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DIGITAL CULTURE AS (NOT QUITE) A PARADIGM SHIFT: JUDAISM'S ADAPTABILITY ON TRIAL

Abstract: *This paper examines Judaism's adaptability in the condition of contemporary digital reality. The central thesis is that Judaism, historically shaped by mediated communication, dispersed communities, and text-based learning, is particularly well positioned to engage with the challenges of digital culture, even as these challenges intensify in speed, scale, and visibility. The paper approaches this question through three interrelated dimensions: theological, historical, and practical. Theologically, it conceptualizes the Jewish covenant as a communicative framework or a mediasphere through which divine–human relations have always been mediated by texts, rituals, and embodied practices. From this perspective, mediation is not external to Judaism, but constitutive of it. Also, the paper analyzes Jewish communal life as a networked tradition sustained across time and space through communication technologies adapted to changing conditions of diaspora, exclusion, and mobility. Digital connectivity thus appears less as a novelty than as an acceleration of already existing modes of Jewish relationality. At the level of lived practice, the paper explores how digital culture reshapes questions of embodiment, community, authority, and halakhic reasoning. Digital environments challenge traditional structures by enabling personalization, decentralized access to knowledge, and new forms of communal belonging. However, these developments do not negate religious life, but participate in generating new sites of negotiation. Halakhic responses to digitality are shown as a spectrum, demonstrating Judaism's internal plurality and its capacity for structured disagreement. Digital culture thus functions simultaneously as a testing ground and a mirror, revealing both tensions and enduring strengths within Judaism's adaptive logic. Adaptability emerges not as compromise, but as a tradition-based practice of negotiation that enables continuity within ongoing sociotechnological change.*

Keywords: *digital culture, Judaism, adaptability, digital religion, halakha, community*

DIGITALNA KULTURA KAO (NE TOLIKO) PARADIGMATSKA PROMENA: ADAPTIBILNOST JUDAIZMA NA ISPITU

Sažetak: *Cilj ovog rada jeste da ispita adaptibilnost judaizma u uslovima savremene digitalne stvarnosti. Centralna teza rada zasniva se na tvrdnji da je judaizam, budući da je istorijski oblikovan medijacijom i komunikacijom, teritorijalno rasutim zajednicama i učenjem koje počiva na tekstualnosti, posebno dobro pozicioniran za suočavanje sa izazovima digitalne kulture – čak i kada su ti izazovi znatno intenzivirani u pogledu brzine,*

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razmere i vidljivosti. Rad ovom pitanju pristupa kroz tri međusobno povezane dimenzije: teološku, istorijsku i praktičnu. U teološkom smislu, rad konceptualizuje Savez Boga i jevrejskog naroda u okviru komunikativnog modela nalik medijasferi, kroz koju su božanski i ljudski odnosi oduvek bili posredovani tekstovima, ritualima i telesnim praksama. Iz ove perspektive, medijacija nije nešto spoljašnje za judaizam, već je u njega konstitutivno upisana. Rad takođe analizira zajednicu unutar jevrejske životne prakse kao oblik umrežene tradicije koja se održava kroz vreme i prostor posredstvom komunikacionih tehnologija prilagođenih promenljivim uslovima dijaspore, što uključuje iskustva isključenosti i stalne mobilnosti. Digitalno umrežavanje se stoga pojavljuje manje kao novina, a više kao ubrzanje već postojećih obrazaca komunikacije u jevrejskoj zajednici. Na nivou živ-ljene prakse, rad istražuje načine na koje digitalna kultura preoblikuje pitanja telesnih praksi, zajedništva, autoriteta i halahičkog promišljanja. Digitalna okruženja predstavljaju izazov tradicionalnim strukturama jer otvaraju značajne mogućnosti personalizacije, decentralizovani pristup znanju i nove formi pripadanja zajednici. Ipak, ovakav razvoj nužno ne ukida religiozni život, već učestvuje u stvaranju novih prostora prilagođavanja. Halahički odgovori na digitalno ukazuju se u liku spektra, što oslikava unutrašnju pluralnost judaizma i njegov kapacitet za institucionalno uvažavanje nesuglasica. Digitalna kultura tako istovremeno funkcioniše kao polje koje oprobava judaizam, ali koje mu služi i kao ogledalo, te time otkriva izazove, ali i trajnu snagu unutar adaptivne logike judaizma. Adaptibilnost se, stoga, ne ukazuje kao kompromis, već kao tradicijski utemeljena praksa dijaloga i promene koja omogućava kontinuitet usred neprekidne društveno-tehnološke transformacije.

