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MAKING HISTORY

STUDIES IN RABBINIC HISTORY, LITERATURE, AND CULTURE IN HONOR OF RICHARD L. KALMIN

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BJS
Abbreviations

AB      Anchor Bible
AGJU    Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AJS Review  Association for Jewish Studies Review
BibInt  Biblical Interpretation
BIS     Biblical Interpretation Series
BJS     Brown Judaic Studies
BZAW    Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBET    Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ     Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CHANE   Culture and History of the Ancient Near East
CRINT   Compendia Rerum Judaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
DCLS    Deuterocanonical and Cognate Literature Studies
DS (Rabb. )  Rabbinowicz Dikduké Sofrim, 16 vols. (Variæ Lectiones &c.; D. S. Munich: H. Roesl, 1867–97)
DSD     Dead Sea Discoveries
HUCA    Hebrew Union College Annual
JAAR    Journal of the American Academy of Religion
JAJ     Journal of Ancient Judaism
JAJSup  Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements
JAOS    Journal of the Ancient Oriental Society
JBL     Journal of Biblical Literature
JETS    Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JJS     Journal of Jewish Studies
JQR     Jewish Quarterly Review
JRS     Journal of Roman Studies
JSJ     Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period
JSJSup  Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplements
JSOT    Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSOTSup Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
Abbreviations

JSP  Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha
JSQ  Jewish Studies Quarterly
LCL  Loeb Classical Library
NovT  *Novum Testamentum*
NovTSup  Supplements to Novum Testamentum
PAAJR  *Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research*
PMLA  *Publications of the Modern Language Association*
RAC  Theodor Klauser et al., eds., *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1950–)
SJLA  *Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity*
SJOT  *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament*
STDJ  Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
TSAJ  Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
VC  *Vigiliae Christianae*
VCSup  *Vigiliae Christianae Supplements*
WUNT  Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW  *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*
Introduction

Making History: Studies in Rabbinic History, Literature, and Culture in Honor of Richard L. Kalmin celebrates the career and wide-ranging impact of our teacher and mentor, Richard L. Kalmin, one of the leading figures in the study of rabbinic literature. Many years ago, we (co-editors Carol Bakhos and Alyssa M. Gray), agreed that someday the time would be right for us to collaborate on a festschrift in our teacher’s honor. That time has come, and the resulting volume is a rich sampling of fruits of Kalmin’s years of patient work “making history” in the study of rabbinic literature. The number and range of contributors, methodological approaches, and texts and historical trends under study in this book show that the contemporary study of rabbinics would not be what it is without his scholarship. Some of the scholars who have contributed to this volume worked under Kalmin’s direct mentorship or teach with him at the Jewish Theological Seminary, where he has taught since 1982. Others are his colleagues in the field who heard his papers at conferences in America, Israel, and Europe, or pored over his numerous articles and monograph publications. His impact on the way we read rabbinic texts from literary and historical vantage points, how we tease out the various voices that make up a passage of the Talmud, and how we detect the transmission of texts over geographic and cultural boundaries cannot be overstated. Through his steadfast commitment to teaching, mentoring, and research, Kalmin has played a remarkable wide-ranging role in shaping the field of rabbinics. For this, we all—rabbinicists and other scholars of late ancient Mediterranean religions who consult rabbinics scholarship—owe him a great debt of gratitude.

The title Making History is doubly significant. From the beginning of his career, Kalmin forcefully pushed back against the notion that scholars cannot do historical reconstruction or draw historical conclusions from rabbinic texts. He has continuously pointed out that the question is not can historical conclusions be derived from rabbinic texts, but how can this be done and what sorts of conclusions may be drawn. His interest in this sort of “making history” grew as his research moved from source- and redaction-critical reflection on who was responsible for the Babylonian Talmud to reflection on what the Talmud itself can tell us about the pre-redactional
Introduction

world of the Amoraim in both rabbinic centers. Always a prolific scholar, Kalmin has produced scores of book chapters and articles, as well as five books, each of which marks a turning point in his research. Kalmin’s first book, *The Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud: Amoraic or Saboraic*, published in 1989, examines modern scholarly theories regarding the redaction of the Babylonian Talmud. Questions about the identity of the final redactors, when they lived, and how they edited their sources animate the work. Is the Talmud a product of the Amoraim of the late fifth century, or the Saboraim, who flourished during the following two centuries? His scrupulous textual analysis leads him to conclude that the Talmud was redacted sometime during the Saboraic period and not earlier. *The Redaction of the Babylonian Talmud* set the stage not only for his later work but also for any scholar interested in the inner workings of the Babylonian Talmud.

Considered a classic in the field, *Sages, Stories, Authors, and Editors in Rabbinic Babylonia* (1994) challenges the notion that the Babylonian Talmud is by and large a product of a late process of redaction. By locating the different sources of the Talmud and how and when they were woven together, this monumental monograph not only succeeds in this endeavor but also demonstrates the Talmud’s usefulness for historical reconstruction. The historical information that emerges from Kalmin’s painstaking analyses sheds light on, for example, a decentralized rabbinic movement. *The Sage in Jewish Society of Late Antiquity* (1999) continues this inquiry by noting key differences between the social settings of the sages of Palestine and Babylonia and exploring examples of their religious and ideological differences.

Kalmin’s award-winning *Jewish Babylonia between Persia and Roman Palestine* (2006) also situates the rabbis in their social contexts. The work seeks to address the question of the degree to which living under Sasanian Persian rule impacted the rabbis and the role that both Persian and Roman Palestine played in shaping rabbinic culture. What do we know of rabbinic culture of late antique Babylonia? His close examination of several rabbinic texts offers fresh insight into how rabbis interacted with the non-rabbinic world.

*Migrating Tales: The Talmud’s Narratives and Their Historical Context* (2014) reflects Kalmin’s long-standing fascination with the stories of the Bavli and how its variegated motifs throw light on the extent to which and the ways in which its transmitters engage with the broader world of Greeks, Romans, Christians, and Persians. He redirects our attention to traditions from the Roman East and the crucial part they play in the Talmud and in doing so he further underscores the need for scholars to examine stories within multicultural contexts. Moreover, his detailed analyses
of specific motifs and passages highlights the important role of language switching in determining a tale’s migration pattern.

Readers will find that most of the chapters in this volume build on the methodological approaches or scholarly findings of Kalmin’s books. Throughout, the contributors illustrate the enduring influence on them of Kalmin’s key scholarly contribution: that, carefully and judiciously read and interpreted, the late ancient rabbinic compilations are capable—in so many ways!—of “making history.”