



April 2012

"If, and, BUT"

Dearly Beloved in Yeshua,

Gospel Grammar

The Lord is speaking to us this month about some unusual but important details in the Holy Scriptures that are often overlooked or misunderstood. One of these details involves a little comma in the New Covenant that has spurred untold anti-Semitic attitudes and acts over the centuries. Another detail is a part of speech known as a conjunction—a word that connects phrases, words, clauses, or sentences together.

Words are important to God. He spoke, and our world came into being. The rabbis of ancient times believed that there was a "word" present at creation through which the world was created. They called this "word" the "*Mimra*." The Apostle John might have had this in mind when he wrote, "*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*" (Jn. 1:3). John was referring to Yeshua, the Living Word, Who was present with the Father in the beginning (genesis) of creation.

The Anti-Semitic Comma

As we remember the horrific human tragedy of the Holocaust this month, observing *Yom HaShoah* (Holocaust Remembrance Day) on April 19, 2012, it seems appropriate to point out how the enemy has used God's Word to incite hatred of God's Chosen People. The devil has been able to twist not only the Word of God, but also the minds of men to convince them that killing Jewish people is doing God a favor. While this is absurd, there are many who believe this lie.

The comma found between verses fourteen and fifteen of 1 Thessalonians Chapter 2 is one instance of a tragic interpretation of the Word that resulted in the charge of deicide (killing God) against the Jewish people: "*For ye, brethren, became followers of the churches of God which in Judea are in Christ Jesus: for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews, who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men...*" (1 Thes. 2:14-15 KJV).

The Apostle Paul is writing a letter here to the congregation of believers at Thessalonica around the year 50 AD. While it is highly unlikely that the same man who was a loyal Jew, a Pharisee, and one who expressed his love for his fellow Jews in his other letters would condemn his own people, this verse seems to indicate that very thing. Why? The COMMA! The comma after the word "Jews" makes it appear that the Jews killed Jesus. ALL THE JEWS.

Frank D. Gilliard, in an article about 1 Thes. 2:14-15, calls it the "dreadful text" because it was interpreted as a "passionate, generalizing, hateful diatribe against the Jews for having killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets..." If the comma had not been inserted between verses 14 and 15, the Apostle Paul would be understood as referring to a specific group of Jews, not all Jews as a people. In fact, a better translation would be Judeans, or even "the Judean leaders," as recently translated in

the Tree of Life New Covenant. In this case, the comma was kept between verses 14 and 15, but the meaning was clarified by changing the word "Jews" to "the Judean leaders."

A little comma placed after the word "Jews" in 1 Thes. 2:14, in both the modern Greek text and in most translations of the passage, added fuel to the fire started by early church fathers such as John Chrysostom, (ca. 400) known as "The Golden Mouthed." Chrysostom wrote the following: "The synagogue is worse than a brothel... it is the den of scoundrels and the refrain of wild beasts... the temple of demons devoted to idolatrous cults... a place of meeting for the assassins of Christ..." (quote from **The Roots of Christian Anti-Semitism** by Malcolm Hay).

The comma was not always in the text. It is speculated to have appeared in the Greek text around the ninth century. Men like Chrysostom certainly influenced the inclusion of the comma in 1 Thes. 2:14 since they passionately preached that the Jews killed Jesus. We must also mention here that other forms of grammatical "stops" have also been used in 1 Thess. 2:14—a slash, colon, semicolon, or period. These "stops" have the same effect of not limiting or restricting the noun (Jews).

WHO REALLY KILLED JESUS? We read in Acts Chapter 4 that a company of people were responsible for the death of Messiah: *"For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus (Yeshua), whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done"* (Acts 4:27-28). All of us killed Yeshua. Our sin nailed Him to the tree. He gave up His life willingly to make atonement for every man, woman, and child on earth. Yeshua fulfilled His Father's plan by dying for us. What amazing love!

