

CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-----------|
| FOREWORD , Prof. Marvin Fox | vii |
| PREFACE | ix |
| INTRODUCTION | xix |
| ANNOTATED LIST OF AUTHORS | xxiii |
| 1. SYNAGOGUE | 1 |
| Historical precedents: <i>Mishkan</i> and <i>Beth Hamikdash</i> , the great synagogue in Alexandria/ <i>Mishmarot</i> and <i>Ma'amadot</i> /Substitute for the Temple/ <i>Bet Keneset</i> , <i>Shule</i> , <i>Bet ha-Midrash</i> /Rules of conduct /Architectural features and furnishings. | |
| 2. TALLIT AND TZITZIT | 11 |
| Biblical source/Their components/ <i>Tallit gadol</i> and <i>tallit katan</i> /Attaching the <i>tzitzit</i> to the <i>tallit</i> /Which garment needs <i>tzitzit</i> / <i>Tzitzit</i> tied by a non-Jew; by a woman/Borrowed <i>tallit</i> /Threading the <i>tzitzit</i> into the <i>tallit</i> / <i>Tzitzit</i> as a reminder for the 613 <i>mitzvot</i> /The blue thread/The <i>atarah</i> / <i>Tallit</i> for women/ <i>Tallit</i> at nighttime/ <i>Tallit</i> for the blind/Proper time for wearing the <i>tallit</i> /How to wear the <i>tallit</i> /Why we begin wearing <i>tallit</i> after getting married/Holding the <i>tzitzit</i> while reciting the <i>Shema</i> /Kissing the <i>tzitzit</i> . | |
| 3. TEFILLIN | 25 |
| Biblical sources/Rabbinical specifications/ <i>Tefillah shel Yad</i> and <i>Tefillah shel Rosh</i> /Making of <i>tefillin</i> /The two <i>Shins</i> of the <i>shel Rosh</i> /The Biblical passages in the <i>tefillin</i> /Its components/The <i>retzuot</i> /Rabbenu Tam's <i>tefillin</i> /Examination of the <i>tefillin</i> /Origin of the word/Importance of wearing <i>tefillin</i> / <i>Tefillin</i> , <i>tallit</i> and <i>mezuzah</i> —which is more important?/Procedure of putting on <i>tefillin</i> /Blessings over <i>tefillin</i> /Winding the strap seven times around the arm, three times around the middle finger/Removing the <i>tefillin</i> /Correct time for putting on <i>tefillin</i> /Times when <i>tefillin</i> is not to be worn. | |
| 4. KERIAT SHEMA | 39 |
| Affirmation of the unity of God/The four daily recitations of <i>Shema</i> /Biblical source and Rabbinic interpretation/The three portions | |

of *Shema/Shema* and the Ten Commandments/Non-scriptural sentence inserted in the *Shema*—the Talmudic source/Why is this sentence recited inaudibly?/Why do we cover our eyes when reciting the *Shema*/Why does the *Shema* contain 248 words?/Reciting *Shema* in tongues other than Hebrew/Why benediction is not recited before reading the *Shema*.

5. SHEMONEH ESREH 45

Tefillah and *Amidah*/Maimonides—Nahmanides controversy/Prohibition of eating and drinking before morning prayer/Eighteen Benedictions plus one/When were they composed, by whom and why?/Their sequence explained/Standing upright; facing Jerusalem/Clean body and proper dress/Why is the *Amidah* recited silently?/Bending of the knees/Three divisions of *Amidah*/Taking three steps backwards before and after the *Amidah*—the reasons/Thrice-daily *Amidah* to correspond to the daily sacrifices and to the three Patriarchs/The epilogue *Elokai Netzor*/The custom of inserting a Biblical verse corresponding to one's name.

