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Klal Perspectives

A Forum for Discussion of Challenges Facing the Torah Community

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TECHNOLOGY AND THE 21ST CENTURY ORTHODOX COMMUNITY

Introduction and Questions

NEW TECHNOLOGIES have altered our world forever.

- The new connectivity has changed communication irreversibly on all levels, whether personal or professional, and has redefined community.

- The information revolution has transformed commerce, education and research.

- Sophisticated and dazzling new tools have created new horizons in science, industry and entertainment.

All of this has introduced incredible opportunities and advantages. At the same time, simple observation and a growing body of research indicate other, less-positive results of these developments – among both children and adults – in areas including personal and communal social dynamics (such as loneliness and isolation), emotional health (such as compulsivity and depression), and education and productivity (such as distractibility and diminution of certain skills). And then there are the spiritual challenges - inappropriate content of many kinds, effects on identity and affiliations and the time and attention diverted from meaningful pursuits.

In this issue of *Klal Perspectives*, we wish to address how we – as a community and as individuals – can harness the incredibly positive contributions that technology makes available to us, while avoiding or overcoming its pitfalls. We are turning to rabbis, educators, and individuals in a wide range of disciplines, including researchers and practitioners from the fields of social science, business, education, science, medicine and mental health, to share their observations on the benefits and challenges of technology. Ultimately, we would like this issue to produce a list of "best practices" for individuals, families, schools and communities to adopt in their engagement with technology.

Specifically, we are asking each of our contributors to address the following questions:

1. What have you observed to be the advantages provided to your clientele by the prevalent accessibility of technology?

2. What have you observed to be the challenges posed to your clientele by the prevalent accessibility of technology?

3. What is your assessment of the cost-benefit ratio of the use of technology within our community? Stated differently, if an individual, family or community could effectively limit or even eliminate the common, casual use of technology, would that be a worthy choice?

4. Can you proffer examples of the effective and positive use of technology to advance the personal and communal goals of the Orthodox community?

5. What are your observations about how thoughtful and deliberate people have been in embracing or limiting their own use of technology, or the use of technology by their children?

6. What have you observed to be the benefits and harms of efforts to limit the use of technology on a communal or personal level? What approaches, if any, have been successful in restricting the intrusion of technology? What efforts have you employed, or have you seen employed by others, to introduce and explain better practices in the use of technology?

7. Share specific "best practices" you have found or observed to be effective.

Foreword

Technology permeates most segments of our experience. Advances in communications technology have altered the nature of relationships, just as information technology has changed the way we learn, gather data, and share knowledge. Technological advances have introduced new ways of listening to music, preparing meals and trading securities. Almost nothing has escaped its influence.

Some dimensions of technology's impact on the Orthodox Jew are widely acknowledged, even if only superficially understood. Of particular focus to the frum community has been the role of the Internet. The Internet has produced portals of easy access to both ideas and images that are anathema to the Oved Hashem (servant of G-d). Internet use induces an irresponsible consumption of unproductive time, and it intrudes into healthy relationship building. It has also created a hotbed of *loshon hora*, even further exacerbated by online anonymity.

It is also acknowledged, however, that the Internet has created unprecedented access to Torah study opportunities. *Shiurim* of every level of sophistication and every sphere of Torah interest can be found. Premier Torah educators can teach those in distant locations, or even those who are unable to leave their homes. Previously inaccessible *seforim* and new essays can now be read online with ease. In addition, the Internet also provides means of healthy relationship building, providing forums for daily contact among family members in far off locations, and between friends, whose busy lives and disparate living locations would otherwise result in waning contact.

It is clear that technology, and the Internet in particular, poses enormous threats, while providing extraordinary opportunities to the American Orthodox community. This issue of *Klal Perspectives* explores whether a community, or even a family, can eliminate the intrusion of the Internet, and if not, how we can best meet its challenges and take advantage of its opportunities. And perhaps of particular interest is the identification of various influences of online use on the Orthodox community that are enormously consequential, yet frequently overlooked (such as online bullying, for example).

In light of the particularly profound psychological repercussions of internet use, Dr. David Pelcovitz was invited to serve as Guest Editor of this issue, and he graciously agreed. Dr. Pelcovitz is widely considered to be the Orthodox community's leading expert in applying academic scholarship to the various social and psychological challenges of our time. He played an invaluable role in both identifying and framing the issues, as well as in introducing us to outstanding contributors. In addition, Dr. Pelcovitz's own submission to the issue serves as an excellent introduction to some of the issue's leading themes.

A key frustration to both academics and mental health practitioners is the compromised value of research in studying the impact of technology. Due to the meteoric pace at which technology evolves, by the time research is completed regarding the effects of certain uses of technology, advances and new applications render the previous research out of date. Nevertheless, there is much valuable wisdom that has been produced, and that can be used as the basis of general extrapolations. In that vein, topics addressed in this issue include child development and cognition, cyber bullying, digital citizenship and technology in the classroom, among others.

Also contributing to this issue are several rabbinic thinkers, including Rabbi Gil Student, Rabbi Efrem Goldberg and *Klal Perspectives*' own Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein, who each address some of the great, and most often ignored, spiritual challenges of the internet, well beyond the often discussed inappropriate content that is so readily available.

Below is a summary of each article. As always, we would love to hear from you.

DR. DAVID PELCOVITZ:
Isolation versus Inoculation: Guidelines for Parents in Meeting the Challenge of Digital Technology

Parents, not schools or community leaders, must assume the primary responsibility for helping children manage technology use intelligently. However, recent generations have seen a drastic diminution in the level of parents' comfort in employing a responsible balance between love and limits in all areas of parenting. When providing limits, the most important aspect of parental supervision is the conveying of parental values and not simply rules, especially through modeling proper use of technology. Particular issues deserving parental attention include protecting children from inappropriate content and preventing the various effects of overstimulation.

RABBI GIL STUDENT:
Torah Authority in the Internet Age

The Internet has facilitated increased Torah learning in mnay ways, providing many more options to find a derech in learning that matches one's proclivities. On the other hand, it is easier than ever for fully committed Orthodox Jews to find themselves attracted to different streams of Orthodox thought and practice that challenge the principles of their upbringing. The Internet has also led to a wave of mockery and weakened communal leadership. Many community leaders simply choose to say little or nothing publicly, and the community suffers from the increased "democratization" of Torah that fills the vacuum. To address these and other unique dangers of the Internet, we need an approach that can be effective in today's environment.

RABBI EFREM GOLDBERG:
Technology – Playing With Fire

While filters and other software are enormously important and helpful in confronting some of technology's threats, we must remain collectively aware of the many perils that can be filtered and controlled only by the individual, with no assistance from technology. Whether as educators, parents or simply on our own behalf, we must remain vigilant and mindful of technology's impact on our lives and we must learn how to employ it judiciously, discriminately and carefully. Furthermore, we have the opportunity to add wisdom to "smartness"—to educate our children and students how to be thoughtful in managing and filtering their own ever-growing use of smart technology.

DR. GAVRIEL FAGIN:
Towards a Model of Self Regulation for Internet Behavior Challenges In Adulthood

Statistics confirm the clinical experience of mental health professionals in both the secular and frum world: marriages are falling apart, workers are being fired and relationships are suffering because of technology-driven hyper-sexuality. In the past ten years alone, a dramatic spike in the sheer number of individuals who are struggling with their online sexual behavior has been observed across the spectrum of Orthodoxy, socio-economic class, and employment type, with the age of onset getting younger. Solutions must be founded on inculcating a sense of individual responsibility to regulate oneself, and providing the tools by which such self-regulation can be become normative.

DR. ELI SHAPIRO:
The Need to Teach our Children Digital Citizenship

Communal dialogue has long focused on the graphic and disturbing nature of much of the content of the Internet. While these concerns are well taken, a broader spectrum of review is necessary, with particular attention to technology's daily impact on children. As writer Allison Slater Tate identifies in her 2014 Washington Post article, "We are the first generation of parents in the age of iEverything," we "had the last of the truly low-tech childhoods, and now are among the first of the truly high-tech parents," and it is our obligation to learn how to be parents of this new generation. The emerging term for healthy and responsible use of technology in the literature and in the field of technology education is "digital citizenship." Digital citizenship is more than Internet safety. It recognizes our role as citizens of the digital realm and how our behaviors and interactions can have a positive and negative effect on others as well as on ourselves.

