

## Looking Toward the Future: From the Editor of *Sh'ma*

Last year, *Sh'ma* nearly died. With this issue, it is revived with added strength and with a clear mission that builds on the best of our past.

Few if any of you will have seen evidence of our travails in these pages. We continued each month, as we have for 37 years, to provide you with some of the most hard-hitting, provocative reflections available anywhere on contemporary Jewish life and belief and learning. To address a serious financial challenge (which occurred because of fiscal constraints at Jewish Family & Life, the publisher of *Sh'ma*) we stitched together a coalition of partners who will help take *Sh'ma* into its next, hopefully no less vibrant, stage.

Our new funding partnership mirrors the fundamental commitment of the journal to pluralism and thoughtful, deep engagement with ideas; our pages will continue to air a spectrum of religious, political, and cultural perspectives and draw from the experiences of our rabbis, scholars, philanthropists, spiritual seekers and wanderers, activists, students, educators, and lay and professional leaders.



*Sh'ma* was created by theologian Eugene Borowitz in the midst of the political and cultural convulsions of the early 1970s. It evolved over time, but never lost its fierce commitment to a belief that criticism of what we love is not merely advisable but essential, a belief in the unassailable power of ideas presented in a minimalist framework, a sense of wonder at the richness, the sometimes difficult, confounding complexity, the splendor of Judaism at its best. Nothing with regard to these central features

of *Sh'ma* will change. They remain as pressing, as achingly relevant now as when Rabbi Borowitz first edited these pages at his kitchen table — sometimes I am sadly reminded that they are now more relevant than ever as I sit at my own table writing and editing *Sh'ma*.

What will shift somewhat is a more focused attention on Jewish learning and leadership. Building on what it has been in the past, *Sh'ma* will now examine creatively, and vigorously, the widest range of ways in which Jews study and experience their culture and religion; it will help create and deepen a rich and fertile intellectual and spiritual communication between the range of people who are preoccupied with deepening our sense of Jewish learning — that is, exploring what it means to live fully a Jewish life in various settings, formal and informal, across the Jewish world.

Our new partnership includes rabbinical seminaries, university Jewish Studies programs, and communal philanthropists. Each of our twelve new partners is contributing financially as well as intellectually (in the form of a reconstituted Advisory Board of distinguished thinkers, writers, and scholars) to the journal. Purposefully, I sought out discreet communities — institutions and individuals — that ought to formally converse with one another to form this coalition. The lines connecting the seminary, the academy, and broader communal institutions are complicated, and it will be one of the central goals of *Sh'ma* to explore and examine just these murky, difficult lines through engagement and conversation. Through this new collaboration, we will remain committed to intellectual independence and the indispensability of debate about how Jewish life remains endlessly fascinating — that nothing important should be hidden from view, too sacred, too tough, too sensitive for scrutiny.

I hope you will join me each month as *Sh'ma* addresses a topic and our rather unadorned pages raise and explore questions that reflect the deepest of Jewish concerns through essays, art, interviews, round-table exchanges, and reviews — conversations and commentary.

— Susan Berrin, Editor