
SECTION 2

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Chapter 5: MATTHEW'S GOSPEL IN HEBREW

Hebrew language and manuscript studies are important for an accurate understanding of the Christian Greek Scriptures. Both the Hebrew language and culture strongly influenced the Greek words and ••57•• thought patterns used in the Christian Scriptures. Though the majority of the Hebrew Scripture quotations come from the *Septuagint*, by no means is this always true. In some instances, such as the book of Hebrews, the writer translated directly from Hebrew to Greek when quoting Scripture.

Thus, a comprehensive study of the Christian Scriptures must also consider Hebrew language documents. In the case of this present study, however, there is even greater need to become acquainted with Hebrew texts, inasmuch as verification of the divine name in the *New World Translation* Christian Greek Scriptures comes directly from Hebrew sources.¹

In this and the following two chapters, we will consider three topics dealing with Hebrew language manuscripts.

An early Hebrew Gospel

The August 15, 1996 *The Watchtower* introduced an important book by George Howard.² Howard's book, *The Gospel of Matthew According to a Primitive Hebrew Text*,³ evaluates the final section (identified as a *book*) within a work published by Shem-Tob ben-Isaac ben-Shaprut in the 1380's. This Jewish physician, whom we will identify simply as Shem-Tob, published a polemic⁴ entitled ••58•• *Even Bohan* (אבן בוהן, "The Touchstone") which consisted of 17 *sections* or *books*. On the first page of the introduction, Howard describes Shem-Tob's work.

Of the original books the first deals with the principles of the Jewish faith, the next nine deal with various passages in the Bible that were disputed by Jews and Christians, the eleventh discusses certain haggadic [commentary] sections in the Talmud used by Christians or proselytes to Christianity, and the twelfth contains the entire Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew along with polemical comments by Shem-Tob interspersed throughout the text.

Howard's book is concerned with the final portion of Shem-Tob's work in which this Jewish apologist reproduced a complete Gospel of Matthew in the Hebrew language.

The basis of our interest

We are interested in Howard's work for two reasons. First, Howard presents persuasive evidence that this is a late recension of the actual Hebrew Gospel written by Matthew. If this is true, then this Hebrew Gospel should not be ranked as a Hebrew version, but as an actual descendant of the work of the Apostle himself.

Howard states that further scholarly work must be done to establish the validity of this claim. Nonetheless, should this Hebrew Gospel of Matthew be fully authenticated as a recension of the *lost* first century Hebrew Gospel, it will shed important textual light on Christian Scripture manuscript

¹ On page 12 in the Foreword of the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* (1985 edition) the New World Bible Translation Committee says:

We have looked for some agreement with us by the Hebrew versions we consulted to confirm our own rendering [of the divine name]. Thus, out of the 237 times that we have restored Jehovah's name in the body of our translation, there is only one instance wherein we have no support or agreement from any of the Hebrew versions. But in this one instance, namely, at 1 Corinthians 7:17, the context and related texts strongly support restoring the divine name.

² The reference appears on page 13 in the article, "Jesus' Coming or Jesus' Presence—Which?"

³ Permission has been granted from Mercer University Press, Macon, Georgia, 31207 to reproduce material in this chapter from *The Gospel of Matthew According to a Primitive Hebrew Text* by George Howard, 1987. This includes the Hebrew and English quotations from Shem-Tob's *Matthew* and miscellaneous citations throughout this chapter taken from Howard's book.

⁴ Webster's *New Collegiate Dictionary* defines a polemic as, "An aggressive attack on or refutation of the opinions or principles of another."

studies. This is an exciting discovery!

Secondly, the Shem-Tob manuscript is one of the "J" documents listed in the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* footnotes. J² is the actual Shem-Tob *Matthew*, while J³ and J⁴ are identified as revisions.⁵ The ••59•• summary of these three "J" references as given in the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* (1969 edition, pages 28-29) reads,

J²

Matthew in Hebrew. About 1385 a Jew named Shem Tob ben Shaprut of Tudela in Castile, Spain, wrote a polemical work against Christianity entitled *Eben Bohan* in which he incorporates *Matthew* in Hebrew as a separate chapter. (Cursive manuscripts of Shem Tob's *Eben Bohan* are found at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York City.)