6. BIRKHAT KOHANIM 55

Repetition of the *Amidah*/Biblical source for the Priestly Blessing/Its performance immediately before the benediction for peace/*Kohanim* remove their shoes before ascending the *dukhan*—the reasons/Disfigured *Kohanim* disqualified from *Birkhat Kohanim*/*Birkhat Kohanim* daily in *Eretz Israel*; in the Diaspora on the major festivals only/Raising of the hands/Dictating of the words to the *Kohanim*/When the Reader is a *kohen*/A congregation of all *Kohanim*/Proper ways of delivering the Blessing/The prohibition to look at the *Kohanim* while they recite the Blessing—the reason/Thanking the *Kohanim*.

7. TAĤANUN 63

Recited in a prostrate position (*nefilat appayim*)—the reason/The head resting on the arm—right or left/Not recited at *Maariv* service/Other occasions when it is not recited—the reasons.

8. TORAH READING 67

Biblical allusion—ordinance of Ezra/Torah Reading on Mondays, Thursdays, Sabbaths and Festivals—the reasons/Number of men called up/Number of verses read to each—the reasons/Torah reading on Saturday afternoon/Reading of Haftorah—its origin/Aramaic translation/Rules concerning the Torah Scroll/The order of being called up to the Torah: *Kohen*, *Levi*, *Yisrael*/When no *Kohen* or *Levi* is present/Blood-relatives are not to be called up in succession—the reasons/Procedure of *Keriat ha-Torah*/Three men stand next to the Torah—the reasons/Procedure of *Keriat ha-Torah*/Holding the stave of the scroll while reading—the reasons/Blessings recited before and after each *aliyah*—why/After reading from the Torah, each person is greeted by the congregants—the reason/*Hagbahah* and *Gelihah*—the difference between Ashkenazic and Sephardic customs/Raising the open Torah Scroll.

9. EIN K-ELOHENU 81

Concluding the morning service with reciting *Pittum ha-ketoret* preceded by *Ein k-Elohem*—the reason. In Ashkenazi synagogues *Ein k-Elohenu* and *Pittum ha-ketoret* is said on Sabbaths and Festivals only—why.

10. MEALS 83

Netilat Yadayim (washing of the hands) before eating bread—the reasons/Reciting of *ha-motzi* while placing our ten fingers on the bread—the reasons/Sprinkling salt on the bread—the reasons/*Mayim Aḥaronim* (washing the fingers after the meal)/*Birkhat ha-Mazon* (Grace after Meals)/*Kos* (Cup of wine) and *Zimmer* (Call to grace)—source and procedure/Removing the knives from the table—the reasons/Leaving bread on the table—the reasons/The four benedictions of *Birkat ha-Mazon*/Grace over forbidden food/Women and the Grace After Meals.

11. MEZUZAH 95

Biblical commandment/Explanations and symbols/Production of the *mezuzah*/Proper writing of a *mezuzah*/Kabbalistic inscriptions on its outside/Procedure of its affixing/Ten conditions making its affixing obligatory/*Mezuzah* and *tefillin*—which takes precedence/Periodic examination of *mezuzah*.

12. SHABBAT 101

Biblical sources/*Remember* and *Observe*/39 forbidden categories of work/Preparing for the *Shabbat*/Blowing shofar to signal the *Shabbat*/Lighting Sabbath candles—when and why/Duty of the woman—the reasons/Procedure and blessing/Placing loaves of bread on the table/Reciting the Song of Songs/*Kabbalat Shabbat*/*Lekha Dodi*/*Maariv service*—*Amidah* of seven benedictions instead of nineteen/*Kiddush*—why over wine/*Kiddush* in the synagogue/*Shalom Alekhem*/Women and *Kiddush*/Making *ha-motzi* over two loaves (*leḥem mishneh*)—the reason/Why the *Shabbat* loaf is called *ḥallah*/Placing the *ḥallot* between two cloths—the reasons/Reciting *ha-motzi* and cutting the *ḥallah*/The twelve loaves of the kabbalists/Eating fish on *Shabbat*—the reasons/*Kiddish* and *ḥallot* on *Shabbat* mornings/*Shalosh Sendot* (Third Meal)—Scriptural source and kabbalistic reason/concluding the *Shabbat*/the *Havdah*—blessings over wine, flame of a torch and *besamim*/departing of the *neshamah yeterah*/Mystical aspects/Gazing at the fingernails by the light of the *havdalah* torch/Songs honoring Elijah the prophet—the reasons/*Melaveh Malkah* (ushering out the Sabbath Queen)—Rabbinic source and kabbalistic symbolism/King David's Meal.

