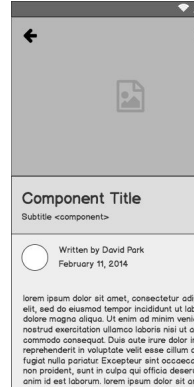


Is there a blessing for the smartphone?

Designing our Jewish Experience of the Future



Acknowledging the Smartphone and
Computer Technology, as Humankind's
God given creativity, innovation and
transformation, is a requirement of
designing the Jewish Experience of the
Future

Three who ate - David Frishman

“Three Who Ate”

the Rabbi of a synagogue in a town in which a plague has spread insists that his congregation eat on Yom Kippur in order to maintain their strength and not fall victim to the plague. The Rabbi eats in front of the congregation, in violation of Jewish ritual practice, in order to demonstrate to his congregation the importance of their breaking ritual law in order to save their own lives.

A story

There is a story about a man who was warned about the coming of a storm that threatened to flood his home and neighborhood. He responded, “God will protect me.”

When the storm came and his neighbors urged him to leave his house and go with them, he responded, “God will protect me.”

When he climbed onto his roof escaping the rising waters, rescuers came by in a boat, he refused to go with them, “God will protect me.”

When he drowned and went to meet his maker, he complained to God that he was not protected. God responded, “you did not pay attention to my messages! I sent messengers to save you!”

AIT LA-ASOT

The text reads, “Ait La-asot haifayrot ha torah” when it was time to do (mitzvot) they overthrew the torah.

The interpretation:”In an emergency situation, it maybe necessary to disregard Torah, and act.”

Challenge One - Technology as Klai Kodesh

The Golem is a legend about an artificial man who was created to protect our people from danger. On its forehead was the hebrew word EMET truth. When the Golem ran amok “as a human”, the first letter was erased, leaving the word MET death, and the Golem was destroyed.

The first computer at the Hebrew University was named Golem.

McLuhan popularized the expression “we shaped our tools and our tools have shaped us”

How do we use technology for the HOLY and not become Golem like?



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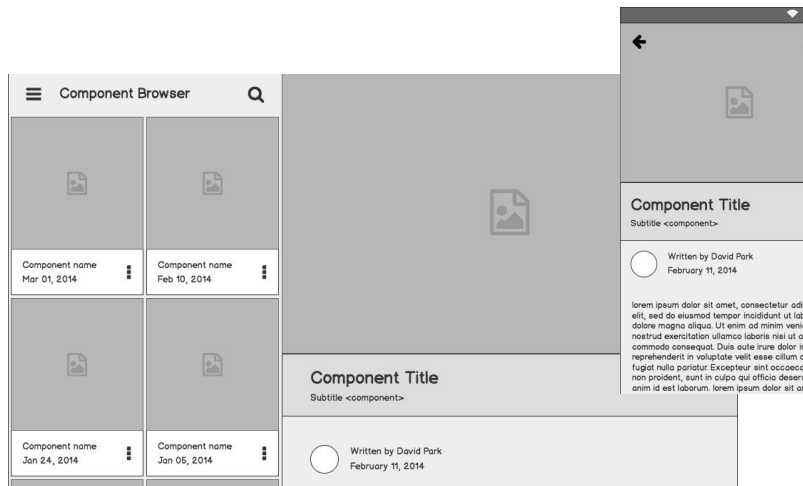
In our Covid era, technology has enabled on-line services, and fostered calls for social justice. Is this technology part of God's creation?

A blessing for the smartphone and associated digital technology would be a step in making Judaism more relevant!

What would that blessing be?

Perhaps, "who has given to us to create, to innovate and to transform"

<https://judaism.stackexchange.com/questions/108332/what-makes-a-smart-phone-kosher>



Internet Technology and Angels

In the biblical book Ezekiel, we learn about three classes of angels: Sepharim inhabiting the World of Mind, Hayot in the World of Emotions, and Ofanim in the World of Action. Each one of the Sepharim is a distinct unit of mind, each of the Hayot is a distinct unit of an emotion, and each of the Ofanim is a distinct action. Sepharim and Hayot are like invisible bits and bytes in the cybersphere Cloud that transmit their messages to Ofanim, which render them visible on your smartphone screen or computer monitor. Like data packets transporting information through cyberspace, the task of angels is to maintain communications between the Worlds of Mind, Emotions, and Action.