Ključne reči: *Digitalna kultura, judaizam, adaptibilnost, digitalna religija, halaha, zajednica.*

1. Introduction: digital culture and its influence on religion-related context and issues

Digital culture is often described as an irreversible shift in human history, communication, and daily living, with all-pervasive global interconnectedness listed as its main characteristic. Besides increased and intensified connection, digital culture introduced other novelties, such as algorithmic mediation of experienced content, and an increased, easily made customization of personal and social life. Huge range of choices, but also limitations that the digital culture brought reopened some very old questions that the human being grapples with; these questions revolve around choices, limitations, and dilemmas that one can have, and around understanding dimensions that are bigger than the individual, and that are not easy to grasp. These are also quite traditional questions that appear in many religious sources, traditions, and practices regardless of technological era, which adds to the relevance of religious contexts in contemporary digital times. Contrary to that, religion is often framed as tradition-bound, and thus it is seen as firmly connected to past times. This may not be untrue, at least for some religious contexts and movements, but that still does not mean that the religion is not adaptable to contemporary times. Looking onto religion as incompatible with the digital condition overlooks two important dimensions of digital culture: first of all,

this new, interconnected, information-driven society is still inhabited by human beings with the same or similar questions as before; and second, from a historical perspective, the digital condition might not represent an absolute break, but rather another major media-related reconfiguration – a new mediasphere (Debre, 2000) that, taking the form of a hypersphere (Merzeau, 1998) might reshape, but not entirely change or extinguish earlier forms of knowledge transmission, community formation, values, beliefs, authorities, daily and religious life. Nevertheless, a new element that digital culture presented to religious institutions, as well as to general society, is its exponential developmental speed (Coleman 2000), which makes it different from all the earlier mediaspheres. In other words, technology no longer evolves slowly enough to enable easy adaptation of complex systems such as religious ones, so they are pushed into a state of constant negotiation with contemporary state-of-the-art developments. This change might bring some substantial challenges to religious authorities, and to the religion-based communities themselves.

One of the most visible changes that digital culture has produced, and that has been reflected in religious institutions, is related to an easy access to religious knowledge. Simply put, this means that, through using the Internet, anyone can get in touch with religious texts and textual interpretations at any time. This is something that was previously possible only with the help and support of religious teachers and authorities. This shift potentially destabilizes traditionally established asymmetries between religious authorities and congregation members, creating a situation in which religious community members might not be as dependent on religious authorities as before. Such a change might disrupt the continuation of religious practice that strictly relies on the hierarchical dynamic between religious authorities and community members, and therefore might call for a change in the nuances of traditional professional religious roles. On the other side, this very condition can also induce the revival of interest in religion and religious life, precisely because religious knowledge is now much more available and easier to access. The challenge, therefore, does not lie in the sudden availability of religious knowledge itself, but in how religious authorities rethink their own position and role once words of expertise are no longer scarce, and active participation in the body of religious knowledge is moving away from one-sidedness (Lövheim 2013; Cheong 2013; Tsuria 2024).

