

PREFACE

With this volume I have completed my study of the traditions of Rabbi Ishmael. The debt which I owe to Professor Jacob Neusner can never be fully stated or completely repaid. Not only did I acquire the skills necessary for the undertaking of this project in his graduate seminars at Brown, but he has also continually supplied the insight, advice, and encouragement I needed to complete this project in the years I have been away from Providence, R.I. Without his insight and mastery of rabbinic Judaism and the texts produced by that culture, this project could not have reached its conclusion.

My work also owes a great deal to Professor William Scott Green of the University of Rochester. Bill has been a constant source of support during our years at Brown and since. He has continually shared his wide range of knowledge with me, he has listened patiently to my problems, and he has helped me discover the answers to several questions which were raised during my research. In addition, his seminal article on rabbinic biography has provided the key to the explanation of several phenomena encountered in the Ishmaelean corpus, and I have relied heavily on that article in this volume. Furthermore, he was gracious enough to read early drafts of some of the chapters in this volume, and his comments clarified many issues dealt with in the present text. His eye for literary style greatly improved the readability of several of the following chapters.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Professor Baruch Bokser of the University of California, Berkeley. Baruch has always been available to answer my questions about the rabbinic documents and the relevant secondary material. His vast knowledge of these documents and the studies about them have prevented my making many mistakes and my omitting references to important scholarly works.

My student, Ms. Linda Weingart, helped in the preparation of the manuscript for publication; without her aid a difficult task would have been virtually impossible. Ms. Aurette Kobel and Ms. Elizabeth Szachowicz typed the manuscripts and their care and patience is greatly appreciated. As with the other volumes, my friend

and colleague Rabbi Steven J. Steinberg helped to read the proofs and prepare them for final publication. Although now in Boulder, Colorado, Steve remains a close and dear friend.

Fraeda, Avi, and Zipporah have supplied the atmosphere which allowed me to pursue this research. Only we know how much they have given up so that I might complete this project.

This volume is dedicated to my mother-and father-in-law. They have been a constant source of material and spiritual support for me and my family. Their faith in me has never waivered, and they have done all that they could to ensure that I would be able to succeed in my scholarly undertakings. It is truly an honor to be a member of their family and to share in the love and support they have for their children.

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