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978-1-107-64541-7 - A Short Account of the Hebrew Tenses

The Rev. R. H. Kennett

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BY

THE REV. R. H. KENNETT, M.A.

FELLOW AND LECTURER OF QUEENS' COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY LECTURER IN ARAMAIC

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TO MY PUPILS

הרבה תורה למדתי מרבותי ומחבירי יותר מהם
ומתלמידי יותר מכולן

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PREFACE.

THE present volume is an attempt to give an account of the nature and use of the Tenses in Hebrew in a form suitable for those who have but recently begun the study of the language, and who have not attained to such proficiency as will enable them to use with advantage Professor Driver's indispensable book. I have commonly found in teaching, that a student's chief difficulty in the Hebrew verbs is to grasp the meaning which they conveyed to the minds of the Hebrews themselves; that is to say, there is a tendency to assign as equivalents to each of the Hebrew Tenses a certain number of Latin or English forms by which that particular Tense may commonly be translated. The result is a failure to perceive many of those fine shades of meaning, which give such life and vigour to the language of the Old Testament.

The difficulty in the use of the Hebrew verbs lies solely in the point of view, so absolutely different from our own, from which the Hebrews regarded an action; the *time*, which with us is the first consideration, as the very word 'tense' shews, being to them a matter of

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secondary importance. It is, therefore, essential that a student should clearly grasp, not so much the Latin or English forms which may be used in translating each of the Hebrew Tenses, but rather the aspect of each action, as it presented itself to a Hebrew's mind.

To deal adequately, however, with such a subject is beyond the limits of a grammar intended for the use of students, and yet no real progress can be made in Hebrew until it is mastered.

In treating of a subject so wide, in which the natural divisions are few, and often slightly marked, it is not easy to make a selection, and one is sorely tempted to multiply examples at the expense of brevity. I trust that the illustrations which are printed under the several headings will be sufficient for learners, but, lest I may be thought too dogmatic in my statements or in my omissions, I have dealt with some of the vexed questions in additional notes.

My heartiest thanks are due to my friend Mr F. C. Burkitt for kindly reading through the greater part of my notes in manuscript, and for many valuable suggestions. It is, however, only fair to him to say that he is in no wise responsible for any of the opinions here set forth.

ROBERT H. KENNETT.

QUEENS' COLLEGE,

January 16, 1901.