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w: Space Age and Stone Age h rities

As a child of the '70s and '80s, I loved watching and rewatching episodes of “The Flintstones” and “The Jetsons.” These early 1960s cartoon sitcoms from Hanna-Barbera were bright, colorful and full of family and societal drama. They presented a vision of both the distant past and the faraway future that was hopeful and accessible. In short, they made me happy.

Lately, though, I have been feeling more and more like I am trapped inside an episode of “The Flintstones,” with my kids trapped in an episode of “The Jetsons.”

A recent conversation between us might help explain:

“Tell me again, how exactly did you take pictures when you were growing up?” they collectively asked.

I started describing how we had a camera with film, took pictures that we couldn’t see in advance, had to wait a while to get it developed, before being interrupted by my teenage daughter.

“Wait, a minute, but how did you share pics with your friends?” she asked.



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“I don’t know ... maybe we mailed them?” I said, shrugging my shoulders. To which, I could see my daughter in the seat beside me, rolling her eyes. Back in the “olden days,” as my middle child calls anything prior to his birth, we had pay phones, color televisions and record players – exactly the same sort of technologies my parents had when they were growing up.

Not so much with my kids, who have grown up with things we could hardly even imagine when I was young. Here is an itemized list of all the things we have gotten rid of in the past few years: our desktop computer, home telephone, cable television and print newspapers (we are still digital subscribers to The Buffalo News, which we love!).

I was never an early adopter of technology. I didn’t even have my first CD player until I was in college and lacked a cellphone until I was 25. Both of those felt like huge leaps back then. Now, both items are long outmoded from the perspective of my kids.

I remember the feeling of graduating from college in the mid-'90s and already feeling technologically behind. Our college program had not even bothered to teach us how to do basic word processing.

Over the years, I have acquired my share of tricks of the trade, feeling my way through constantly updating software and newly developed apps. And, yet, my skills pale in comparison to my kids, who seemed to

have been able to navigate a smartphone before they even started walking.

This is both good and bad. My parents worried about me getting lost. I worry about our kids being found. Their world is always on, available to anyone who seeks them out on the World Wide Web.

My childhood was quieter and much more private. I could fall, pick myself up and forget the event ever happened in the first place. Their mistakes will be available forever to anyone who Googles their names.

The world of “The Flintstones” had some advantages. Friends lived right next door, and foot-powered cars were great for exercise. The high-tech Jetsons conducted everything over videoconferencing and had robot maids, but their lives seemed strangely emptier.

It is also important to note how similar the lives of the two sitcom families were, with shuttling kids off to appointments and navigating marital disagreements. Perhaps this is a truth I can pass on to my kids: While technology might continue to change rapidly in the age of “The Jetsons,” human beings themselves have not changed a whole lot since the age of “The Flintstones.”

*Alex Lazarus-Klein is rabbi of Congregation Shir Shalom in
Williamsville.*

