

Lk. 16:17--One Tittle

*"And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass,
than one tittle of the law to fail"*

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INTRODUCTION

The movement which "ministers" questions about the doctrine of Scripture (cf. I Tim. 1:4) began in the Garden by the subtle enemy of God, the serpent (Gen. 3:1-5), and continues to this very day. This satanic subtlety pervades Christianity to the extent that even some fundamental Baptists are beguiled by it. For instance, the clear and precise promise of the Lord Jesus Christ, *"till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled"* (Mt. 5:18), has been obfuscated and blunted in such a way that leaders in fundamentalism are not sure what He meant. The editorial committee members of *God's Word in Our Hands*, after a promising exegetical study on this verse, make the ambiguous statement:

Returning now to the question, "Is our Lord here guaranteeing the preservation of all the written words of Scripture?" the answer is an emphatic "yes." Although, as has been shown, preservation is not His main point, it is nevertheless the point He chooses to contribute to the way in which He makes that main point (that all the Law would be fulfilled). What He does not do, however, is give even so much as a hint as to *how* or *where* preservation will take place. Answers to these questions are simply beyond the scope of what is revealed in this passage. The conclusion one must reach is that this passage does not teach that those words are preserved in one particular manuscript or lineage of manuscripts alone. Neither does this passage guarantee that all the words will be always available at all times.¹

These men make a least three denials about this verse and the biblical doctrine of preservation. 1) They deny the "how" of preservation. 2) They deny the "where" of preservation. 3) They deny the "availability" of preservation. Actually this passage teaches all three truths, which truths are corroborated elsewhere in Scripture. The Lord Jesus Christ referred to the jots and tittles of the law. In Scripture the law refers to both the Mosaic Law and the whole Old Testament (OT).² The answer to the second question, "where," is in the OT Hebrew text, which the Lord declared had been preserved up until His day (Mt. 4:4).³ The answer to the first question, "how," is implied through the agency of God and necessitated through the agency of the Jews. The Lord, of course, is the One Who has promised verbal plenary preservation through the agency of His people, the Jews (*vide* Ps. 12:6-7; Rom. 3:2). The answer to their third denial is as follows. First, the "unavailable preservation" view is a *non sequitur*. If something is preserved it

¹J. B. Williams, editor, *God's Word in Our Hands, The Bible Preserved for Us* (Greenville: Ambassador Emerald International, 2003), p. 106.

²E.g., Dt. 31:24 ff. (for Pentateuch); Jn. 10:34 (for Psalms); I Cor. 14:21 (for Isaiah).

³The Greek verb the Lord utilized was the perfect passive *"it is written"* (*gregraptai*), meaning "it has been and still is written."

is available. If it is not preserved it is not available. Second, the Scriptures make it very clear about the agency God has raised up to preserve the Bible, both the OT and New Testament (NT) Scriptures--the local, NT immersionist church (Mt. 28:19-20; I Tim. 3:15). The Lord commanded His baptized disciples to disciple the nations and then baptize them, and instruct their converts in the Scriptures, and as they obeyed Him, His ecclesiological presence would be with them (Mt. 18:15-20; Rev. 1:13).⁴ The Scriptures guarantee the presence of the Lord in His churches with His truth in every generation from the first until now, and history cannot disprove this divine promise.

In addition to these aforementioned truths, Mt. 5:18⁵ and Lk. 16:17 claim that the very consonants and vowels of the inspired Hebrew text would be preserved. This additional truth causes another conundrum for those with a non-biblical view of the doctrine of preservation. Since jots and tittles, which are Hebrew consonants and vowels and consequently Hebrew words, will be preserved, at least two corollaries follow. 1) There is absolutely no warrant to look to penultimate authorities, such as the LXX or Dead Sea Scrolls, to correct the Hebrew text. 2) The Hebrew text that has been preserved by the Jews and approved of by the Lord's churches has been the venerable Masoretic Hebrew text. These corollaries in turn eliminate the necessity to utilize the science of Textual Criticism "to restore" the OT and NT texts, and also repudiate the notion that God has promised merely to preserve His "word" or "concept," or "message."

