

IN WHICH LANGUAGE WAS THE RENEWED TESTAMENT ORIGINALLY WRITTEN?

Why is it important to ascertain in which language the Renewed Testament was written? Because a language possesses an inner structure, a specific flavor, and idioms of its own. A language brings with it a cultural background. All of these elements shape the way of thinking of those speaking it. If one wishes to understand more precisely and with any real depth the language of Messiah and His disciples, one should read His words either in the original language, as do the Jews with the Tanakh, (the "Old" Covenant), or try to reconstruct it from the language one has at hand. In addition, a language's idioms are only fully comprehensive in that language and in no other. To translate a language idiom directly into another language only makes it absurd, and reveals the foreign origin of it.

Please keep in mind the fact that the Greeks hated the Jews. Because of this, there was little effort in doing a proper translation of the original Hebrew scrolls. Anti-semitism throughout history raises its ugly head and here we see more results of it. In the Book of John, chapter 7 you will see the word "Jew" used in a derogatory (with a negative connotation) way, every time. What it should read is: *"the religious leaders who were in charge of the culture of their day"*. It shouldn't single out Jews.

All of the above elements should be assayed when one tries to answer the above question about the importance of the original language of the Renewed Testament. 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 has first to know it was originally in Spanish, and only then one may try to find an equivalent idiom in English, as we did.

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 cheveux."* We would conclude, erroneously, that the original came from poor French. For this is exactly what happened with the Renewed Testament language, as I shall prove.

Think about some of the following idioms that are commonly used in the English speaking world today, and imagine these same idioms spoken in other languages. For example: If I asked someone in Alaska what the word "cool" meant, he would clearly understand it. But as we all know, the word "cool", can, and has been used many times to mean someone of casual/easy going character (like Fonzy). To the baby boomers, perhaps hippie or beatnik would be understood as being "cool". Yet, even in the English language of today's world, "cool", now means, "hot" to many people. "Hot", also means, "cool", to many others. How are we to know what idiom is used and how we are to interpret it, if we don't know the context, location, language, and situation it was used in. If I said a common idiom like: *"he's two bricks short of a load"*, in most English speaking cultures, most would understand that I mean he is; *"slow on the draw"*, *"not dragging a full chain of fish"*, etc., meaning; the person is not very smart. Imagine saying this to a person on the street in Spain. He wouldn't have a clue what is meant by it.

Now lets go a step further. Imagine, if you were reading an article that contained the idiom: *"he's two bricks short of a load"*, to a Spanish person, and he was translating it into literal Spanish. In Spanish this would obviously sound foolish. Those reading it would not

be able to understand at all what it means, and it would destroy the true meaning of the paragraph it was part of. In fact, a few of these idioms in a text could, and often do, destroy the entire text to those who don't understand. They would obviously be CONFUSED. Imagine someone translating the following type idioms, and phrases:

- “he’s not a happy camper”,
- she’s a turkey”,
- “hole in one”,
- “who’s on first”
- “bald eagle”
- “megabytes of ram”
- “aeroplane”
- “let’s play hardball”
- “space shuttle”
- “blow you out of the water”,
- “dodging bullets”,
- “tripping the light fantastic”,
- “pulling your chain”,
- “can I use your John”, etc..

The meanings of the idioms of that time and era are extremely important to try to grasp. Without some basic Hebrew understanding, we are left in the dark.

It should be obvious by now how important it is to know what the Bible is saying in its Hebrew context. The idioms of the Hebrew language, are found throughout the Good Book. In order to understand them, we must first understand the idioms of the Hebrew language, which few of us do. So how are we to understand what is meant as we read the words of the Bible? It’s easy. We must think as a Hebrew person would think. Think like Paul/Shaul.

What was Paul meaning when he said that?

Was Shaul speaking literally or using an idiom?

Was he being serious, or perhaps sarcastic because of the situation?

Was he speaking personally, or from a teachers/preachers standpoint?

Where was he when he said that?

Who was he speaking to at the time he said that?



Was he speaking to Believers or secular people when he said that?

It was a common practice back then (as it is today in many parts), to include in their speech incomplete **parts** of scripture that everyone is familiar with, to make a point. For example: “If I say; **“the wages of sin is”**, and don’t finish the sentence, most will know that I am talking about **“death”**, spiritual and or physical (Rom. 6:23). When I refer to the commandments; those familiar with the Bible will obviously assume I am referring to the Ten Commandments.

