



# **Ritual and Ethnic Identity: A Comparative Study of the Social Meaning of Liturgical Ritual in Synagogues**

*Jack N. Lightstone, Frederick B. Bird, Simcha Fishbane, Marc P. Lalonde, Victor Levin, Louise Mayer,  
Madeleine Mcbrearty*

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In this innovative and comprehensive collection of essays Jack Lightstone and Frederick Bird document and interpret ritual practice among contemporary Canadian Jews. They particularly focus on the character and meaning of the public performance of the Sabbath liturgy in six urban Canadian synagogues, ranging from Orthodox to Reform, and from large congregations to a small house synagogue-yeshiva (rabbinic academy). Their examination of synagogue ritual is complemented with accounts of the ritual life of contemporary Canadian Jews outside the synagogue ? amongst their families, within their homes and beyond.

In contrast with other studies of Jewish observance, Lightstone and Bird document not simply which rituals are practised and how often; rather they stress the meaning, including the social meaning, of these rituals and treat them as complex symbolic systems. Their multidisciplinary approach together with their openness to include a wide variety of phenomena in their study (for example, the organization of the physical setting of the Sabbath, dress codes and patterns of greeting and handshaking) place this work at the very forefront of current research.

*Ritual and Ethnic Identity* will be of great value to historians and sociologists of religion, anthropologists and all those concerned with religion, ritual and Canadian Jewish and ethnic studies.

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