This essay, focusing primarily on Lk. 16:17, will demonstrate that the Lord not only promised the preservation of every consonant of the Hebrew text, but also every vowel. Consonants and vowels make up words, and since the Lord promised to preserve His words, He has in fact preserved the constituent parts of words--jots and tittles. The word "tittle" (*keriaia*), both in English and Greek, refers to the Hebrew vowel *chireq*, which is the dot ($\text{כֶּרִיאָ} = \text{כֶּרִיאָ}$). This biblical interpretation is exegetically and linguistically sound, inherently harmonious with other Scripture, and it readily dispatches of the fallacious theory of "concept preservation."

CONTEXT

The Lord, in emphasizing that the purpose of His ministry was to fulfill the law, rebuked the Pharisees with the comparative statement, "*And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail*" (Lk. 16:17).⁶ He used two illustrations of extremes within His observable creation for emphasis. Heaven and earth comprise the largest realms of the Lord's created physical work (cf. Gen. 1:2-19).⁷ The smallest thing in God's observable creation is the dot or *chireq* in the Hebrew OT that constitutes a

⁴This presence is more intimate, and authoritatively powerful, than the Lord's general omnipresence.

⁵The Lord Jesus employed the strongest negative (*ou me oὐ μὴ*) possible as He denied absolutely the passing of one (*hen ἓν*) consonant or one (*mia μία*) vowel of the Hebrew OT.

⁶One may appreciate the fuller details of the background as Matthew cites Christ's similar promise in Mt. 5:18.

⁷Since heaven (*hashshamayim*) is a dual noun, and not a plural, in the Hebrew text, it refers to the atmosphere and greater stellar space. The Lord also created the third heaven (II Cor. 12:2) during the creation week but it is not alluded to in Gen. 1. Before God created, all that existed was God (cf. II Kings 8:27).

vowel. The Lord Jesus Christ's statement declared that before the smallest observable thing He created fails (*parelthein*), it would be easier for the largest thing He created to pass (*pesein*) first! It would be difficult to miss His point: the minutia of the OT law will not fail but will be preserved until He completely fulfills it. The OT law was made up of statements, warnings and predictions that were made up of words that had consonants and vowels. The Lord promised that the Hebrew text would be preserved perfectly, as He had previously stated (Lk. 4:4), so that it could be fulfilled perfectly by Him, down to the very words of the law.

The tittle (*keraiā*) is the smallest thing of the Hebrew text. It is not a consonant, such as a jot or *yodh* (י), the Hebrew equivalent to the English "j" or "y" or "i," which He alluded to in Mt. 5:18.⁸ It is not the overhang (i.e., serif) on a consonant (𐤀 versus 𐤁) since He did not refer to a consonant in this passage, and serifs do not make up words. Since the Lord was talking about the smallest thing in the Hebrew text of the law, He was referring to the Hebrew vowel *chireq*, and not to any other vowels such as the *kametz*, *pathach*, *segol*, *cholem*, *qibbutz*, *shureq*, *tzere*, *qametz chatuph*, *chataph qametz*, or *shewa*.⁹ The *chireq* is a mere dot, like a period in an English sentence, and is the basis for several other vowels.¹⁰

Commentators and lexicographers are very tentative about the precise identification of the Greek word *keraiā*. For instance, R. T. France suggests that "the dot (*keraiā*, 'horn') may be either the similar letter *waw* (which is equally optional), or the 'serif' which distinguishes some similar Hebrew letters."¹¹ Colin Brown, after rejecting Manson's interpretation that the *keraiā* refers to "scribal ornaments," postulates the following speculation:

Another possibility for the *keraiā* is that it denotes the "hook" (letter), i.e., *Waw* (*w*) which was also sometimes dispensed with...The *Waw*, when placed in front of a word means "and." Both letters could also be used as vowels (*Yod* = *y*; *Waw* = *u*, or = *o*), but unlike other vowels they would be written in the unpointed text (i.e., the normal text of the time which was written with consonants only). How such a text is read (i.e., whatever vowels are read into the text) obviously can make a considerable difference to the

⁸Matthew's reference to Christ's expression "*one jot or one tittle*," utilizing the disjunctive particle *וְ* ("or"), indicates that He differentiated between the consonant jot and the vowel tittle. Redundancy would have been meaningless.

⁹Nor was he alluding to accents since they are not necessary to constitute words.