DR. YITZCHAK SCHECHTER:
Breathing Life into the Golem of Technology

The future religious stability and growth of our community is dependent upon our acknowledging the inevitable role technology will continue to play in our lives and exploring how to both protect against its dangers and fully utilize its benefits. A denial of reality will only lead to misguided responses, outdated strategies and squandered opportunities, as we continue to fight yesterday's battles without addressing today's urgent needs. The power of technology is not in gizmos and gadgets, but in the fundamental restructuring of social patterns and the opportunities it provides for us to serve our community in vastly more effective ways. It is only through an increased focus on our deepest, most authentic Torah values and commitments that we can effectively navigate the overwhelming challenges and opportunities before us.

DR. SHMUEL MANDELMAN: Technology and Media's Impact on Child Development and Cognition

Technology's impact on child development is profound and complex. Major policy bodies and developmentalists have warned of possible detrimental effects of technology on the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of children. In particular, attention, memory and executive function underlie the ability to learn and are all affected by a child's engagement with technology, as are such functions as impulse control, decision making and systematic problem solving among others. While the literature may not be as robust as one would expect or desire, and while we honestly do not yet

have clear and definitive answers as to the full effect technology and media has on development and cognition, there is still much for us to learn from the existing literature and we must be committed to keeping abreast of new emerging research.

RABBI YITZCHOK ADLERSTEIN: Paradigm Shifts: Authority and Truth

The Internet has already brought several paradigm shifts to the Torah world, most notably in the areas of authority and truth. The paradigm shift in the dynamic of authority stems primarily from the community's democratization, which itself is an outgrowth of becoming a "connected" community. Every Jew has always had an opinion; the Internet has now given every Jew a voice. In regards to truth, as Google puts more questions, more challenges and more skepticism in the hands of the curious than anything ever did before, our community remains slow to respond. We will need to exercise ever-greater vigilance in ensuring that those presenting the Torah hashkafa are equipped with best material that our Torah community can offer.

RONA NOVICK, PHD: Cyber Bullying in the Jewish Community

Cyber bullying is currently understood as not specific to a particular technology, but rather any bullying that takes place using electronic technology. This can include sending mean text messages or emails, spreading rumors by email or on social networking sites, and posting or disseminating embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or imposing fabricated profiles. While no statistics on these phenomena exist regarding the Jewish community, practical factors may well cause the devastating impact of cyber bullying to be equal to, or greater, in the Orthodox community. Parents and community leadership need to up their game and increase their familiarity with the cyber world in order to properly supervise what goes on there.

RICK MAGDER: Exploring New Possibilities in Online Torah Learning

The unavoidable and increasingly pervasive and powerful impact of technology implores us to confront the unprecedented opportunities and avenues it can facilitate for Jewish growth, education and learning, despite the many imposing challenges it presents. Many online platforms deliver rich and profound media but at the same time may also inadvertently serve as the conduit for severely inappropriate material. Though online Torah learning is just beginning to become normative, and will likely continue to flourish, there is a need to be proactive in identifying a safe and effective means of employing the extraordinary tools available for online education. Additionally, with the tuition crisis only growing, we cannot simply ignore the emerging opportunities to alleviate it in significant ways.

LAYA SALOMON: Technology as a Learning Tool: An Educator's Perspective

The unprecedented proliferation of technological advancements, marked by an ability to access and manipulate content in unprecedented ways, compels a measure of reflection regarding the use of new technologies in educating our children. Educational uses for technology include conveying the content being taught, enhancing student learning, serving as an assessment vehicle and serving as an organizational tool. To help mitigate the risks and costs involved in bringing technology into the classroom, two principles must be respected: First, if construed by individuals or institutions as being anything but a tool, technology will prove to be either useless or harmful. Second, a child's education is profoundly enhanced by the existence of a partnership between home and school.

DANIEL WEISS: The Time in Between

Recent studies have shown that moments of downtime and the "mind wandering" that generally takes place then are essential for our mental health, giving us a much-needed opportunity to reflect and plan. Filling all that time up with other tasks, as is commonly done when one has a smartphone in one's pocket, can rob us of what the research calls "Autobiographical Planning," the time we take orient ourselves to what's important and maintain a comfortable equilibrium. Losing the availability of the downtime in our day can actually undermine our ability to know ourselves, digest ideas and experiences, and process the significance (or insignificance) of everyday events.

Dr. David Pelcovitz

Isolation versus Inoculation: Guidelines for Parents in Meeting the Challenge of Digital Technology

When I address parents in our community about their role in ensuring their children's responsible use of digital technology, they are consistently open to adopting a systematic and logical approach. Their level of receptivity, however, is significantly raised when the guidance acknowledges the complexity of what Rabbi S.R. Hirsch describes as "the tension between isolation and inoculation."[1] Parents whose homes contain smartphones, internet access or other digital technology are often eager for an approach that accepts the realities of technology, while also recognizing that parents bear enormous responsibility to ensure that their children's innocence and Torah values are not corrupted by unfettered exposure to the outside world. This discussion assumes the unavoidable prevalence of technology in the home and its accessibility to children. In that context, parental responsibilities and appropriate responses will be explored.

I. The Parental Mindset

A. ACKNOWLEDGING THE CHALLENGES

Research on the psychology of change suggests two relevant components of the mind-set of parents in approaching the challenges posed by digital technology:

1. A mind-set that views a task as a "challenge" rather than a "threat" results in more effective interventions including: greater persistence, more productive thoughts and problem-solving strategies and more efficient physiological responses.[2]

2. Canadian philosopher and author Robertson Davies, famously said: "The eye sees only what the mind is prepared to comprehend."[3] When there is clarity about the nature of a challenge, effective intervention is more likely.

The pervasiveness of digital technology in children's lives and behavior is demonstrated by the powerful results of the 2015 survey of teen social and technology use conducted by the Pew Research Center.[4] They report that 24% of adolescents are online "almost constantly "and 71% regularly use more than one social networking site. Reliable data on the pervasiveness of technology in our community is not available. Anecdotally, however, when I speak to high school students across the religious spectrum there is widespread acknowledgement that a considerable amount of time is spent with their digital devices, occupying a considerable amount of psychological space in their inner lives.

The impact on family dynamics can be profound. To the extent that one-on-one time spent between parents and children is one of the most powerful ingredients shaping internalization of values, time spent by children and their parents interacting with their devices rather than with each other, by definition, comes at the expense of depth of family connections. When family dinners or long vacation road trips give way to both children and adults immersed in texting, emailing or checking social media, the phenomenon of being "alone together"[5] replaces the family rituals that cement connections.

Parents, not schools or community leaders, must assume the primary responsibility for helping children manage technology use intelligently. During a recent talk that I gave at a Bais Yaakov high school, the overwhelming majority of the girls shared that they had virtually no discussions with their parents about rules and guidelines for prudent use of the Internet or social media sites. National surveys show[6] that an increasing number of parents in the general community recognize the need to guide their children in responsible digital behavior in areas such

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[1] Rabbi SR Hirsch (1984-2012) Collected Writings of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Volume 7, page 286, Feldheim, New York, New York.

[2] Tomaka, J. (1997). Cognitive and Physiological Antecedents of Threat and Challenge Appraisal, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*· 73, 63-72.

[3] Davies· R· (1951). Tempest-Tost· Toronto· Canada: Clarke· Irwin & Company.

