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This path-breaking collection of studies explores the cultural implications of the digital revolution in communication for a diverse range of Jewish religious communities and their institutions. This cultural turn, shifting the focus from digital technologies to the people who use them, reflects the critical methodologies and broad fields of research of the editor, Heidi Campbell, an Associate Professor of Communication at Texas A&M University. Campbell comes at this task as a scholar of Media Studies, an author of numerous works that analyze the relationship between technology and religion, and director of the Network in New Media, Religion, and Digital Culture Studies. The second in a series on religion and digital culture published by Routledge,¹ edited by Campbell, Mia Löveheim, and Greg Grieve, *Digital Judaism* looks at the diverse ways in which the internet and digital media have made an impact on the online and offline religious practices and lived experiences of Jews. The book provides a new framework for analyzing how these diverse Jewish communities negotiate their relationships with new media technologies (e.g., the internet, smartphone, apps) and social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, and memes). In so doing, it makes a compelling argument for paying careful attention to national and local contexts and the personal agency exercised by Jews across and beyond the familiar denominational spectrum of Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform.

Undergirding Campbell's approach is what she calls "the Religious-Social Shaping Technology" (RSST) framework for studying how a given religious community negotiates with new technologies and adapts or shapes them for its own purposes. RSST is presented as a "holistic view" for understanding religious resistance and innovation when confronted by new media. The interdisciplinary study of this negotiation, utilizing the RSST methodology, is undertaken through a careful analysis of "four key areas": 1) history and tradition; 2) core beliefs and patterns; 3) the negotiation process itself; 4) communal framing and discourse (p. 77). Building on the Social Shaping of Technology (SST) work of MacKenzie and Wajcman, who see technology as a "product of the interplay between different technical and social factors in both design and use,"² Campbell applies such insights to the study of religious communities. Focusing on religious users of the technology, rather than on the technology itself, she argues, allows for a deeper understanding of the decision-making processes, distinctive values and unique situations of the users.

¹ The first being *Buddhism, the Internet and Digital Media. The Pixel and the Lotus*, edited by Gregory Price Grieve and Daniel Veidlinger. New York and London: Routledge, 2015.

² Heidi A. Campbell, *When Religion Meets New Media* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 50, citing D. MacKenzie and J. Wajcman, *The Social Shaping of Technology: How the Refrigerator Got Its Hum*. Milton Keynes, U.K.; Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1985.

This framework seeks to go beyond simplistic models of technological determinism in order to reevaluate the correlation between religious belonging and media use. In *Digital Judaism*, her methodological innovations come to life through a series of case studies and examples, which are meant to be understood on their own terms and for future comparative study.

The book is divided into two parts. The first focuses on how the “core values and communal goals” of different Jewish communities shape the way they negotiate, accommodate, and embrace new media (p. 8). The second section focuses on forms of resistance and reconstruction (p. 10). Following Campbell’s introduction, Menachem Blondheim sets out in broad outlines a Jewish media theology and social history of Jewish community from Biblical times to the present through the prism of modern communication theory. Declaring at the outset that “Judaism, like digital technology, is binary” (p. 16), Blondheim supports this claim with a series of textual examples that begin with the problem of how a transcendent god communicates with an immanent creation. Calling attention to the tabernacle in the desert as the means used to overcome this difficulty, he states that, “it was the mere adoption of God’s media, not the conveying of any particular message, which formed the core of early Jewish ritual” (p.18). The subsequent written and oral dimensions of Jewish religious culture, he claims, constitute further evidence of the binary nature of Judaism, and the complicated halakhic implications that flow from it such as, for example, the status of writing God’s name in digital form. In the second part of his ambitious essay, he elaborates on this interpretation of a Jewish media tradition by rereading diasporic Jewish history along the lines of network theory, highlighting the challenges Jews dispersed across wide geographical spaces faced and transcended in order to stay connected with each other. Through each historical epoch he rereads Jewish tradition in light of “ideology, media infrastructures, and institutional arrangements” (p. 27). Finally, it is the “Jewish encounter with modernity,” the tragedy of the Holocaust, and the establishment of a Jewish state which “signaled a new turn in the communication history of the Jews since antiquity” (p. 32). This conclusion is summed up by noting the dual nature of Judaism as a religion and as a nationality and that Judaism’s binary tradition of communication has prepared its people well for survival in the twenty-first century.

