

ABSTRACT

Historical, Mythical and Religious Narratives of the Babylonian Talmud in their Middle Persian Context

Azadeh Ehsani Chombeli Ph.D

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This dissertation offers a comparative study between a number of Talmudic and Middle Persian narratives. The present work seeks first and foremost to examine Talmudic narratives in their Iranian context, and secondly to examine the Talmudic background of Iranian narratives where applicable.

The first and second chapters will offer an analysis of the alteration of historical and Biblical figures in the Bavli (the Babylonian Talmud) based on the influence of Iranian mythical and historical figures, while the third chapter will provide an account of how Iranists can learn from Talmudic Studies. Here we suggest that a Talmudic narrative may have encouraged Zoroastrian priests to compose an extensive work of religious literature, namely the *Ardā-Virāz Nāmāg*, an idea which will be further explored in the appendix.

The relationship between Iranian and Jewish materials in the Talmudic era is merely a piece of a larger puzzle, a piece that a number of scholars—such as Elman, Secunda, Mokhtarian, Herman, Kiel, Kalmin etc.—have recently begun to focus on. By focusing on Talmudic narratives that have not yet been sufficiently examined for Iranian themes and ideas, this dissertation represents a contribution towards piecing this puzzle together.