So why have the Jewish people been blamed for the Messiah's death? Satan. The enemy of God hates Him and the people He chose to bring salvation to the world. Satan is the source of anti-Semitism. It is spiritual and demonic and began long before Yeshua was born, as the enemy tried to annihilate the Jewish people so that the Messiah would never appear. Satan lost, but he is still trying to wipe out the people who will welcome back the Messiah by saying, *"Baruch haba b'shem Adonai"* ("Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord"). Anti-Semitism is rampant today, as people believe the lies of the devil concerning Israel and the Jewish people.

The Consoling Conjunction

The word "but" is a conjunction that is used to join two sentences together. We find ourselves using the phrase "But God!" when confronted with the multiple challenges that face us as believers today. There are many comforting verses in the Bible where the conjunction "but" reinforces this idea. A number of them are in the Book of Psalms. May they be kisses from God to you this month:

*"Lord, how they have increased who trouble me! Many are they who rise up against me. Many are they who say of me, there is no help for him in God. **BUT** You, O LORD, are a shield for me, My glory and the One who lifts up my head."* Ps. 3:1-3

*"Many are the afflictions of the righteous, **BUT** the LORD delivers him out of them all."* Ps. 34:19

*"Whom have I in heaven but You? And there is none upon earth that I desire besides You. My flesh and my heart fail; **BUT** God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."* Ps. 73:25-26

Neil always says that we have to put our "but" in the right place! We all have a tendency to turn from faith to fear during difficult times and say things like, "I know God can help me, BUT I have so much going against me and have lost all hope of things ever getting better." Or perhaps we say, "I believe that God can deliver me, BUT I've got more problems than even He can handle." Some might say, "I really love God with my whole heart, BUT I'm not sure He wants to heal me." Notice how these statements are the reverse of the positive confessions from Psalms 3, 34, and 73—all because the "BUT" is misplaced!

The "And" that Adds

"And" is a wonderful little word and another conjunction that God uses freely to give us increase and blessing. Two of our favorite verses from the Book of Psalms have three "ands" and the promise of beauty and invaluable blessings: *"Let Your work appear to Your servants, AND Your glory to their children. AND let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us. AND establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands"* (Ps. 90:16-17).

Psalms 37:3-7 uses the conjunction "and" six times. We are instructed to add, and as we add, God adds to us: *"Trust in the LORD, AND do good; Dwell in the land, AND feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the LORD, AND He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD. Trust also in Him, AND He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, AND your justice as the noonday. Rest in the LORD, AND wait patiently for Him..."*

Romans 10:14-15 in the Brit Hadasha contains some important ANDS concerning God's priority of sharing the Good News with His People Israel: *"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? AND how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? AND how shall they hear without a preacher? AND how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!'"*

Thank you for sending US! We pray AND thank God for you every night. May the LORD *"...add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love"* (2 Peter 1:5-7).

The Vav that Connects

Hebrew is much more fascinating than English! The letter vav is the prefix of conjunction. It unites concepts and links words and phrases to form sentences, much like the "and" in English. Vav joins sentences into paragraphs and chapters; it connects one chapter to another and even unites books. The vav implies close relationships between events and continuity between generations.

According to **The Wisdom in the Hebrew Alphabet** in the ArtScroll Mesorah Series, the absence of a vav ׀ at the beginning of a new chapter in the Torah indicates the beginning of a new era or subject. The Book of Exodus, on the other hand, begins with a ׀ to indicate continuity with the previous text, *"וואלה שמות בני ישראל הבאים מצרימה"* AND (׀) *these are the names of the children of Israel who came to Egypt*" (Exodus 1:1). Our NKJ version translates the vav as "now," missing the sense of connection and continuity implied by the Hebrew vav. It is interesting to note that the description in the Torah of Israel's arrival at Mt. Sinai to receive the Law of God does not begin with a vav: *"In the third month, after the children of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on the same day, they came to the Wilderness of Sinai"* (Ex. 19:1). The vav is missing, according to the Sages, because God did not want to show a connection or conjunction with the past. The giving of the Torah inaugurated a new beginning for Israel and the world.