Another challenge that digital culture presents to religious teaching and institutions lies in the high degree of personalization and customization to which digital prosumers[2] have been accustomed. Digital culture privileges and strongly

2 In a contemporary digital realm of Web 2.0, people are in the same time producers and consumers - *prosumers* of digitally created and mediated content. However, this concept is not new and can be traced well before the digital times, since Alvin Toffler described it in 1980 (Toffler 2022, Ertz, Barragán & Cao, 2025).

encourages individual choices, multiple possibilities, and a pick-and-choose approach in matters of identity, belonging, and practice, at least while browsing through the digital realm. This is also an important element in potential reshaping of individual religious engagement (Lövheim 2013; Abrams 2015; Campbell & Bellar 2023). This change is often interpreted as a threat to existing religious communities, or as a religion reduced to a marketplace (Cohen 2012; Lövheim 2013). As a result, religious institutions and authorities often search for more or less effective solutions to the newly created problem of reshaped or dissolved communities. Some of religious movements turn closer towards the isolation from the digital world, while others pursue rapid adaptation, often at the cost of traditional ways of teaching, learning, and practicing religion. There are also many solutions in between these two decisive or radical approaches (Campbell 2013b; Schiff 2023). Before turning to the analysis of Judaism's historical and contemporary responses to new media, technology, and technological change, I will bring one more digital challenge into the focus.

Besides changing the ways in which an individual looks onto authorities and communities, digital environment can also change the ways in which the embodiment and presence of a human subject are experienced – both internally, from the perspective of an individual, and externally, from institutional perspectives. Embodiment presents an element that has played an important role in religious contexts in the past, as well as in the present (Campbell 2013b). However, with a change of perspective in relation to what embodiment is in the reality of a new digital agency, new kinds of religious responses and practices emerge, such as those that the online religion brings (Campbell 2015). *Online religion* is sometimes criticized as disembodied, virtual, or detached from "real" religious life, and sometimes celebrated as the new potential for future religious individual, communal, and institutional existence (Lövheim 2013). However, all these different thoughts on online religion do not change the fact that online or digital religious practices are becoming increasingly present. It should also not be forgotten that this sort of activity is not "disembodied" as such – in the end, it is enacted by real, embodied subjects embedded in material contexts. In the other words, the human subject is not suddenly "turned into" its virtual representative and divided from their physical self, as the condition of digitality brought reality that is *extended* rather than divided (Stojanović 2025). This direction points to the conclusion that merging of online and offline spaces does not necessarily suggest a division of the self or the collapse of an effective religious life, but rather a point of reconfiguration in how religious identity, ritual participation, and community belonging are lived across multiple sites (Campbell 2013a; Clark & Lindsey 2022). In religious studies and media studies literature, these developments have been researched through the concept of *digital religion*, which moves beyond simplistic notions of religion as merely transferred online (Campbell 2013a;

Campbell 2015; Grieve 2015). *Digital religion* refers to the evolving relationship between religious practices and digital media, in which online and offline religious contexts mutually shape one another in a specific mediated, multisite reality (Clark & Lindsey 2022). This means that, rather than existing in two separate and/or different domains, religious practices happen simultaneously across physical, digital, and hybrid spaces of lived religion (Wagner 2013; Yadlin-Segal 2015; Campbell & Bellar 2023). Besides being enacted in traditional physical spaces, lived religion unfolds through new forms of everyday tools and expressions such as user-generated content and groups on social networks, memes, forums, and apps. These practices blur distinctions between consumption and production, positioning individuals as active contributors to religious meaning-making. Although this confirms a prominent change within the scope of religious activity, such practices nevertheless seem to offer space for digitally adapted personal and communal engagement, instead of just presenting an obstacle to religious practice (Raucher 2015; Lundby 2015). However, as in the earlier presented issues of authority, community, and embodiment, different religious communities and leaders respond differently to this form of challenge.

Similarly to other religious institutions, different denominations and communities in Judaism have different attitudes toward digitally induced changes in religious life. On the one hand, Jewish life has already functioned as a networked tradition, sustained through text, interpretation, and dispersed communities, for a long time before the internet. Also, as it will be shown in further text, the very notion of mediated communication between people and God, which does create a type of mediasphere at its core, is not foreign to Judaism (Blondheim 2015). Taken from this perspective, digital culture may not confront Judaism with a challenge that is impossible to grapple with. Rather, it tests the limits of its adaptability under digital conditions of heightened speed, exchange, and visibility of information. Digital culture thus functions simultaneously as a window through which Judaism encounters contemporary society and as a mirror reflecting Judaism's internal negotiations over authority, authenticity, and continuity (Tsuria 2024).