If we are to try and think like a Jewish person, then we must try to understand their Hebrew language to the best of our ability. In order to do this, we obviously need a Hebrew person to teach us. This is why it is so important to get Biblical understanding from a Jewish person if we are to learn the truth of the word of Yah. Yah is not the author of confusion. Man has made the Hebrew language of the Bible confusing, by trying to translate it into various other languages without understanding the social content of the words used in the Hebrew tongue. That is one of the reasons Yah told us to learn from the Jewish people. They are the oracles of the word. **Zech. 8:23** *“Thus says Yahveh of hosts, ‘In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew saying, **“Let us go with you, for we have heard that Yah is with you.”** Rom. 3:1-2* *“Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? Great in every respect. First of all, that they **were entrusted with the oracles of Yahveh**”*. If we understand a little about the Hebrew language and listen to the leading of the Holy Spirit, we will be guided to the truth, and the truth will set us free. If we show Abba that we are truly interested in the fullness of His Hebrew word, He will no doubt lead us to freedom and understanding.

HEBREWISMS/HEBREW IDIOMS..PUNS

In all texts of Hebrew literature you will find what is called Hebraisms. A type of “play on words” only recognized in Hebrew. As explained previously about English idioms, the same applies for many Hebrew words. For example:

{1} **Gen. 2:25a** *“And the man and his wife were both **naked (arumim in Hebrew)** and were not ashamed.”* **Gen. 3:1a** *“Now the serpent was more **crafty (arum in Hebrew)** than any beast of the field which Yahveh had made.”*

{2} **Jer. 1:11-12** *“The word of Yahveh came to me saying, “What do you see, Jeremiah?” And I said, “I see a rod of an **almond (shaked in Hebrew)** tree.” (12) Then Yahveh said to me, “You have seen well (**diligent**), (**shoked in Hebrew**) for I am watching over My word to perform it.”* These words are spelled similar.

{3} **Matt. 9:8** *But when the crowds **saw [this], (vayi’ru in Hebrew)** they were **awestruck, (vayiru in Hebrew)** and glorified Yah, who had given such authority to men.”* Again, two words that are spelled the same yet pronounced different.

{4} **Matt. 12:13,15** *“Then He said to the man, **“Stretch out your hand!” (vayet in Hebrew)** He stretched it out, and it was restored to normal, like the other.” (15) But Yeshua, aware of [this], **withdrew from there (vayet in Hebrew)**. Many followed Him, and He healed them all,”* Two words spelled the same but meaning different.

{5} **Mark 13:32** *“But of that **day or hour** no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. The 48 hours between the wan sliver and the dark*

moon has throughout history been called "day or the hour" to the Hebrew people.

THE PROOF

What I will prove then, is that the Renewed Covenants/Testaments original language was neither Greek nor Aramaic, as popular wisdom goes, but essentially Hebrew, the same Hebrew as the "Old" Covenant was written in. Keep in mind that Hebrew and Aramaic are sister languages. 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. Are there any proofs that the original language was Hebrew, and not Greek, or Aramaic? Yes, there most definitely are: there are external and internal proofs. The Bible itself says it: **Acts 21:40** *"When he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, saying,"* Clearly Paul was speaking in Hebrew. If he was speaking in Hebrew wouldn't it be assumed it was being recorded in Hebrew by Luke. **Acts 26:14** *"And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'* This is Yeshua speaking Hebrew to Paul on the road to Damascus.

For a list of Hebrew idioms refer to the teaching on "Hebrew Idioms" page 68. We will deal with the external proofs first.

THE EXTERNAL PROOFS FOR A HEBREW ORIGINAL

There are several external sources, i.e., outside Scripture, pointing to Hebrew as the written language of the Renewed Testament, as Dr. David Bivin has most eloquently attested. [Bivin and Blizzard Jr, Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus, 1988, pp. 45-78.] These sources are: the testimony of the Church fathers and the Dead Sea Scrolls. I will examine these two external sources, albeit briefly.

The testimony from what many call the church fathers.

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 (225 A.D.) said: ***"The first Gospel composed in the Hebrew language, was written by Matthew..for those who came to faith from Judaism."*** the first gospel is written according to Matthew, the same that was once a tax collector, but afterwards as an emissary of Jesus Christ who having published it for the Jewish believers, wrote it in Hebrew"

Ishadod (800CE) wrote: ***"His (Matthew's book), was in existence in Caesarea of Palestine and everyone acknowledges that he wrote it with his hands in Hebrew"***

Jerome (382CE) wrote: ***"Matthew is also called Levi and from a tax collector came to be an emissary first of all evangelists, composed the gospel of Messiah in Judea in the Hebrew language and letters for the benefit of those of the circumcision who had believed. Who translated it into Greek is not sufficiently ascertained? Furthermore the Hebrew itself is preserved to this day in the library at Caesarea which the martyr***

Pamphilous so diligently collected. I also was allowed by the Nazarenes who used this volume in the Syrian city of Borea, to copy it in which is to be remarked that wherever the evangelist makes use of the testimonies of the old scriptures he does not follow the authority of the seventy translators of the Greek Septuagint but that of the Hebrew"

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 language"* (Ecclesiastical History III 24, 6)

THE INTERNAL PROOFS FOR A HEBREW ORIGINAL

Internal proofs for Hebrew being the original language spoken by Rabbi Yeshua are equally direct and even more convincing, for we can take the Renewed Covenant and prove it now, in our own native language, be it English or Spanish or any other.