Alexenberg, Melvin L. . Through A Bible Lens (p. 50). Elm Hill. Kindle Edition.

Challenge Two: Dealing with COVID PTSD

Whether or not we or someone we know has contracted the virus and died, our lives and our certainties have changed.

Consciously or unconsciously, we are suffering from Post Traumatic Stress: Think about the losses we have incurred:

1. Loss of a sense of well being and safety
2. Loss of human contact
3. Loss of nourishing travel opportunity
4. Loss of intimacy with our synagogues
5. Loss of certainty for adventure planning
6. Loss of a sense of timing - "what's a weekend?"

Future Shock: Observing the amount of and rate of change in the America of the 1960's, Alvin Toffler coined the term "Future Shock" to describe the impact of such rapid change on our human psyche and physical health.

Toffler's "future shock" concept may be approached from two perspectives. Firstly, recent studies conducted point to the likelihood of sickness following an individual's undergoing a great deal of stress due to changes in one's life. It is now "possible to show in dramatic form that the rate of change in a person's life - his pace of life - is closely tied to the state of his health."

Coping Strategies

COVID Coach

Some symptoms: <https://www.ptsd.va.gov/index.asp>

- You may have a hard time sleeping.
- You may have trouble concentrating.
- You may avoid crowds, because they feel dangerous
- You may think the world is completely dangerous, and no one can be trusted.
- Avoidance is a common reaction to trauma..But when avoidance is extreme, or when it's the main way you cope, it can interfere with your emotional recovery and healing.

Some coping strategies

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/ptsd-and-covid-19#tips>

- Staying Connected
- Using Techniques to stay calm
- Focusing on a sense of control
- Staying Hopeful: maintaining a long-term perspective and looking to the future
- being patient and kind to themselves
- celebrating any successes
- taking breaks and doing enjoyable activities

Alvin Toffler suggests eight means of countering the effects of future shock:

- (1) Direct coping
- (2) Personal stability zones
- (3) Situational groupings
- (4) Crisis counseling
- (5) Halfway houses
- (6) Enclaves of the past
- (7) Enclaves of the future
- (8) Global space pageants

Challenge Three - Designing Our Jewish Experience of the Future

"It is not the past that is taken as holy; the past is nonexistent, living on as relics and in the human imagination...It is the future that is holy."

: "Out of fear and inadequacy, the present glorifies itself; the past is re-interpreted to make today the culmination of history and the fulfillment of ancient promise...the present declares itself holy, and the past, created in its own image, sacrosanct.

"To see the future as holy, therefore, is to understand its divine sanction and inevitability. It means, at the very least, to be open to its image, to listen to its whispers, to heed its plea for life. Beyond this, the holy attitude toward life calls us to action, to communication and dialogue with its onrushing possibilities

"Judaism is...the prototype of religions that simultaneously undergird continuity and change: thus when historical processes were relatively repetitive, Judaism affirmed its commitment to tradition and an immutable revelation: when they churned with novelty, Judaism fashioned new forms: when they threatened the traditional notions of God, Judaism discovered that the last word about God had not been communicated to Moses or the prophets." Ellis Rivkin

Judaism and Future Shock a la Alvin Toffler

Direct coping

Moving from unconscious adaptation to conscious awareness of the degree of stimulation and stress we are experiencing. "We can...introvert periodically to examine our own bodily and psychological reactions to change, briefly tuning out the external environment to evaluate our inner environment."

This direct coping method is what Fritz Peris calls developing a sense of response-ability, the ability to respond to ourselves and our environment. Both the suggestion of the method of direct coping through bodily awareness and the sense of "response-ability" are reflections of the wisdom of the human body to heal itself.

The Morning Blessings for body awareness

Personal stability zones

Our homes should be made comfortable, with music, wifi, televisions and other entertainment sources. Many are learning to expand their cooking skills and menu choices. Of course on-line shopping, take-out or home delivery help.

The synagogue could serve as an extension of personal stability zones through on-line services, classes. Technology could be used to develop an on-line "temperature taking" of members filling out weekly surveys of their physical and emotional health that could be used to aggregate a congregational profile for the rabbi and educational staff to use to create sermons, readings and other means of reaching out to members.

Judaism and Future Shock a la Alvin Toffler

Situational groupings

The thinking of Dr. Herbert Gerjuoy, whose coinage "situational grouping" has real possibilities for the synagogue: "By bringing together people who are sharing, or are about to share, a common adaptive experience, "he argues, "we can help equip them to cope with it.

