



# Jews, Idols, and Messiahs: The Challenge from History

*Lionel Kochan*

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## **Jews, Idols, and Messiahs: The Challenge from History** Lionel Kochan

Two themes lie at the heart of Jewish history - the construction of communities where the laws of Judaism define the framework of existence, and, opposing this communal endeavour, the messianic theme, rooted in idolatry. This book analyzes the tension between the two themes, showing how the messianic impulse, prevalent in the Renaissance, involved reliance on "signs of the times" and a confidence in "revelations" which entailed disregard for urgent communal tasks. The author argues that the history of the Jews should be understood in terms of this conflict, comparing the Jewish communities of London and of Berlin in the 17th and 18th centuries. He also supports this account with wide-ranging evidence from Jewish history and thought in medieval and modern Europe.

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