Nathan Abrams introduces readers to the lived experiences of “Grass Roots Jews” or “GRJ” in London, whom he interviewed between 2008 and 2010. Similar to the pre-digital Jewish counterculture, such as the *havurah* movement that emerged in the United States in the late 1960s and 1970s, Abrams shows how in the digital era of communication, Facebook has helped Jews in Great Britain create offline forms of religious association outside the bonds of traditional denominations, e.g. (non-Haredi) Orthodox, Conservative, and Reform. These post-denominational “pop-up” Jewish networks enabled by social media demonstrate the limits of centralized authority in shaping and controlling Jewish identity and show how social media generates new ways for alienated Jews to respond to a lack of opportunities for “inclusiveness, experimentation, exploration and a feeling of joy” (p. 48). Social media is not presented as a causal explanation for these new relationships but as a facilitating technology for creating unprecedented opportunities for community building.

In her study of the phenomenon of strictly observant online female religious advisors, or *yoatzot* in Hebrew,³ Michal Raucher “explores the way in which Jewish women use the internet to affirm and challenge Orthodox rabbinic authority offline, increase women’s authority in limited areas of Jewish law and alter the practice of Judaism for halachically observant women” (p. 57). Her gender analysis of the religious use of new media technologies highlights the emergent tensions, which both test and reaffirm traditional boundaries and categories of Orthodox religious authority. The effort to produce qualified Jewish women to perform this online role of *yoetzet* (advisor) began in the late 1990s at a women’s seminary in Israel called Nishmat, founded and led by Rabbanit Chana Henkin.⁴ Rabbanit Henkin recognized the potential of new media to address the specific needs and sensitivities of Jewish women more comfortable seeking advice from other women rather than from male religious authorities about ritual matters relating to menstruation, sexuality, marital intimacy, or pregnancy. What began at Nishmat as an “old media” telephone hotline led to the creation of a bilingual (Hebrew and English) website featuring an FAQ and the opportunity for women to submit their own, personalized questions. The scale of use of both the hotline and website is quite impressive though interestingly, most of the thousands of calls received by phone have been in Hebrew whereas the majority of the thousands of website contacts have been in English. Raucher claims that we find online a more expansive role than would otherwise be possible offline and indeed she suggests, “that the internet presence of the Yoatzot has already laid the groundwork for female religious authorities [distinct from the women ordained at the Open Orthodox Yeshivat Maharat] within Orthodox Judaism” (p. 58). Like physician’s assistants, the *yoatzot* occupy a prominent yet still subordinate role in the religious affairs of Orthodox Jewish life. Nonetheless, we see how *yoatzot* contribute to women’s health and well-being, and quietly serve as surrogate religious leaders, albeit not legal *poskim* (decisors), within the confines of traditional religious community.

Heidi A. Campbell and Wendi Bellar present the ways in which the internet has been used for “kiruv” or outreach to attract non-observant Jews to the world of Jewish practice. In this case, we find that the internet, far from representing a threat to traditional authority, serves as a powerful means to achieve a religious end. Complicating the popular view that the internet is thought to be *trayf* (unfit for consumption) by strictly religious Jews, Campbell and Bellar show how the strategies and methods of digital outreach practiced by the Orthodox Jewish religious organization Aish HaTorah amount to having the effect, as they put it in the title of the chapter, of “Sanctifying the Internet.”

Another way in which the seemingly “sacred” and the “profane” mix is brought out by Owen Gottlieb, in his essay “Jewish Games for Learning: Renewing Heritage Traditions in the Digital Age.” Gottlieb, the founder and director of ConverJent: Jewish Games for Learning, shows the serious side of digital games as tools for teaching and learning traditional Jewish religious content within a progressive, liberal educational framework. The term “Games for Learning,” he

³ There are no editorial conventions for Romanization provided in this work.

⁴ *Rabbanit* is a feminine form of the word *rabbi* in Hebrew, traditionally used to indicate the role of a rabbi’s wife and differentiated in Modern Hebrew from *rabbah*, the equivalent for a woman Rabbi adopted by Reform and Conservative Judaism.

explains, refers to “a class of games that is concerned with drawing on research in education, the Learning Sciences, and Media Studies regarding how best to improve learning environments” (pp. 92–93). He emphasizes the difference between simplistic forms of toy-like games disconnected from learning and complex types of games based on problem-solving and inquiry-based learning. Traditional Jewish sacred texts and ritual practices are shown to be sophisticated forms of rule-based “game systems.” These Jewish forms of ritual and play do not merely entertain; they have the capacity to “transport the participant to another world” (p. 95, quoting the Dutch cultural historian Johann Huizinga). Whether as reenactment or simulation, “the goals of a ritual observance such as Passover include achieving a connection to a sense of history, deepening ties with family and community, and the passing on of story and values associated with it.” Gottlieb persuasively argues that “these rituals function as games for the acquisition of cultural practices: heritage games” (p. 95). He then explores types of traditional Jewish learning practices, including the *havruta* system of study and Talmud learning, as complex, rule-based, open-ended problem-solving games, before turning his attention to the ways in which the Covenant Foundation and his own ConverJent have taken the lead in creating innovative ways of bringing Jewish games to support Jewish education. As with the internet itself, we learn efforts to bring Jewish games to Jewish Studies and Jewish education have met with opposition by those who, for example, fear the deleterious effects of video games. Gottlieb’s efforts represent a singular effort to change perceptions and thinking about the benefits games already do and should play in Jewish life.

