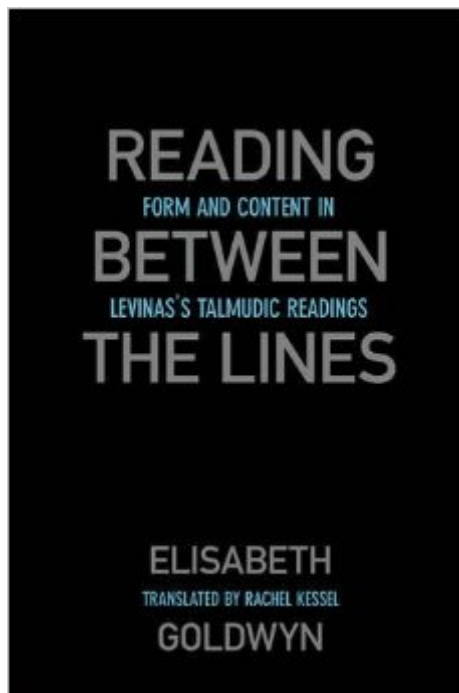


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Reading Between The Lines: Form And Content In Levinas's Talmudic Readings



Synopsis

Originally published in Hebrew, *Reading between the Lines* takes up philosopher Emmanuel Levinas's fascinating contributions to Jewish thought, concentrating specifically on his talmudic readings in the context of "contemporary midrash." Herself a scholar and teacher of the Talmud, Elisabeth Goldwyn finds Levinas's approach to study and interpretation to be both bold and original, and here she seeks to examine the importance of his methodology and its relationship to the content he intends to convey. Among his chief aims, Levinas emphasized the philosophical value of talmudic study as a practice to be pursued, with all its ethical and religious meanings; its role in the shaping and rejuvenation of Judaism in times of crisis; and the Torah's universal appeal and the human values that it teaches. His talmudic commentary proposes a humanistic Judaism that is connected to its roots and immersed in Western culture, albeit from a critical perspective. His is thus an important alternative to the many diverse voices currently being asserted in the Jewish world. This is a new midrash, or exposition and interpretation of the biblical stories, for contemporary society: talmudic study that is connected to life's most urgent questions, offering deeply meaningful answers. Additionally, Levinas's many comments on methodological issues indicate that he was not only consciously aware of the principles guiding his learning, but he also viewed the method to be intimately connected to the content, as an issue itself worthy of careful thought. Likewise, Goldwyn's approach to Levinas's talmudic readings is primarily an interpretation of these lessons by following a similar method to that used by Levinas himself in his discussions. As a result, readers of *Reading between the Lines* will find important and meaningful tools for understanding both the midrashic dimension of Levinas's writings and the spiritual significance that Jewish cultural discourse has in the broader society—in Israel and beyond, and in both religious and secular contexts.

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