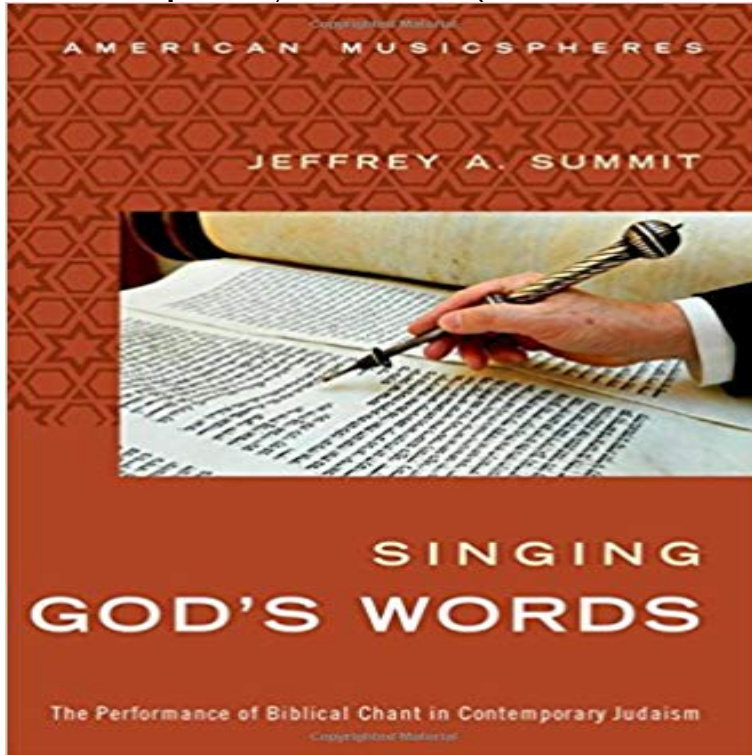


Singing Gods Words: The Performance of Biblical Chant in Contemporary Judaism (American Musicspheres)



Singing Gods Words is the first in-depth study of the experience and meaning of chanting or reading Torah among contemporary American Jews. This experience has been transformed dramatically in recent years by the impact of digital technology, feminism, the empowerment of lay people and a search for self-fulfillment through involvement with community. At a time when worshippers seek deeper spiritual experience, many Jews have found new meaning in the experience of reading Torah, an act that is broadly accessible to Jewish adults even as it requires intensive immersion with the text of the Bible in Hebrew. This book examines why and how growing numbers of American Jews in all denominations see the public chanting of Biblical texts during the synagogue service as one of the most authentic and personal expressions of their religious identity. Drawing on hundreds of interviews with men and women, both professionals and congregants, Jeffrey A. Summit describes how the reading of Torah embodies their understanding of historical religious practice, even as it is shaped by contemporary views of spiritual experience. Through this act, holiness becomes manifest at the intersection of Biblical chant, sacred text, the individual, and the community.

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