¹⁰For example, the *cholem* vowel is a single dot over a consonant (𐤀̇); the *tzere* vowel is two horizontal dots under a consonant (𐤀̈); the *qibbutz* vowel is three diagonal dots under a consonant (𐤀̋); the *segol* is a cluster of three dots under a consonant (𐤀̌); and the *shewa* is two vertical dots under a consonant (𐤀̍), acting as a half-vowel.

¹¹R. T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., 1985), p. 115. It is interesting to note that France's translation of *keraiā* renders it as "dot," and yet he interprets the dot to be the full-sized hook consonant *waw* (ו).

meaning. Whatever particular ideas may lie behind these terms, Manson would seem to be wrong in his interpretation...¹²

MEANING OF KERAIA

The English Word "Tittle"

The Oxford English Dictionary traces the history of the occurrence of the word tittle to Wycliff's translation of the Bible in 1382. He rendered the Latin *apex*, for "point or tip," in Mt. 5:18 and Lk. 16:17 as *titel*.¹³ Other English translations followed this rendering, including Tyndale's translation (1526), the Great Bible (1539), the Geneva Bible (1560), the Rheims NT (1582), and the AV (1611). Why did these early translators employ the noun tittle, and not another word such as "serif," which means an overhang on a letter? The English word tittle comes from the old German word *titteldjen* meaning "tittle, dot."¹⁴ Since Hebrew was the original language, all languages including German derive words from the original consonants. For instance, it is well known in linguistics to realize that dental consonants such as "d" and "t," are interchangeable. In fact, tittle or tit comes from dot since the d's and t's substitute for one another.¹⁵ The English word tit, meaning small,¹⁶ comes from dot that in turn comes from "dod" (tit = tot = dod = dot). The Hebrew *dad* (דָּד) ¹⁷ means breasts or teats and is so translated in Prov. 5:19 and Ezk. 23:8, and Ezk. 23:3 and 23:21,¹⁸ respectively. Tittle is the specifically accurate English word for a dot, coming through the German from the Hebrew for dot or teat. Interestingly, the *English Standard Version* (2001) translates *keriaia* literally as "dot" in Mt. 5:18, stating "For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a **dot**, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished" (so also the RSV).

The Greek Word Keraia

When the Lord employed the Greek work *keriaia* He was giving the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew *chireq* (*kra* = *chrq*). The Greek *kappa* is equivalent to the Hebrew *cheth*. The Greek *rho* is equivalent to the Hebrew *resh*. The Greek *alpha*

¹²Colin Brown, Editor, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publ. House, 1979), p. 182. His assumption that the consonants *waw* and *yodh* were employed for double duty as vowels in some cases, as the so-called *matres lectionis* ("the mothers of reading"), is unwarranted and easily refuted biblically.

¹³"Tittle," *The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 3335.

¹⁴Felix Fluegel, *A Dictionary of the English and German Languages for Home and School*, eds. Im. Schmidt and G. Tanger, (Brunswick: George Westermann, 1903), p. 819.

¹⁵Isaac Mozeson, *The Word: The Dictionary that Reveals the Hebrew Source of English* (NY: SPI Books, 2000), pp. 180, 183, 184.

¹⁶Cf. the name for the small rodent "titmouse" and the expression "tit for tat."

¹⁷The plural is *dadeyha* (דָּדַיָּהוּ). Technically, *dad* refers to the teat or nipple whereas *shad* (שָׁד) refers to the whole breast.

¹⁸I. e., "Thus thou calledst to remembrance the lewdness of thy youth, in bruising thy teats (*dad*) by the Egyptians for the paps (*shad*) of thy youth."

replaces the Hebrew *goth*. This assertion will be established through several lines of argument.

Linguistic Argument

Linguistically, it is common for consonants in words to be dropped off or silenced as they pass from language to language or from generation to generation. In English, several examples of the consonant "h" being silenced are found in the words "hour" and "heir." Even hard guttural consonants are sometimes softened or even silenced with regard to some words. For instance, Bryson states in his best seller,

There were other changes as well--most notably the loss of the Old English sound x, the throat-clearing sound of the *ch* in the Scottish *loch* or the German *ach*. The loss of this sound from English meant that others rushed to fill the vacuum, as in the Old English word *burh* (place) which became variously *burgh* as in Edinburgh, *borough* as in Gainsborough, *brough* as in Middlesbrough, and *bury* as in Canterbury.¹⁹

As Bryson asseverates in his illustrations for English, similarly one should recognize that in other languages such as Hebrew the "q" (*goth*) in *chireq* could be soften or omitted as it goes into the Greek. But it will be demonstrated that this change was not only a possibility but also an actuality.

