

PREFACE

The five tractates of the present volume are joined only for convenience's sake. But Keritot and Meilah treat Lev. 5:17-19 and 5:14-16, respectively. Tamid, Middot, and Qinnim bear no special relationship to one another, as do, e.g., Arakhin and Temurah, Zebahim and Menahot or Keritot and Meilah. All make their sizable contributions to the Mishnaic law of Holy Things, of course, and the translation and explanation of each are necessary. Our purpose is fulfilled, however, solely in the historical studies to come in Part VI. The exegesis of the law is accomplished only so far as it is required for the ultimate intention of the work as a whole. It is kept brief and pays attention solely to those issues which clearly inhere in the law's earliest historical stratum of meaning.

My purpose is to uncover the history of the formation of earlier Rabbinic Judaism, down to the redaction of Mishnah in ca A.D. 200. The sole reliable route is through the analysis of the earliest sources, beginning with Mishnah, from the perspectives required, in particular, for a history of the law and of its religio-legal conceptions; What do the sources mean in their original circumstance? What ideas are taken for granted in them? What are the literary and intellectual traits exhibited by them? When these questions have been thoroughly dealt with, we proceed to the next stage in the work. Our sole purpose in this part, therefore, is the exegesis of the sources. When the analytical work is accomplished, we turn to the synthetic procedures of historical restoration and the reconstruction of the history and structures of the kind of Judaism revealed in Mishnah and associated, to begin with, with the names of its authorities. The exegesis is accomplished in two stages, first, through form-analytical translation, second, through an explanation of what has been translated. In all I aim at a severe economy of intellect, dealing, as is clear, only with questions important for the larger venture.

My colleague, Professor Richard S. Sarason, kindly took time out of his own scholarly work to criticize mine. His work on Tamid is particularly important and detailed. I am especially grateful.

This work carries forward the sequence of dedications to my students, each advancing the work of teaching and scholarly research begun in my seminar at Brown University.

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