13. ROSH ḤODESH 123

The New Moon in Jewish religion/The lunar calendar, its basis in the Torah/New Moon by observation/Fixing of the calendar/Announcing

the New Moon in the synagogue/*Erev Rosh Hodesh* as *Yom Kippur Katan*/*Rosh Hodesh* as women's holiday—the reasons/*Half-Hallel*, Torah reading and *Musaf* on *Rosh Hodesh*/Why half-Hallel/Hallel on *Rosh Hodesh* mitzvah or *minhag*/Allusion to the extra month in a leap year/Reappearance of the moon as sign of atonement/*Kiddush Levannah*, its symbolism/Concluding with the *Alenu* prayer—the reason.

14. PASSOVER

129

Biblical sources/Early preparations—the *shemurah matzot*/Nissan as “chief of the months”/*Shabbat ha-Gadol*—what makes it great/*Bedikat hametz*, reasons and procedure/Placing ten pieces of bread around the house—the reasons/The candle, the feather, the wooden spoon/Burning of the *Hametz*/Selling of the *hametz*/The mitzvah of eating *Matzah*/*Matzah shemurah* and *matzah ashirah*/Fast of the first-born/*Siyum bechorim*/*Erev Pessah*, the preparations, the prohibition to eat *matzah*/The *Seder* as a re-enactment of Exodus/The role of children/The *Haggadah*/The four cups of wine—the reasons/Reclining/Why three *matzot*/Wearing the *kittel*/The *Seder* plate and its symbols/The evening service—why *al ha-nisin* is not recited/*Hag ha-Pesah* and *Hag ha-Matzot*/*Kiddus*/*Karpas*/*Yahatz*—stealing the *Afikoman*/*Maggid*—lifting the *matzot*/The Four Questions/Why do we spill a drop from the wine cup at the mention of each of the ten plagues/Eating the *matzah*, the blessings/Eating the *maror* dipped in *haroset*/*Korekh*—the sandwich of *matzah* and *maror*/The custom of eating eggs dipped in salt water—the reasons/The meal/Eating of the *Afikoman*/Origin of the word/Grace after the meal/Opening of the door—the reasons/The Cup of Elijah/Completing the Hallel/*Had Gadya*.

15. SHAVUOT

155

Anniversary of giving of the Torah/The Biblical names: *Hag ha-Katzir*, *Hag ha-Shavu'ot*, *Hag ha-Bikkurim*/*Shavuot* and *Atzeret*/The days of *Sephira* as period of mourning—the historical background/Differences in observance/*Lag ba-Omer*/Refraining from menial labor during the time of counting the *Omer*—the reasons/Why no *sheheyanu* is recited at the commencement of counting the *Omer*/Decorating the homes and synagogues with foliage—the reasons/Remaining awake during the night of *Shavuot*—the reasons/*Akdamut*/Reading the Book of Ruth—source and reasons/Eating dairy foods on *Shavuot*—the reasons/Throwing apples on *Shavuot*.

16. TISH'AH BE-AV

169

The Four Fast Days and their historical backgrounds/*Ben ha-Metzarim*/*Shabbat Hazon*/Abstention from eating meat—the reason/the *siym*/Laws of mourning and prohibition of eating on *Tish'ah be-Av*/The *Seudah ha-mafseket*/Reading of the Book of Lamentations/Reciting the *Kinot* in the morning/Mourning prayers without *tallit* and *tefillin*—the reason/Why *Nefilat Appayim* is omitted/Visiting the cemetery/Circumcision on *Tisha be-Av*.

