

Jots and Tittles

By Jim Myers

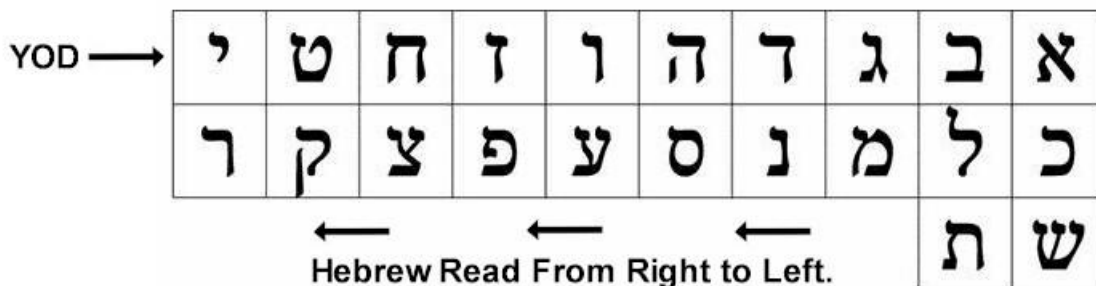
*Amen! I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, not one **jot** or one **tittle** shall in any way pass from the Law . . . (Matthew 5:18)*

What are jots and tittles? One thing they are is evidence that Yeshua, the Jesus of history, and his followers were very familiar with the Hebrew language. However, to understand this we have to trace the journey of the Hebrews words of Yeshua into the Greek language of the ancient manuscripts of the New Testament and then into the English translations we read today.

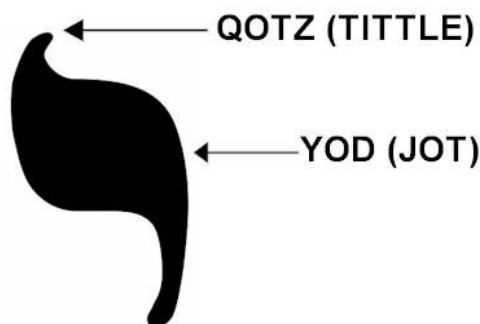
In order to help you follow that journey I will use English transliterations of Greek and Hebrew words, which means I will replace their letters with English letters that are their equivalents. By the way, *ōYeshuaō* is an English transliteration of the Hebrew word that is his name.

If we use a Greek text of Matthew 5:18, the Greek word translators read for *ōjotō* is *ōiota*. *ō Iota* is the name of a Greek letter. It is usually transliterated by the English *ōi*. *ō* However, it appears that the translators borrowed from a Latin variant of the spelling of *ōiotaō* *ō ōjota.ō* They then dropped the final *ōaō* to get *ōjot.ō*

The reason that ancient Greek translators chose to use the word *iota* is that it is the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet. Their decision was based the fact that in Yeshua's Hebrew teachings he used the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet to make his point *ō yod*.



Now let's turn to the word *ōtittle.ō* The word used in Greek manuscripts is *keraiā*, which means *ōanything projecting like a horn.ō* When we track this word back into the Hebrew language of Yeshua we discover it is a translation of the word *qotz*, which means *ōthorn.ō* Yeshua and his Jewish audience would have quickly recognized the connection between the words *yod* and *qotz*.



When scribes made copies of scrolls they would add the decorative marks called *thorns* to letters. Also, the Hebrew word Yeshua would have used for *Law* is Torah, which is the scroll that contains the first five books of *Jewish Scriptures* and *Christian Bibles* ó *Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy*.

Yeshua was responding to accusations that *he had misinterpreting the words of the Torah.* To make his point, he used these words:

Amen! I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, not one yod (smallest letters of the Hebrew alphabet), or even one thorn on one of the smallest letters of the Torah will be misinterpreted.

For Yeshua to use this example in his teachings, it is a clear indication that he and those in the audience were very familiar with the Hebrew language and understood his point!

Shalom!