



Rabbis, Language and Translation in Late Antiquity

Willem F. Smelik

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Exposed to multiple languages as a result of annexation, migration, pilgrimage and its position on key trade routes, the Roman Palestine of Late Antiquity was a border area where Aramaic, Greek, Hebrew and Arabic dialects were all in common use. This study analyses the way scriptural translation was perceived and practised by the rabbinic movement in this multilingual world. Drawing on a wide range of classical rabbinic sources, including unused manuscript materials, Willem F. Smelik traces developments in rabbinic thought and argues that foreign languages were deemed highly valuable for the lexical and semantic light they shed on the meanings of lexemes in the holy tongue. Key themes, such as the reception of translations of the Hebrew Scriptures, multilingualism in society, and rabbinic rules for translation, are discussed at length. This book will be invaluable for students of ancient Judaism, rabbinic studies, Old Testament studies, early Christianity and translation studies.

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