Aya Yadlin-Segal’s case study of the Israeli Facebook page *dosim metsaytsim* (Tweeting Orthodoxies), considers the way a “National Religious” website featuring humorous internet memes functions as a shared space for dialogue between popular culture and religion. Her study, which explicitly employs the RSST framework, demonstrates the complex negotiation between offline values and online activity found there. She bases her research on an “analysis of twelve memes shared on the ‘Tweeting Orthodoxies,’” as well as interviews with some of its members, and (offline) printed pamphlets made for National Religious synagogues in Israel which incorporate (online) humorous memes. Yaglin-Segal introduces memes historically, referring to previous scholarship grounded in evolutionary biology which views the way ideas pass from one person to another and internet memes, in which ideas and cultural artifacts (re-) circulate online, as akin to processes of natural selection. Her discussion builds on the research of biologist Ronald Dworkin and other social scientific investigators of phenomena of imitative or replicative cultural communication through reposting of online content. Yadlin-Segal understands internet memes as a “possible manifestation of lived religion, a process in which ordinary men and women draw on religious sources to make sense of their world and the experience of the sacred in everyday practices” (p. 112). Tweeting Orthodoxies, she argues, exists outside traditional institutional structures for both religious and secular viewers. It is a virtual space where they may learn about each other via humorous memes. Yadlin-Segal distinguishes between humorous popular content of an “international” nature and content particular to Jewish religious life in order to highlight the complementarity of the two and to dispel the idea that National Religious Jews would shun digital technologies or censor popular content. Indeed, it is the jarring “incongruent” character of this juxtaposition of the popular and religious which is shown to be a source of humor (p. 117). She also draws attention to types of internet memes on the site which display cruel or “superior” forms of humor, such as jokes in which the inferior status of Oriental Jews might be inferred. In

short, Yadlin-Segal sees in the virtual space of Tweeting Orthodoxies on Facebook a new media type of “participatory culture,” a “bridge between offline and online environments,” a means of identity formation for National Religious Jews, as well as a vehicle for communicating and negotiating the relationship between observant and non-observant Jews.

The second part of *Digital Judaism* contains four studies that balance the mostly positive, complementary picture of religion and technology found in the studies in the book’s first part. Here the focus mainly is on ambivalence and negative reactions by Jewish religious authorities. New media is seen as a source of corrupting religious and political content and the potential cause of sinful behavior like viewing pornography. Nonetheless, we still find a balancing act being struck between the need to limit access and otherwise regulate new media use and the need to take into account, for example, the opportunities the digital economy provides religious Jews to earn a living. Oren Golan considers ways in which three different groups of religious Jews in the United States—Haredi (insular ultra-Orthodox), Chabad (an outward-directed ultra-Orthodox Hasidic movement), and Reform (progressive, integrative) Jews—respond to and legitimate their relationships with new media. Golan identifies three patterns of legitimation: a (Haredi) dualist pattern, characterized by limited and filtered use of new media content; a (Chabad) purposeful scheme, which embraces new media tools to achieve religious ends; and a (Reform) inclusive adoption pattern, which embraces new media as means for achieving progressive ends and deepening integration. Golan provides extensive methodological information about the types of source material upon which his study is based, the field work he undertook, pointing out social factors such as suspicion which affected research access, and his methods of categorizing and interpreting the data collected. Notably, this essay also discusses in some detail various Jewish apps for mobile phones and tablets. Underlying this discussion, as with almost all the other studies in *Digital Judaism*, is the fundamental issue of communal authority and its limitations, in this case made evident by these three patterns that reveal the need and strategies for legitimation.

In “On Pomegranates and Etrogs: Internet Filters as Practices of Media Ambivalence among National Religious Jews in Israel,” Michele Rosenthal and Rivka Ribak focus on “users rather than producers or religious authorities” to highlight the “importance of understanding Jewish responses to the internet within the context of daily praxis” (p. 147). The themes of ambivalence and negotiation shape this study based on qualitative interviews. National religious Jews in Israel, 11 percent of the population according to the 2009 census, consisting of stricter (*Haredi dati le’umi*) and lax (new National Religious) communities, have a more positive yet ambivalent relationship to modern technology than their Haredi co-religionists (interestingly, and in contrast to the situation in the United States studied by Golan, we learn that Haredim in Israel, said to be approximately 8 percent of the population there, have adopted a much stricter approach to new media, banning entirely television viewing and the use of the internet and smartphones; p. 147.) The word “pomegranates” in the title of this essay is the English translation (plural) of the Hebrew word *rimon*, which is also the name of “an Israeli internet service provider (ISP) that offers varying degrees of filtering (visual and verbal) for its religiously observant subscribers” (p. 146). Rimon offers five different tracks or increasingly restrictive degrees of filtered access: Protected Track; Protected Track Plus; Protected Track Squared; Preserved Track; Hermetic Track. This