[4] Lenhart, Amanda, Pew Research Center, April 2015, "Teen, Social Media and Technology Overview 2015

[5] Turkle, S. (2011) Alone Together, Basic Books, New York,

[6] Madden, M. (2012) Parents· teens and online privacy. Pew Internet, Washington· D·C·

as interaction with strangers online, reputation management and impact on future opportunities. However, parents seem to be spending very little time discussing the more subtle issues raised by digital technology, such as the increased dangers of being cruel to others in the anonymous settings of digital discourse or the tendency to think and interact in more shallow and superficial ways. For parents who strongly value depth of thought and learning as well as the primacy of proper behavior in the sphere of אדם לחבירו בין (interpersonal relationships), discussions about these more subtle aspects of digital behavior are an essential component of parental responsibility.

B. ACKNOWLEDGING THE INFLUENCE OF STRESS ON PARENTS' CHOICES

Before considering specific challenges and recommendations, it is important that parents recognize the role that stress plays in clouding parental behavior in this area. Daily stress is part and parcel of the *frum* lifestyle, including time and financial pressures, as well as the particular challenges of large families. This stress often leads parents to seeing the trees rather than the forest – a potential paralysis that can impede parental efforts to take a proactive approach in responsibly inoculating their children. Stress often leads parents to actually encourage overuse of technology by their children, instead of increasing their parental monitoring.

In one of their national surveys on parental modulating of child media use[7], the Kaiser Family Foundation explains parents' encouragement of children's use of technology as significantly motivated by the attractive role that technology can play as an effective babysitter. By distracting children with electronic gaming, texting friends or watching videos, overloaded parents may enjoy increased quiet, "me" time, the opportunity to complete household tasks or a chance to capture the often elusive, yet much needed, couple time.

The pressures of contemporary parenting are, undeniably, intense and occasionally overwhelming. Parents, however, are not typically prepared to address these pressures by encouraging children's associations with destructive friendships or engaging in physically dangerous activities. Parents must become intensely familiar with the technologies used by their children, and evaluate which uses or programs, if any, are similarly unacceptable preoccupations for their child.

[7] Kaiser Family Foundation (2006) The Media Family: Electronic media in the lives of infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their parents.

C. STOP BEING AFRAID TO EXERT AUTHORITY

Over the last decade, studies have consistently shown that the most effective parenting style in helping children deal with digital technology is an authoritative approach. Put simply, parents must assume the role of setting firm limits regarding their child's use of technology.[8] This does not suggest that a parent should employ an excessively strict authoritarian style that fails to pay attention to the child's point of view, but is rather an observation that a permissive parenting style is counter-productive, and parents must assume an assertive role. As *Chazal* tell us, the key to wise parenting is to find the balance between שמאל דוחה וימין מקרבת– "The left hand pushing away while the right hand brings closer."[9]

Recent generations have seen a drastic diminution in the level of parents' comfort in employing a responsible balance between love and limits. This topic was addressed in an important book by psychologist Jean Twenge and her colleague, W. Keith Campbell. They document how parental comfort with the limit-setting component of parenting has steadily dwindled over the course of the last two generations.[10] Parents increasingly fear upsetting their child, and avoid imposing limitations, even when the parent recognizes the benefits to the child of such limitations. Too frequently, children prevail in demanding the freedom and latitude enjoyed by friends, whom they perceive as being allowed to do whatever they please. Nowhere is this parental avoidance of responsibility more acute than in regard to children's access to technology.

We are taught in Mishlei (19:18): כי יש תקוה; ואל המיתו, אל תשא נפשך יסר בנך, – "Discipline your child because there is hope, let your soul not be swayed by his protest." A Midrash on this verse adds an insight that sounds alien to Western ears: "The more one disciplines one's child, the more the child will love his parent."[11]

When the imposition of rules results in an upset, crying child, it is only natural for parents to doubt themselves and be tempted to accede to the child's demands. Wise parents will recognize, however, that beneath the protests, a part of the child may well be welcoming the imposed structure and limits.

[8] Valcke, M. (2010) Internet parenting styles and the impact on internet use of primary school children *Computers and Education,* 55, 454-464.

[9] *Sotah* 47a

[10] Twenge, J· & Campbell· K. (2009) The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement. Simon & Schuster, New York, New York

[11] Shemos Rabbah, I

A number of years ago, I saw an adolescent regarding difficulties related to high levels of conflict between him and his parents. His home was dominated by frequent arguments with his parents who, he felt, were placing stricter limits on him than those placed by the parents of any of his peers. Now a young parent himself, he recently told me that when he thinks back to his years of resisting his parent's rules, he is very grateful that they never yielded to his cries of protest. He now realizes that their limit setting was necessary and came from their fulfilling their responsibility to protect him from himself. What he previously saw as arbitrary and cruel, he now sees as loving and not taking the easy way out. What I found of particular interest, however, was his assertion that he remembers that even during the worst periods of conflict, he was secretly happy that his parents stood firm. He was frightened at the time about the temptations he was being exposed to and, although he could barely acknowledge it to himself, let alone his parents, he needed the controls that he was unable to provide for himself.[12]

Debbie Fox, a prominent therapist in Los Angeles, conducted a study on the use of digital technology by a group of adolescents enrolled in local yeshiva high schools. Among her fascinating findings were the teens' responses to the question:

When you are a parent and have teenage children of your own, how will you handle their use of digital technology differently than your parents did with you?

More than half of the adolescents responded that they would be more restrictive with their children than their parents were with them. One teen observed that she wished that she could recover the endless hours wasted on texting and social media – often to 3 o'clock in the morning. A tenth-grade boy wrote that he does not think that he will ever be able to erase the pornographic images that he saw on the Internet as a child, when such exposure was surely confusing and over-stimulating.

From a practical standpoint, parents need to recognize two important points:

1. Children report a lower level of parental supervision of their internet use than their parents report; in other words, parents typically think that they are providing clear boundaries and rules, while their children report that this is not the reality of their day-to-day lives.[13] This problem is easily fixed. This discrepancy will inevitably disappear when parents provide clarity regarding rules, set limits regarding consequences for breaking the rules and regularly engage their children in dialogue about their expectations.

2. Setting limits works. In their national survey, the Kaiser Family Foundation reports that children provided with clear rules and consequences spend less time with media and are more likely to use media in a responsible manner. In fact, children with any media rules at all consume nearly three hours less media per day than those with no rules.

D. THE IMPORTANCE OF WARMTH

While it is essential that parents find the correct balance between love and limits, it must always be understood that rules without relationships inevitably translate into rebellion. Monitoring one's child's internet use is certainly crucial, but studies find that supervision is only effective in the context of a strong and healthy relationship.

Ultimately, parental controls cannot insulate a child from improper technology. If the child rejects a parent's guidance, digital technology can be accessed through friends or family. The most important aspect of parental supervision is the conveying of parental values. Such conveyance is forged only by parent-child interactions characterized by warmth, calm discussions that take into account a child's perspective and a general atmosphere that allows for a child to come to parents with any problem, without fearing a loss of love or support.

E. PARENTAL MODELING

The most powerful force shaping a child's behavior is not what parents say, but rather what they do. A classic study conducted by British psychologist John Rushton[14] found that when middle-school children were taught to play a game where they could earn tokens that could either be kept for themselves or given to impoverished children, the only predictor of whether the child would act charitably was how the adult, who taught them the game, modeled charitable or selfish actions. The adult's words were irrelevant, only their

[12] Pelcovitz R. & Pelcovitz D. (2005) Balanced Parenting, Shaar Press, Brooklyn, New York

[13] Livingstone, S., & Helsper, E. J. (2008). Parental mediation of children's internet use. Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 52(4), 581–599. 2015

actions influenced what the child would do.

For example, a powerful model is established when a parent, in interactions with children and spouse, designates at least some portion of the daily schedule as contemplative, digital free time. Similarly, when having one-on-one conversations with a child, a parent's phone should not be physically present – even if shut off. The very physical presence of the device may well lead the child to perceive the parent as less "present."

