



Women As Ritual Experts: The Religious Lives of Elderly Jewish Women in Jerusalem

Susan Starr Sered

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This ethnography explores the religious beliefs and rituals of a group of elderly Jewish women, originally from Kurdistan and Yemen, who now live in Jerusalem. Sered visited the women in their homes and accompanied them on trips to holy tombs, local ethnic synagogues, and Judaica classes. She finds that, though mainly illiterate and excluded from formal religious practices, the women are experts in rituals aimed at safeguarding the well-being of their extended families. By analyzing their rituals, daily experiences, life-stories, and non-verbal gestures, Sered uncovers the strategies these women have used to circumvent the patriarchal institutions of Judaism, and how they have developed their own "little tradition" within and parallel to the "great tradition" of Torah Judaism.

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