J³

Matthew and *Hebrews* in Hebrew. Sebastian Münster revised and completed an imperfect manuscript copy of Shem Tob's *Matthew*. This he published and printed in Basel, Switzerland, in 1537. Later, in 1557, Münster published his Hebrew version of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. (A copy is found at the New York Public Library.)

J⁴

Matthew in Hebrew. A revision of Münster's *Matthew* made and published by Johannes Quinqueboreus, Paris, France, 1551. (A copy is found at the New York Public Library.)

Identification of Shem-Tob manuscripts

Howard identifies nine Shem-Tob manuscripts used in his study. (That is, nine separate manuscripts of the Shem-Tob *Matthew* text were available for comparison.) One of the nine is presumably the actual J² manuscript used by the New World Bible Translation Committee and is housed in the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, New York.

Earlier we discussed *textual criticism* and the study of variant manuscripts. The nine Shem-Tob manuscripts give an example of this process. On pages x and xi (Roman numerals 10 and 11) of his introduction, Howard identifies all these manuscripts as 15th to 17th century copies. Of these, some are identified as being of fair quality, though they evidence considerable revision in regard to the improvement of grammar and were edited with the view of bringing them into agreement with the wording of the Greek Gospel of Matthew. Other manuscripts he classifies as being of mediocre quality. Some of the manuscripts are incomplete. Two manuscripts are identified as being of high quality with the least amount of copyist editing. Howard generally relied on these latter two high-quality manuscripts for the translation of the Gospel of Matthew included in his book.

The testimony supporting Matthew's Hebrew Gospel

••60•• There is abundant and early evidence that Matthew wrote a Gospel in the Hebrew language. Jerome, writing in the fourth century, is quoted in the reference edition of the *New World Translation* as follows:

"Matthew, who is also Levi, and who from a publican came to be an apostle, first of all composed a Gospel of Christ in Judaea in the Hebrew language and characters for the benefit of those of the circumcision who had believed. Who translated it after that in Greek is not sufficiently ascertained. Moreover, the Hebrew itself is preserved to this day in the library at Caesarea, which the martyr Pamphilus so diligently collected. I also was allowed by the Nazarenes who use this volume in the

⁵ On pages 160-162 in the book cited, Howard argues against Münster's work being a revision of Shem-Tob. However, whether or not J² is a revision of Shem-Tob is moot from the perspective of its use as a "J" reference. The concern of the New World Bible Translation Committee was the *wording used* in this Hebrew text, not its source. The use of יהוה (or ה') in J² remains unaltered. Nonetheless, Howard identifies Münster's work as coming from an older Hebrew tradition rather than from a translation of the Greek text (pp.160-176). Therefore, J³ probably correctly stands as an authentic Hebrew language Gospel and should not be classified as a version. In the same section, Howard identifies Jean du Tillet's Hebrew *Matthew* as also coming from a Hebrew Gospel source rather than being a translation from Greek. Thus, J¹ would also be listed as a Hebrew Gospel rather than a Hebrew version. Redefining J¹, J², J³, and J⁴ as Hebrew Gospels originating from an original Hebrew text gives the New World Bible Translation Committee a considerably stronger position than merely identifying these "J" documents as Hebrew versions.

Syrian city of Beroea to copy it."⁶

There is no reason to doubt the veracity of Jerome's statement. In all likelihood, Matthew, a Jew employed by Rome as a tax collector, was capable of writing in Hebrew,⁷ Greek, and Latin. It is certainly probable that he wrote a Gospel account to his fellow Israelites in the spoken language of the day. It is entirely possible that the Gospel we have today was a translation⁸ by Matthew himself from his Hebrew ••61•• Gospel. Jerome's statement implies that the Hebrew text he copied was identifiable by him as a parallel of the Greek Gospel of Matthew.

In the book we are consulting by George Howard, he gives further evidence of Matthew's Gospel in Hebrew (pp. 156-157). The following quotations from early writers merely represent a few of the better preserved references:

Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 3.1.1

Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect while Peter and Paul were preaching at Rome and laying the foundations of the Church.

