

## Inside Next Gen

Steven M. Jacobson OMG! . . . . .	1
Discussion Guide . . . . .	2
Stephen Hazan Arnoff A Jewish Artists Service Corps . . . . .	3
Sarra Alpert Moving Beyond . . . . .	5
Joshua Gross Lacking Seed. . . . .	6
Sarah Tauber ReCreating Jewish Communities . . . . .	8
Koby Oppenheim Service . . . . .	10
Amy 'afo' Fornari Dispersion . . . . .	12
Michael Rosenberg Talmud Torah . . . . .	14
Keith Kahn-Harris Preparing for the Pains of Peace . . . . .	15
David Siff Rediscovering Jewish Practice . . . . .	16
Tony Michels Plotting a Future Course. . . . .	17
Etgar Keret Lies and other Strange Fruits . . . . .	19
Svetlana Lantsman Choosing Jewish. . . . .	20
Ruth Andrew Ellenson Guilt and the Divided Soul. . . . .	21
Michal Lemberger Book Review . . . . .	24
Jonathan Glass NiSh'ma. . . . .	26
Leonard Gordon Sh'ma Ethics. . . . .	28

**To subscribe:**  
877-568-SHMA  
www.shma.com

THIS PAST YEAR, *Sh'ma*, along with the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life and Culture, sponsored an essay contest to spark a communal discussion on the future of North American Jewish life. The contest was designed to foreground the creative, inspiring, thoughtful, and imaginative ideas of a Jewish generation — young people roughly in their twenties and thirties — that has not yet been fully heard. This double issue of *Sh'ma* includes the nine winning essays, which reflect new opportunities to engage next-gen Jews in Jewish life. Introducing the issue is Steven Jacobson's essay suggesting that we listen carefully to these new and insightful voices. Details about the contest and the winners are found on page 22.

*Sh'ma* deeply appreciates the generous support of the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life and Culture, which sponsored the essay contest and this issue of the journal.

## OMG! How Generation Y Can Help Redefine American Judaism

Steven M. Jacobson

"IT IS THE PURSUIT of happiness that thwarts happiness."

So wrote Victor Frankel in *Man's Search for Meaning*. To paraphrase Frankel, I regretfully predict the following: efforts to ensure Jewish continuity will thwart Jewish continuity.

"OMG! How Generation Y is Redefining Faith in the iPod Era," Anna Greenberg's illuminating report on issues of faith among Generation Y, reveals increasingly evident insights about the disillusionment of young American Jews with the dominant institutions of American Jewry. In recent years, an increasingly vocal cadre of communal critics has identified the multiple variables that continue to enlarge the chasm between our postmodern children and the thoroughly modern institutions that seek to serve them. Greenberg's report adds to this chorus.

Among the contributions of Greenberg's report is its confirmation that young Jews possess fully integrated identities as Americans and as Jews. Not surprisingly, Greenberg's report illustrates that young Jews largely reflect the values and influences of mainstream American culture. Like their peers, they are intensely pluralistic. Reared in a radically different milieu than their parents, most young American Jews eschew many of the very tenets of modern American Jewry — particularly the centrality and, dare I say, the superiority of Jewishness. They are products of a society in which the combination of consumer culture, unbridled individualism, and technology have enabled multiple identities to coexist fluidly in a single individual. This multiplicity is celebrated and has resulted in an unparalleled embrace of diversity, though most conventional American Jewish institutions do not share in that embrace.

Rather than focus on how Jews and Judaism might define our purposes and our contributions in the 21st century, too many of our institutions remain locked in a battle that has long been decided and thus squander vast resources on lavish efforts to turn inevitable tides. The communal obsession with intermarriage and continuity has prevented the community from engaging in a process of discourse and discovery that could define postmodern Judaism, that could draw upon our resources and our vast collective memory to inform how we might manage our fully integrated identities, and that could empower young people to take their place in the future of American Jewry.