Research on the family dynamics that are most associated with instilling values in children finds that values are most effectively transmitted to children through the currency of time and emotion. When parents convey their passion about a value by spending time discussing its importance and becoming emotional when sharing their feelings about its importance, the message is far more likely to be incorporated into the family culture.[15] When parents openly discuss their own struggles with being mindlessly pulled into technology use during family time, and when they discuss their determination to fight the temptation of being drawn to the ring of their cell phones or the ping of an incoming text, a powerful lesson is transmitted regarding mindful use of technology.

II. Particular Issues Deserving Parental Attention

A: PORNOGRAPHY ON THE INTERNET: UNDERSTANDING ITS IMPACT AND THE ROLE OF PARENTS

As online activity has increasingly moved to portable devices, easy access to sexually explicit material has become the norm for the vast majority of adolescents, and the Internet has become the major source of adolescent information about sex.[16] The pervasiveness of these devices is indicated by a recent Pew Foundation survey that found that the average American adolescent owns 3.5 mobile devices – mostly unmonitored by parents.[17] This impact is likely compounded in families and schools in our community who often fail to discuss sexuality with their children.[18]

Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the sexualized nature of the Internet – they are at a stage in life where hormonal and neurobiological changes heighten their sexual drive and curiosity. More than any other period of life, they are prone to risk taking, poor judgment and a drive to explore anything that is new.[19]

A consistent picture emerges from recent studies on the impact of exposure to pornography on adolescents. A process of הרגל – habituation – has led to the "normalizing" of frequent exposure to even the most graphic depictions of nudity and sexual activity. In a Swedish study, close to 70% of adolescent males and 50% of females expressed no shame at pornography use – which is increasingly experienced as a legitimate form of sexual expression.[20] We shouldn't view our community as immune to this view of pornography. I was recently told by a principal of a Modern Orthodox elementary school that one of her students seemed genuinely surprised when a school administrator disciplined her for sharing pornographic pictures with classmates.

This shift is not only attitudinal. Adolescents who are regular consumers of pornography have been found to develop an approach to sex that is primarily physical and superficial and is devoid of the deep connection and commitment that is consistent with Jewish values. How this plays out in our relatively sheltered community is not known, but in the secular world, research indicates that heavy exposure to pornography serves as an accelerant for early and high risk adolescent sexual behavior and that approximately one in five adolescents are engaged in sending and receiving sexually suggestive nude photos through text messaging or email.[21] Studies have also found that heavy adolescent pornography use is associated with social isolation and impaired physical self-image, particularly in girls. Interestingly, when self-concept improves, or social connections are increased, there is a corresponding drop in the need to use pornography.[22]

In recent years, some secular mental health professionals, who had previously

[14] Rushton, J. (1975) Generosity in children: Immediate and long-term effects of modeling, preaching, and moral judgment. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 31, 459-466.

[15] Pelcovitz, R. & Pelcovitz, D. (2014) Life in the balance: Torah perspectives on positive psychology. Mesorah publications, Brooklyn, NY

[16] Owens, E. (2012) The impact of internet pornography on adolescents: A review of the research. *Journal of Sexual Addiction and compulsivity*, 19, 99-122

[17] Lenhart, A., Purcell, K., Smith, A., & Zickur, K. (2010). Social media & mobile Internet use among teens and young adults. PewInternet: Pew Internet & American Life Project.

[18] Hartman T. & Samet, B. (2007) Uncovering Private Discourse: Teachers' Perspectives of Sex Education in Israeli Religious Jewish Schools. *Curriculum Inquiry 37:1*

[19] Spear, L. (2000) Neurobehavioral Changes in Adolescence, Current Directions Psychological Science, 9(4), 111-114.

[20] Lofgren-Martenson, L., & Mansson, S. (2010). Lust, love, and life: A qualitative study of Swedish adolescents' perceptions and experiences with pornography. *Journal of Sex Research*, 47, 568–579.

[21] Kraus, S., & Russell, B. (2008). Early sexual experiences: The role of Internet access and sexually explicit material. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 11, 162–168.

welcomed easy access to pornography as a path to healthy sexual attitudes and expression, have become increasingly alarmed at the damage that pornography use can cause in marital relationships. These clinicians report that clients who heavily use pornography are conditioned to experience arousal as self-centered, sensually blunted and loveless.[23] In marital therapy wives complain that husbands who heavily use pornography develop unrealistic expectations regarding the physical appearance of their spouse as well as a self-centered attitude towards sexual activity marked by expecting one's spouse to be always ready, and consistently willing to try something new.

As is discussed elsewhere in this article, the most effective approach for parents to use in sheltering their children from the destructive force of pornography is an authoritative disciplinary stance, marked by the balance between clear rule setting and a close parent-child relationship. This parent-child connection will allow the child to turn to their parent for guidance and support should they encounter difficulties in the area of pornography. Research consistently shows that one of the most powerful predictors of responsible sexual behavior in teens is the level of parent-child connection. The following general guidelines should be considered:

1. Adolescents understand less about sexuality than their pseudo-sophisticated and jaded presentation often suggests. Their main source of information about sex is often whatever they find online – or whatever they are told by their equally ill-informed peers. Parents and teachers tend to consistently underestimate their children's concerns about sex as well as their child's desire to talk to them about these concerns. Even though adolescents often act like they aren't interested in parental input, when asked who they turn to in times of trouble, or whose opinions they value the most, the answer, typically, is their parents. It is important to remember that discussions about sexuality in general, or pornography use in particular, are not an event but a process – so even if a talk does not go particularly well, there will be many more opportunities to address this important area of parenting. If you are uncomfortable discussing sex, say that up front: "My parents/teachers didn't talk to me about sex so I'm feeling uncomfortable; please be patient. I'd still rather discuss this than avoid such an important reality." Also, be sure to avoid falling into a lecturing mode by making sure to frequently check in with your child regarding his or her opinions and feelings.

2. Make your values clear and explicit. Directly explain how exposure to such material violates our core Jewish values. Sharing some of the research discussed above about the negative psychological and social impact of pornography use can strengthen the impact of your message, particularly if your teen tends to generally not be receptive to "religious" based arguments.

Remember to install filtering and monitoring programs on your child's mobile devices as well as your home computers. Consulting with friends or professionals who have expertise in this technology is often helpful.

B. ATTENTION AND DISTRACTION

In their 2012 National survey,[24] the Pew Foundation found that ninety percent of teachers believe that digital media are creating a generation of children with unacceptably short attention spans. Educators teaching American students in Israeli yeshivas and seminaries often share the same observation. These educators have a unique perspective in being able to identify drastic changes in the attention and depth capacities they observe when comparing cohorts of current students with their students of a pre-digital era.

Over the last five years, I have been asked to discuss the role of technology with the students of several seminaries in Israel serving the centrist Orthodox community. I often mention to the students that their teachers find them, collectively, to be much less engaged in the transformative learning and experiential process that in the past had characterized students' Israel studies. The students agree, and acknowledge that their use of devices has had a significant impact on their ability to focus and become immersed in their learning. Despite this recognition, the students find themselves unable to shed the embrace of devices and to develop the level of independence and growth that in the past has stemmed from the year in Israel experience.

The distraction of devices not only impacts academic and intellectual pursuits, it also affects interpersonal relationships. Author and researcher Linda Stone, a former Apple and Microsoft executive, coined a widely-used term: "continuous, partial attention." This term captures the feeling of a constant need to be connected to digital devices lest anything be missed. The

[22] Owens, E. (2012) The impact of internet pornography on adolescents: A review of the research. *Journal of Sexual Addiction and compulsivity*, 19, 99-122

[23] Maltz, W. (2009). The porn trap: The essential guide to overcoming problems caused by pornography. HarperCollins, New York, New York

[24] Pew Research Center (2012) How teens do research in the digital world.

self-imposed requirement of constant connection mandates an emotional and cognitive state that is always "on." These expectations lead to chronic levels of stress and overload. Typically, one may not even recognize this drain, but interactions with children, spouses and friends can be subtly tainted by never being fully "present" in day-to-day interactions.