Theological Argument

Theologically, the Bible predicts the preservation of words, or vocalized consonants, that is, consonants with vowels. Although it is popular to argue that since modern Israeli newspapers and the ancient Dead Sea Scrolls are un-pointed,²⁰ or lack vowels, and therefore the original Hebrew text had no points, this theory is fallacious for at least two reasons. 1) Neither ancient nor modern Jewish practices dictate the truth of Scripture (Rom. 3:3).²¹ 2) The NT writers, under inspiration, read points in their Hebrew text and translated them as such.²²

When the Lord God renewed His covenant with Israel, He used Moses to write the very same words that were on the initial tablets (Ex. 34:1 ff.). The Lord said to Moses, "Write thou these words: for after the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel" (v. 27). The expression "after the tenor of these word" (*al piy hadevariym ha'elleh*) could be translated literally "on [the basis of] the

¹⁹Bill Bryson, *The Mother Tongue: English & How It Got That Way* (NY: Avon Books), p. 93. All one needs to do to observe the "torture" many English words have received in pronunciation and spelling is to read Bryson's chapter on "Pronunciation."

²⁰Most readers of their respective native language do not read every vowel or even every word in a sentence. Readers learn to read clusters of words, which words they have learned to spell and have memorized. The following statement proves this point: Cna yuo raed thsi snetecne?

²¹"Let God be true, but every man a liar."

²²Cf. the Hebrew word behind Immanuel (Isa. 7:14) which is translated by Matthew as Emmanuel (Mt. 1:13), doubling the *mem* ("m") with the double Greek *mu* since he saw the *dagesh forte* (dot) in the Hebrew text (דגש).

mouth of these words." The only way Moses could have written the Lord's spoken words was to hear the vowels in the consonants (i.e., vocalization) and then to write the words with the vowels intact.²³ The Mosaic Law, then, constituted the very written words of Jehovah, including the consonants and vowels. Furthermore, the Jews were to obey the Mosaic Law in minute detail, not adding to nor diminishing from it (cf. Dt. 4:2). They were to keep or preserve (*shammar*) the Law and not forget the things they had seen and which were written down in it, and then to teach their children the Mosaic Law (vv. 6, 9, 10; 6:7; 32:46). Jehovah promised Isaiah that the words which He put in the prophet's mouth (*peh*) would be accompanied by the Lord's Spirit, and these words would not depart out of Isaiah's mouth, or Isaiah's seed's mouth, or Isaiah's seeds' seed's mouth, from then forever on (Isa. 59:21). Obviously, these words of the book of Isaiah would be preserved intact through the Lord's remnant (Israel and the local churches) forever. The Lord told Jeremiah to write all the words which He had spoken to Jeremiah in a scroll (Jer. 36:2). God gave him vocalized consonants, that is words, which Jeremiah in turn gave to Baruch who wrote down the words (v. 4). These passages conclusively argue against any notion that the vowel sounds were merely given to Moses who passed on the oral tradition of the pronunciation until the Masoretes invented a system to approximate the vowels. Elias Levitas' speculation that the Masoretes invented the points has nothing to commend it but has all scriptural authority to condemn it.²⁴

The initial Psalm addresses the blessed man and his responsibility to delight in and meditate on the law of the Lord, stating: "*But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night*" (Ps. 1:2). The word "meditate" comes from *hagah* that means, "to mutter" and suggests the deliberate pronunciation of the words of Scripture. It is impossible to recite meaningfully consonants without vowels and it is equally impossible to delight (*chaphatz*) in consonants with non-authoritative vowels. Again, the fallacious view that man invented the Hebrew vowel points has nothing to commend it. Is there any reason that Bible believers must countenance the speculative view that the Lord God, the Creator of language, disdains vowels, at least to the extent that He would not preserve them in written form (Ps. 12:6-7; Mt. 24:35)? After all, has not the Lord Jesus Christ referred to Himself as the *Alpha* and *Omega* (Rev. 1:8; 21:6), the first and last vowels of the Greek language?