2. Theological aspect of Judaism and (new) media: Covenant as a mediasphere

In order to go deeper into exploring Judaism's perspectives on digital culture, it is useful to turn to some theological aspects of Judaism and their relation to media and communication in general. Judaism is, at its core, a religion of communication (Campbell 2010: 118; Cohen 2012: 15; Blondheim 2015; Tsuria 2024: 70). One of the core pillars of Judaism – the covenant between God and the Jewish people – can be understood as a communicative framework, or a

form of mediated space in which meanings and obligations are continuously communicated through the medium of once-given commandments (mitzvot).[3] The covenant practically functions as a mediasphere: a mediation-structured communicational environment that enables exchange between fundamentally asymmetrical, yet equally responsible, partners – humans and God. This type of communication persists across time, space, and continually changing material conditions, and defines Judaism as organically tied to media and technology as conditions of its existence.

In Judaism, God is radically transcendent: utterly beyond materiality, but also immanent – present in the physical world through the act of Creation (Blondheim 2015). Creation, in this way, also functions as a medium of communication with human beings, as humans are given the task of responsibly dealing with this physicality according to mitzvot (Bereshit 1:28–30). This kind of communication always includes a kind of reduction of divinity (Blondheim 2015), so that it can be translated into a communicative form accessible to humans,[4] and yet the residual of divine attributes remains embedded in the core of everything that is created or given as mitzvot (Blondheim 2015). This is exactly the reason why the Torah is considered sacred in Jewish tradition, together with the actions of fulfilling mitzvot given through the Torah itself. Besides the Torah, the Talmud also qualifies in this category, as it was also given as Oral Law at Mount Sinai (Avot 1:1; Rambam, *Introduction to the Mishnah* 2:14). Moreover, all other means of God's communication to people found in the Torah, which mentions tablets, fire, smoke, and sound,[5] carry theological weight for the same reason. Blessings also fit into this category, as they precede or follow a mitzvah (Cohen 2012). It is the same media that God used in communication with the Jewish people that the Jewish people adopted as media in communication with God. This structure can even be understood through the image of the Magen David itself: two intertwined triangles, one stemming from above to below and the other from below to above, reflecting the communicational relation (Sherwin 2006: 165).

Looked at from this perspective, Judaism has always been highly communicational and deeply connected to media. It relies on the communication of words and acts as mitzvot across time, dimensions, and generations. Judaism's very existence and transmission thus historically relied on contemporary media and technology, due to the specific historical conditions in which Jewish communities dwelled – almost not only as People of the Book, but as People of the Network too.

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3 According to the Torah, the 613 commandments were given on Mount Sinai, thus bounding Jewish people as People to God in two-directional mutual covenant of guidance, obligation, and trust (Shemot 19:5-6).

4 This idea can also be seen in Devarim 30:12 and Devarim Rabbah 8:6.

5 For example, the sound of shofar (Shemot 19:16).

3. Historical aspect of Judaism and (new) media: People of the Network

Since Jewish identity has been tied to its communal existence and relationality (Campbell 2010; Schiff 2023), it has consequentially been shaped by the conditions of the Jewish community (or communities) through which it developed. From the emergence of the Diaspora[6] to 1948, Jewish people lived without a stable territorial center. Although the Diaspora era lasted for over two thousand years, Jewish communities sustained a strong sense of identity and integrity across the borders of time and space. This factor kept Jewish communities vibrant through their changes and migrations over time and across historical, social, and political conditions. Such a decentralized condition of Jewish history has never led to fragmentation as such; rather, it has produced strong forms of belonging mediated by continuously newfound ways of intra- and intercommunal communication, based on shared texts, memories, and ethical frameworks, and exercised through communicative practices that leaned on contemporary technologies to enhance communicational impact and success.

