
Contents

Glossary, xiii

Abbreviations, xv

Introduction, 3

1. On Writing an Intellectual History of the Bavli, 9

The Meaning of Literary Forms, 9

The Bavli: A Preliminary Description, 16

The Bavli's Sources: On the Reliability of Attributions, 20

2. A History of Amoraic Literary Expression, 26

The First Amoraic Period, 30

The Second Amoraic Period, 35

The Third Amoraic Period, 39

The Meaning of the Evidence, 41

3. The Preservation of Amoraic Argumentation, 50

The Evidence, 55

More Evidence and Conclusions, 63

Appendix A: The Data at a Glance, 72

Appendix B: The Data in Detail, 72

4. The Bavli Considered as a Whole, 79

- The Urgency for Argumentation, 79
- Building on Earlier Argumentation, 80
- Building on Brief Traditions, 84
- Fictional Argumentation, 87
- Argumentation for Its Own Sake, 90
- The Bavli and the Yerushalmi Distinguished, 93

5. The Meaning of Argumentation, 99

- A Philosophical Analysis: The Indeterminability of Truth, 99
- Historical Underpinnings, 112
- Theological Underpinnings, 120
- Appendix: The Erosion of Authority in the Bavli's Sources, 127

6. The Bavli on "Truth," 139

- The Separation of Truth and Practice, 139
- The Centering of Human Reason: Reason and Revelation, 146
- Human Reason on Its Own Terms: Learning Becomes Torah, 156

7. The Bavli in Comparative Perspective, 171

- Truth in the Classical Philosophical Tradition, 175
- Religious Traditions and Truth, 179
- Philosophy Meets Scripture, 183
- In Conclusion: Why the Bavli? 187

Notes, 191

Bibliography, 207

General Index, 213

Index to Primary Rabbinic Sources, 217