

## The Evolution of Jewish Monotheism

In this book, David Michael Grossberg offers a fresh and illuminating perspective on the three-thousand-year evolution of Jewish monotheism by narrating the history of “God is one” as a religious slogan from the ancient to the modern world. Although “God is one” has been called Judaism’s primary testimony of faith, its meaning has been obscure and contentious from its earliest emergence. From the Bible’s acclamatory “the Lord is one” to Philo of Alexandria’s highest Word just secondary to God; from the Talmud’s rejection of “two powers in heaven” to the philosophers’ First Existent who is one beyond unity; from the Kabbalists’ tenfold Godhead to Spinoza’s one substance, this innovative history demonstrates the remarkable diversity encompassed by this deceptively simple Jewish statement of faith. Grossberg shows how this diversity is unified in a continuous striving for knowledge of God that has been at the heart of Judaism from its earliest beginnings.

David Michael Grossberg is a sponsored researcher in the Department of Near Eastern Studies at Cornell University. He is the author of *Heresy and the Formation of the Rabbinic Community* and coeditor of *Genesis Rabbah in Text and Context*.

# The Evolution of Jewish Monotheism

*“God is One,” from Antiquity to Modernity*

DAVID MICHAEL GROSSBERG

*Cornell University*



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UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment  
978-1-009-56919-4 — The Evolution of Jewish Monotheism  
David Michael Grossberg  
Frontmatter  
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UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314-321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,  
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103 Penang Road, #05-06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment,  
a department of the University of Cambridge.

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Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781009569194](http://www.cambridge.org/9781009569194)

DOI: 10.1017/9781009569224

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When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009569224

First published 2025

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.*

*A Cataloging-in-Publication data record for this book is available from the Library  
of Congress*

ISBN 978-1-009-56919-4 Hardback

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To *sonia bat sima*, ז"ל  
—'al tittosh torat 'immekha

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## Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Department of Near Eastern Studies and the Jewish Studies Program at Cornell University for accommodating me as a Visiting Scholar during the period that I was researching and writing this book. I thank as well the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Connecticut, where I obtained my master's degree, and the Religious Studies Department at Princeton University, where I obtained my PhD, and my doctoral advisor, Peter Schäfer, for providing a foundation of skills that helped to make its writing possible.

I am fortunate to have had several readers for all or parts of this book or for the material that was part of the research on which it is based. These readers all provided invaluable criticism, both trenchant and constructive, that helped me constantly to improve my work. I am grateful to all of these readers. But I am especially grateful to a reader for Cambridge University Press who patiently read the entire original manuscript and offered a frank and candid critique and an excellent approach to revising the material that made possible the current monograph-length book. I regret that the anonymous peer-review process prevents my acknowledging this reader more specifically, but I hope at least that my sincere expression of gratitude will be received.

My thanks as well to my editor at Cambridge University Press, Beatrice Rehl, for her care and commitment to this project. And thanks to Franklin Mathews Jebaraj and Trent Hancock for their dedication and effort in shepherding the book through the editing process and seeing it through to publication.

I dedicate this book to my mother, who passed away some years ago. I am called to a rather nonstandard path through life. I never pursued a

career, and I sought a PhD much later and for reasons other than is typically the case. My mother was especially pleased when I completed my PhD and published my first book because these seemed to her tangible tokens of success. Although I am sympathetic to this perspective, for me it is not so – my life has been dedicated not to career or to scholarship, nor to writing or academia, but to a spiritual path, success in which is not so easily measured. And yet this, my second book, is certainly one physically manifest reflection of my life's work, and thus I dedicate it to her memory, *zikhronah li-vrakbah*.