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Power and Emotion in Ancient Judaism

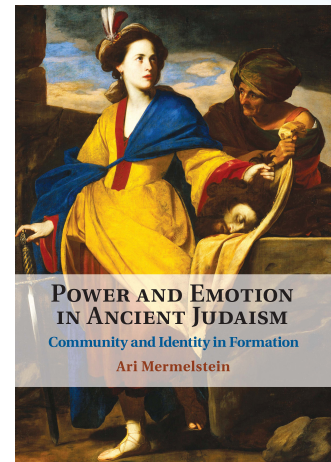
Community and Identity in Formation

Ari Mermelstein

Yeshiva University, New York

In this book, Ari Mermelstein examines the mutually-reinforcing relationship between power and emotion in ancient Judaism. Ancient Jewish writers in both Palestine and the diaspora contended that Jewish identity entails not simply allegiance to God and performance of the commandments but also the acquisition of specific emotional norms. These rules regarding feeling were both shaped by and responses to networks of power - God, the foreign empire, and other groups of Jews - which threatened Jews' sense of agency. According to these writers, emotional communities that felt Jewish would succeed in neutralizing the power wielded over them by others and, depending on the circumstances, restore their power to acculturate, maintain their Jewish identity, and achieve redemption. An important contribution to the history of emotions, this book argues that power relations are the basis for historical changes in emotion discourse.

Part I. Jewish Emotional Resistance to Gentile Power-Over in the Greco-Roman Diaspora: 1. Emotional resistance to physical power-over: the performative power of the public spectacle in 4 Maccabees; 2. Emotional resistance to domination: feeling rules as proxies for power in Joseph and Aseneth; 3. Resistance to emotional stereotypes: emotional stereotypes and power dynamics in 3 Maccabees; Part II. Jewish Emotional Discourse in Response to Divine Power-Over: Emotions in the Context of Tragedy and Trauma: 4. Overcoming divine power-over: righteous anger in 1 Maccabees; 5. Coping with divine power-over: grief in 4 Ezra; Part III. The Dead Sea Sect as Emotional Community: The Power and Powerlessness of Feeling Like a Sectarian; 6. Feeling rules in the construction of communal identity: sectarian feelings in the Hodayot; 7. The power of fear: strategic manipulation of fear in the construction of a sectarian emotional community; 8. Sectarian ritual and the cultivation of an emotional habitus.



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