

November 2017 Message from President Howie Hirsch

I finally got a chance to take some time off from work and temple this past month. Iris and I were able to travel to the Galapagos Islands off the coast of Ecuador. I will not use this column to tell you of our trip; you may ask that personally anytime you want. What I do want to talk about is the experience of disconnecting from our modern world.

For the first time in at least 5 years, I was disconnected. I could not communicate with work and I could not communicate with temple. I could not communicate with family and I could not even follow the Yankees during their playoff series against both Cleveland and Houston. In this day and age, to not know what others are doing or being able to communicate with them can at first be a frightening thought. You don't know if you missed out on something crucial, like someone in your family being gravely ill or dying. Other than that, you come to realize that while all the social media, e-mails and interactions that you have are truly important, it is not more important than being in the moment with the people that you are with. When you do not have the ability to look into a screen, and you must deal with the people who are in front of you, it can be both scary and wonderful.

For my generation, we did not grow up with all this communication, but over the years, we have certainly come to rely on it. I found it liberating to be disconnected. For all my friends, I suggest trying this one day a week, maybe on Shabbat would be a good idea. If that is too scary for you, try once a month. [Rabbi Lewis](#) gave me a present a while back. It was a small bag that you could put your cell phone in during Shabbat. The idea was that you need to disconnect from the modern world for a while and focus on what you are doing. You do not need to document every interaction that you have in the world. Take the time to experience life without wondering what else is going on.

I have been told that there is a new phobia called FOMO, or Fear of Missing Out. The idea being that whatever you are doing, someone, somewhere else in the world is doing something better. Focus on who you are with and what you are doing and I think you will find our life to be richer and more fulfilled. I know for me, I came back to my real life with new perspectives on being in the moment.

My love to all of you,

Love, Howie