17. ROSH HA-SHANAH 177

Day of judgment/The month of Elul as time of preparation/Blowing the shofar during Elul—the reasons/*Selihot*/Rosh ha-Shanah in the Torah/Why are the High Holy Days celebrated in Tishri?/Why is Rosh ha-Shanah on the first day of the month?/Why does it last two days?/The problem of *Sheheyanu* on the second night/Special synagogue melodies/“May you be inscribed for a good year”/*hallot* in form of a ladder or a bird—the reason/Apple, honey and other foods as good omens/Why *Hallel* is not recited?/Why the shofar is made of ram’s horn?/Procedure of blowing shofar/Thirty sounds plus seventy—the reasons/Saadia Gaon’s ten reasons for blowing the shofar/Circumcision on Rosh ha-Shanah before blowing the shofar—why/Shofar not blown on *Shabbat*—the reason/Shofar as a symbol of the *Akedah*/The benediction on hearing the shofar/Blowing shofar both before and during the *Amidah*—why/Why *teki’at shofar* is delayed till the *Musaf* service/*Malkhuyot*, *Zikhronot*, *Shoferot*/The custom of not to sleep on the day of Rosh ha-Shanah/*Taslikh*—the origins.

18. YOM KIPPUR 199

The Ten Days of Penitence/*Shabbat Shuvah*/The ways of repentance/The *Kapparot* ritual, its reasons/*Vidduy* (confession) at *Minha*/Asking forgiveness from our fellow-men/The *Seudah ha-Mafseket*/The mitzvah of eating on the eve of Yom Kippur—the reasons/Wing-shaped bread and its symbolism/Festive spirit on Yom Kippur/Holiday candles and memorial candles—the reasons/White garments/The five deprivations, their sources in Torah and Talmud/*Kol Nidre*, the annullment of vows, past or future/Removing three Torah scrolls from the Ark—the reasons/Why two men flank the Reader at *Kol Nidre*/The prologue to *Kol Nidre* and its historical background/Why *Kol Nidre* is chanted three times/Why on Yom Kippur “Blessed be the name of His Glorious Majesty . . .” is called out loud/The *shaharit* service/Why the Torah reading of Yom Kippur recounts the death of the two sons of Aaron/The Haftarah/*Yizkor/Musaf*, a recounting of the Yom Kippur service in the Temple/Why we prostrate ourselves three times/Spreading hay on the synagogue floor, the reasons/The *Minha* service/Reading from the Torah the portion dealing with immorality—the reasons/Reading the Book of Jonah—why/Why the final service is called *Ne’ilah*, closing/Why a total of ten confessions/Epilogue of three verses/Ending Yom Kippur with a shofar blast—the reasons.

19. SUKKOT 217

Why Sukkot follows Yom Kippur/Feast of Tabernacles and Feast of Ingathering of the Fruits/Tabernacles: booths or heavenly clouds/Why Sukkot does not coincide with Passover/Three aspects of Sukkot in Scriptures/The sukkah, its material and construction/Dwelling in the sukkah/The seven *Ushpizin* (guests), why are they singled out/The Four Species, their characteristics and distinguishing features/Why the *Etrog* is not tied together with the other three species/Why the benediction refers to the Lulav only/How to recite the benediction before per-

forming the mitzvah/The ritual of waving of the Four Species and its reasons/*Simḥat Bet ha-Sho'evah* and *Nisukh ha-Mayim/Hosha'na Rabbah*, the name and the importance/The ritual of circling the *Bimah* seven times—the reasons/Why we flail the *aravot/Shemini Atzeret*, a separate holiday, in the Torah and the Midrash/*Simḥat Torah* and its highlights/*Hakafot/Aliyah* for every man/*Kol ha-ne'arim/Completion* of the Torah and beginning it anew/*Ḥatan Torah* and *Ḥatan Bereshit*.