Besides shared textual sources, interpretations, and practices that functioned as a binding force for Jewish communities across the world, continual grappling with antisemitism deeply impacted Jewish communities and individuals in different times and local contexts. As much as antisemitism was directed against Jewish people and Jewish communities, it has also functioned as a response-induced social glue for Jewish communities, pulling endangered individuals closer to Jewish communities, and pulling Jewish communities closer to other Jewish communities. Moreover, as antisemitic acts marked Jews as outsiders within wider society and often excluded them from equal participation in social, cultural, and institutional life, it almost seems that in certain periods it was antisemitism that might have been "the most significant factor that worked to keep Jews Jewish" (Schiff 2023: 13). The persistent sense of being excluded from surrounding societies or marked as "different" in a negative sense paradoxically revitalized intra- and intercommunal Jewish bonds and accentuated the necessity of communication between Jewish communities in times of crisis. Here, contemporary media use played a key role, keeping Jewish individuals, families, and communities in constant touch. Even though Jewish people nowadays have a country representing a historical, political, and cultural center, contemporary technology still plays a significant role in connecting and networking Jewish individuals, communities,

6 The Jewish Diaspora refers to the historical condition of Jewish life outside the Land of Israel, initiated by the Babylonian Exile following the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE and reenacted by the Roman destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. These events transformed Judaism from a territorially centered, Temple-based religion into a dispersed but cohesive tradition sustained through law, text, and communal networks.

and Jewish learning centers across the world. From this perspective, contemporary digital technology might not be the element that introduced a radically new experience to Judaism and Jewish communities; rather, it has introduced a new, more effective tool that can serve the same causes.

Although being quite elastic in its adaptations, Judaism is not immune to contemporary challenges that digital technology brings. Nevertheless, this is not the first time that Judaism has had its adaptability put on trial. Modern Jewish movements themselves emerged as responses to earlier cultural and media shifts (Schiff 2023). For example, in the early nineteenth century, Reform Judaism embraced Enlightenment values and focused on functional deeds and notions of social and ethical responsibility, not forcing its congregants to remain faithful to traditional ways of keeping mitzvot (Schiff 2023: 32). Conservative Judaism, on the other hand, but in an equally innovative way, sought to strengthen tradition precisely by acknowledging social, communicational, and technological change, finding ways to engage with contemporary times both traditionally and functionally (Schiff 2023: 34). The Haskalah, the Hasidic movement, the Mussar movement, and proto-Zionist initiatives also relied on contemporary media forms to disseminate ideas, shape communities, and mobilize collective actions (Blondheim 2015). Each historical moment brought more efficient means of connection, but it did not undermine the underlying logic of networking within Jewish communities.

In the case of digital technology and culture, the all-pervasiveness of connection has intensified communication and turned it into a challenge, both for the Jewish individual and the Jewish community. As much as constant connectivity promises a large potential for Jewish networking and integration, these networking opportunities might also pull the Jewish individual away from tradition, or even from the Jewish community by offering numerous possibilities of individual choice. Moreover, the figure or notion of authority loses its strength when faced with a radically decentralized system of information offered as a new standard and value through everyday internet use. In the end, and perhaps to begin with, the issue of virtuality, or the immateriality of digital interaction, poses many questions for the way Judaism is traditionally lived. These are the topics that still figure as sites of negotiation and contestation within the practical dimension of Judaism in digital times.

4. The practical questions of religion in digital times: The case study of Judaism

Judaism emphasizes *doing*, which means that an active Jewish religious life is constituted through *embodied* practices of the daily performance of mitzvot (commandments). One of the first questions that Judaism thus encounters in digital times concerns the status of doing while being in digital space, or in hybrid,

extended, multisite spaces.[7] More precisely, the question is whether a bodily action (such as lighting candles, being physically present in a minyan, or directly experiencing the light of the fire during Havdalah) can be transferred into a digital, immaterial form and still retain its validity. This issue has already been addressed in existing scholarship and includes many different examples, disputes, and solutions in rabbinical and scholarly discussions.[8] The important point is that digital environments may add complexity to halakhic questions and solutions,[9] but they do not obstruct Judaism-related practices per se; they actually uncover the ways in which the continuity of religious life is obtained, even within new technological environments. This demonstrates that religion does not disappear in the face of technological development but instead reorganizes itself under new conditions.