The subtle way that this dynamic can impact the quality of relationships has emerged in the surprising findings of some recent studies. This research finds that even the presence on a desk of a cell phone that is switched off leads to impairment in attention,[25] as well as a perception on the part of the person being spoken to that the conversation is less meaningful and that the interaction is marked by less empathy. [26]

The reduction in attention that is haphazardly and casually caused by devices is consequential, even to infants. Infants are impacted by where their parents' attention is directed. If a mother's gaze is turned to her smartphone, her baby will intrinsically focus on the phone as an object of importance. As Yale psychiatrist Bruce Wexler notes:

If an infant is given a choice of playing with an object being handled by an adult or with an identical copy of the object that is closer, the infant will reach past the copy to play with the one the adult has.[27]

Psychologist Catherine Steiner-Adair confirms that even newborns are profoundly impacted by a parent's frequent and mindless pull to their digital devices. Paying attention to one's smartphone is qualitatively different than folding laundry or engaging in other superficial tasks. Parents become so engrossed in checking their phones for texts and Facebook updates that they are not psychologically present for their infant or toddlers, whose minds and emotions are being shaped by constantly checking and interacting with their parents. As Steiner-Adair writes: "From birth to two they rely on us completely and they need our engaged presence during these connecting interactions. They can tell when we are distracted. We can't fool them."[28]

[25] Thornton, B. Faires, A. & Robbins, M. (2014) The mere presence of a cell phone may be distracting: Implications for attention and task performance. *Social Psychology*, 456) 479-488

[26] Misra, S, Cheng, L. & Genevie, J. (2014) The iPhone Effect: The Quality of In-Person Social Interactions in the Presence of Mobile Devices, *Environment and Behavior* 0013916514539755v1-13916514539755

[27] Wexler, B (2006). Brain and Culture: Neurobiology Ideology, and Social Change. Cambridge, MA, MIT Press

Recommendation: Empirical research has documented that multitasking reduces efficiency and produces a more superficial product. When a study contrasted a group spending 20 minutes of work interrupted by calls, checking texts, social media sites or email with a comparable group working without interruptions, the multitaskers complained of significantly higher levels of stress and frustration.[29] Most children, however, are unaware of the inefficiencies that typically accompany trying to do more than one thing at a time. In the spirit of thoughtful authoritative parenting, one strategy is to approach older children and adolescents in a collaborative manner. Give them the facts about the research on multitasking and discuss possible alternatives. Listen carefully to their perspective and then encourage them to experiment by doing their work with, and without, multitasking. In a well-designed, parent-child discussion, children may come to their own conclusions about the cost-benefit analysis that makes sense for them.

C. TEXTING WHILE DRIVING

Adolescent drivers represent the highest proportion of those who text while driving.[30] Recent studies have reported that ninety-two percent of college students admit to reading texts while driving.[31] Such distractions are a contributing factor in ten percent of driver fatalities.[32]

A recent review of empirical research on the dangers of texting while driving concludes that parents of young drivers have a crucial responsibility in directing their teens not to text and drive. Studies show that adolescents typically believe that they can safely multitask in this way, but the harsh reality is that such behavior often has calamitous results.

Recommendation: First and foremost, parents must model the behavior of not texting and driving. In fact, clear rules should require that cell phones be kept shut off in the glove compartment while driving, available for emergencies. And even then, only after the car engine has been turned

[28] Steiner Adair, C. (2013) The big disconnect: Protecting childhood and family relationships in the digital age. New York, New York, Harper-Collins, page 72

[29] Mark, G. (2006) The Cost of Interrupted Work: More Speed and Stress, University of California, Irvine, Department of Informatics

[30] World Health Organization (WHO), 2011. Mobile Phone Use: A Growing Problem of Driver Distraction. World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland.

[31] Atchley, P. (2011). The choice of text and drive in younger drivers: behavior may shape attitude. *Accident Analysis and Prevention* 43, 134–142.

[32] National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 2009. Electronic Device Use in 2008 (Report No. DOT-HS-811-184). NHTSA, Washington, DC.

off. Not only should parents have discussions about these expectations, they should monitor compliance by checking phone records to confirm that their teen did not text or speak on the phone while driving.[33]

D. INDEPENDENCE

One understandable attraction of smartphones is assisting students abroad, such as in Israel, in coping with homesickness. As one girl told me, "Since coming to Israel, I feel even closer to my parents. I hardly ever said 'I love you" to my mother or father back home, but now I say that at least once a day."

Though parents may relish that upside, it comes at the expense of the child's personal growth that often emerges from finding one's own way without constant input from family back home. This is true for students studying away from home in Israel, but equally true for the yeshiva student, ostensibly ensconced in the *bais hamedrash*. At a Torah U'Mesorah convention a number of years ago, I heard Rav Shmuel Kaminetsky say that he does not allow cell phones in the Philadelphia Yeshiva "because when a *talmid* has a cell phone in the Philadelphia Yeshiva, he is not truly in the Philadelphia Yeshiva."

E. "BEING" VERSUS DOING

There is a growing body of evidence that our society is becoming increasingly uncomfortable with just "being" rather than doing. In a 2012 survey, eighty-three percent of American adults reported that they had spent no time "relaxing or thinking" during the prior twenty-four hours.[34]

In a fascinating series of studies,[35] University of Virginia psychologist Timothy Wilson and his colleagues asked participants of different ages and backgrounds to sit in a room alone with their thoughts, staring at the four walls with nothing to do but "be." Even though the participants were asked to sit in the room for only between six and fifteen minutes, they found the experience very unpleasant. The next experiment was even more interesting. A group was given the same task, albeit with a choice. Each participant could elect to either sit alone with their thoughts for fifteen minutes, or self-administer mildly painful electric shocks. Amazingly, 25% of the women, and more than 60% of the men chose to shock themselves rather than experience the discomfort of being alone with their thoughts.

As MIT sociologist Sherry Turkle writes in her book "Alone Together,"[36] stillness – the term she uses to describe the emotional state of "being" – is increasingly rare in the daily life of adolescents. Jewish educators report stories of high school students in a genuine state of panic when they lose their smartphones. Turkle quotes developmental psychologist Erik Erikson as saying that in order to develop their emerging identities, adolescents in particular need to carve out a place of stillness in their lives. Constantly being wired can rob adolescents of familiarity with their core identities and the time and psychological space needed for personal reflection.

Recommendation: In his book "The Distraction Addiction,"[37] Stanford University technology expert Alex Soojung-Kim Pang strongly advocates for building a "digital Sabbath" – a designated part of the week that is technology free. In a sense, translating the lesson of Shabbos into our weekday schedule and attitudes should be a component of educating our children to be more comfortable with carving out a part of their life that allows for stillness and reflection.

Specific recommendations for implementing effective technology breaks include the recognition that in order for such practice in stillness to become part of children's life, regular times must be set aside during the week. Careful attention must be paid to what activities and discussions will replace a digital connection. In addition, children may need help with strategies for explaining to their friends the reality of their being AWOL from the digital world for a period of time. Of course, to be effective, parents themselves must participate in the designated technology breaks.

Recommendation: Almost one thousand years ago, Rabbeinu Bachya introduced a four-word *tefila* that captures the essence of our objective:[38] ה' יצילני מפיזור הנפש – *"May G-d save me from fragmentation of the soul."* A similar statement was made by the Piacesner Rebbe, who quoted the Baal Shem Tov as saying that another way of understanding the words we say several times a day in the Shema – ואבדתם מהרה – is that we should strive to get rid of the rush in our life (instead of the literal translation "you

[33] Caird, J. (2014) A meta-analysis of the effects of texting on driving. *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, 71, 311-318.

[34] American Time Use Survey (2012) Bureau of Labor Statistics.

[35] Wilson, T. (2014). Just think: The challenges of the disengaged mind. *Science*, 345:6192 75-77.