"Now (Vav-and) this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death." (Deut 33:1) The vav at the beginning of this verse serves to indicate that this blessing of Moses was a continuation of many other blessings which he had bestowed on the children of Israel during his lifetime.

The Important "If"

The little word "if" is also a conjunction and includes the ideas of "on condition that," "in case," and "supposing." The very first "if" in the Torah is found in Genesis 4:7. It is generally believed that the first time a word appears in the Bible, there is a special meaning. Consider what God says when He uses "if" for the first time: *"IF you do well, will you not be accepted? And IF you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it"* (Gen. 4:7). This is the Lord speaking to Cain after not accepting Cain's offering. God shows us right from the beginning that there are consequences

for our actions, but He always gives us ample opportunity to do the right thing. God is the God of second chances, but we miss His best **IF** we insist on doing our own thing rather than God's. Sin is always at the door. That's why Yeshua came to help us have victory over sin, by becoming the Door Himself: *"I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture"* (Jn. 10:9). Sin's desire may be for us, but Yeshua's desire is greater: *"I am my beloved's, and his desire is toward me"* (Song of Sol. 7:10). We have the victory over sin through Yeshua.

This leads us to a crucial "if": *"IF you love Me, keep My commandments"* (Jn. 14:15). Yeshua says the same thing, a short while later, in yet another way, *"IF anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our home with him"* (Jn. 14:23). "If" indicates that there are conditional promises in God's Word. Obedience to God's Word is certainly a condition that the Messiah clearly stated. It is also a demonstration of love for the Lord.

There are a number of "ifs" in the eleventh chapter of Romans that the body of believers must embrace if they are to be counted as "sheep" instead of "goats" when the Messiah returns (Mat. 25:32). The "ifs" have to do with the attitude of the Church concerning Israel: *"For IF their [the Jews] being cast away is the reconciling of the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? For IF the firstfruit is holy, the lump is also holy, and IF the root is holy, so are the branches. And IF some of the branches were broken off, and you, being a wild olive tree, [the Gentiles] were grafted in among them, and with them became a partaker of the root and fatness of the olive tree, do not boast against the branches. But IF you boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you"* (Rom. 11:15-18). Rabbi Saul (Paul) goes on to say, *"For IF God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either"* (Rom. 11:21). Please read all of Romans Chapter 11. It is filled with "ifs" which have eternal consequences.

God is speaking about Israel in Romans 11. IF we rightly divide the Word of Truth, we will realize that, 1) God still loves the Jewish people, 2) God is the One who blinded His people from seeing the truth, 3) Salvation came to the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy, and 4) Israel's acceptance of the Gospel will be life from the dead for the rest of the world.

Love **AND** blessings in Yeshua,

Mel & Jamie

P.S. The natural branches (Jews) are being grafted back into their own olive tree in our day: Rose Price (Cregar) is one of them. Her testimony book, **A Rose From the Ashes**, will bless you. IF God leads you, please give a copy to one of His Chosen AND pray for a revelation of the Messiah Yeshua.

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THU 11:30 AM	FL	Miami/Ft. Laud.	WHFT TV 45
SUN 1:30 PM	FL	Tallahassee	WVUP TV 45
SAT 10:30 PM	FL	West Palm Beach	WFGC TV 61
SUN 2:30 PM	GA	Columbus	WYBU TV 16
SUN 1:30 PM	IA	Dubuque	KFXB TV 40
SUN 1:30 PM	MO	New Bloomfield	KNLJ TV 25
SUN 4:00 PM	NJ/NY	NYC/New Jersey	WMBC TV 63

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Dish Network

MON 8:30 PM Ch. 376 - CTN (Christian Television Network)



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