

Never Heard Of It

BY RABBI DAVID WOLPE

Cultural references were once shared. Now, with the explosion and profusion of media, we no longer watch the same shows or listen to the same music. Denizens of each cultural cul-de-sac lament the ignorance of others who don't know their favorite band or book, or the blogger, tweeter or pinterest goddess of the moment.

The desire to share interests is as old as humanity. And the discovery of another who loves what you love is splendid.

English poet and writer Robert Graves used to tell a story about the novelist Arnold Bennett who carried a five pound note to give to the first person he found reading one of his books: on his death the note was still found, folded in his wallet. Once Graves was on a train and saw a man who was sleeping with one of Graves own books, *The Reader Over Your Shoulder*, next to him. Graves sat beside him, waited until he awoke, told him the story about Bennett, signed the book, and gave him ten dollars.

That is part of what makes *Daf Yomi* or other communal studies so powerful. When everyone learns the same thing, studies the same book or prays the same words, the experience reaches across the barriers of individual souls and single ages. We are part of the great collective; each soul singular to be sure, but also shared.