

FROM THE EDITOR

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Our teens are growing up in a world unlike anything previously witnessed. Authorities struggle to find a name for this generation, suggesting things like 'the selfie generation' and 'the social media generation', but more accurate monikers might be 'the passive generation' or 'the consumer generation'. For years, parents have been cautioned about turning their television sets into 'babysitters' and the harm that would be done to children's brains as a result of hour after hour of mindless passivity. Nowadays, with every form of entertainment imaginable instantly available at the touch of a finger, people are increasingly cutting the cords to their televisions. Who needs such a limited, single-function device when the 'babysitter' is now wireless, completely portable and pocket-sized, and able to go anywhere and do everything? The problem is that these 'babysitters' work a little too well, as even parents have a hard time being without the constant stimulus they provide, leaving them within arm's reach at the dinner table and even showing them preference in the presence of real, live human beings. This has actually garnered a name: 'phubbing' – short for 'phone snubbing' (which is being considered for inclusion in the next Oxford English Dictionary)!

The changes that have come to society with this silent, passive, spiritually-destructive revolution are palpable. Sit back, tune in, and turn off. Do as little work as possible and retire from that work as early as possible; minimise effort, maximise gain. Seek fame (or, to be more precise, infamy, since people are now famous for having done nothing other than having succeeded in gaining the world's attention, after which they desperately try to hang on to that attention at any cost in the hope of achieving the ultimate sign of success: one's very own reality show), fortune, physical pleasure and physical beauty. Flaunt whatever you've got so you can achieve the coveted status of being deemed desirable and envied, of having your words, pictures and videos go 'viral', consumed and shared around the world by complete strangers. Everyone must now brand and market himself. Look how talented I am! Look how beautiful I am! Look how smart I am! Look at how successful I am! Look at how much fun I'm having! Look at what I ate for breakfast! #dontyouwishyouwereme #arentiawesome

The irony is that, in an age of instantaneous and constant communication, there's so little that's actually worth talking about.

It's a world that stands entirely at odds with the timeless values of the Torah. Is it any wonder that activities like shul attendance and participation are in an alarming decline across all age groups, especially our youth? Is there a Jewish parent out there who doesn't worry about his child's future generally, and, in particular, about whether he'll choose to live an authentically Jewish life?

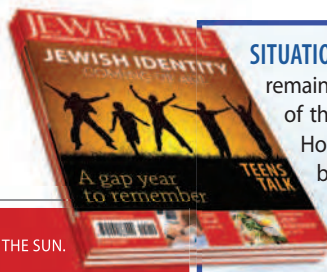
Previous generations worried that idealistic young minds would be drawn, G-d forbid, to less meaningful pursuits than Torah study; that they would become great nonetheless, but in alternative areas of study or through misguided devotion to various competing ideologies. The worry now is not so much about achieving greatness in a foreign field, but about floundering in mediocrity, utterly squandering potential in the mindless pursuit of meaningless drivel: the perfect selfie, the high score on Candy Crush, and other such nonsense.

Our Sages are clear: our heritage can be neither acquired nor maintained passively. What can we do to wake up our children to the fact that they are part of an unbroken chain stretching all the way back to Sinai; that, like it or not, they bear a tremendous responsibility on their shoulders: literally carrying within them the future of our people. Thousands of years of hopes and prayers have been invested in them. They stand at the front of a long line of people, and everyone behind them in that line now looks to them to add onto that line, to not let it end, G-d forbid, with them. The time is quickly approaching when it will be our children's turn to pass on this precious inheritance to the next generation. Will they be ready? Or will they be too busy looking at pictures of what their friend's sister's cousin's dog ate for breakfast to even take notice?

To Martyn and the entire staff of JL – mazel tov on celebrating eight great years. And mazel tov also to our features writer, Chandra Serebro, and her family on the birth of a baby boy.

ROBERT SUSSMAN, EDITOR

ON THE COVER:
THE BOUNDLESS ENERGY OF YOUTH CAPTURED AGAINST THE SETTING OF THE SUN.
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SITUATION IN ISRAEL Current events in Israel show that the world remains entirely irrational in its attitude towards and treatment of the Jewish people. In the relatively short time since the Holocaust, there have been no gains in the value of Jewish blood, which continues to be spilled without regard and little notice, and with the blame inconceivably placed on those from whom that blood spills. Our thoughts and prayers remain steadfastly focused on our brothers in Israel. May Hashem watch over His beloved people, protect us from harm, and speedily deliver us from the hands of our oppressors.