

[PDF] Generation J

Lisa Schiffman - pdf download free book



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Description:

Generation J is a beautifully written, constantly courageous, hip, wise memoir by a young woman determined to figure out what it means to be Jewish. Lisa Schiffman, who grew up in the mostly Christian community of Levittown, New Jersey, writes of her own alienated adolescence: "We were a generation of Jews who'd grown up on television, with Barbie, with rhinoplasty as a way of life. Assimilation wasn't something we strove for; it was the condition into which we were born." Feeling unmoored in early adulthood, Schiffman begins a search for the essence of the Jewish identity she feels exiled from. She undertakes experiments such as eating nonkosher food every day for a week, and gently confronting her parents' ignorance of their own religion. Oddly, her greatest religious epiphany comes from the experience of getting a henna tattoo--a vine across her torso, with the Star

of David at the end. The tattoo sets off what she calls, elsewhere in the book, "a big think-through": "There is the vine. There is me. There's Judaism, the religion of paradox and reconciliation. I'll learn from it what I can. I'll sort out my own conflicted truths. I refuse to reject myself--any part. I no longer choose to exile." --*Michael Joseph Gross* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Publishers Weekly Although positioned as emblematic of a generation of searching, post-Holocaust Jews, this memoir is actually the more specific story of a once engaging and exasperating 30-something Jewish woman attempting to reconsider her assimilation. A former editor at the San Francisco Review of Books, Schiffman presents a spiritual journey that has a Northern Californian cast: she attends a workshop on Judaism and psychology, talks with Rodger Kamenetz (author of *The Jew in the Lotus*), and interviews Rabbi Lew, who headed the Berkeley Zen center before returning to conservative Judaism. Having been raised in near-complete ignorance of her religion, Schiffman speculates about how Judaism might benefit from a new "brand" identity and voices amazement at the plethora of kosher supermarket products. On the other hand, she knows enough about anthropology to conclude that she should look outside that discipline for insights, since its major theorists dismiss the spiritual. Ultimately, Schiffman finds a congenial rabbi who validates her piecemeal approach to Judaism, and she decides to start reading the Torah with a friend. It's unfortunate that Schiffman seems to have operated in a vacuum, oblivious to similar quests that regularly appear in the Jewish press. When she ends her book by getting a temporary Star of David tattoo, it's not surprising that she doesn't cite the biblical prohibition against indelible tattoos nor the post-concentration camp implication of tattooing. (Sept.)
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