The speculation that the vowels were not inspired is ludicrous in light of the complexity of the Hebrew language. Biblical Hebrew demands the linguistic necessity

²³To postulate that the consonants were written but the vowels and therefore the pronunciation of such were passed on through oral tradition is biblically fallacious and constitutes a major conundrum for its advocates. The position that vowels were passed by oral tradition is condemned by the Lord Jesus Christ, who denounced all traditions, stating "*Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye*" (cf. Mk. 7:13). Furthermore, if the Masoretes invented the points and added them to the preserved consonantal text and consequently "created" words, then they violated the commands of Scripture about adding to the preserved text (cf. Dt. 12:32; Rev. 22:18).

²⁴Owen questions the very existence of a 5th or 6th century school of Masoretes, stating "It is said to have been the common work of the school of Massoretes (*sic*) in Tiberias. At least Elias Levita says so...What then if someone should suggest that these Tiberian Massoretes perhaps never did exist at all, and that those who would persuade us that the Massoretes dreamed up the points first dreamed up the Massoretes themselves?" John Owen, *Biblical Theology* (Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1996 reprint of the 1661 edition), pp. 508-509.

for distinguishing Hebrew verbs and nouns. Hebrew verbs are made up of seven stems, of which are the *Qal* stem and six derived stems, including the *Niphal*, *Piel*, *Pual*, *Hithpael*, *Hiphil*, and *Hophal*. These stems apply equally to both the strong and weak verbs. The differentiation of some of these stems is based on complex vowel pointing, without which tremendous confusion abounds. The *Piel* and *Pual* differ from each and the *Qal* stem only by vowels and diacritical marks. The *Niphal* perfect 3ms (3rd person, masculine, singular), *Niphal* imperfect 1cp (1st person, common, plural), and *Niphal* participle ms differ by vowel points alone, and may be confused with the *Qal* imperfect 1cp except for the points. The imperfect forms for all of the stems except the *Hiphil* and *Hithpael* are identical without points and consequent confusion would abound with the divinely preserved vowel points. If the stems are significant, which they must be, then their respective vowel differences are significant, and must be carefully maintained to make sense of any given passage.²⁵

For example, in Gen. 1:26, Scripture uses the first of several *Qal* imperfect 1cp verbs (*na`eseh*) for God to express "let us make" man. However, without authoritatively inspired vowels this verb could be "he was made" (*Niphal* [passive] perfect 3ms) or "we will be made" (*Niphal* imperfect 1cp). Furthermore, the *Niphal* participle masculine singular without the pointing would be the same consonants and mean "being made." Although some might say that the context would always show which conjugation and tense was divinely inspired, in this case the context would probably eliminate only the participle. Did Jehovah say "let us make" man, or man "he was made," or "we [i.e., the Godhead] will be made" man?

Another example should suffice for this point. In response to Isaac's query about the animal sacrifice, Abraham answered "*God will provide (yire'eh) himself a lamb*" (Gen. 22:8). Is the verb *Qal* imperfect 3ms and therefore active (God will provide **for** Himself the lamb) or *Niphal* imperfect 3ms and therefore reflexive (God will provide Himself **for** the lamb)? The Masoretic text has the former reading and therefore the answer is that God, and no one else, including Abraham, will provide the lamb.²⁶ Without authoritative pointing, the precise theology required here and elsewhere is forfeited.

With respect to nouns, the endings on masculine nouns are necessary to determine number, whether singular, dual, or plural. In Hebrew some nouns are singular, some are dual, such as those in pairs like hands, feet, eyes, ears, etc. The distinctive ending of a masculine dual noun is *pathach*, *yodh*, *chirek*, and *mem*, in contrast to the distinctive ending of a masculine plural noun: *chirek*, *yodh*, *mem*. The first verse of the OT Scriptures is instructive. Scripture says, "*In the beginning God created the heaven and earth*" (Gen. 1:1). Without authoritative vowels, one would not know that the word "God" (*elohim*) is a masculine plural noun and that the word "heaven" (*hashshamayim*) is a masculine dual noun. The Masoretic text teaches that the plural Godhead created the

²⁵If, according to the prevailing theory, the Masoretes invented the pointing to prevent the loss of the traditional pronunciation about twenty-one centuries after the Lord gave it to Moses, what absolute guarantee is there that the Masoretes did not make mistakes in light of this extreme linguistic complexity?