Another group of questions that arise from the conditions of new digital culture is related to the notion of community. Judaism has traditionally emphasized the importance of community. Community takes an important place in the fulfilment of communally defined mitzvot, as well as in concepts of shared responsibility and mutual support. In times before the digital age, the Jewish individual was situated within a community with which they shared material space. In other words, the community consisted of people who were physically present together with the individual in the same place. On the other hand, digital environments offer the possibility of choosing one's group according to affinity or preference, without physically moving from the place one lives in. Unlike the pronounced diversity that can be encountered in physically situated communities, these individually chosen groups are often strongly founded on similar or shared interests, political, social, and religious views, and they are easily entered and exited. Although the question of whether they can be understood in the same way as physical communities persists, they still represent viable communities, with their own distinctive netiquettes (Lövheim 2015), norms, values, expectations, and activities. All this strongly suggests that although these communities are practiced digitally, they nonetheless develop as socially recognizable groups, together with

7 The term *multisite spaces* addresses the phenomenon of a practical life extending from the „offline" sphere into the online sphere and vice versa, merginf these two realms into one, lived, multisite reality (Campbell 2023).

8 These include questions of *lashon hara* (evil speech) and *rehilut* in social media contexts, *tzniut* and online self-presentation, communication within observance-mixed online environments, Shabbat observance across time zones, electronic documents containing the Divine Name, online commerce, copyright and intellectual property, witnessing and vowing in digital spaces, virtual minyanim, online prayer, anonymous rabbinic consultations, dating applications, AI-mediated correspondence, and emerging issues related to digital intimacy, artificial reproduction, and technological approaches to mortality. While a deeper examination of each of these issues would undoubtedly be valuable, such an analysis lies beyond the scope of this paper.

9 *Halakha* is the body of Jewish law that guides religious practice and daily life, derived from the Torah, rabbinic interpretations, and centuries of legal discourse. It governs areas ranging from ritual observance to ethics and interpersonal conduct.

clear demarcations of collective identity (Lövheim 2015). Moreover, the rise of digital, social network–based pop-up congregations, online grassroots Jewish initiatives, and post-denominational or "just Jewish" groupings further adds to the models by which Jewish community can be recognized (Abrams 2015). In digital realms, social media platforms often act as mediators and catalysts for these formations, enabling communities to emerge outside established or physically grounded institutional frameworks. Although sometimes subject to critique or institutional fear, these groups do not necessarily reject traditional Judaism. Some of them may selectively engage with it, producing forms of "pick-choose-and-mix" Judaism (Abrams 2015), while others function as strong vehicles of traditional Jewish identity, aligning closely with already recognized institutional denominations.[10]

The described dynamics are also visible in the ways in which digitality challenges traditional religious authorities. In one way, traditional authority figures such as community rabbis or knowledgeable community members fade, as digital users increasingly turn to "Rabbi Google" (Campbell 2010: 233), to Halachipedia, to AI systems, or to one another for immediate answers. In another way, digital media can provide unprecedented opportunities for religious leaders to extend their reach, visibility, and influence. This means that authority will not "disappear" simply due to a new technology; again, this is not the first time that Judaism has encountered this type of change. What may happen, however, is that the ways in which authority is built and disseminated may be reconfigured, reshaped, or adapted. Given that Judaism offers a model of religious leadership where the rabbi is a teacher, and that teachings and texts are easily disseminated through online space, this may add to Judaism's adaptability throughout the changes that the hypersphere brings, though not without certain challenges and choices to be made. For example, the hypersphere has brought entirely new figures of influence, such as bloggers, vloggers, digital educators, religious digital content creators, religious app designers, influencers, and religious media strategists, who now occupy roles that did not previously exist (Lövheim 2015; Fader 2020). To go or not to go in these directions in order to establish or strengthen online presence and work is a decision that each rabbi must make according to their own standards and values (Cohen 2015).

