**00571** אֵת  found in TWOT #186

0186.0 אֵת ( *'ēt*) 1. Untranslated particle.

An untranslated particle in Hebrew often described in grammars (somewhat superficially) as the sign of the direct object after a transitive verb. Its origin is unknown. The prevailing view is that *'ēt* was originally a noun meaning "essence, substance, self," a significance which it subsequently lost in the historical development of the language.

When *'ēt* is used to signify an accusative (*nota accusativi*) it is generally, though not always, in prose and when the object of the verb is determined by the definite article. More important than indicating an accusative, the function of *'ēt* is to emphasize the word to which it is attached.

For this reason one observes that *'ēt* is used not only with the accusative but with the subject (*nota nominativi*) of both intransitive and passive verbs. Copious illustrations could be offered but two will suffice. With 'ēt as subject of an intransitive verb compare 2Kings 6:5; "The axe-head fell into the water" (*wᵉ 'et- abbarzel nāpal 'elhammāyim*). With *'et* as subject of a passive verb compare Gen 17:5; "And your name (*'et-shimkâ*) shall no more be called Abram."

To summarize, *'ēt* was originally a substantive, and was used to emphasize the noun to which it was prefixed. In the course of time the emphatic meaning was lost and *'ēt* became a particle with no special meaning.

Bibliography: On a similar particle in other Semitic languages and texts: Andersen, F. I., "Moabite Syntax," *Orientalia* 35: 117-18. Leahy, T., "Studies in the Syntax of 1QS," *Bib* 41: 152-54.

On Biblical Hebrew *'et* : Hoftijzer, J., "Remarks Concerning the Use of the Particle *'t* in Classical Hebrew," *Oudtestamentische Studien* 14: 1-99. MacDonald, J., "The Particle 't in Classical Hebrew," *VT* 14: 263-75. Saydon, P. P., "Meanings and Uses of the Particle *'t*," *VT* 14: 192-210. Walker, N., "Concerning the Function of *'eth*," *VT* 5: 314-15. V.P.H.