[36] Turkle, S. (2011) Alone Together, Basic Books, New York, New York

[37] Soojung-Kim Pang, A. (2013) The Distraction Addiction, Little Brown and Company, New York, New York

[38] חובת הלבבות בפתיחה לשער הבטחון

will be quickly lost" it can be read out of context to mean "you should lose 'quickness'" – i.e., don't rush).[39]

A possible antidote is to develop a capacity for mindfulness – a teachable skill that directly addresses the emotional state of פיזור and מהירה. Adolescents and young adults are increasingly open to developing skills such as meditation and mindfulness. When I was involved in co-developing a treatment for abused adolescents, one of our more striking findings was the openness of even the toughest teens to learning how to do mindfulness exercises. Yeshiva high school students are also surprisingly receptive to *tefila* programs that incorporate the development of mindfulness skills as an approach to improving *kavana* during *davening*. While the specifics of mindfulness training is beyond the scope of this article, instructive books include *The Art of Kavana* by Rabbi Alexander Seinfeld (Devora Publishing, 2005), and Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan's classic, *Jewish Meditation: A Practical Guide* (Shocken Books, 1985).

Recommendation: In a recently published book,[40] child psychiatrist Jodi Gold makes a number of common-sense recommendations about a parent's role in guiding children to responsible technology use. One such suggestion is that parents keep technology out of their child's bedroom, especially before bedtime. Recent studies have documented how smartphone or iPad use before bedtime can interfere with sleep. Once again, of course, parents must serve as models. Along with their children, each evening parents should recharge their digital devices in the kitchen or dining room. The temptation to check for texts, emails and calls while in bed is simply too strong when the phone is in the room.

III. A CLOSING PROPOSAL: THE DIGITAL CONTRACT

Both children and adolescents in our community are surprisingly receptive when I introduce the concept of conducting an open discussion between parent and child on responsible use of the Internet and other digital devices, and then establishing a written contract on the agreed-upon parameters of such use. As it says in *Mishlei:* באין חזון, יפרע עם – "When there is no vision, the people cast off restraint."[41] This receptivity reflects the fact that children, as well as parents, are looking for clarity and guidance.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends[42] that parents and children sign a "contract" that represents a commitment to a specific set of guidelines regarding the family's use of technology. Two important provisions of this contract are the children's acknowledgment and agreement that their parents will periodically check into their media history on whatever devices the child uses, and the children's assurance that they will not watch inappropriate shows or play offensive games. Another suggested provision is that a child's total screen time be limited to a maximum of two hours a day, unless a school assignment requires more.

Gold suggests that while doing schoolwork, children and adolescents give their parent their smartphone to hold. Conversely, an important component of the contracts suggested respectively by both the American Academy of Pediatrics and by Gold is that parents commit to a certain standard of behavior, as well. The American Academy of Pediatrics' contract also includes a joint family commitment to have technology-free meals, and to designate certain periods of the year, such as portions of vacations or the summer, as technology-free family bonding time.

Each family's guidelines, of course, must be tailored to the standards of their community, the age and temperament of the children and the particular values of the family. For example, contract terms will inevitably differ between families in a Modern Orthodox community and those in a more sheltered *Chasidishe* school and community.

Consequences to contract violations are also important. Gold recommends that a contract violation should result in a loss of technology use for half a day in that week. A second offense will result in loss of a whole day. These types of consequences reflect the generally held view of parenting experts that the most effective consequences for children and adolescents are brief and logical, and are delivered unemotionally.

In the spirit of using an authoritative parenting style, parents agree that, while they may designate the ultimate terms of the contract, they commit to actively listen to their child's thoughts and concerns before the rules and regulations are established. Parents also pledge to take a general approach, guided by trying to help their child learn from their mistakes. A particularly important component of an effective contract – especially for adolescents – is that parents agree that they will expect to give their child increasing freedom

[39] Rabbi Moshe Tzvi Weinberg, Maintaining peace of mind in a high speed world, Yeshiva University Purim to go, 5773.

[40] Gold, J. (2015) Screen Smart Parenting. Guilford Press, New York, New York.

[41] *Proverbs* 29:18

[42] http://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/Media/Pages/Media-Time-Family-Pledge.aspx

and responsibility as the child demonstrates a commitment to responsible use of technology.

IV. CONCLUSION

When trains were a new technology 150 years ago, some journalists and intellectuals worried about the destruction that the railroads would bring to society. One news article at the time warned that trains would "blight crops with their smoke, terrorize livestock… and people could asphyxiate" if they traveled on them.[43]

Thankfully, society learned how to integrate the new reality of the locomotive into their daily life. One of the greatest challenges of our time is far more complex – learning how to manage the technology revolution, a transformational force that brings the outside world – both the good and the bad – into our children's daily experience. It is hoped that the recommendations shared in this article will help families find their way in reaching the optimal balance between isolation and inoculation.

[43] Quoted by Nick Bilton, The twitter train has left the station. New York Times, February 3, 2010.

Rabbi Gil Student

Torah Authority in the Internet Age

A famous saying has it that Jews in America are just like everyone else, only more so. Perhaps when it comes to the Internet, Jews are like everyone else, only less so. The following thoughts are admittedly impressionistic due to a lack of data. Moreover, I am not a sociologist. However, I am very much involved in the use of the Internet for Orthodox communal purposes. Likely because of that role, I have been observing the Orthodox community's interaction with the Internet, particularly since the focus on its dangers was raised in broad communal terms in the Asifah of 2012. With that reference, I should disclose that I strongly opposed the Asifah, for reasons I will explain below.

The Internet's impact on general society has certainly seeped into the Orthodox Jewish community, but to a lesser degree for us than for others because of our unique communal and cultural traits. For example, Shabbos observance forces us offline for approximately 25 hours a week. On occasion, throughout the year, we have prolonged electronic "fasts" due to Yamim Tovim, sometimes lasting as long as three consecutive days. Forced to live in the pre-Internet era for these short periods, we exercise the skills that the Internet tends to suppress, such as holding conversations without electronic interruptions. Similarly, though our schools' policies limiting Internet use are generally observed only in the breach, the concerned attitude toward Internet use conveyed by our yeshivos and rabbis force us to at least construe Internet use as an option, rather than an unquestioned necessity. Nevertheless, just as the Internet has dramatically changed general society, it has had a substantial impact on our community as well.

In this essay, I will discuss some of the benefits that the Orthodox community has enjoyed by capturing the opportunities afforded by the Internet, but also the significant drawbacks. Some of the more obvious and seemingly pressing issues generated by the Internet are, from a historical perspective, not particularly concerning. There is, however, another issue that is historic and

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theologically urgent, threatening to undermine our entire communal order and tradition. That issue will be discussed in the second half of this essay. I believe that, unfortunately, there is no simple solution for these problems. However, the old approach, exemplified by the aforementioned Asifah, is doomed to failure. I can only suggest another approach that may not be popular, but it is all I have.

Part I: The Internet and the Individual

FACILITATING INCREASED TORAH LEARNING

Probably the most significant contribution of the Internet has been its dramatic expansion of the sheer volume of Torah that is available to be learned. The immense stores of Torah articles, books and audio lectures posted online, and thereby accessible to all, are astounding. A simple personal device can store more information, study tools and resources than the ancient library in Alexandria. This new technology allows yeshiva graduates to listen to, and learn from, their *rabbeim* for years after leaving the yeshiva, something that was but a rare treat in earlier times. Perhaps the even greater innovation is its enabling of graduates of one yeshiva to learn from *rabbeim* of another yeshiva. The Gemara (Avodah Zarah 19a) encourages Torah learning from more than one teacher, since such practice broadens one's understanding of Torah. As never before, the Internet allows mature students to learn from the widest selection of leading *talmidei chachamim* and *magidei shiur*.

The access to one's earlier *rabbeim*, as well as to others, meets different needs for different people. For some, an ongoing connection to the *rabbeim* of their younger years expands the teachers' influence into the student's adult years. Others, who never really connected to their *rabbeim* while in yeshiva, find new *rabbeim* better suited to their disposition or learning interests. Yet others may have had excellent relationships while in yeshiva, yet discover on the Internet new *rabbeim* who are better suited to their needs as an adult, and to their more mature emotional and intellectual orientation. They now have many more options to find a *derech* in learning that matches their proclivities. But this opportunity also highlights a danger.