Origen as quoted by Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.24.6

As having learnt by tradition concerning the four Gospels, which alone are unquestionable in the Church of God under heaven, that first was written that according to Matthew, who was once a tax collector but afterwards an apostle of Jesus Christ, who published it for those who from Judaism came to believe, composed as it was in the Hebrew language.

Eusebius, *H.E.* 3.24.6

Matthew had first preached to Hebrews, and when he was on the point of going to others he transmitted in writing in his native language the Gospel according to himself, and thus supplied by writing the lack of his own presence to those from whom he was sent.

From the abundant evidence available, there would be no reason to doubt that the Apostle Matthew did, in fact, compose a Gospel written in Hebrew. Further, we can be certain that this Hebrew Gospel was copied and circulated for an extended period of time among Hebrew-speaking readers.

⁶ *New World Translation Reference Edition*, 1984, p. 1564.

⁷ It has long been held that the conversational language of Palestine in Jesus' day was limited to Aramaic rather than Hebrew. However, based on manuscripts from the Dead Sea Scrolls, Howard gives evidence that biblical Hebrew was used as a spoken language in Jesus' day (*Op Cit.*, pp. 155 to 156). Consequently, Matthew could just as well have written in Hebrew as in Aramaic. The reader should be aware, however, that Hebrew and Aramaic are closely related languages. They use a similar script and vocabulary, and primarily differ in areas of grammatical structure.

⁸ Howard presents convincing evidence that the Shem-Tob *Matthew* (which is J²) is actually a *copy* of this early Matthew Hebrew Gospel. He then makes the following comments on pages 225 to 226 (*Op cit.*),

If the conclusion to this study is correct, namely, that the old substratum to the Hebrew Matthew found in the *Even Bohan* [J²] is an original Hebrew composition, the question of the relationship of this old Hebrew substratum to the canonical Greek text is of great importance. As stated before, three basic possibilities exist: (1) The old substratum to Shem-Tob's text is a translation of the Greek Matthew. [A conclusion from an earlier discussion], in the judgment of this writer, rules out this possibility. (2) The Greek Matthew is a translation of the old Hebrew substratum. This likewise does not appear to be a possibility. Although the two texts are accounts of the same events basically in the same order, careful analysis of their lexical and grammatical correspondences fails to support the Greek as a translation. (3) Both the old Hebrew substratum and the Greek Matthew represent compositions in their own respective languages. This latter appears to be the best explanation of the evidence. It implies that the two texts are two editions in different languages of the same traditional material with neither being a translation of the other.

There is evidence from ancient times that this sometimes occurred. Josephus tells us that his work, *The Jewish War* (75-79 C.E.), was first written in Aramaic or Hebrew and then translated in Greek (Josephus, *War* 1.3). The evidence suggests, however, that Josephus did not actually translate, in a literal sense, the Semitic original, but, in fact, virtually rewrote the whole account. The Aramaic/Hebrew original apparently served only as a model for the Greek version to follow.

In regard to the Hebrew and Greek Matthew, their similarity in arrangement and wording suggest that one, as in the case with Josephus, served as a model for the other...Any conclusion in regard to the priority of the Hebrew Matthew vis-a-vis the Greek, or vice versa, must not be hastily drawn. Which one came first will be determined conclusively only after much further study and accumulation of evidence.

Shem-Tob as a recension of Matthew's Hebrew Gospel

••62•• We are unable to give an adequate representation of Howard's valuable work in this brief chapter. At the very least, we will over-simplify the complexity of identifying Shem-Tob's *Matthew* as a recension of the original Hebrew Gospel. Howard has done a great deal of textual work leading to his conclusions which require appropriate qualification rather than a simple statement identifying J² (Shem-Tob's *Matthew*) as the Hebrew Gospel written by Matthew himself.

Nonetheless, we are left with the fascinating possibility that in J² we possess a copy of the Apostle Matthew's Hebrew Gospel despite the fact that it has passed through successive generations of unknown copyists and editors. Even though this editing weakens the full impact of the Gospel, it gives us much greater insight into Matthew's work in Hebrew than does any other source known today.