²⁶The issue of whether the divine Lord Jesus Christ is the Lamb or not is not the question here since the NT clearly states that He is the Lamb of God (cf. Jn. 1:29, 36; I Pet. 1:19; Rev. 5:6; *et al*).

two heavens (first and second). Or was it that the dual God (i.e., yin yang) created a plurality of heavens?

Regarding proper nouns, the consonantal text provides several interesting, but non-authoritative, alternatives to the Masoretic pointed text. In Proverbs 30:1, did Agur address Ithiel and Ucal? Kidner asserts,

The Hebrew consonants of this phrase can be revocalized to read: 'I have wearied myself, O God, I have wearied myself, O God, and come to an end', which introduces the opening theme well. The ancient versions likewise eliminate the proper names, but fail to agree in their translations. It remains an open question.²⁷

If vowel points may be rearranged in proper nouns, what prevents the interpreter from the thorough rearrangement of major sections of the Hebrew text and thereby the creation of new and false doctrine?

Another example of the alleged need to revocalize the Masoretic text brings consternation to those who maintain the integrity and originality of the Hebrew vowel points. In the passage that deals with "the great wall" of Aphek, the Scripture states "there a wall fell upon twenty and seven thousand of the men that were left" (I Ki. 20:30). Kulus, in citing Donald Wiseman's statement: "The 'thousand' (*'eleph*) might be revocalized without change of consonants to 'officer' (*'alluph*) ... the number might represent twenty-seven officers killed," charges some who "will not hear this number because it is too large!"²⁸ In this context one would not know if 27,000 men were killed or twenty-seven officers.

Not only does the complexity of the Hebrew verb system demand that the vowels to have been written *ab origine*, but also so does the necessity to distinguish different words with the same consonants. In Psalm 119, the *sin/shin* stanza (vv. 161-168), displays an illustration of the necessity for diacritical markings (i.e., tittles [Lk. 16:17]). The sibilant or "s" consonant designated *sin* looks like a three-pronged comb with a dot over the left tooth (שׁ). The *shin* has the same consonantal form but has the diacritical dot over the right tooth (שׂ) and produces the "sh" sound and spelling. The psalmist declared in v. 164 "*Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments.*" Without the diacritical dot over the right tooth of the first consonant in the noun *sheva`* ("seven"), the word could be the perfect verb *sava`* ("he is satisfied"). Therefore the Hebrew text could read "He is satisfied in the day I do praise thee because of thy righteous judgments." The context cannot render an authoritative solution and hence the text becomes as wax ready to be twisted by every interpreter.

Moses punned on the nakedness of Adam and Eve and the subtlety of the serpent, using two words with the same consonants, *`arom* and *`arum*²⁹ respectively. The only

²⁷Derek Kidner, *Proverbs, An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1976), p. 178.

²⁸Chester Kulus, *Those So-Called Errors* (Newington, CT: Emmanuel Baptist Theological Press, 2003), p. 304.

²⁹Without pointing these words are identical (ארום and ארום).

difference between these two adjectives, other than the first is plural³⁰ and the second is singular, is the vowel pointing. What did Moses intend to say: the couple was naked and the serpent was subtle, the couple was subtle and the serpent was subtle, the couple was subtle and the serpent was naked, or the couple was naked and the serpent was naked? At this stage in the development of Moses' narrative, it would be impossible to know absolutely without the pointing.

Finally, a cursory glance at any elementary Hebrew grammar glossary would show basic words differentiated only by pointing. For example, one should consider the following: *l* ("God" or "to" or "no"), *'m* ("mother" or "if"), *'ph* ("nose" or "also"), *'th* ("with" or "you"), *bn* ("to perceive" or "between"), *bqr* ("cows" or "morning"), *gll* ("to roll" or "on account of"), *hw'* ("he" or "she"), *hnh* ("they" or "behold"), *zcr* ("male" or "to remember"), *chwh* ("to bow" or "Eve"), *lchm* ("to fight" or "bread"), *mn* ("from" or "manna"), *ngs/ngsh* ("to beat" or "to draw near"), *`d* ("witness" or "unto"), *`wr* ("to arouse" or "skin"), *`m* ("people" or "with"), *prs/prsh* ("to spread out" or "horseman"), *r`* ("friend" or "evil"), and *shm* ("name" or "there"). With these words, some verbs, some nouns, some adjectives, some adverbs, and some pronouns, making up thousands of contextual possibilities, it would be ludicrous to suggest vowels were not originally inscripturated.