WHOSE DERECH?

Most men leave yeshiva while in their twenties, but never stop growing and changing. Such continuing development is both natural and wonderful. On the one hand, the Internet allows *rabbeim* and others with traditional Torah voices to play an integral role in this maturation process. On the other hand, the Internet makes it easier than ever for fully committed and believing Orthodox Jews to find themselves attracted to different streams of thought and practice. Rather than going "off the *derech*," they are going "off their *derech*." This tendency is particularly pervasive among those intellectually inclined, and in my experience is actually far more common than the more-frequently-discussed phenomenon of individuals going "off the *derech*" completely.

Perhaps for social and family reasons, and perhaps because it makes them more comfortable, most people who change beliefs, whether off the *derech* or off their *derech*, do not actually leave their community. They keep their new attitudes more or less to themselves and alter little in their outward behavior; they certainly do not change the schools to which they send their children. This absence of social expression greatly diminishes the impact of Internet-induced derech issues. It is true that some young people are leaving the community, but that was also the case in the 1950's, 60's, 70's, 80's and 90's. One should not minimize the pain and concern related to any individual leaving the community, or to the spiritual damage of any individual abandoning traditional beliefs. But, the Internet does not appear to be causing any sort of exodus from our communities.

MORE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES, YET LESS TIME LEARNING

Greater than its impact on the Orthodox Jew's theological views is the Internet's consumption of a colossal amount of time. The *frum* Jew has no shortage of demands on his or her time, yet technology is unquestionably diverting time from other far more important and productive uses. This diversion desperately requires corrective action.

The onslaught of e-mails, many demanding immediate attention, is a normative part of everyone's day. Rabbis report that they spend huge parts of their day responding to e-mails and texts from their congregants. On the one hand, this expanded contact between rabbi and congregant is wonderful. On the other, it detracts from other activities the rabbi had otherwise committed to be doing, such as spending time with his family, planning communal events and learning Torah. Not only rabbis carry this new burden. Leaving an office at day's end no longer allows one to enter into an alternative restricted zone of family, Torah study and other activities. Emails, texts and cell phones allow the office to be an intrusive and demanding part of life, at any time and in any place. Moreover, social media and many websites are intentionally

designed to capture the viewer's attention for extended periods of time. People read innocuous status updates and watch mildly interesting videos, despite recognizing that they are wasting time. But the intrusion into time otherwise more wisely allocated is but one dimension of the issue. A second dimension is the resulting comprised ability to focus.

A personal device may contain *Tanach*, Shas and several hundred *sefarim*, including *rishonim* and *poskim* and almost everything else. When learning this Torah on a device, it is hard not to take an occasional peek at e-mail. In fact, simply having the device accessible creates this urge. Similarly, typing on a smartphone could be writing a *devar Torah* one minute and texting the next. While these functional overlaps can theoretically be conquered with self-control, self-control is a trait that has always suffered a supply/demand imbalance.

The distractive nature of devices is recognized by the technology industry. In fact, apps and programs have been introduced to force users to focus; alas for a variety of reasons they inevitably fail. Ultimately, the most effective strategy to manage this challenge is by employing a time log, which is a daily or weekly estimate of the time spent online. After keeping such a log for a few weeks, and seeing the shocking amount of time spent unproductively online, conscientious people will inevitably take action to reduce their usage.

INATTENTION SPAN

Many have written, with varying degrees of alarm, about the widespread decrease in the attention span of the Sesame Street, and now Internet, generations. I find myself struggling to read long articles and, *le-havdil*, occasionally skipping to the end of long *teshuvos*. There is even a trend among Religious Zionist *sefarim* to include a summary at the end of each *teshuvah*. I am not sure how that started, but it is quite a reflection of the needs of the current generation.

Teachers and rabbis must adjust their styles to accommodate the realities of their less attentive listeners. The days are long gone when Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik, z'tl, could capture an audience's attention for a four-hour lecture. To maintain students' attention, we must intersperse stories and surprising insights into our adult education classes. To a degree, this practice, though necessary, has watered down some of the learning in our community. It has also given higher profiles to rabbis who excel in infotainment, which sometimes comes with the risks attendant to a charismatic personality *(ve-ha-meivin yavin)*. Writers, too, need to entertain. Articles need cliffhangers and teasers to get people to read to the end.

But the implications of the Internet to our community are even more ominous and profound.

SHMUTZ

The well-publicized 2012 Asifah was mentioned in the introduction, above. The focus of the Asifah was almost exclusively on preventing access to the inappropriate material available online. Similarly, ongoing discussions abound in shuls and by rabbis concerning the allegedly rampant infidelity caused by the Internet. I suggest that this narrow focus is misplaced.

By its nature, the *yetzer hara* finds opportunities to wreak havoc. The Internet did not introduce marital cheating nor is looking at inappropriate things a new concern or practice. For centuries, even prior to the Internet, the *yetzer hara* enjoyed much tragic success. Even in more recent times, summer bungalow colonies have, arguably, been a far bigger source of infidelity than the Internet. Certainly, those engaged in extramarital affairs use any technology available, including cellphones and social media. These technologies may be tools of choice, but eliminating them will not hinder cheating spouses. Admittedly, this perspective is premised on anecdotes alone, but so is the view that the Internet is the primary inducer of misbehavior.

That is not to suggest that the Internet is not rampantly abused and that it need not be assiduously controlled. However, the tone and rhetoric regarding its dangers must be appropriately measured lest the damage of the rebuke be more devastating than the improper behavior being addressed.

For example, we are often warned that Internet users can lose their *neshamos or entire olam haba* with the click of a link. This declaration is incredibly unhelpful. We believe that people can do *teshuvah* until their last breathing moment. It is horribly inappropriate to employ language that effectively writes off those who have sinned – whether by viewing online pornography or otherwise – by asserting that they are a lost cause. People make mistakes; in moments of weakness they make bad choices. We must vociferously discourage inappropriate behavior but the wholesale and absolute marginalization of those who succumb to temptation is not productive. In fact, some people are addicted to pornography and they need professional help. If their behavior is simply characterized as evil, they will not likely seek the necessary aid. Others

can stop their inappropriate behavior, and should be effectively motivated to do so. Rather than loud clamoring, the most effective method to motivate the ceasing of hidden behavior is to promote the threat of discovery (see *Berachos* 28b).

Internet filters are necessary but filters alone are insufficient, particularly on mobile devices. Image and ad blockers are also very important. But more powerful are stories of men losing their families and livelihoods because of their accessing pornography. If people realize that they are likely to get caught and are truly scared of what will happen to them when they are caught – what their children, friends and bosses will think of them – they will stop if they can. Sadly, we do not lack for many true stories that can bring this message home. The stories must be utilized to scare people away from pornography and infidelity. Imposing the requisite fear of discovery does not require fire and brimstone rhetoric. Every rabbi and educator, in their own style, should repeatedly remind people that no one is truly anonymous online; every search can be traced and every user unmasked; and thus, eventually, misdeeds will be disclosed.

However, the language and tactics were not the primary failing of the Asifah. Rather, something more fundamental was missing, the discussion of which requires us to look from a communal perspective and take a brief historical and theological detour to see the truly historic change the Internet has caused.

Part II: The Internet and the Community

MOCKERY AND A WEAKENED COMMUNAL LEADERSHIP

Online mockery and derision are ubiquitous. Their pervasiveness imbues readers with a diminished sensitivity to improper language and to attitudes that are fundamentally anathema to being a frum Jew. More than that, however, is the impact of anonymous frontal attacks on communal leadership. In the face of unbridled and unabashed anonymous bomb throwing, many community leaders simply choose to avoid the heat by saying nothing publicly. Whether or not this intimidation is the very goal of the derision, the community suffers immeasurably from the silencing of at least some of its leadership. Because of the widespread mockery and uncharitable reading of the media, particularly on the Internet, the community is being deprived of invaluable guidance and a sorely needed counterbalance to the rather loud and incessant voices that are unsympathetic to Torah tradition.

