

The Law & Jesus

The following translation of Matthew 5:17-18 has been the foundation of generations of Christian beliefs.

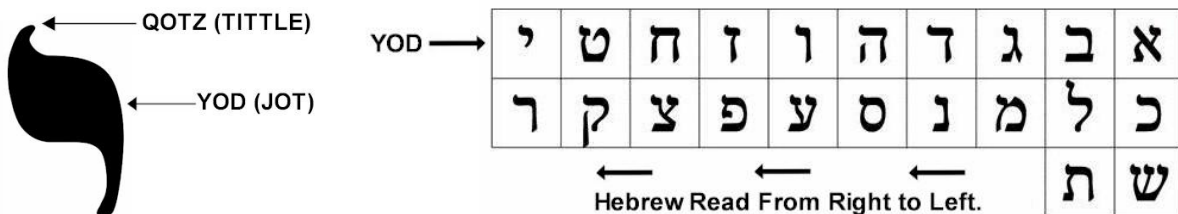
¹⁷ Think not that I am come to **destroy the law**, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. ¹⁸ For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one **jot** or one **tittle** shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

Jesus spoke Hebrew and used the name of a letter of the Hebrew alphabet to make an important point above. The letter is the “**yod**,” the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Since the *New Testament* books were written in Greek, and then translated into English by translators who did know Jesus taught in Hebrew, the **yod** became a **jot**.

The word “**tittle**” is translated from the Greek word *keraia*, which means “**anything projecting like a horn**.” When we track it back to Hebrew, we discover that it is a translation of the Hebrew word **gotz**, which means “**thorn**.” His Jewish audience quickly recognized the connection between the Hebrew words *yod* and *gotz*. *Yod is the smallest letter in the alphabet and gotz is the tip of a thorn that decorates the yod.*

The focus of theologians has been “*I have come to fulfill the law.*” What does that mean? Two popular theological positions are below:

- *Jesus fulfilled all the old covenant law (and prophecies) by His life, death, and resurrection, so this law is no longer binding on Christians.*
- *God set and established the laws, but since the laws cannot save a man, He had to*



destroy them to bring salvation to humanity.

Below is an accurate reconstruction of the Hebrew words of Jesus.

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“Do not even begin to think that I came to destroy the Torah or the Prophets. I did not come to cancel them, but I came to interpret them properly. Amen! I tell you, until the heavens and earth pass away, not even a yod or a thorn on a yod shall pass away from the Torah until all is properly interpreted.”

Be sure to note that Jesus actually said, “**Torah**” instead of “**law**.” Every Jewish person hearing Jesus that day – *as well as most Jews today* – knew exactly what “**The Torah and the Prophets**” were: **they are the two sections of the Jewish Scriptures below**.

- **Torah** – Genesis, Exodus, **Leviticus**, Numbers and Deuteronomy.
- **Nevi'im** (Prophets) – Joshua, Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel, 1 & 2 Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi.

Do you think Jesus intended “**to do away with all of the books of the Bible above?**” Always remember the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:18:

*“I tell you, until the heavens and earth pass away,
not even the smallest letter or dot from a Hebrew letter
shall pass away from the Torah.”*

Is the earth still here? If it is, **all of the yods and thorns on yods are still the Sacred Scriptures of the Jesus Movement**. It is important to remember that **his interpretations of the Torah and the Prophets are only found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke**. They count as much today as they did when he taught them.

Jesus will refer to portions from all three sections of the Hebrew Scriptures – *Torah, Prophets, and Writings* – many times in *Matthew, Mark, and Luke*. When we compare his interpretations to those of the earliest teachers in **Avot, The Sayings of the Fathers**, a tractate preserved in the Mishnah (Oral Laws), we can view his positions with other Jewish interpreters of his time period.