First of all, Scripture itself says the language of the Rabbi Yeshua and His disciples was Hebrew. Hebrew is the Masters language from which most other languages are derived. When Paul was converted on the road to Damascus Yeshua came down and spoke to him in Hebrew. **Acts 26:14** "*And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*

Despite this scriptural proof, various translations, especially the NIV, have changed the original Hebraism (which does not require one to be a Greek scholar to understand it says "Hebrew") for "Aramaic" (see John 19:13,19; Lk. 23:38; Acts 21:40). In addition, there are over 5366 manuscripts of the Renewed 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 any language, -including Greek--except in Hebrew, as clearly explained earlier! How can such a thing be explained unless it is because the original was 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--except for Hebrew. The expression "*Ben Adam*" means literally "*son of Adam*" and by extension "*son of man*", and "*man*", Adam being of course the first man alive. 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 Scriptures) and 43 times in the Renewed Covenant is obviously the same Hebrew idiom.

It is said that the Renewed Covenant was written in Koine Greek, common Greek, because it is found to be a poor kind of Greek. When we find these man Hebraisms as they are there, we begin to understand that it is not Koine Greek lying there, in the substratum of the text, but a Hebrew original, which was almost literally translated into Greek, which makes it sound like poor Greek.

The over 5000 Greek manuscripts that were used for the bible were all taken out of Constantinople. Almost none of them agree with each other. There are major discrepancies with almost all of them.

Let us take another example, the idiom "*Peace be to you*", appearing twelve times in the Renewed Covenant. What kind of a greeting is "*Peace be to you*" in English, Spanish, French, or any other language--except in Hebrew? 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-wide famous "*shalom*", literally "*peace*", but really an everyday greeting meaning anything from "*Hi*", to "*How are you?*" according to the speech patterns and the mood of the speaker.

When Jewish people meet or greet people, they often say "Shalom". It is a traditional blessing common only to Hebrew people. Most astute people understand this word to mean "peace", but it means far more than that. You could write a book about the meaning of the word shalom. It is far more than just a greeting. Briefly, it means: bless you, bless your family, bless your home, bless your friends and relatives, bless your crops, bless your livestock, bless your goings out and your comings in, etc., etc.. The meaning (blessing) behind this one Hebrew word is absolutely extraordinary. All the great men and women throughout our Bible used that word constantly in their vocabulary, and yet you will not see it recorded once in most Bibles. See what the world has missed out on?

The fourth and last internal proof of the Hebrew character of the Renewed Covenant is the use of two very Jewish ways of speaking: that of repeating words, and the answering of a question with another question. Yeshua did both quite often. In **Matt. 27:46** "**Eli, Eli** (~~*My God, my God,*~~) *why hast thou forsaken me?*" In this Mathew verse we see Yeshua reciting the first words of Psalm 22. He was trying to get those present to realize that He was the Messiah spoken of in that Psalm. He was not questioning why He had to die. It was just another custom of Jewish Rabbis to recite the first few words of a verse to bring peoples attention to what that particular passage was explaining. When words are repeated in such a way, it is like a "volume control" to us. It means, the volume is turned up greatly. **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...*" When a word in scripture is duplicated there is a Hebrew interpretation principle involved. Any time you see what appears to be a redundant expression repeated it means the second meaning is different then the first. It means something different. There are no redundant expressions in scripture. In Deut. 16:20 for example "Justice and only justice", the first "justice" is referring to a correct justice decision whereas the second "only justice" is referring to pursuing justice in a just way. In other words everything you do in pursuing that justice shall also be done in a just way. In the English language and understanding it is called "due process", a term used in courtroom proceedings all the time. The judge in a courtroom cannot be partial to either party. He must judge according to the evidence presented before him.

What is important to stress is that these two characteristics, especially the former, comes with the Hebrew. It does not appear in English, or in any European language. If this is so, you will ask yourself, how did it come about that it is "known" that the Renewed Testament was originally written in Greek? We will deal with these questions now as they provide the latter half of the answer to the original question of this segment of this article: "In which language was the Renewed Testament originally written?"

First of all, let us say that the issue of the Renewed 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 unbelievably is; None! As far as the "Greek theory" is concerned, the only basis one can think of is the fact that the versions we have left are in that language, and not one single copy remains of its Hebrew original, (other than the recently discovered Shem Tov Hebrew Matthew scroll). 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, etc..

In sum, what we have are assumptions by theologians, assumptions, and, what is more, assumptions very probably based upon ugly, anti-semitic prejudices, brought about by the nest of the anti-christ, the Roman Catholic Church. The Harlot of Rome (Rev. 17:5) has many daughters.

Why do we say the latter? Is there a basis for raising up the ugly spectre of anti-Semitism within the Church? You judge it yourself.

(Mar 26/16) Jerry Hennig