

## PREFACE

The aim of this work is to present, in a comprehensive way, the traditional Jewish conception of the ideal life for individuals, as well as for nations. The problems taken up in the book are discussed, not from a theological viewpoint, but rather from that of the prophecies of the prophets as interpreted by the rabbis. The doctrines concerning God, Torah, Israel, Messiah, the future world and so forth, are, therefore, referred to, only where they are directly related to the subject of an ideal life in the ideal era to come. For my main problem is to reconstruct an ideal social life on earth as pictured by the rabbis of old.

The Tannaitic literature, the Babylonian and Palestinian Talmudim, and the Midrashim, were utilized as the basis of the work. Allusions are occasionally made to the Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphal literature, and to the Jewish prayer book. Since the purpose of the work is to reconstruct, not a purely prophetic, but a prophetic-rabbinic ideal life, only those allusions to the Bible which are quoted in the rabbinic sources are given. With a few minor exceptions, no attempt was made to allude to the Mediaeval Jewish authorities, like Maimonides, Nahmanides, Abravanel, and others, who dealt with some phases of my problem.

It is self-evident that a debatable subject of this nature will invite a number of criticisms. The orthodox and reformed groups alike, it is expected, will disagree with many of the interpretations and conclusions. These groups are advised, however, to consult carefully all the sources given in the notes before they form an opinion about the conclusions herein arrived at.

For the benefit of the prospective critic and of the student of Jewish eschatology, it may be added that the old method of some authorities to differentiate between certain terms which designate the " future world " and the " future era ", respectively, was for my purpose, entirely ignored. Every passage was studied carefully for its contents, regardless of the particular expression employed by the rabbis in referring to the " future ". If the passages speak, for instance, of poverty, of large families, or, of universal peace, in the future, it is evident that such passages, irrespective of the term used for the " future ", allude, not to the future world, or the realm of the spirit, but rather to the ideal era on this earth. If, on the other hand, a statement speaks of a " future " when there will be no eating, no drinking and so forth, it is equally clear that such a statement refers to the world of the spirit—a subject which the present work does not include.

The reader who will hastily pass judgment concerning the book and label it as " radical ", is likewise reminded of two important facts. First, that the subject matter is Utopian in nature, and that established institutions of our social structure naturally should not expect any complimentary statements at the hands of a Utopian author. Secondly, nearly all the statements and conclusions set forth in this work are rabbinic, and not my own—even though the style employed, namely, that of paraphrasing the rabbinic passages and statements, may suggest that I express my own personal views.

The Bible translation of the Jewish Publication Society was used for the biblical references. In a few places, parts of, instead of complete, verses are quoted, because they are so quoted in the rabbinic sources.

All the sources are given fully in the notes at the end of the book. When the paraphrased rabbinic quotation con-

tains a biblical reference, the biblical source is mentioned first, in the notes, and the rabbinic sources follow in their regular chronological order.

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MICHAEL HIGGER.

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