# Contents

## Acknowledgments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overview</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Babylonian Talmud as a Sasanian Work</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality and Religious Demarcation</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex and the Interplay of Law and Narrative</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mythologizing Sexuality</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textual Stratification and Synoptic Reading of the Talmud</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahlavi Literature</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## PART I

1. **Talmudic, Christian, and Zoroastrian Notions of Sexual Desire**
   - Introduction                                                      | 31   |
   - Sexual Gratification in Babylonian Rabbinic Culture                 | 35   |
   - The Demonic Reification of Sexual Desire                           | 37   |
   - Extinguishing Desire with Sex                                      | 40   |
   - Paul on Sexual Desire                                              | 41   |
   - Sex and Desire in Zoroastrianism                                   | 46   |
   - Conclusion                                                         | 54   |

2. **Sex and the Sages**
   - Introduction                                                        | 75   |
   - Between Palestine and Babylonia                                     | 78   |
   - Marriage versus Study in Zoroastrianism                            | 82   |
   - The Models of Moses and Zarathustra                                 | 87   |
   - Was Ben ʿAzzai Really Celibate?                                     | 91   |
   - Conclusion                                                         | 92   |
# Contents

3. Sexual Etiquette and Identity Demarcation
   - Introduction 101
   - Persian Modesty 104
   - Daytime Sex and Adiabenian Converts 107
   - Conclusion 113

4. The Mythologization of Sexuality
   - Introduction 121
   - Adam and the Demons: Between Palestine and Babylonia 125
   - Creation by Emission 130
   - Conclusion 134

## Part II

5. The Pahlavi Doctrine of Xwēdōdah
   - Introduction 149
   - Objections to Xwēdōdah 151
   - Xwēdōdah as Positive Law 152
   - Purity of Lineage 155
   - Increasing Love 156
   - Cultural and Moral Relativism 158
   - A Battle against Evil 159
   - The Rectification of Sin 160
   - Mythical Prototypes 162
   - Legal Concerns 165

6. Noahide Law and the Inclusiveness of Sexual Ethics
   - Introduction 182
   - Noahide Law: Natural or Positive 183
   - Biblical Foundations 186
   - The Sinaitic and Noahide Codes of Sexual Conduct 189
   - The Palestinian Rabbinic Discussion 191
   - The Babylonian Discussion 196
   - Explaining the Differences 201

7. Incestuous Riddles
   - Talmudic Riddles 212
   - Zoroastrian Connections 218

8. Incest between Law, Narrative, and Myth
   - Introduction 224
   - The Mythical Origins of Xwēdōdah 226
   - Cain, Abel, and their Sisters 228
   - Lot’s Daughters and Jam 235
   - Conclusion 239
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>vii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Confessing Incest to a Rabbi 245</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Difficulties and Anomalies</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Early Rabbinic Interpretation</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confessing to a Religious Authority</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confessing to a Rad</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rav Hisda as Rad</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Xwedôdah Cancels a Death Sentence”</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bibliography 271

Index 299