filtered approach, described as a shared moral responsibility by a company and its subscribers, is the precondition for National Religious Jews in Israel to surf the web in a religiously suitable manner and subscription to it is taken as a marker of piety. The crux of the matter for Rosenthal and Ribak is understanding the meaning and consequence of the National Religious Jews in Israel choosing to share their moral authority with a non-human filtering system.

The final two essays in this volume discuss strong negative attitudes and intensive forms of resistance to new media that exist in Israel. Hananel Rosenberg and Tsuriel Rashi study the use of *pashkevilim* or wall posters employed by ultra-orthodox Jews in Israel to protest against the inroads of new media on their communities. The initial appearance of cell phones per se was not by itself the trigger mechanism for this fierce analog campaign. Rather, the rapid technological shift in Israel in the early years of the twenty-first century to cellular phones with easy access to the internet set off Haredi protests in 2005 against these new forms of digital communication. A Committee of Rabbis for Media Matters first convened to push for an acceptable “kosher” mobile phone and demanded telecommunication companies respond. An Israeli company named Mirs in fact addressed this demand, leading others in the industry to see the market potential and develop competing products. The strategies adopted by the rabbis to promote their cause and the use of the wall posters to achieve their ends offer yet another case study in how strong reaction and resistance led to negotiation and adaptation of new media technologies to local needs. For *Judaica* librarians, significantly, the role of physical *pashkevilim* in these controversies highlights their historical importance and the need to collect them. Rosenberg and Rashi define three types of such wall posters: “official” ones that are signed by rabbinic authorities connected with the Committee of Rabbis for Media Matters; “alternative” *pashkevilim* signed by rabbis not part of the Committee but belonging to the ultra-orthodox, extremist Edah Haredit community; “anonymous” *pashkevilim* posted without official signatures or otherwise signed by an unofficial group. The basis of their study is a sample survey of approximately one hundred of these *pashkevilim*. Some of the selected examples came from the holdings of the National Library of Israel (NLI), based on a collection of 15,000 posters donated by an ultra-Orthodox private collector, Yoel Kraus, and then scanned by the NLI and an additional group collected and/ or photographed by the ultra-orthodox themselves and available, surprisingly, online at the first ultra-Orthodox Israeli web forum *be-Ḥadre ḥaredim* (p. 166).⁵ The authors then analyze the content, rhetorical strategies, authorial voices, and audience or readers of these wall posters while distinguishing them from other types of physical media, including newspapers and graffiti.

Finally, Yoel Cohen surveys through a series of questionnaires the attitudes of different streams of Israeli rabbis, including Haredi, Hardal, Modern Orthodox, Reform and Conservative rabbis, towards new media technologies. Among the questions posed to them are whether they possess a computer, whether they are connected to the internet, and if so, whether they use an internet filter, whether they believe the internet damages religious values, and whether they believe in limiting access to the internet for children. The survey takes into account their place of birth, defined as the State of Israel, Western countries, Eastern Europe, and Arab countries, and the

⁵ Though not mentioned, Charles Berlin, the Lee M. Friedman Bibliographer in *Judaica* in the Harvard College Library, has systematically collected these wall posters as part of his Documenting Israel program.

year of birth, ranging from 1901–1920; 1921–1940; 1941–1960; or 1961–1980. Cohen provides a nuanced understanding of Israeli Haredi attitudes toward new media. He distinguishes among “the so-called European Lithuanian branch and the European Hassidic branch of Haredim and the Sephardic or oriental branch of Haredim” (p. 196). He also finds that by 2008, Haredi use of the internet has notably increased (p. 197). All streams are shown to be engaged in complicated negotiations between their religious commitments and new technologies.

CONCLUSION

While a great deal of attention has been paid within professional Judaica librarianship to digital technologies as tools for preservation, access, discovery, teaching and research, this book offers a useful introduction to new ways of thinking culturally about Jewish users of these technologies. It shows how diverse groups of Jews spanning the spectrum of religious observance negotiate their relationships with digital technologies; it surveys new forms of Jewish religious community and communication facilitated by social media; it opens new doors to understanding the moral valences new media Jewish users assign to their activities. Taken together, the interdisciplinary character of the book and the variety of innovative topics covered make it a valuable addition to the field of Jewish studies and to Judaica libraries.