

Discovering How to Destroy and Fulfill the Torah

We explored Matthew 5:17a in my previous email. Now let's examine it in the context in which it appears, Matthew 5:17-18.

Do not think that I came to destroy Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy or Joshua, Judges, First & Second Samuel, First & Second Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. 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 Torah till all is fulfilled.

The Babylonian Talmud (*Shabbat 116a-b*) contains a story that will help us accurately understand the meanings of Jesus' words.

- A certain philosopher lived in the vicinity of Rabbi Gamaliel, and he bore a reputation that he did not accept bribes. They wished to expose him, so he went with his sister to see the philosopher.
- She gave him a golden lamp and said, "I desire that a share be given me in my [deceased] father's estate." "Divide it," ordered the philosopher.
- Rabbi Gamaliel said to him, "It is decreed for us, where there is a son, a daughter does not inherit." The philosopher replied, "Since the day that you were exiled from your land **the Torah of Moses has been superseded and another book given**, wherein it is written, 'A son and a daughter inherit equally.'"
- The next day Rabbi Gamaliel brought him a Libyan ass and said he to him, "Look 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**,' and it is written therein, 'A daughter does not inherit where there is a son.'"
- Rabbi Gamaliel then says, "Look 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**,' (Deuteronomy 12:32) -- "What thing soever I command you, **observe to do it: you shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.**"

"**Destroy the Torah**" means "**add to or take away from the Torah**." Now let's turn our attention to discovering the meaning of "*till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Torah till all is fulfilled.*"

BHC Exploration #9



We traced the word for "**jot**" back through Greek to Hebrew and discovered it is the name the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, "**Yod**." Look at the enlarged picture of a **Yod** above.

The arrow points to the tip of the yod, which is called a "**qotz**" which means "**thorn**." "**Qotz**" is the name of the decorative mark scribes place on Hebrew letters. After being translated from Hebrew into Greek, and then into English, the "**qotz**" became "**tittle**."

During the time Jesus taught, the following saying was well-known: "*not a yod or a thorn of a yod.*" This is what Jesus said: ". . . *till heaven and earth pass away, not even one of the smallest letters (yod), or even the tip of the yod will by no means be removed from the Torah till all is fulfilled.*" Jesus used this example to challenge his disciples and make them think outside the box.

*How could someone "**destroy the Torah**" without
"adding or removing words or letters of words?"*

The Hebrew word in the verse in Deuteronomy above said, "**diminish from it**." His answer to the question is this. "*People could diminish the Torah by misinterpreting its words!*" Therefore, "**fulfill**" means "**correctly interpret**." Now let's add this to our reconstruct the original teaching of Jesus.

*"Do not think that I intend to **add or remove words** of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy or Joshua, Judges, First & Second Samuel, First & Second Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi. I do not intend to add or remove words, I intend to interpret them correctly! Amen! This is what I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, **not one yod**, not **even the small decorative mark on the tip of a yod**, will by any means disappear from **the Torah until everything is interpreted correctly!**"*

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Since Jesus intends to correctly interpret the Torah, there must be some misinterpretations that he plans to correct. That will be the subject of my next email.

Shalom,
Jim Myers, President
Biblical Heritage Center, Inc.

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