



Biblical Heritage Center's

Real Yeshua Handbook

Viewing His Words Through the Eyes of His Ancient Culture

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Yeshua Master Teacher of the Jewish Scriptures

By Jim Myers

A very important piece of evidence that reveals insights about how Yeshua saw himself and what he intended to do has been lost to modern Bible readers because of 16th theological conflicts between Catholics and Protestants and the poor English translators of his words (this is from the *New KJV*).

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. (Matthew 5:17-18)

A key phrase in the translation above is *the Law and the Prophets*. The English word *Law* comes from the translation of the Greek word νόμος (*nomos*), which literally means *law*. However, since we know that Yeshua taught in Hebrew, not Greek, we look for the Hebrew word behind the Greek translation. When νόμος (*nomos*) appears with *the Prophets* it is clear that the actual Hebrew word Yeshua spoke was **(Torah)**.

A Jewish audience, either 2,000 years ago or today, hearing *the Torah and the Prophets (Nevi'im)* would understand exactly what he meant *just like Christians around the world would understand what "Old Testament and New Testament" mean*. The *Torah* and the *Prophets* are two sections of the *Jewish Scriptures* (a third section called *the Writings* [**Ketuvim**]). When Yeshua said *the Torah and the Prophets* he was talking about all of the books contained in those sections:

Torah ó *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.*

Nevi'im (*Prophets*) ó *Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.*

Ketuvim (*Writings*) ó *Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and 1 & 2 Chronicles.*

By the way, the Hebrew meaning behind the words *I came to* can be either *my purpose is* or *I intend to*. Let's update our reconstruction of Yeshua's lesson again:

Do not think that I intend to destroy the words recorded in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah,

Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

Now let's turn to the words *ōdestroyö* and *ōfulfillö*. One option is *ōdisobeyö* and *ōobeyö*. However, another option fits this context much better. It is found in a story recorded in the *Talmud (Shabbat 116a-b)* about another famous rabbi, who appears in the *New Testament*, **Rabbi Gamaliel** (grandson of **Hillel**):

Then one in the Sanhedrin stood up, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Torah held in respect by all the people, and commanded them to put the apostles outside for a little while. (Acts 5:34)

“Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now.” And when they heard that Paul spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said: “I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers’ Torah, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.” (Acts 22:1-3)

By the way, did you notice that Paul spoke Hebrew to the Jewish audience in Jerusalem? Gamaliel was a *ōteacher of the Torahö* too. In the story in the *Talmud* Rabbi Gamaliel says this:

ōLook at the end of the book, wherein it is written, ‘I came not to destroy the Torah of Moses nor to add to the Torah of Moses.’”

Gamaliel commenting on words written in *Deuteronomy 13:1* (12:32 in Christian Bibles):

All that I have commanded you, be careful to do it; you shall not add to it, nor take away from it.

This is how Gamaliel's Jewish audience understood these words:

ōLook at the end of the book, wherein it is written, ‘I do not intend to take away words from the Torah of Moses nor add words to the Torah of Moses.’”

For Gamaliel, the phrase *ōdestroy the Torah of Mosesö* meant *ōto add or take awayö* words written in the Torah. How could someone do that? The most common way was by teachers *ōmisinterpreting the words of the Torahö* when they were teach people the Torah.

Understanding what *ōdestroyö* means helps us define Yeshua's word *ōfulfillö*. To *ōfulfill the Torah and the Prophetsö* meant *ōto correctly interpret the words of the Torah and the Prophetsö*.

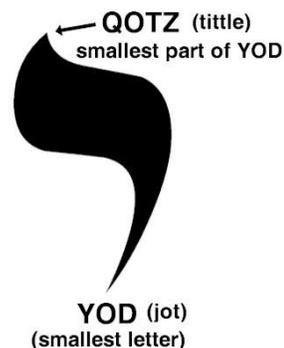
Now let's use this information to our reconstruction of Yeshua's words:

Do not think that I intend to take away words from or add words to Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. I intend to obey them and interpret them correctly. Amen!

Next, Yeshua highlighted and strengthened this point with these words:

Amen! I say to you, not even one yod or even the tip of a yod will be removed from the Torah as long as the heavens and the earth remain.

A *ōyodö* is the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet and a *ōqotzö* is the smallest part of the *yod*. (See the study -- [It's a Yod, NOT a Jot and Tittle](#) for more info.)



Our reconstruction of Yeshua's teaching now reads:

Do not think that I intend to take away words from or add words to Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. I intend to obey them and interpret them correctly. Amen! I say to you, the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet and even the tip of the smallest letter of the Torah will be changed as long as the heavens and the earth remain.

Only a master teacher of the Jewish Scriptures would make a claim like that to a Jewish audience that included scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees and priests. It also helps explain why his encounters with the scribes and Pharisees often included questions about Jewish Scriptures. In some cases, Yeshua agreed with their interpretations, while in other places he disagreed. People often approached Yeshua to discuss his interpretations of Jewish Scriptures and *disagreement between Jewish teachers were – and still are – very common.*

Two decades after the Romans executed Yeshua, his apostles still taught the importance leaning the Torah *ó even the new Gentile converts coming from Paul's movement.* The famous ruling of the Jerusalem Council around 50 CE was over the question of whether Gentiles should be required to convert to Judaism in order to be members of Yeshua's movement. Their ruling was very clear and learning the Torah was an important part of it.

*Known to God from eternity are all His works. Therefore I rule that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood **since** Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath.* (Acts 15:18-21)

In this case, understanding the meaning of the small Greek word **γάρ** (*gar*) is very important. I translated it since above, but it often appears *for*. Below is an explanation about its use:

“(when γάρ) is used to introduce the reason: when the reason precedes that of which it is the reason, it may be rendered by ‘since’ or ‘as’ . . . (A Lexicon Abridged from Liddel and Scott’s Greek-English Lexicon; Oxford University Press; p. 138)

The author of Acts gave the reason -- the minimum requirements for Gentiles to be members of the Yeshua movement *first* and then explains why. It also includes a forth requirement requirement:

*abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, from blood and **keep the Sabbath** *since they will be hearing the Torah read in synagogues every Sabbath.**

Yeshua was a master teacher of the Jewish Scriptures. There is no doubt that he personally taught his apostles how to be master teachers too. In order to understand his meanings of other very important words *saved, forgiven, repentance, righteousness, love, etc.* *we have to learn what they meant in his Jewish Scriptures. By the way, Yeshua also built fences around the Torah too! We will learn more about that in the next study.*

BHC

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