

There is no Messiah – and you're it, by Rabbi Robert N. Levine, D.D.
Published by Jewish Lights Publishing, 2003.

There are few ideas more powerful in Judaeo-Christian religious thought than that of the Messiah, and few concepts more contentious throughout Jewish history. Rabbi Levine's latest book, published by Jewish Lights Publishing, is an exploration of the range of Jewish traditions that exist about the Messiah and a consummate turning of them upside down.

The thesis which Levine develops, and develops convincingly and powerfully, is that a 'messianic' role rests on each and every one of us, and he defines it as the responsibility to act in such a way as to improve human life and society so as to create the conditions associated with the Messianic age.

In the course of his analysis, Levine considers the famous manifestations of messianic fervour in Jewish history, including Bar Kochba, Shabbetai Zevi and Jacob Frank, and also how the concept has influenced Chasidism, particularly that of Lubavitch. He is honest and realistic about the damage that such hysteria can and has caused, and politely cautionary about the identification of the late Lubavitcher Rebbe by some of his followers as the King Messiah.

This is a book of inspirational content for Jews, but particularly I suspect, for those of a non-Orthodox persuasion. It is a clarion call to social and ethical action that is needed more than ever in a material age, and a reminder that none of us can afford to leave the tasks that need to be done to others to complete.

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