



Plato and the Talmud

Jacob Howland

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This innovative study sees the relationship between Athens and Jerusalem through the lens of the Platonic dialogues and the Talmud. Howland argues that these texts are animated by comparable conceptions of the proper roles of inquiry and reasoned debate in religious life, and by a profound awareness of the limits of our understanding of things divine. Insightful readings of Plato's Apology, Euthyphro, and chapter three of tractate Ta'anit explore the relationship of prophets and philosophers, fathers and sons, and gods and men (among other themes), bringing to light the tension between rational inquiry and faith that is essential to the speeches and deeds of both Socrates and the Talmudic sages. In reflecting on the pedagogy of these texts, Howland shows in detail how Talmudic aggadah and Platonic drama and narrative speak to different sorts of readers in seeking mimetically to convey the living ethos of rabbinic Judaism and Socratic philosophizing.

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