The Babylonian Talmud and Late Antique Book Culture

In this book, Monika Amsler explores the historical contexts in which the Babylonian Talmud was formed in an effort to determine whether it was the result of oral transmission. Scholars have posited that the rulings and stories we find in the Talmud were passed on from one generation to the next, each generation adding their opinions and interpretations of a given subject. Yet such an oral formation process is unheard of in late antiquity. Moreover, the model exoticizes the Talmud and disregards the intellectual world of Sassanid Persia. Rather than taking the Talmud’s discursive structure as a sign for orality, Amsler interrogates the intellectual and material prerequisites of composers of such complex works, and their education and methods of large-scale data management. She also traces and highlights the marks that their working methods inevitably left in the text. Detailing how intellectual innovation was generated, Amsler’s book also sheds new light on the content of the Talmud. This title is also available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

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To Martin,

Emelina, Gwendolin, Filippa, and Charlotte
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Abbreviations

AJEC  Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity
AJSR  Association for Jewish Studies Review
ANRW  Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt
BJS  Brown Judaic Studies
HTR  Harvard Theological Review
HUCA  Hebrew Union College Annual
Hug  Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies
JBL  Journal of Biblical Literature
JNES  Journal of Near Eastern Studies
JQR  Jewish Quarterly Review
JSJSup  Supplements to Journal for the Study of Judaism
LCL  Loeb Classical Library
List of Abbreviations

NTS  New Testament Studies
OECS  Oxford Early Christian Studies
SFSHJ  South Florida Studies in the History of Judaism
SJLA  Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SLA  Studies in Late Antiquity
STAC  Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
TSAJ  Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism
TSJTSA  Texts and Studies of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America
WGRW  Writings from the Greco-Roman World
WUNT  Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

TALMUDIC TRACTATES

Avod. Zar.  Avodah Zarah
Avot  Avot
B. Bat.  Bava Batra
B. Metz  Bava Metzi’a
B. Qam  Bava Qamma
Ber.  Berakhot
Betzahb  Betzah
Eruv.  Eruvin
Git.  Gittin
Hor.  Horayot
Hul.  Hullin
Kelim  Kelim
Ketub.  Ketubbot
Meg.  Megillah
Mo’ed Qat.  Mo’ed Qatan
Ned.  Nedarim
Nid.  Niddah
Pesah.  Pesahim
Qidd.  Qidushim
Rosh Hash.  Rosh Hashanah
Sanh.  Sanhedrin
Shabb.  Shabbat
List of Abbreviations

Ta’an. Ta’anit
Tem. Temurah
Ter. Terumot
Yevam. Yevamot
Yoma Yoma

Prefixes to the tractates are used as follows:
m. = Mishnah
t. = Tosefta
y. = Palestinian Talmud
b. = Babylonian Talmud