

PREFACE

The purposes and methods of this commentary continue those of *Kelim* and are explained in Part I (pp. xi-xx). While my primary goal is to carry out the studies in the next part, *Ohalot. Literary and Historical Problems*, that work cannot be undertaken or understood without a clear and responsible account of the laws under discussion.

The present task is by far the more difficult of the two, and, alas, I can claim only moderate success. If, as I hope, I contribute in some small measure to the interpretation of the law, much more work still is to be done. Yet for the historical purposes for which the exegetical task is undertaken, I hope the modest achievement of the present work will suffice. No one can come to the study of Mishnah-Tosefta without a considerable measure of humility before both the great contributions of earlier exegetes and the intellectual accomplishments of the Tannaim, which I propose to explain. I welcome the criticism of others interested in the same problems of explanation and understanding.

I thank The John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation for a research fellowship in the calendar year 1974 and Brown University for an extraordinary research-leave during the same period. My thanks go to E. J. Brill for the continuing commitment to the publication of my research. Nothing I attempt to accomplish would be possible without the encouragement of my colleagues in the Department of Religious Studies at Brown University, of my graduate-students and former students, now engaged in their own research, of my teacher, Morton Smith, and my teachers and friends, Baruch A. Levine and Isadore Twersky. The specific contribution, in the form of letters, of Professor Saul Lieberman, is quoted verbatim. The work is dedicated to Professor Mary Boyce, University of London, who is a friend and an inspiration.

June 28th, 1974

J. N.

8 Tammuz 5734

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