



Memory, Oblivion, and Jewish Culture in Latin America

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Latin America has been a refuge for Jews fleeing persecution from 1492, when Sephardic Jews were expelled from Spain, until well into the twentieth century, when European Jews sought sanctuary there from the horrors of the Nazi Holocaust. Vibrant Jewish communities have deep roots in countries such as Argentina, Mexico, Guatemala, and Chile—though members of these communities have at times experienced the pain of being "the other," ostracized by Christian society and even tortured by military governments. While commonalities of religion and culture link these communities across time and national boundaries, the Jewish experience in Latin America is irreducible to a single perspective. Only a multitude of voices can express it.

This anthology gathers fifteen essays by historians, creative writers, artists, literary scholars, anthropologists, and social scientists who collectively tell the story of Jewish life in Latin America. Some of the pieces are personal tales of exile and survival; some explore Jewish humor and its role in amalgamating histories of past and present; and others look at serious episodes of political persecution and military dictatorship. As a whole, these challenging essays ask what Jewish identity is in Latin America and how it changes throughout history. They leave us to ponder the tantalizing question: Does being Jewish in the Americas speak to a transitory history or a more permanent one?

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