



Jews, God, and Videotape: Religion and Media in America

Jeffrey Shandler

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Engaging media has been an ongoing issue for American Jews, as it has been for other religious communities in the United States, for several generations. **Jews, God, and Videotape** is a pioneering examination of the impact of new communications technologies and media practices on the religious life of American Jewry over the past century. Shandler's examples range from early recordings of cantorial music to Hasidic outreach on the Internet. In between he explores mid-twentieth-century ecumenical radio and television broadcasting, video documentation of life cycle rituals, museum displays and tourist practices as means for engaging the Holocaust as a moral touchstone, and the role of mass-produced material culture in Jews' responses to the American celebration of Christmas.

Shandler argues that the impact of these and other media on American Judaism is varied and extensive: they have challenged the role of clergy and transformed the nature of ritual; facilitated innovations in religious practice and scholarship, as well as efforts to maintain traditional observance and teachings; created venues for outreach, both to enhance relationships with non-Jewish neighbors and to promote greater religiosity among Jews; even redefined the notion of what might constitute a Jewish religious community or spiritual experience. As **Jews, God, and Videotape** demonstrates, American Jews' experiences are emblematic of how religious communities' engagements with new media have become central to defining religiosity in the modern age.

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