The question of adaptability becomes the most visible at the very practical level of halakha. As lived practice of Judaism usually carries more challenge and produces more questions than purely theological discussion (which is what keeps theological discussion vital and relevant!), the questions of how to do a mitzvah in changed conditions of everyday reality become particularly numerous and important. Halakha, with the meaning of "the path one walks" (Schiff 2023: 192)

10 Examples include formal or public pages of denominationally recognized religious communities, as well as pages maintained by individual figures, such as rabbis or cantors.

represents the body of comprehensive legal and ethical regulations in Judaism that governs religious practice, communal life, and many aspects of everyday conduct. Being so widely applicable, halakha has never functioned as simply static legal code. It developed and changed following the changes in society and culture where Jews live, while never diverging from its base rooted in Torah and Talmud. Or, as Chaim Saiman says: "The Mishnah and Talmud do not tell us whether a given body of law describes an imagined legal reality, daily practice, rabbinic aspiration, or some combination thereof. On the contrary, by constant mixing, matching, and moving among halakha's meanings, the Talmud signals that, from its perspective, these distinctions are not very significant. This is one of the central insights of the rabbinic idea of law" (Saiman 2018: 55). In this large body of knowledge and regulations, disagreement between different rabbis and sages is not seen as a flaw, but as a constitutive principle that should be responsibly handled (Schiff 2023: 192). This dual nature of halakha – formal and contextual – positions it as both a legal system and an educational framework. It provides not only rules, but also instructions in how to think and act in a changing world, which allows Judaism to remain relevant even in the times of big changes.

Halakhic responses to digital media can be mapped along a spectrum, differing across communities and denominations. They range from refusal and prohibition of digital media, through selective filtering and control of digitally accessible information, to negotiated adaptation to digital reality, and even to full acceptance or integration of digitality into halakhic solutions (Campbell 2010). For example, Ultra-Orthodox responses often frame the Internet as a potential gateway to immoral content and unregulated influence, which is seen as a threat to communal cohesion and traditional authority (Campbell 2010: 52, 172; Rashi 2013; Rosenberg & Rashi 2015; Campbell 2015; Fader 2020). The establishment of special rabbinical courts in Ultra-Orthodox communities, specifically assembled to address issues of new digital communication technologies, illustrates the impossibility of completely avoiding discussion of technological change (Tsuria 2024: 25). These discussions often lead to more or less adaptive halakhic models of response (Rosenthal & Ribak 2015). Of course, not all Orthodox communities shy away from the use and application of technology. Chabad, for example, has embraced the Internet as a tool for textual communication, outreach, and education, hoping to widen the digital space filled with Torah-based content (Golan 2013; Tsuria 2024). Many other Orthodox and Modern Orthodox communities do the same. This approach represents an example of RSST – Religious Social Shaping of Technology (Campbell 2010), in which new media are not neglected, denied, or forbidden, but are instead viewed through their potential for attaining religious or observance-related goals.

In conclusion to the examples of changes and adaptations through which Judaism is going in contemporary digital times presented in this paper, digitality appears

more like yet another version of a new technology than a radically new rupture in the continuity of Judaism. Whether viewed through the aspects of covenantal communication, networked communal connections, or lived halakhic practice, Judaism's encounter with digitality seems less like an existential threat than a complex field of negotiation. What is distinctive today is not the nature of these challenges or Judaism's capacity to adapt, but rather the speed and scale of change, which place constant pressure on religious actors, institutions, and interpretive frameworks, as well as on communities and individuals at all levels of religious observance. In this sense, digital culture reveals both the vulnerabilities and the enduring strengths of Judaism's adaptive logic. Judaism demonstrates that adaptability is not a sign of weakness, but a tradition-based capacity for negotiation. Judaism's long history of networked learning and communal life offers valuable experience for navigating today's forms of connectivity and fragmentation. Viewing these negotiations as sites of meaning-making, more than as signs of decline, helps in understanding how Judaism continues to persist, reorganize, and maintain social and ethical relevance in a developing sociotechnological environment.

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