

Making History

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BROWN JUDAIC STUDIES

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MAKING HISTORY

edited by  
Carol Bakhos and Alyssa M. Gray

# MAKING HISTORY

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

Edited by  
Carol Bakhos and Alyssa M. Gray

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Brown Judaic Studies  
Providence, Rhode Island

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# Contents

Abbreviations	ix
Introduction	xi
I. "Migrating Tales"	
The Tall Tales of Babylonian Talmud Bekhorot 57b: Zombie Mothers, Angry Birds, and Egg Drop Soup <i>Beth A. Berkowitz</i>	3
Who Owns the Treasure? Alexander the Great and Apollonius of Tyana <i>Shaye J. D. Cohen</i>	25
The Book of Adam <i>Shamma Friedman</i>	33
Seas of Ink and Reeds for Pens: The Migrations of a Topos of Inexhaustibility <i>Christine Hayes</i>	43
II. Rabbis in Context	
David's Bravado in Light of Sasanian Cultural Practices <i>Carol Bakhos</i>	85
Translation and Authority: Three (Very Different) Cases <i>Steven D. Fraade</i>	97
The Impact of the Jewish Revolts on the Jews of Asia Minor <i>Seth Schwartz</i>	111
A Life in the Balance: Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai's Compliment <i>Burton L. Visotzky</i>	143

III. The Bavli's Inner Workings

Gufei Sanhedrin: An Analysis of the Term גופא in Tractate Sanhedrin <i>Noah Bickart</i>	155
Hidden Traditions <i>Robert Brody</i>	199
Amoraic <i>Memrot</i> as Reworkings of Older Sources: Women and <i>Qiddush</i> <i>Joshua Cahan</i>	209
<i>Eiteveih</i> as an Indicator of Halakhic Change: A Sample Study and a Proposal for Further Research <i>Judith Hauptman</i>	235
The Late Amoraim: A Digital Analysis <i>Michael L. Satlow</i>	257
Who's on First? A Methodological Note on Determining Whether the Bavli Refers to Rabbah or Rava in a Specific Passage <i>Marcus Mordecai Schwartz</i>	277
IV. The Bavli and the Land of Israel	
Sodom between the Rivers? Revisiting B. Sanhedrin 109a-b <i>Alyssa M. Gray</i>	283
Not from Zion: More on the Bavli's Arrogation of Prerogative in the Jewish World <i>David Kraemer</i>	313
Anna Whistler and the Talmudic Mothers of Yerushalmi Qiddushin <i>Marjorie Lehman</i>	331
Abraham as Hero in the Synagogue and Study House: The Aqedah in Genesis Rabbah and the Babylonian Talmud <i>Kristen Lindbeck</i>	355

V. Textual Transmission and Ideational Transformation  
in Ancient Judaism

- Plurisignation in Biblical and Rabbinic Law:  
The Meaning and Punishment of "Rape"  
*Catherine Hezser* 383
- Havai* and *G'zuma*: Hyperbole and Aggadic Midrash  
*Marc Hirshman* 407
- Pidyon Ha-Ben*, Rabbi Akiva, and the Diffusion  
of the Principle: *Ha-Motzi Me-Chavero Alav Ha-Reaya*  
in Tannaitic Literature  
*Jonathan S. Milgram* 415
- Looking at the Past from the Bible to the Mishnah:  
Toward a History of Jewish Historiography, with Emphasis  
on Demetrius the Chronographer  
*Chaim Milikowsky* 425
- "Between Her and Others": The "Spirit of Jealousy"  
in Numbers 5:14 and Its Ancient Jewish Reception  
*Sarah Wolf* 459

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## Abbreviations

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

JSP	<i>Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha</i>
JSQ	<i>Jewish Studies Quarterly</i>
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones, <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> , 9th ed., with revised supplement (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996)
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to <i>Novum Testamentum</i>
OTP	James H. Charlesworth, ed., <i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> , 2 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985)
PAAJR	<i>Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research</i>
PMLA	<i>Publications of the Modern Language Association</i>
RAC	Theodor Klauser et al., eds., <i>Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum</i> (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1950–)
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SJOT	<i>Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament</i>
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
VCSup	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i> Supplements
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

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## 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 rabbinic 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

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.”

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