



Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History

David B. Ruderman

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Early Modern Jewry boldly offers a new history of the early modern Jewish experience. From Krakow and Venice to Amsterdam and Smyrna, David Ruderman examines the historical and cultural factors unique to Jewish communities throughout Europe, and how these distinctions played out amidst the rest of society. Looking at how Jewish settlements in the early modern period were linked to one another in fascinating ways, he shows how Jews were communicating with each other and were more aware of their economic, social, and religious connections than ever before.

Ruderman explores five crucial and powerful characteristics uniting Jewish communities: a mobility leading to enhanced contacts between Jews of differing backgrounds, traditions, and languages, as well as between Jews and non-Jews; a heightened sense of communal cohesion throughout all Jewish settlements that revealed the rising power of lay oligarchies; a knowledge explosion brought about by the printing press, the growing interest in Jewish books by Christian readers, an expanded curriculum of Jewish learning, and the entrance of Jewish elites into universities; a crisis of rabbinic authority expressed through active messianism, mystical prophecy, radical enthusiasm, and heresy; and the blurring of religious identities, impacting such groups as conversos, Sabbateans, individual converts to Christianity, and Christian Hebraists.

In describing an early modern Jewish culture, *Early Modern Jewry* reconstructs a distinct epoch in history and provides essential background for understanding the modern Jewish experience.

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