20. HANUKKAH 241

The Feast of Lights/Historical background/Ḥanukkah as commemoration of military victory and the miracle of the cruse of oil/Why eight days/Why no festive meals/Games, *dreidel*, *Ḥanukkah gelt/Pirsumei nissa*/Why the *shammash*/Procedure, time and place of lighting the candles/The dispute of the school of Shammai and the School of Hillel and their arguments/Candles or olive oil/The blessings/Biblical derivation of the mitzvah/Ḥanukkah candles, wine for *kiddush*, Sabbath candles, *havdalah* candles—which has priority/Full *Hallel* recited on all eight days—the reasons/Custom of eating dairy products.

21. TU BI-SHEVAT 255

The four *Rosh ha-Shanahs* in the Mishnah/New Year of the Trees/Its significance in the laws of tithing/Its celebration by Ashkenazi Jews: eating fruits that grow in Israel/Celebration by Sephardi Jews/Kabbalistic notion/Planting trees in Israel on *Tu bi-Shevat*.

22. PURIM 259

The historical background in the Bible/The Fast of Esther/Reading of the Megillah evening and morning—the reason/Reading of the Megillah takes preference over other *mitzvot*/The four observances of Purim/Shushan Purim/Purim in a leap year/*Megillah, Sefer, Igeret*/Why we read the *Megillah* in Hebrew/Customs in reading the *Megillah*/Noisemakers/The three benedictions before reading the *Megillah*/Why *Hallel* is not recited on Purim/*Megillah* and *Havdalah*, which has preference/*Megillah* and *tefillin*/Money-gifts to the poor—how and why/*Maḥatzit ha-Shekel/Mishloah Manot* (food gifts to friends)—the reasons/Purim and Yom ha-Kippurim/Why Purim will be celebrated even in the days of the Messiah/Why will the *Megillah* outlast all other Prophetic books?

23. MARRIAGE 275

“Be fruitful and multiply!”/The Talmud about marriage/Development of the institution of marriage in Jewish history/Marriage as acquisition/*Erusin* and *kiddushin/Nissuin, huppah, yihud*/Wedding customs—their origin in the giving of the Torah/Adam and Eve/Calling up the bridegroom to the Torah before the wedding—the origin/Showering him with nuts, almonds and raisins—the reasons/Why the bride and groom fast on their wedding day/Reasons for veiling the bride's face under the *huppah*/Why a *minyán* is required at the wedding/Why the bridal couple is escorted to the *Huppah* with candles/The groom enters

the *huppah* first—the source/Why the bride circles the groom/The *Tenaim* prior to the wedding/The Benediction of Betrothal (*Birkhat Erusin*)/The act of betrothal/The witnesses/Betrothal by ring—the reasons/Reading of the *Ketubah*/The Seven Benedictions of Marriage (*Birkhat Nissuin*)/Breaking of a glass—the reasons/Why the groom wears a *kittel* under the *huppah*/Some yemenite marriage customs/Seven days of marriage celebration—Biblical precedents/The *Sheva Berakhot*—difference between Ashkenazim and Sephardim/Some unique wedding customs/Why the bride presents the groom with a *tallit*/ Why a benediction is not recited over the mitzvah of getting married.

24. BIRTH

291

Berit Milah and *Berito shel Avraham Avinu*—The Biblical commandment/Obligation of the father/Circumcision on the eighth day—why/Circumcision compared to sacrifice/Why was the male organ chosen/Circumcision as a mitzvah of paramount importance/*Hatafat dam berit*/A child born at twilight/When circumcision endangers life/Circumcision in the Kabbalah/*Shalom Zachar*—the reasons/The Sephardi custom/Leaving the scalpel under the baby's pillow—the reasons/*Wachnacht*/Calling up the father to the Torah/Why a *minyán* has to be present at the *berit milah*/The *Kvater*, his role and meaning of the word /“*Barukh ha-ba!*” explained/Why the father wears *tallit* and *tefillin* at the *berit milah*/Why is the *mohel*'s scalpel double-edged/The *Sandek*, his role and meaning of the word/The Chair of Elijah and his presence at the *berit milah*—the historical source/The Sephardi custom/The ritual: *milah*, *periah*, *metzitzah*/The blessings/*Shehecheyanu*—the arguments for and against/“Just as he entered the Covenant of Abraham . . .”—an explanation/Why the removed foreskin is placed in earth/The *mohel*'s prayer/“In thy blood you shall live” twice repeated—why/Why the *mohel* wets the baby's lips with wine/The baby receives his name after the *berit milah* only—the Biblical sources/The festive meal—its Biblical origin/After her confinement the mother attends the synagogue—the reasons/The birth of a daughter/The naming of a daughter—when and where/Calling up the father to the Torah/Inviting the congregation to a festive Kiddush.

