This book has been in preparation for many years. It is preceded by a number of monographs pertaining to both the history of the Halakhah and, to a lesser degree, the history of the talmudic period. If the treatment of some phases of legal history is too brief, the reason may be that a fuller and satisfactory discussion of them is found elsewhere. On the other hand, a few phases of Jewish legal history are dealt with in greater depth here as they have not previously been treated fully or satisfactorily. These chapters may be of particular interest to specialized scholars, whereas the book as a whole should be of more general interest. In order to facilitate the use of the book also by non-talmudists, most of the Hebrew and Aramaic sources are translated. Available translations were used, but with modifications. Many of the sources—e.g., Tosefta, Palestinian Talmud—appear here in English for the first time. Whatever the shortcomings of the book, it is unique in that it demonstrates for the first time in English how the development of Jewish legal tradition was directed and implemented by the Pharisaic and rabbinic leadership from the earliest times to the end of the tannaitic period, ca. 220 C.E.

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