Yah'shua" means: "Yah's salvation, *[victory, deliverance]*."

What we have is a very Gentile-sounding "Jesus". What does "Jesus" mean? Nothing at all! You will say: "It is a translation." Then, how does Matitiahu/Mat. 1:21 come to mean anything: "And they will call His name Jesus, because he came for salvation of his people." THAT VERSE DOES NOT MAKE SENSE, unless you write "Yah'shua" there!

*The name of Yah'shua´s half-brother was Jacob--apparently too Jewish for them--although there is a Jacob in every known language--so the anti-Semites gentilized it to "James", as in the book of "James" *[Where in Greek it says quite clearly EPISTOLE IAKOBUS.]*

Marcion, a historically recognized heretic within the *Church* created two Elohims: A Jewish Elohim, the Elohim of the "Old" Covenant, "Yahweh", a small deity, severe, specifically for the Jews; and a Gentile God-

Elohim, Jesus, the God of Love. *[How many Elohim are there?]* However, the spirit of Marcion lives on in the *Church* to this day.

*There are several references to Yah'shua speaking Hebrew in Scripture and Saul speaking Hebrew. Westcott and Hort, two New Age occultists *(See "New Age Versions of the Bible by G. Riplinger, A.V. Publications, 1993.)* substituted the word *hebraisti* with Aramaic, besides 5000-8000 other alterations on the Greek text from which modern translated versions are made.

The above shows us the "Aramaic" and "Greek" theories were not isolated mistakes or misconceptions, but very definitely, they have been and continue to be part of a worldwide, centuries-old campaign by the Satanic, anti-Hebrew *[modern anti-Semites]* within the Church.

← Return to the Articles Index