



Profiling Jewish Literature in Antiquity: An Inventory, from Second Temple Texts to the Talmuds

Alexander Samely

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This book introduces a new system for describing non-biblical ancient Jewish literature. It arises from a fresh empirical investigation into the literary structures of many anonymous and pseudepigraphic sources, including Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha of the Old Testament, the larger Dead Sea Scrolls, Midrash, and the Talmuds. A comprehensive framework of several hundred literary features, based on modern literary studies and text linguistics, allows describing the variety of important text types which characterize ancient Judaism without recourse to vague and superficial genre terms. The features proposed cover all aspects of the ancient Jewish texts, including the self-presentation, perspective, and knowledge horizon assumed by the text; any poetic constitution, narration, thematic discourse, or commentary format; common small forms and small-scale relationships governing neighbouring parts; compilations; dominant subject matter; and similarities to the canonical books of the Hebrew Bible. By treating works of diverse genres and periods by the same conceptual grid, the new framework breaks down artificial barriers to interdisciplinary research and prepares the ground for new large-scale comparative studies. The book introduces and presents the new framework, explains and illustrates every descriptive category with reference to specific ancient Jewish texts, and provides sample profiles of Jubilees, the Temple Scroll, Mishnah, and Genesis Rabbah. The books publication is accompanied by a public online Database of hundreds of further Profiles (literarydatabase.humanities.manchester.ac.uk). This project was made possible through the support of the Arts and Humanities Research Council.



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