"A man required to adapt to a new life situation loses some of his bases for self-esteem. He begins to doubt his own abilities; If we bring him together with others who are moving through the same experience, people he can identify with and respect, we can strengthen him. The members of the group come to share, even if briefly, some sense of identity. They see their problems more objectively: they trade useful ideas and insights: most important, they suggest future alternatives for one another."

Crisis counseling

Toffler writes of crisis being any significant transition

Rabbi Harold Schulweis:

"The synagogue could become the most important therapeutic institution imaginable. But that requires a very radical change in the understanding of what is in the proper ken of the synagogue. Instead of saying that the synagogue is the place in which we pursue the ritual celebrations of one's life, rites of passage, festivals, fasts, study and social action; if we can say that there are problems that we have not been attending to, such as existential aloneness...and if we can come to understand that it is the synagogue's function to deal with these new kinds of psychological problems, then loneliness and the rest can be, oddly enough, an opportunity."

Judaism and Future Shock a la Alvin Toffler

Halfway houses

"wherever a change of status is contemplated, the possibility of gradualizing it should be considered."
Adaptive programming would be geared to:

To facilitate human growth among the adult members of the synagogue through the use of Jewish historical metaphor, symbols, and literature.

To provide participants with an awareness of traditional sources and the tools with which to approach the wealth of the Jewish historical experience.

To create authentic Jewish community based on trust, openness, and a shared desire toward further human growth within the synagogue.

Enclaves of the past

The purpose of such enclaves of the past is to allow the individual to step outside the overstimulating reality environment. This use of history is fantasy at its best, the creative and positive use of our imaginative capabilities. We step into Shabbat as a positive fantasy experience, as a retreat from weekday reality; why not take such steps into other Jewish realms.

We need to expand our synagogue's role as enclave of the past, by using our imagination to allow the physical environments to also be teaching devices. We could learn much from museums which recreate historical environments, giving us the experience of being and feeling what earlier individuals must have felt in such spaces. Films and pictures are reaching devices we are ready to use, but we must think in terms of total environment

Judaism and Future Shock a la Alvin Toffler

Enclaves of the future

"We must also make it possible for individuals to experience aspects of their future in advance...we shall also have to create enclaves of the future."

The pre-adapting individual will be able not merely to see and hear, but to touch, taste and smell the environment he is about to enter. He will be able to interact vicariously with the people in his future, and to undergo carefully contrived experiences designed to improve his coping abilities. "

The synagogue as enclave of the future utilizes technology as an adjunct to its functioning as an enclave of the past. The use of film, slides, recorded contemporary music is a message conveying to the congregants a sense of contemporary and future Jewishness. Judaism can take technology and make it holy just as it took the animal skin and wrote the Torah on it - a transformation of the secular technology of the ancient Israelites.

Global space pageants

In grandiose terms, Toffler speaks of global space pageants, but fundamentally, he tells of the positive purposeful use of ritual. "Repetitive behavior, whatever else its functions, helps give meaning to non-repetitive events, by providing the backdrop against which novelty is silhouetted. "He writes of ritual as a change-buffer, sharing with his reader the anthropologists' leaning that ceremonies "helped individuals to re-establish equilibrium after some major adaptive event had taken place ."

Here Toffler brings us back to essential function of the synagogue, that of being the sanctuary of Israel in which we celebrate the meaningful ritual of our lives. The Jewish calendar keeps us in tune with the time clock of the universe, even as our observance of Jewish life cycle events brings us into deeper awareness and appreciation of our own lives,

Our Jewish Experience of the Future is Ethnotherapy for the COVID19 Era.

Jewish history has shown that we are a problem-solving people.

Ethnotherapy is the proactive structuring of Jewish traditional teachings as self-discovery experiences leading toward spiritual well-being and on-going personal creativity.

The goal of the Jewish community must be the individual who "recognizes that Judaism has been the manifold expression of human beings struggling and wrestling with their human problems, and he therefore can enter into the thoughts and feelings of each historical moment and come forth enriched." (Ellis Rivkin)

We must create Jewish Experience that addresses the emotional and spiritual needs of our COVID19 and post COVID19 community.

One first step is to reimagine the Kaddish as a prayer for our losses and an affirmation that there is a future in which we can be self-actualizing and spiritually whole.