After a series of comparisons of Shem-Tob's Hebrew text with the Greek canonical Matthew, Howard makes this comment on pages 176-177:

These examples show that in some way the First Gospel in Shem-Tob fits into a process of textual evolution that began in primitive times and culminated in du Tillet [J¹] in the sixteenth century, or possibly later if our survey should include subsequent Hebrew texts of Matthew. The suggestion made here is that the gospel text incorporated into the *Even Bohan* was not a freshly made translation of the first Gospel by Shem-Tob, but was a reproduction, possibly with some revision by Shem-Tob himself, of an already existing literary Hebrew tradition that had been in the process of evolution for some time.

On page 223 Howard adds this comment:

The text also is written in a kind of Hebrew one would expect from a document composed in the first century but preserved in late rabbinic manuscripts. It is basically composed in biblical Hebrew with a healthy mixture of Mishnaic Hebrew and later rabbinic vocabulary and idiom.

In these summary statements, *Howard is saying that Shem-Tob's Matthew was copied*—and possibly further edited by Shem-Tob himself—*from a series of manuscripts which traced their origin back to the original Gospel the Apostle Matthew had written in the Hebrew language.* Even as we now understand the variations introduced in a text from successive hand copying through generations, we understand the significance of Howard's terminology stating that the present Shem-Tob *Matthew* "fits into a process of textual evolution."⁹ ••63•• Nonetheless, the importance of the work leading up to this statement (assuming that it can be fully substantiated with additional scholarly efforts) ranks the work of Howard among the dramatic textual advances in Christian Scripture studies.¹⁰

It is intriguing to realize that this book published in 1987 changes our thinking from regarding Shem-Tob's work as a mere translation, to the realization that it may be an actual copy—albeit flawed—of the work of the Apostle himself!

The divine name in Shem-Tob's *Matthew*

In the context of this study, our interest in Matthew's Gospel in Hebrew is the use of the Tetragrammaton. Does Shem-Tob use the divine name?

Howard transcribed the entire Hebrew Gospel according to the most trustworthy extant manuscripts. Of this transcription he says,

The printed [Hebrew] text preserves the British Library manuscript and D in their relevant sections along with their errors and inconsistencies in spelling and grammar. Periods and question marks have been added editorially to the printed Hebrew. In a few instances where the base text

⁹ The reader may well ask why it is so difficult to be certain of the original wording of this text when we are so confident of the wording of the Christian Scriptures. The answer is found in the limited number—and recent age—of extant Hebrew manuscripts available for comparison. There are a limited number of Hebrew Gospels coming from this tradition which are available for study. (That is, only manuscripts which evidence transmission of the original work of Matthew could be used. Hebrew *versions* must be entirely excluded.) Secondly, of the potential manuscripts which fall into this category, all are recent copies, presumably dating from the 13th century and later. In contrast, we have some 5,000 partial to complete manuscripts of the Christian Scriptures some of which date to the second and third centuries.

¹⁰ It is evident from the footnote references in *The Gospel of Matthew According to a Primitive Hebrew Text* that others have contributed to this study as well.

has a lacuna [a missing part within the text], the text of another manuscript is printed within parentheses.

In addition to the Hebrew text, Howard gives a parallel English translation on the facing page. The line format and verse numbers allow the reader who is unfamiliar with Hebrew to scan the text for the divine name with reasonable certainty.

Before evaluating the Hebrew text itself, we must review an interesting section of Howard's book under the heading, "The Divine Name" found on pages 201-203. On page 201, he says:

A set of interesting readings in the Hebrew Matthew of Shem-Tob is a series of passages incorporating the Divine Name ••64•• symbolized by םה (apparently a circumlocution for השה, "The Name"). This occurs some nineteen times. (Fully written השה occurs at 28:9 and is included in the nineteen.) Usually the Divine Name appears where the Greek reads kuvio" [Lord], twice (21:12 mss, 22:31) where the Greek reads qeov" [God], and twice where it occurs alone (22:32; 27:9). (1) It regularly appears in quotations from the Hebrew Bible where the M[asoretic] T[ext] contains the Tetragrammaton. (2) It occurs in introductions to quotations as, for example, at 1:22, "All this was to complete what was written by the prophet according to the LORD "; and at 22:31, "Have you not read concerning the resurrection of the dead that the LORD spoke to you saying." (3) In narratives apart from quotation it occurs in such phrases as "angel of the LORD" or "house of the LORD ." Thus, 2:13, "As they were going, behold, the angel of the LORD appeared unto Joseph saying"; 2:19, "It came to pass when King Herod died the angel of the LORD appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt"; 21:12, "Then Jesus entered the house of the LORD "; 28:2, "Then the earth was shaken because the angel of the LORD descended from heaven to the tomb, overturned the stone, and stood still."

