

THE TALMUD

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ZERAIM

Contains eleven books or Tractates. This Order deals with the regulations governing public and private prayer and laws concerning agriculture and the produce of the fields and vineyards. Special attention is paid to the laws of tithes, mixed planting and grafting, the Sabbatical year and the first fruits.

Since the Jewish people were originally an agricultural people it is natural that the first collection of their laws should be devoted to the regulations which concern the land and its produce.

MOED

Contains twelve Tractates. This Order deals with all the laws concerning the festivals. Detailed attention is paid to the Shabbat, Pesach, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Succot and the fasts. Most of these regulations are still applicable even though many of the laws contained in this section are concerned with the ancient practices in the Temple. Much of our religious ritual as used in the home and synagogue is traceable to this section; for example, the Haggada of Pesach is drawn largely from this section.

NASHIM

Contains seven Tractates. This Order deals mainly with the laws of marriage and divorce and family life. Since the Jewish home plays so prominent a part in Jewish life such a section is obviously of supreme importance in the formulation of traditional law. Detailed attention is paid here to the laws governing marriages, which are permitted and forbidden; regulations regarding the writing of the Ketuba, the marriage document and the Get, the bill of divorce. One Tractate is devoted to the laws of vows, because the acceptance of a vow can cause serious disturbance in the family group.

NEZIKIN

Contains ten Tractates. This Order is mainly devoted to the regulations governing the relations between man and his fellow in society. Special attention is paid to the laws of damages, both to persons and property, and the forms of compensation to be paid. Stress is naturally laid on the regulations governing the procedure of the courts of justice and the behaviour of judges and witnesses. The relations between Jews and non-Jewish courts is also dealt with and the responsibility of religious authorities when issuing their decrees.

KODASHIM

Contains eleven Tractates. This Order is mainly devoted to the regulations governing the Temple procedure and the sacrifices which were offered. These are carefully enumerated with detailed instructions as to the form to be adopted. Of special interest to us is the Tractate called "Chulin" which is concerned with the dietary laws and matters affecting that which is kosher and trefah; all the regulations governing the types of food which may be eaten, the method of slaughter of animals and the detailed examination to which they must be submitted before the meat is permitted for consumption.

TOHOROT

Contains twelve Tractates. This Order is devoted to the laws of personal hygiene and the "levitical purity". The Torah demands that "the camp of Israel shall be holy" and this meant that it had to be free from defilement. Contact with corpses was the main source of such defilement in ancient days as well as the main source of contracting contagious diseases. Special ceremonies existed in Temple times for purification. All these regulations are set out in this order and some of them, especially those connected with personal hygiene, are still an integral part of Jewish life.

