

בשנת ה'תש"ל
AN OLD HEBREW TEXT OF
ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

TO
MY WIFE
AND TO MY FELLOW-MEMBERS
OF THE
INTERNATIONAL HEBREW CHRISTIAN ALLIANCE
THIS BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED



AN OLD HEBREW TEXT OF
ST. MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

TRANSLATED, WITH AN INTRODUCTION
NOTES AND APPENDICES

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PREFACE

EVERY effort that can be put forth to illuminate the pages of Holy Writ should commend itself to those who have made its teaching their rule of life, and such an effort has been humbly attempted in the present volume. The Bible has suffered greatly at the hands of faulty expositors who, from ignorance of the languages in which it is written, have based their interpretations on forms of words found in a translation. The Bible has suffered equally at the hands of inaccurate translators. A literal translation is not necessarily a good one. The translator may be out of sympathy with his author, or he may be insufficiently acquainted with the customs, modes of thought, and colloquial expressions of the author's people. The more remote the date of the document, the more difficult becomes the task of understanding precisely

the meaning of the terms employed. It is not by any means an exaggerated statement to assert that at the present day it is still impossible to make a correct translation of the whole Bible. None the less, we have advanced far beyond the meagre information possessed by those who prepared the Authorised Version. And almost every year throws fresh light on the social, religious and philological conditions of which the Bible is the mouthpiece.

The work of the translator is thus seen to be beset with difficulties even when he has the original in his hands, but in the case of the Bible he has to face further complications. Not only are the originals lost, but accurate copies are also unobtainable. This necessitates the preparation of a critical edition, based on the divergent texts of manuscripts of varying age and authenticity, before the translation can be begun; and even so, such a critical text is liable at any time to be invalidated by the discovery of older and more faithful copies of the original documents. There is still another eventuality to be taken into con-

sideration: the supposed originals of certain books of the Bible may themselves be translations. This would be analogous to our expecting that a French version of Shakespeare made from a German translation of that poet's works would accurately represent the sense of the original English text. Broadly speaking, we take Hebrew as being the language in which the writings of the Old Testament were composed, and Greek for the New; but this cannot be asserted dogmatically. Apart from the fact that, in the Old Testament as we have it, there are certain sections of the Books of Daniel and Ezra written not in Hebrew but in Aramaic, we can by no means be sure that some of the earlier narratives of the Bible were not written in ancient Babylonian or Egyptian. When we turn to the New Testament we find that there are reasons for suspecting a Hebrew or Aramaic original for the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and John, and for the Apocalypse.

In the case of Matthew's Gospel, with which this volume is immediately concerned, the evidence is particularly strong, for we