We should also consider the information in a footnote from page 202 which says in part,

By incorporating the Hebrew Matthew into his *Even Bohan*, Shem-Tob apparently felt compelled to preserve the Divine Name along with the rest of the text. םה in Shem-Tob's Matthew should not be viewed as a symbol for both Adonai and the Tetragrammaton as was customary for Hebrew documents copied during the Middle Ages. The author of the Hebrew Matthew uses Adonai and םה discriminately. He uses Adonai in reference to Jesus and םה only in reference to God. Since אדוני (often itself abbreviated as אדו) refers to Jesus, not God, throughout the text, the author's use of םה is a symbol only for the Tetragrammaton and in all probability stands for the circumlocution השה, "The Name."

The following passages have been reproduced from the Shem-Tob *Matthew* in George Howard's *The Gospel of Matthew According to a Primitive Hebrew Text*. The English translation taken from the same book is reproduced under the Hebrew text. The first passage from Matthew chapter one shows two examples within verses 22 and 24 of the surrogate םה which replaces the circumlocution השה meaning *The Name*. (In the remainder of the chapter, we will generally identify either the surrogate or a longer written form as simply the *circumlocution*.) This passage also shows an interesting instance in which there is a variance between the *New World Translation* and Shem-Tob. At verse 20, the *New World Translation* reads, "Jehovah's ••65•• angel," whereas Shem-Tob reads, "an angel." Where applicable in the following examples, the reading from the *New World Translation* is inserted into the English text in brackets. The divine name is circled and connected to its corresponding translation in the English text.

Matthew 1:20-23

20 ובחשבו בזה הדבר בלבו והנה מלאך גראה אליו בחלום ואמר יוסף
בן דוד אל תירא לקחת אשתך מרים שמרוח הקדוש היא מעוברת.

20 While he thought on this matter in his heart, behold an [Jehovah's *NWT*] angel appeared unto him in a dream and said: Joseph son of David do not fear to take your wife Mary because she is pregnant by the Holy Spirit.

21 ותלד בן ותקרא שמו ישוע כי הוא ישיע את עמי מעונותם.

21 She will bear a son and you will call his name Jesus because he will save my people from their sins.

22 כל זה לנמור מה שנכתב מאת הנביא על פי ה'.

22 All this was to complete what was written by the prophet according to the **Lord** [Jehovah NWT].

23 הנה העלמה הרה ותלד בן וקראת שמו עמנואל שרל עמנו אלקים.

23 Behold the young woman will conceive and bear a son and you will call his name Emmanuel, that is, God with us.

24 וייקץ יוסף משנתו ויעש ככל אשר צוה אותו מלאך ה' ויקח את אשתו.

24 Then Joseph awoke from his sleep, did according to all which the angel of the **Lord** [Jehovah NWT] commanded him and took his wife.

In the following two examples, we encounter variations in the circumlocution within the Shem-Tob manuscript itself. The reference at Matthew 5:33 adds the Hebrew letter *Lamedh* (ל) which is the preposition "to" in combination with the circumlocution for the divine name. The reference at Matthew 28:9 shows the circumlocution written in full.

Matthew 5:33

33 עוד שמעתם מה שנאמר לקדמונים לא תשבועו בשמי לשקר והשיב לה' שבועתך.

33 Again you have heard what was said to those of long ago: You shall not swear by my name falsely, but you shall return to the **Lord** [Jehovah NWT] your oath.

••66••

Matthew 28:9

9 והמה הולכות וישל עבר לפנייהם אומר השם יושיעכן. והם קרבו אליו ויקרו לו וישתחוו לו.

9 As they were going Jesus passed before them saying: May the **Name** deliver you ["Good day!" NWT]. They came near to him and bowed down to him and worshipped him.