Biblical Argument

Biblically, there are examples of the *qoph* dropping off of words as it is translated or replacing one of the Hebrew gutturals, such as the *cheth* ("ch"), the *caph* ("c" or "k"), or the *hey* ("h").³¹ For instance, the Hebrew word *nahaq* for the verb bray is translated in English as "neigh." In this case the "n" (*nun*) and the "h" (*hey*) transfer over but the "q" (*qoph*) drops out in the translation. The Hebrew *qoph* is pronounced as a "k" or "q" without the "u" sound. Over one hundred years ago biblical theologians pronounced the *qoph* with the "k" sound. Govett stated, "I retain the English letter Q to represent the Hebrew *Koph* or *Quoph*, though I suppose it was generally pronounced K."³²

The NT writers, under inspiration, confirmed that the Hebrew *qoph* was pronounced as the "k" in the Greek letter *kappa*. Several Hebrew proper names beginning with *qoph* have been translated in the Greek NT with the *kappa* used as the equivalent. The name Cain has had the initial *qoph* translated with the *kappa* and the "C" in English (*Qain* = *Kain* = Cain [קַיִן = ~~Kain~~ = Cain]). Other examples include the names Cainan (Lk. 3:34), Cis (Acts 13:21), and Core (Jude 1:11). The point of all this is to demonstrate that the *qoph*, under inspiration, was sounded and spelled like the Hebrew gutturals *cheth*, *caph* and *hey*.

³⁰Moses uses the plural *`arummiym* (naked) in Gen. 2:25 and Solomon uses the plural *`arumiym* (prudent) in Prov. 14:18. In this case, the only difference is the *dagesh forte* (dot) in the *mem* ("m") of the former word "naked."

³¹A guttural is a letter sound that is emitted from the back of the throat. In Hebrew other gutturals include the *'aleph* and *'ayin* letters.

³²Robert Govett, *English Derived from Hebrew; with Glances at Greek and Latin* (London: S. W. Partridge and Co., 1869), p. 4. The English "kitten" comes from the Hebrew word *qatton* for small.

Furthermore, there are examples where the Hebrew guttural consonants, with which the *qoph* is interchanged, are omitted and replaced with vowels in Greek. The proper noun Abel in Hebrew is *Hebel* (אֵבֶל), and the NT writers omitted the *hey* leaving the *alpha* or "A" as the initial letter (e.g., Mt. 23:35), rendering his name Ἄβελ. Another example is the name Hosea. The Hebrew is *hoshea`* (הוֹשֵׁעַ) and Paul translated the prophet's name as Osee (Ὀση) in Rom. 9:25, omitting the *hey* and putting forth the vowel *omega*. Again, the Apostle John rendered the expression "praise the Lord" or *halelu jah* (הַלְלוּ יְהוָה) from the Hebrew (e.g., Ps. 115:18) as *Alleluia* (ἁλληλουια) in Rev. 19:1. In this case he omitted the guttural *hey* and retained the *alpha* as the initial letter. Similarly, Paul rendered Hagar (חַגָּר) as Agar (Ἄγαρ), giving the *alpha* the rough breathing mark in Gal. 4:25. These examples illustrate that the biblical writers omitted the Hebrew guttural consonant *hey* and started the word with the Greek vowels such as *alpha* or *omega*.

