

numbers of human beings to learn from and share opinions with one another. One can imagine a similar debate 2,000 years ago when our sages deliberated the relative merits of a strictly oral tradition versus the innovation of documenting the tradition in writing on parchment scrolls. Centuries later, some of the very first documents produced by the newly invented printing press were Jewish books.

**Rabbi Dan Cohen:** Our embrace of technology simply means we are continuing a longstanding Jewish tradition. One of the reasons we Jews have survived over the millennia is because we've been quick to adapt to new realities.

At the same time, we're always striking a balance between tradition and modernity. We have no hesitation in using a printed Tanach; yet when it comes to worship, we still use the ancient form of a Torah scroll. Change doesn't mean "either/or"...we Jews are always looking for a "both/and" answer.

**Rabbi Dan Moskovitz:** Technology and the Internet are the printing presses of our day. They have the same benefits and built-in challenges as those encountered by the rabbis of the talmudic period: When you put things in writing on paper or on the screen, they are subject to interpretation, inviting comment and more writing. The Talmud was really the first blog or listserv, with various voices and perspectives speaking over a period of time to comment on a subject. In our age, instead of being restricted to the rabbinic authorities, the Jewish Internet is available to *Am Yisrael* (the entire Jewish people)—with all of the benefits and some of the downsides of such democratization. The Internet is the logical evolution of the "People of the Book."

**Emily Grotta:** Let us not forget that this technology is a means to an end, not the end itself. What is crucial is the *content*, not the way it is delivered.

The Jews are known as the "People of the Book" because the written word has, for centuries, been the means for debate and dialogue over the "big ideas" in our literature. It doesn't matter

if the words appear on parchment or on a website. What matters are the words themselves, and the ideas they convey.

**If our strength as a Movement is in creating community, and if we create community through communications, how will new communications change us as a Movement?**

**Rabbi Amy Perlin:** Technology doesn't change anything except to expand our ability to reach our people. When a woman tells me that she listened to a podcast while walking on a beach to sort out her life, when a "new Jew" is able to learn the service by listening to Friday's podcast, when a Jew becomes comfortable reciting the *Kaddish* that way, or when a man hears the *Mi She-beirach* with the voices of fellow congregants before surgery or during chemo, we are meeting needs beyond our walls and touching hearts and lives.

**Emily Grotta:** Today's communications *do* benefit the Jewish community.

Those who take advantage of the vast amount of information are becoming better informed and more involved Jews—and these experiences, in turn, prompt many to turn to the "real life" temple community, where they share in people's joys and sorrows, and hugs and smiles tell them they are cared about.

**Rabbi Scott Sperling:** Our Movement will, of necessity, have to change in adopting changes in communications technologies. We are—as individuals, as synagogues, and as a Movement—going to be less tied to a single geographic location or source of information and community. We will face new paradigms in which everything about a synagogue community—education, worship, governance, finance—will change. This is not a matter of better or worse; it is simply different.

**What are the pluses and minuses of the technology?**

**Rabbi Amy Perlin:** I fear that the Movement will divide into those con-

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