In the last example, we see a reference using the circumlocution within the Shem-Tob *Matthew* whereas the *New World Translation* does *not* use the divine name.

Matthew 21:12

12 ויבא ישל בית ה' וימצא שם הקונים והמוכרים. ויהפוך לוחות השלחנים והמושבות מוכרי היתנים.

12 Jesus entered the house of the **Lord** [temple NWT] and found there those who buy and sell. He overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who were selling doves.

The divine name is used 18 times in the Gospel of Matthew within the *New World Translation*. In contrast, the circumlocution which stands for the divine name (including all variants of its written form) is used 19 times in the Shem-Tob *Matthew*. Table 3 compares these references in the two Matthew Gospels.

As one can see, there are no discrepancies in the translation *sense* between the use of the circumlocution in Shem-Tob's *Matthew* and the divine name in the same locations of the *New World Translation*. The variants are merely textual alterations in wording. (We must add, however, that in dealing with textual variations between manuscripts, we may make the statement that certain differences are inconsequential. This does *not* imply that we are not concerned with the end result of textual studies. When the work is completed, *it is our goal to obtain the exact wording of the inspired Scripture writers.*) For example, in some instances (1:20, 2:15, and 4:4) Shem-Tob does not include the divine name, whereas the Westcott and Hort text uses *Kyrios* (Κύριος). The reverse is also true at 27:9. In one instance (27:10) Shem-Tob uses *Adonai* rather than the circumlocution for *The Name*. In two instances (22:31-32) the *New World Translation* uses *God* rather than *Jehovah*. At 28:9 Shem-Tob uses "The Name" as a form of greeting whereas the Westcott and Hort Greek text uses the word

chairete (Χαίρετε) which is a greeting derived from the word *Rejoice*.

	Shem-Tob	NWT		Shem-Tob	NWT
Matthew			21:9	יהוה	Jehovah
1:20	∅	Jehovah	21:12	יהוה	temple
1:22	יהוה	Jehovah	21:42	יהוה	Jehovah
1:24	יהוה	Jehovah	22:31	יהוה	God
2:13	יהוה	Jehovah	22:32	יהוה	God
2:15	∅	Jehovah	22:37	יהוה	Jehovah
2:19	יהוה	Jehovah	22:44	יהוה	Jehovah
3:3	יהוה	Jehovah	23:39	יהוה	Jehovah
4:4	∅	Jehovah	27:9	יהוה	∅
4:7	יהוה	Jehovah	27:10	אדוני	Jehovah
4:10	יהוה	Jehovah	28:2	יהוה	Jehovah
5:33	יהוה	Jehovah	28:9	השם	Good day

Table 3. The divine name in Shem-Tob's *Matthew* compared with the *New World Translation*.

••67•• In and of themselves, these are not significant *textual* differences. What is bothersome, however, is that there is *variation of any kind* in light of the presumption that the *New World Translation* represents a corrected text which better reflects Matthew's original Gospel.

Before leaving this section, it will be of interest to compare the frequency of the footnote citations in the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* for each of the four "J" references which come from this Hebrew tradition. The four are: J¹—*Matthew* by Jean du Tillet (1555), J²—Shem-Tob's *Matthew* (1385), J³—*Matthew* by Münster (1537), and J⁴—a revision of Münster's *Matthew* by Quinquarboreus (1551). Table 4 indicates the presence (*yes*) or absence (*no*) of a footnote citation to the Tetragrammaton in the Hebrew text. (Note that the Shem-Tob text does not actually contain the Tetragrammaton, but contains a circumlocution as indicated. In the cases of J¹, J³, and J⁴, we are citing the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* footnote without reference to the actual document for verification.)

If each of the four recensions were perfect transmissions of the original Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, we would see identical *yes* or *no* responses across each line. Of course, no hand copies separated from the original by 1300 years are perfect. Thus, the above table gives an idea of the textual variation which has crept into these recensions during this period of time.

Table 4 is included merely for its interest in comparing the four Hebrew recensions from this early Hebrew manuscript tradition. The ••68•• variations in no way cast doubt on the veracity of the Shem-Tob manuscript.

