



The Social World of the Sages: An Introduction to Israelite and Jewish Wisdom Literature

Mark R. Sneed

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The notion of a distinct “wisdom tradition” in ancient Israel has a long history—but does it have a basis in the evidence? Mark R. Sneed argues for a redefinition of the wisdom literature as a loosely cohering collection of books aimed at educating scribal apprentices in moral instruction and the art of living. He presents archaeological and literary data illustrating scribal culture and pedagogy in the ancient Near East and draws a portrait of Israel’s scribal culture, on the basis of which he argues that Israel’s wisdom literature was meant to complement, not to compete with, other modes of literature in the Hebrew Bible. The result is a surprising new picture of the authors and tradents of the wisdom materials alongside the rich mixture of other traditions in ancient Israel, a presentation carried out with regard to Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Sirach, Wisdom, and the wisdom writings in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Features include informational sidebars, photos, diagrams, and maps illustrating archaeological discoveries.

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