

The Birth of the Author Individual vs. Collective Composition in Early Judaism and Rabbinic Literature

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Early Judaism and rabbinic literatures demonstrate continuous tension between collective and individual writing and redaction.

One may look at **Rabbinic literature**: even when the redaction of a particular composition is attributed to a prominent figure, the composition as a whole presents itself as the collective effort of many generations bringing together various schools and movements into one textual fabric, quoting hundreds of names of sages.

Another example is the sectarian literature of **Qumran**; while it is devoid of authors' names, it attributes content or compositions to the Teacher of Righteousness.

Some **Pseudepigraphal books** did claim a single author, but by attributing the writing to a biblical figure, kept the identity of its real author hidden, etc.

The discussion of this tension is, therefore, multifaceted:

- 1) What was the actual place of individuals vs. collective bodies in the writing and composing of various works? What was the nature of collective creativity? Who were the bodies involved in it and how did they function?
- 2) How was the role of author or authors perceived, presented or hinted? How were the works perceived, accepted and presented in terms of this tension?
- 3) What were the various perceptions about the part the individual vs. collective in the writing, redaction and transmission of the Bible, and how these perceptions relate to later modes of textual creativity.

These research questions are also relevant to the **NT and patristic literature**. While our main focus is on rabbinics and early Judaism, we urge contributors to widen the scope of our meeting and enable a comparative discussion.

Possible subjects for discussion are: the various representations of individual author vs. collectives in given works (naming a sage in a composition which is attributed to a single evangelist); the representation of the individual in apocalyptic literature (writing in first person, sharing the authors emotions, etc.); individuals and bodies that are considered as redactors of various works (Rabbi Judah the patriarch, The Great Assembly, etc.), and the attribution of biblical works to individuals (Moshe, David, Solomon, etc.); changes and developments in the place of individual author throughout time, such as the rise of the individual in late Midrashic works such as Pirque De-Rabbi Eliezer and Seder Eliyahu or the changes of its role in Paytanic literary creativity.

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