

## PREFACE TO TRACT SHEKALIM.

AMONG the treatises contained in the Section Moed of the Babylonian Talmud is to be found that of Shekalim, which consists, however, only of Mishnas, the Babylonian Talmud having no Gemara. The Palestinian Talmud contains a Gemara for this tract also, and there is an additional commentary by Maimonides. While we are translating only the Babylonian Talmud, we would not care to omit Shekalim, which is of peculiar historical value and may prove quite interesting to the reader. But the Mishna, without any explanation whatever, would naturally seem obscure, and in some instances would be absolutely incomprehensible; and, the Gemara of the Palestinian Talmud, as well as the commentary of Maimonides, consisting of very complicated and intricate series of arguments, inferences, and explanations, which would be not only difficult of translation but also immaterial to the subject, the insertion of which would be a deviation from our method, and unnecessary, as would explanations of Barthanora, Tospath-yomtabh, etc., we were forced to provide the text with a commentary of our own, drawn from the most authentic sources. This, we trust, will serve to elucidate any obscure passages not quite comprehensible to the general reader. Accordingly, every sentence or word in the Mishna requiring an explanation is distinguished by a number or an asterisk, and has a corresponding reference in the commentary printed below the text. We may add that, for our personal satisfaction and to guard against any possible errors, we have given this tract for revision to some noted Russian scholars who are competent to judge upon it, and they find it very intelligible.

As stated above, we have taken our commentary from the most authentic sources we could find. We do not, therefore, solicit leniency on the part of worthy critics, but ask them to restrain their criticisms until they shall have carefully studied the commentaries mentioned, as well as our commentary, with proper consideration; for ours is derived from the Palestinian Talmud, Maimonides, etc. Conscientious critics will do so without our

solicitation; and as for others, who are ready to criticise everything impromptu as soon as it leaves our pen, such a request would be of no avail. We nevertheless will be grateful to any one who will call our attention to things which are not comprehensible in the commentary, this being our first venture of the kind, more especially as we think we shall be compelled to do the same with other Mishnayoths to which the Babylonian Talmud has no Gemara. A separate introduction to Tract Shekalim we think unnecessary, as the contents of this speaks for itself. We nevertheless will return to this when we come to Tract Midoth (Measures).

In compliance with our promise in our prospectus, we add to this volume the Hebrew text of the Tracts Shekalim and Rosh Hashana of our new edition, for the benefit of students and scholars who may desire to compare the translation with it.

NEW YORK, May, 1897.

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