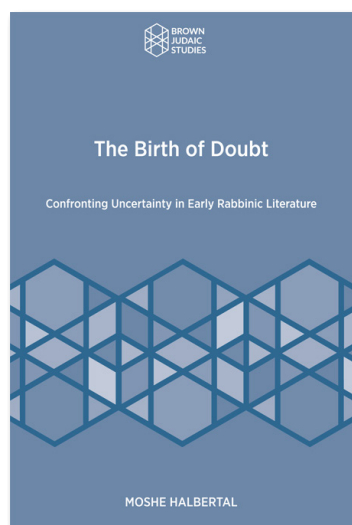# BROWN JUDAIC STUDIES

The Birth of Doubt
Confronting Uncertainty in Early Rabbinic Literature

Moshe Halbertal

A systematic attempt to understand the rabbinic world through its approach to confronting uncertainty

In the history of halakhah, the treatment of uncertainty became one of the most complex fields of intense study. In his latest book, Moshe Halbertal focuses on examining the point of origin of the study of uncertainty in early rabbinic literature, including the Mishnah, Tosefta, and halakhic midrashim. Halbertal explores instructions concerning how to behave in situations of uncertainty ranging from matters of ritual purity, to lineage and marriage, to monetary law, and to the laws of forbidden foods. This examination of the rules of uncertainty introduced in early rabbinic literature reveals that these rules were not aimed at avoiding but rather at dwelling in the midst of uncertainty, thus rejecting the sectarian isolationism that sought to minimize a community's experience of and friction with uncertainty.

Features:

- A thorough investigation of the principles concerning how to behave in cases of uncertainty
- An examination of two distinct modes for coping with uncertainty

Moshe Halbertal is Gruss Professor of Law at New York University, John and Golda Cohen Professor of Jewish Philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and a member of the Israel Academy for Sciences and Humanities. He is the coauthor of *The Beginning of Politics: Power in the Biblical Book of Samuel* (2017).

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