



Stories of the Babylonian Talmud

Jeffrey L. Rubenstein

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Jeffrey L. Rubenstein continues his grand exploration of the ancient rabbinic tradition of the Talmudic sages, offering deep and complex analysis of eight stories from the Babylonian Talmud to reconstruct the cultural and religious world of the Babylonian rabbinic academy.

Rubenstein combines a close textual and literary examination of each story with a careful comparison to earlier versions from other rabbinic compilations. This unique approach provides insight not only into the meaning and content of the current forms of the stories but also into how redactors reworked those earlier versions to address contemporary moral and religious issues. Rubenstein's analysis uncovers the literary methods used to compose the Talmud and sheds light on the cultural and theological perspectives of the Stammaim?the anonymous editor-redactors of the Babylonian Talmud.

Rubenstein also uses these stories as a window into understanding more broadly the culture of the late Babylonian rabbinic academy, a hierarchically organized and competitive institution where sages studied the Torah. Several of the stories Rubenstein studies here describe the dynamics of life in the academy: master-disciple relationships, collegiality and rivalry, and the struggle for leadership positions. Others elucidate the worldview of the Stammaim, including their perspectives on astrology, theodicy, and revelation.

The third installment of Rubenstein's trilogy of works on the subject, *Stories of the Babylonian Talmud* is essential reading for all students of the Talmud and rabbinic Judaism.

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