



A Real Message

Harav Y. Reuven Rubin Shlita

Josh is successful, seriously so. He is a well-connected attorney who is in great demand. His partnership thinks him so valuable that they can't let him be out of touch for even a minute. In today's technological wonderland, this is no problem; the phone in his pocket not only keeps him on a tether, but the boss can track him down wherever he may be.

This just shows you how vital a cog in the machinery of commerce our friend is. There is no place he can hide; at all times, day or night, his little device bleeps forth new messages, making his life seem ransomed to others.

Baruch Hashem, Josh has a clear view of what is really important. He is a ben Torah and knows that when it comes to his Daf Yomi shiur or the zman tefilah, the machine is turned off and put decidedly away (well, almost always).

Last week, our hero took a day off to spend some quality time with his grandson. The boy was home from yeshiva and Josh wanted to be with him for one whole day. Of course, raising today's children doesn't allow for turning off one's phone; after all, business is business, but at least he and his future "Chofetz Chaim" could be together for some time. After a day of going to a shiur, then shopping for needed clothing (it seems young future Gedolei Torah grow exceedingly fast and need an abundance of hats), the boy and his Zeidy went out to a hiemisha take-out emporium to buy a huge dinner for the entire family.

Now remember, Josh had his phone in his pocket, and all day it had been sending forth a myriad of directions that our man had responded to as he strode along with his grandson. Truth be told, he seems to be constantly preoccupied since his company gave him this new "smart" device. He is always listening with one ear, while staring down at the phone screen. Seems he can't talk for ten minutes without clicking away on the device's mini-keys at the same time.

So there he was, standing in the takeout restaurant, when he met a close friend from his yeshiva days. They fell into a friendly conversation and Josh told his einikel to make the order. As he chatted, his phone came alive (does it ever sleep?) and he scanned the screen: "Buy me a steak kebab with mushroom salad" was the



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terse message. He told his grandchild of the missive and continued his discussion. The machine went off again: "Where are the kebabs?" Now Josh is a patient soul and was taken aback by this seemingly strident tone, yet he shrugged it off and added to the growing order.

This little event went unmentioned till a few days later. Josh met his close friend Reuven, who asked if he had enjoyed his supper a few nights earlier. He looked at Reuven curiously. "How did you know?" he asked. "You were talking to Chaim at the restaurant. I had been chatting on the phone with him when he saw you, and - well, I was the one who was sending you those orders over your phone text."

Of course, Josh immediately saw the humour in all this. He had thought those orders were coming from his home and instead they were from a well-meaning pal who was having some fun with him. Obviously, his family was even more delighted, as they benefited from a bonanza supper that was fit for a family twice the size.

All this activated my creative side. As a writer I am always awaiting inspirational insights from the everyday, and here I was being served one on a platter.

We all get messages, yet are we aware of who sends them or what they are about? I mean far beyond the take-out store. I mean the realm of the soul, that most fragile of places. Hashem sends us experiences that are meant to teach us and show us where we should be going, but we need guidance in understanding them. A Torah Jew must always seek to be simple in his approach to all things holy. We often think that we can be sophisticated and philosophical, allowing ourselves to twist the Torah message to suit our own ego driven view. The simple approach is to ask what the Torah wants from us, and through the guidance of our Gedolei Hatorah follow that path.

We are out there in this world of swirling messages and mixed obligations. How do we get through the mire? We develop a loving connection with Hashem, which can be the beginning of true understanding. This is what our holy Gedolim can show us: they are truly reliable messengers.

Let me share something I personally saw from just such a giant.

The Bobover Rebbe, Rav Naftali, Zt"l, was a Gadol in Torah and in living its message simply. He had no ambition other than to create Kiddush Hashem in this world and in his every word; his every action, there was a sefer full of living mussar. I was blessed to be in his holy presence for many years as a young student and soaked up his gentle teachings through the force of his sweet manner.

He never needed to speak; his was a life lived by holy example. Want to learn about Shabbos preparations? Watch as the future Rebbe of thousands helps set his Shabbos table, humming a Shabbos tune. Asking for the right way to observe the practice of true humility? See the tzadik as he lives his life, hiding all signs of his specialness.

The Rebbe's every word was spoken with a caring smile, and when he was faced with another's pain, you could see that he was carrying the same pain. All this occurred without any fanfare. It just happened, naturally and without force or coercion. This slight-figured soul carried enormous pain with every step, yet he gave the sense of calm joy to others.

There were times when I was faced with difficulties, and I would visit him under some pretence and feel the weight of my problems being lifted just by the tone of his voice. My son once asked me why I didn't tell the future Rebbe what my problem was. I really didn't have an answer till recently. It came to me as such insights often do, without any indication, simply sliding into my heart ... I never told him because just seeing him resolved the turmoil that was in my mind.

This is what Hashem's messengers do; they give light and instruction without even needing to speak. So leave all the electronic trinkets at home, tune in to wisdom's teachers, and savour the taste of what's truly real.

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