



Temple Rodef Shalom
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Yom Kippur 5777/2016
Disconnected

As a society, and as families, we are forgetting how to talk meaningfully with one another. This morning I'd like to address a problem that affects us all one way or another – the need to put our phones and devices down. Check this out:

Get Off the Phone – Rhett and Link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nfUD0WhE264>

We find it nearly impossible to put our phones down. They've become an extension of who we are. Over the past decade, people have become more and more connected to their electronic devices. I don't want to discount the fact that the time and convenience benefits of our devices are numerous. Tasks take less time, and people who are far away feel closer than ever. Our devices are, and always will be a part of our lives.

But the social implications are slowly revealing themselves. When we're on our devices, we signal busyness and unapproachability to both strangers and family members. Our attention is not on who we are with or where we are. Perhaps you've seen the photo exhibit by photographer Eric Pickersgill called "Removed". Eric captures this idea by removing the phones from the photos and showing how they disconnect us from one another.

SHOW 5 PICS

5 sec ea



We experience this in real life – just look around. My daughter Jennifer and I recently went on a trip to NYC and visited the Museum of Modern Art. There was a large common area and we both were struck by the fact that no one was talking to one other and every single person there had a phone out. Check this out:

Photo from MOMA



We need to find more balance in life between time on our devices and time with our relationships. Rapper and spoken word artist Richard Williams, better known as Prince Ea captures that need for balance in this piece:



*It's no wonder in a world filled I-Pads, I-Macs, I-phones, so many I's,
So many selfies, not enough us' and we's, see
Technology has made us more selfish and separate than ever.
'Cause while it claims to connect us, connection has gotten no better.
Facebook should be reclassified to what it is – an anti-social network.*

*Cause while we may have big friend lists, so many are friend-less,
All alone because friendships are more broken
than the screens on our very phones.*

*We sit at home on our computers, measuring self-worth
By numbers of followers and likes.
Ignoring those who actually love us
It seems we'd rather write an angry post
than talk to someone who might actually hug us.*

*I asked a friend the other day if we might meet up face to face
He said "alright, what time do you wanna Skype?"
I responded with OMG, SRS [serious], and then a bunch of SMH's [shaking my head]
And realized, "what about me?"*

*Do I not have the patience to have conversation without abbreviation?
This is the generation of media overstimulation:
Chat's have been reduced to Snaps, the news is 140 characters*

*Videos 6 seconds at high speed, and you wonder why ADD is on the rise
Faster than 4G LTE.*

*You do have a choice, but this one my friends we cannot autocorrect.
We must do it ourselves. Take control or be controlled.
Me, no longer do I want to spoil a precious moment by recording it with a phone
I'm just gonna keep them.
I'm not going to take a picture of meals any more
I'm just gonna eat them.*

*I'm so tired of performing in a pageantry of vanity,
And conforming to this accepted form of digital insanity.
(pause) Call me crazy but,
I imagine a world where we smile when we have low batteries...
'Cause that'll mean we'll be one bar closer
To humanity.*

Title Slide - Disconnected

A couple generations ago, family conversations were much deeper than they are now. In her book “Reclaiming Conversation”, author Sherry Turkel explains that even though we tend to idealize family conversations of the past, there were stories about relatives that you didn’t even know you had; there were actual conversations around the dinner table about our personal challenges... We learned empathy through these deeper conversations.

On the flip side, Turkel shares some contemporary observations from teens: Colin, a college junior confesses “In our family we have our disagreements in Gchat conversations. It makes things smoother. What would be the value in disagreeing with each other face-to-face?”

Or 15 year old Chelsea who relates, “The other night I went out to dinner with my dad. And we were just having this conversation and I didn’t know the answer to something, like the director of a movie we had seen. And he automatically wanted to look it up on his phone. And I was like, ‘Daddy, stop Googling. I want to talk to you. I don’t care what the right answer is! I just want to talk to you.’”

Turkle points out that in contemporary society, there is a noticeable decline in actual conversation – between friends, between lovers, in classrooms and in places of work. Going to technology starts to feel easier, if not better, than going to each other. We are losing the skills that make conversations possible — the ability to focus deeply, think things through, read

emotions, and empathize with others. Genuine human interaction is becoming a casualty of the information age.

Let us define the ethics of our technology use. We need to find time to step away from our devices – at the dinner table, at certain times of day or in certain spaces in our homes. Consider the possibility of creating “no phone zones” or sacred-spaces, or having “device free dinners”.

And so, on this Yom Kippur Day, let us remember that our relationships are the most precious things in our lives. The human needs that bind us must be met face to face and heart to heart. And let us grow our capacity for empathy, connection and love.

Kein y’hi ratzon

May this be God’s will.