	Shem-Tob	J ¹	J ³	J ⁴		Shem-Tob	J ¹	J ³	J ⁴
Matthew					4:10	yes	yes	yes	yes
1:20	no	no	yes	no	5:33	yes	yes	yes	no
1:22	yes	yes	yes	no	21:9	yes	no	no	yes
1:24	yes	no	yes	yes	21:42	yes	yes	yes	yes
2:13	yes	no	no	no	22:37	yes	yes	no	no
2:15	no	no	no	no	22:44	yes	yes	no	yes
2:19	yes	no	no	yes	23:39	yes	yes	yes	yes
3:3	yes	yes	no	yes	27:10	yes	yes	no	yes
4:4	yes	yes	yes	yes	28:2	yes	no	no	yes
4:7	yes	yes	yes	yes					

Table 4. The divine name in Shem-Tob's *Matthew* (J²) compared with the use of the divine name in J¹, J³, and J⁴.

The crucial issues

The differences between the Shem-Tob *Matthew* and the representation of Matthew in the *New World Translation* Christian Scriptures are not great. Nonetheless, two areas of comparison between a probable recension of Matthew's ancient Gospel and the *New World Translation's* Matthew surprise us in light of the assertion that the *New World Translation* reinstates the divine name which was removed by carelessness and heresy.

1. We would expect that an accurate restoration of the Gospel of Matthew would parallel the use of the divine name in a recension of Matthew's Hebrew language Gospel with high precision. However, as we have seen in Table 3, this is not the case. In spite of the fact that there is precise correspondence in 15 instances where Shem-Tob uses *The Name* (or a related form) and the *New World Translation* uses *Jehovah*, we are, nonetheless, left with eight instances in which one or the other does *not* exactly correspond in the use of the divine name. Considering the claim that the *New World Translation* restores the wording of the Christian Scriptures to its original written form, this variation is too large to be acceptable. Stated in mathematical terminology, we have only a 0.65 correlation, whereas we would expect close to a 1.00 correlation for a true restoration. (That is, of a total of 23 occurrences of the divine name in either or both the Shem-Tob *Matthew* and the Gospel of Matthew ••69•• in the *New World Translation*, there is agreement in 15 instances. Thus, 15 divided by 23 equals 0.65, whereas the ideal of 23 divided by 23 equals 1.00.)
2. In and of itself, the presence of a circumlocution meaning *The Name* (שֵׁם) rather than the Tetragrammaton (יהוה) itself is not of great significance considering typical textual variants found within textual criticism studies. In this case, however, it is cause for concern. The New World Bible Translation Committee assures us that Matthew used the Tetragrammaton. This is in sharp contrast to Matthew's use of a circumlocution.¹¹ *If Matthew wrote שֵׁם in its surrogate form, or even שֵׁם (The Name in written form), he did not, in fact, write the Tetragrammaton.* As we have already seen, Shem-Tob's *Matthew* is a recension which "fits into a process of textual evolution." We may speculate that Matthew himself used the Tetragrammaton and it, too, was changed in time. However, we are nonetheless confronted with the reality that *the current text we possess which gives indication of Matthew's Hebrew writing does not use the Tetragrammaton.*

New light on Christian Scripture studies

Our search in this book is for new light on ancient Christian Scripture manuscripts. We are particularly looking for information ••70•• which was unavailable to the New World Bible Translation Committee in the late 1940's. Most certainly the discovery that Shem-Tob's work is no longer considered a Hebrew version is *new light* indeed! In the 1969 edition of the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* (page 16), the New World Bible Translation Committee is quoted as saying,

There is evidence that various recensions of the Hebrew and Aramaic versions of Matthew's

¹¹ In the "Questions from Readers" from the August 15, 1997 *The Watchtower*, the following question and answer is given:

Is the Tetragrammaton (the four Hebrew letters of God's name) found in the Hebrew text of Matthew copied by the 14th-century Jewish physician Shem-Tob ben Isaac Ibn Shaprut?

No, it is not. However, this text of Matthew does use *hash-Shem'* (written out or abbreviated) 19 times, as pointed out on page 13 of *The Watchtower* of August 15, 1996.