25. PIDYON HA-BEN

309

The Biblical source/Consecration of the first-born in return for God's slaying of the first-born Egyptians/Replacement of the first-born with the Levites—the commandment in the Torah/Four key elements of *Pidyon Bekhor* as defined in the Torah/The time and amount of redemption/Which *bekhorim* are exempt from being redeemed and why/Redeeming an orphan *bekhor*/The *Pidyon ha-Ben* ceremony/The blessings/The father-*kohen* dialogue/The priestly blessing/Two answers to one question/The custom of adorning the child with precious objects/The festive meal—its importance in the Kabbalah.

26. BAR MITZVAH

315

Maturity at the age of thirteen—the source in the Mishnah and Talmud as inferred from the Bible/The celebration of the day/The commencement

of putting on *tefillin* and being called up to the Torah/The *Barukh she-petarani* blessing and its origin/The tradition of delivering a Talmudic discourse in conjunction with a festive meal/Reading of the Haftorah and acting as *sheliaḥ tzibbur*/Practicing the mitzvah of *tefillin* before becoming *bar mitzvah*.

27. DEATH AND MOURNING

319

Fundamental principles of Judaism concerning death/Why cremation and burial in a vault are not permitted/*Lo'eg la-rash*/Sanctity of the soul/Washing hands upon leaving a cemetery/Closing the eyes of the deceased/The dead body is covered and placed on the ground—the reasons/Why candles are lit beside the body/The custom of pouring out water in front of the house of the deceased—the reasons/The *Hevrah Kadisha*—its function and name/Why we dress the dead in white linen shrouds/The custom of wrapping the body of a man in a *tallit*/The ritual of *keriah*—its source and procedure/Burying the dead on the day of death—Biblical sources and mystical reasons/Interring the body in the ground—the Biblical source/Burial in a casket or without/Why jewelry is removed from the dead before burial/Why we stop seven times when carrying the body to the grave/Placing the body in the grave with the head towards the west and the feet toward the east—the reason/Filling in the grave—its customs and their reasons/Placing the hands on the casket—its symbolism/The *Shurah*/The custom of tearing up grass and throwing it over the shoulder when leaving the cemetery—the reasons/Why we don't dry our hands after washing them when leaving the cemetery/In Jerusalem sons don't follow the father's bier to the cemetery—the kabbalistic reason/What happens when the parent of a bride or bridegroom dies on the day of the wedding/The *Seudat Havra'ah*—why the first meal of the mourner is provided by neighbors/Eggs as a symbol of mourning/The four periods of mourning: *Aninut*, *Shiv'ah*, *Sheloshim*, the Twelve Months—their sources and prohibitions/Why the mirrors are covered during the *Shiv'ah*/Why the major holidays abrogate the mourning periods/When is a widow or widower permitted to remarry/The *Kaddish*—its source and purpose/Why the *Kaddish* is recited for eleven months only/Why the *Kaddish* is in Aramaic/Oriental mourning customs/Erecting a monument—its source and purpose/The *Yahrzeit*—its observances/The *Yahrzeit* in the Kabbalah: the *Hillula*/*Yizkor*/Why those whose parents are living leave the synagogue during *Yizkor*/Immortality of the soul, resurrection of the dead and the future redemption of Israel.