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Divided Souls: Converts from Judaism in Germany, 1500-1750

Elisheva Carlebach

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This pioneering book reevaluates the place of converts from Judaism in the narrative of Jewish history. Long considered beyond the pale of Jewish historiography, converts played a central role in shaping both noxious and positive images of Jews and Judaism for Christian readers. Focusing on German Jews who converted to Christianity in the sixteenth through mid-eighteenth centuries, Elisheva Carlebach explores an extensive and previously unexamined trove of their memoirs and other writings. These fascinating original sources illuminate the Jewish communities that the converts left, the Christian society they entered, and the unabating tensions between the two worlds in early modern German history.

The book begins with the medieval images of converts from Judaism and traces the hurdles to social acceptance that they encountered in Germany through early modern times. Carlebach examines the converts' complicated search for community, a quest that was to characterize much of Jewish modernity, and she concludes with a consideration of the converts' painful legacies to the Jewish experience in German lands.

"Carlebach's reading of autobiographical texts by converts from Judaism is careful, intelligent, and skeptical--a model of how to treat spiritual memoirs."--Todd M. Endelman,
University of Michigan

"This superb book highlights the ambiguous identities of these boundary crossers and their impact on both German and Jewish self-definitions."--Paula E. Hyman, Yale University

Elisheva Carlebach is professor of history at Queens College and the Graduate Center, City University of New York. She is the author of *The Pursuit of Heresy: Rabbi Moses Hagiz and the Sabbatian Controversies*, *winner* of the National Jewish Book Award for Jewish History, and coeditor of *Jewish History and Jewish Memory*.

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