The Hebrew *hash-Shem'* means "the Name," which certainly refers to the divine name. For example, in Shem-Tob's text, an abbreviated form of *hash-Shem'* appears at Matthew 3:3, a passage in which Matthew quoted Isaiah 40:3. It is reasonable to conclude that when Matthew quoted a verse from the Hebrew Scriptures where the Tetragrammaton is found, he incorporated the divine name in his Gospel. So while the Hebrew text that Shem-Tob presented does not use the Tetragrammaton, its use of "the Name," as at Matthew 3:3, supports the use of "Jehovah" in the Christian Greek Scriptures.

...Shem-Tob's text of Matthew included "the Name" where there is good reason to believe that Matthew actually used the Tetragrammaton. Thus, since 1950, Shem-Tob's text has been used as a support for employing the divine name in the Christian Greek Scriptures, and it still is cited in *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References.*

account persisted for centuries among the early Jewish Christian communities of Palestine and Syria. Early writers, such as Papias, Hegesippus, Justin Martyr, Tatian, Symmachus, Irenaeus, Pantaenus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Pamphilus, Eusebius, Epiphanius and Jerome, give evidence that they either possessed or had access to Hebrew and Aramaic writings of Matthew.

How delighted these men would be today to see this confirmation in George Howard's book of their early statement. In 1950, they could only look back to evidence of the *use* of these Hebrew and Aramaic recensions of Matthew's account. In all probability, today we are able to look at a reconstructed Hebrew Gospel of Matthew itself!

If this document is ultimately verified as a late copy of Matthew's Hebrew Gospel, we will, for the first time in modern biblical studies, have limited access to his *lost* Hebrew Gospel. Of course, editorialized changes over the centuries have reduced its precision. Yet, it remains a valuable research tool.

The work of Shem-Tob has been known among Jewish and Christian scholars since it was published in the late 14th century. As such, it was cited 16 times in the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* footnotes as a Hebrew version with the identification nomenclature of J². With Howard's recent research, however, we have an entirely new insight into the reading of Matthew's Hebrew Gospel which was available only through speculation to those working on the *New World Translation* between 1947 and 1949.

We now know that the best surviving recension from the work of the Apostle Matthew verifies the use of the divine name in the 20 instances indicated in Table 3. We also know that these same 20 instances use a circumlocution rather than the Tetragrammaton and that they differ in verse location from the 18 references to *Jehovah* in the *New World Translation*.



CHAPTER SUMMARY. Shem-Tob, a Jewish physician writing in the 1380's, included a Hebrew Gospel of Matthew as the last *book* in his polemic against Christianity. There is convincing evidence that this ••71•• old Hebrew Gospel is a revision (passing through many copyists and editors) of the Hebrew Gospel written by the Apostle himself. If this ultimately proves to be true, then the "J" reference used in the footnotes of the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* identified as J², is, in fact, the closest reproduction of this early work.

1. There should no longer be any reasonable debate that Matthew wrote a Hebrew language Gospel. Early writers such as Jerome, Irenæus, Origen, and Eusebius have left ample testimony to this work.
2. The evidence presented by George Howard indicates that Shem-Tob's *Matthew* was not a translation from Greek sources. Rather, it contains a Hebrew writing style which marks it as a document which was composed in the first century using biblical Hebrew and subsequently edited in the following centuries.
3. Shem-Tob's *Matthew* uses the divine name. However, it is not in the form of the Tetragrammaton, but is rather a surrogate form of the circumlocution *The Name* (יְהוָה). Though it is impossible to tell from the present form of this Gospel whether or not Matthew actually used the Tetragrammaton, the substantial evidence remaining today gives no support for this claim.
4. The correlation between the use of the circumlocution for the divine name in Shem-Tob's *Matthew* and the use of *Jehovah* in the Christian Scriptures of the *New World Translation* is not strong. There are 15 instances in which the two agree, and eight in which there is a variance. This gives a correlation of a mere 0.65, in contrast to an ideal 1.00. It would be expected that a restored Gospel of Matthew would more closely approximate a recension of the work of the Apostle himself.
5. The Shem-Tob *Matthew* gives a wonderful example of new light in biblical texts. This knowledge regarding the Hebrew Christian Scriptures was not available to the Bible Translation Committee prior to the publication of the *New World Translation* in 1950.