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Chosen Capital

The Jewish Encounter with American Capitalism

Edited by Rebecca Kobrin

DESCRIPTION

At which moments and in which ways did Jews play a central role in the development of American capitalism? Many popular writers address the intersection of Jews and capitalism, but few scholars, perhaps fearing this question's anti-Semitic overtones, have pondered it openly. *Chosen Capital* represents the first historical collection devoted to this question in its analysis of the ways in which Jews in North America shaped and *were shaped* by America's particular system of capitalism. Jews fundamentally molded aspects of the economy during the century when American capital was being redefined by industrialization, war, migration, and the emergence of the United States as a superpower.

Surveying such diverse topics as Jews' participation in the real estate industry, the liquor industry, and the scrap metal industry, as well as Jewish political groups and unions bent on reforming American capital, such as the American Labor Party and the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, contributors to this volume provide a new prism through which to view the Jewish encounter with America. The volume also lays bare how American capitalism reshaped Judaism itself by encouraging the mass manufacturing and distribution of foods like matzah and the transformation of synagogue cantors into recording stars. These essays force us to rethink not only the role Jews played in American economic development but also how capitalism has shaped Jewish life and Judaism over the course of the twentieth century.

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