More specifically however, are the occasions the biblical writers omitted the Hebrew guttural consonant *cheth* and allowed the subsequent vowel to head up the word. The *qoph* ("q") is interchangeable with the *cheth* ("ch") and both sound and are spelled like the English "k." Some examples are put forth to demonstrate that the hard "k" sound in Hebrew words is often softened or eliminated so that the vowel sounds of the *alpha* or *epsilon* head up the word. The Hebrew names *Henoch* (חֵנוֹךְ) and *Chawwah* (חַוְוָה) for Enoch and Eve are translated respectively as Ἐνοχ and Ἔβα, removing the hard guttural *cheth* and retaining the corresponding vowel which is the Greek *epsilon*. The names Anna (אָנָּה), Annas (אַנָּס), and Ananias (אַנְיָאֵס) all begin with the *cheth* in the Hebrew OT, being derived from *chan* for "grace" (cf. Lk. 2:36; Jn. 18:13; Acts 5:1). The NT writers omitted the *cheth* in their translation and let the underlying vowel rendered as an *alpha* carry the word, producing Anna (Ἄνα), Annas (Ἄνας), and Ananias (Ἀνανίας), respectively. Another example is that of the Aramaic place name Aceldama (Acts 1:19). The Aramaic spelling is *chaqaldema`* (חַקְלְדֵמָא), starting the noun off with the *cheth*, and reflected as such in the 1899 Douay-Rheims Version's spelling "Haceldama." The biblical writer Luke, under inspiration, spelled the word Ἀκελδᾶμα dropping off the hard *cheth* letter and sound, and allowed the soft *alpha* vowel to surface as the head letter.

These examples illustrate the NT biblical writers' proclivity in translating Hebrew words to drop the hard "k" letters of Hebrew (*cheth*, *hey*, *caph*, or *qoph*) and allow the subsequent corresponding vowel to surface, whether the Greek *epsilon*, *omega*, or *alpha*. The two references to tittle or *keriaia* the Lord Jesus Christ made (Mt. 5:18 and Lk. 16:17) manifest this omission of the corresponding Greek letter for the Hebrew *qoph* in *chireq*. The Greek word *keriaia* is the equivalent to the Hebrew vowel *chireq*, translating *kappa* for the *cheth*, *rho* for the *resh*, and omitting the *qoph* and allowing the *alpha* to surface (ch = k, r = ρ, q = 0 and a appears). When the Lord said "tittle," He was referring to the dot that is the Hebrew vowel *chireq*. Accordingly, He asserted, "Till heaven and earth pass, one **consonant** (jot = *yodh*) or one **vowel** (dot = *chireq*) shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Mt. 5:18). Likewise, He also asserted "And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one **dot** (*chireq*) of the law to fail" (Lk. 16:17).

CONCLUSION

Surely it is a self-evident fact that words are vocalized consonants, or consonants with vowels. This is true in most languages and the Scriptures indicate that this indeed is true for the words of the biblical languages. The OT Scriptures predicted that the Lord God would preserve all of His inscripturated words, including the vowels with the consonants. The Lord Jesus Christ confirmed these OT promises by referring to the jots and tittles of the OT Hebrew words. He mentioned specifically the word *keraiia* for tittle, arguing for the preservation of the smallest vowel of the Hebrew language, the *chireq* or dot, in Mt. 5:18 and Lk. 16:17. That the Greek word *keraiia* is the equivalent to the Hebrew vowel *chireq* is demanded along several lines of argument. First, the translators of English Bibles, from Wycliff to the 2001 ESV, understood the Greek word as referring to the dot and utilized the English equivalent "tittle" or "dot." Second, the Greek *keraiia* corresponds to the Hebrew vowel for the point, the *chireq*, as the "k" and "r" letters are transliterated and the "q" is dropped and replaced by its underlying vowel. This linguistic phenomenon of softening or dropping the hard "q" sound is common not only in English, but also in the biblical languages, as numerous examples demonstrate.

Since the Lord confirmed His OT promises by referring to the preservation of every consonant and every vowel, the Hebrew text He had was perfectly preserved and is still perfectly preserved down to this very moment. This truth eliminates the necessity then to emend the OT Hebrew text with Textual Criticism and with the aid of the *LXX*, the Vulgate and the Dead Sea Scrolls. If there is no necessity for OT Textual Criticism, since God has indeed preserved all of His words, then there is no necessity for NT Textual Criticism as well. Therefore the Hebrew and Greek texts (Critical and Majority texts) produced by Textual Criticism and the subsequent English versions from such texts are corrupt impostors based on a fallacious and dangerous theory which denies the Bible. Believers need to receive by faith the Jehovah God's promise of the preservation of every OT Hebrew consonant and vowel since for the Lord Jesus Christ "*it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail*" (Lk. 16:17).