This is all in addition to the traditional damage caused by ever-present mockery, cynicism and frivolity. They destroy faith in, and respect for, others, and diminish the inclination to accept rebuke. The Internet has raised the impact of mockery to new heights, thereby decreasing *teshuvah* in the world.

None of these evil challenges, however, are new. Mockery is denounced in *Tanach*, indicating that it has been a problem since time immemorial. In our own lifetimes, we recall how Israeli reporters would attend the speeches of Rav Elazar Shach and Rav Ovadiah Yosef, waiting with bated breath to mock their teachings. The Communists in the early twentieth century mercilessly mocked rabbis and Judaism in newspapers, theater and other media. Even our forefather Avraham Avinu faced the *leitzanei ha-dor* who would mock him.

The impact, as well, is not unprecedented. In the past, mockery has won impressive victories. A century and a half ago, yeshiva benches were emptied to the halls of Communism and Socialism, largely due to a campaign of mockery against traditional Judaism. Compared to the spiritual devastation wrought in such eras, twenty-first century Internet challenges may pale in comparison. Perhaps Heaven has mercy on our outgunned community.

The unique challenge of Internet mockery, however, is the Internet's unparalleled penetration into our communities, our schools and our homes. In other situations, however uncomfortable the mockery, we can tolerate the unpleasantness by avoiding it. The intrusion of the Internet, however, has diminished the ability to avoid it, even for those in the most insular of communities.

The only effective defense to mockery is sophistication. Rabbis need to become PR mavens, savvy in the judicial use of media to convey a message. The current generation of *gedolim* grew up in a different era and cannot be expected to master new media. The next generation, however, must become media savvy. An excellent example is Rav Shlomo Aviner in Israel, who has developed relationships with the media and publishes with such frequency and ferocity that his views cannot be easily distorted. He is well-known for answering all text message questions, affording him a radical availability, allowing anyone to directly ask his opinion on almost any subject. We cannot defeat mockery outright, but we can wage a good fight. That effort, however, requires a willingness to use the right weapons. Leading rabbis need to follow basic PR ideas like staying positive, learning what your opponents are saying and trying to convince bystanders and not your opponent.

Mockery is a clear internet challenge to Torah leadership but the very culture of the Internet poses a more subtle and pervasive challenge to the Torah tradition.

DEMOCRATIZATION OF TORAH

Though Torah study is a universal Jewish obligation, mastery of Torah is a prized and limited achievement. Prior to the publication of the Talmud, when the Torah was primarily transmitted orally, only those who studied in the controlled environment of a yeshiva academy could ever gain access to the "texts." And only those with phenomenal memories could actually master the material. Everyone else recognized their own limitations in scholarship and, to a great degree, had no choice but to defer to the wisdom and guidance of their rabbis. Their only alternative, if we can call it that, was to reject the oral tradition outright and adopt the more accessible text of the Bible as the sole source of religious truth.

This wish to minimize rabbinic influence could likely have been the allure of the Sadducee, and later Karaite, ideology. These were paths that allowed for Torah expertise without the prerequisite of mastering the oral Torah. In this sense, the Sadducees were religious populists, democrats of the religious spirit. They sought to wrench religious authority away from the rabbis and allow everyone to participate equally. Rather than spreading greater knowledge, they reduced the knowledge requirement and merely distributed authority more arbitrarily. We can sense a rebirth of this strategy in the Internet era.

The Torah, however, does not encourage populist authority, but rather places authority on the shoulders of the contemporary, scholarly experts. The "priest and the judge who shall be in that day" serve as the highest religious decision-making body, from whose rulings we must not "deviate right or left" (*Devarim* 17:11). Through the teachings of the oral tradition, the Sages taught that Torah mastery and guidance requires true, substantive expertise. Absent both intellectual and moral mastery, the Torah's lessons are vulnerable to distortion, whether deliberate or otherwise. Therefore, rabbis must shepherd their flocks and nurture a connection to Torah in the proper measures, as befitting their spiritual readiness. Sometimes, restricting access to certain types of information is appropriate.

TORAH FOR SCHOLARS

There is a concept of *"halachah ve-ein morin ken,"* which translates as "this is the law but we do not teach it this way." This principle reflects the fact that the law occasionally includes dimensions that create opportunities for abuse. This ruling is only appropriate for Torah scholars who are equipped to appreciate these legal dimensions within a fuller context.

This attitude can be criticized as paternalistic and condescending. Who are the rabbis to decide who is ready to learn certain things, and who is not? Who are they to restrict access to dimensions of the Torah; after all, is not Torah the inheritance of the entire nation?

On the other hand, if it is true that certain knowledge will be abused if shared, or be wholly misunderstood and then misapplied, is a degree of restriction not appropriate? For example, is it appropriate to teach an entire community how to delay divorce proceedings through legal technicalities, or how to pursue other activities that are invaluable when applied appropriately, but devastating when not? Are there not topics that should be broached only with those who are sufficiently mature or sophisticated to understand and utilize them appropriately? Of course not all information is ripe to be shared with everyone. Yet, this seemingly elitist attitude is certainly being challenged by contemporary societal attitudes.

One might have thought that the centralized influence of the rabbis would diminish when, out of necessity, the Oral Torah was committed to writing. The recording and resulting text of the Oral Torah, however, was so confusing and voluminous, and its manuscripts so rare, that few could claim to master it. Torah remained within the exclusive purview of the experts, and the rabbis remained the sole source of Jewish information. During that period, rabbis could and frequently did challenge each other, often heatedly. Texts were checked against rabbinic assertions, and compilations of arguments were tested against other views. Yet, due its complexity, the discussion remained closed to those without proper training. The barrier to entry was years of textual study and apprenticeship.

The exclusive access to views and arguments then began to diminish. Certainly the introduction of the printing press played a significant role in the democratization of Judaism, but another culprit demands notice. Not only were texts made readily accessible, but summary works, like *Ba'eir Heitev*, condensed complex textual debates into manageable digests. These books allowed proficiency to masquerade as expertise. To the uninitiated, someone able to skim the summaries could appear to be a master, a lamentable situation in any field. Being familiar with the *Mishnah Berurah's* position on

a particular law cannot compare to having extensively studied the underlying texts, commentaries and codes.

TORAH IN A DEMOCRATIC AGE

Halachic Judaism may have now truly entered its democratic age. Electronic databases, and the Internet in particular, produce an ever greater democratization of knowledge. Those who do not even know Hebrew can Google their way to proficiency, on some level. The clever yeshiva graduate, who is familiar with the ways of the Talmud and codes, but has certainly not yet mastered them, can use Google and databases to amass impressive arguments and even produce seemingly informed articles. One can even become a decade-long Torah blogger without having mastered the Talmud. The Internet is a magnification of the once minor threat of democratization of Torah.

In this age, can the traditional respect of, and deference to, expertise survive? Does *"halachah ve-ein morin ken"* have any meaning in the electronic age?

One strategy for Torah leaders is to bemoan this democratization by standing their ground and denouncing the non-experts who overstate their competence for the intellectual frauds that they are. Unfortunately, however, calling out frauds generally alienates more than it attracts. The authentic scholar appears self-serving and uncharitable, even when he is entirely correct. Similarly, debate will fail, since the audience lacks the requisite sophistication and training to evaluate the credibility and strength of competing arguments. Consequently, such debates are won through rhetoric and simplistic formulations, usually the province of the fraud, and not authenticity and truth, the province of the scholar.

Authority has been transferred to the people. The Asifah failed to recognize this and therefore proposed solutions to the Internet that immediately failed. Respected communal leaders attempted to impose strict limitations on Internet use. Among the proposals were communal requirements of "kosher" devices or mandatory expulsion from school of students whose families access the Internet at home. Even the subsequent Flatbush Asifah, which was more moderate in its tone, attempted to impose communal guidelines limiting Internet use. This approach will continue to fail because the Internet is about democracy and autonomy, which is in direct contradiction to externally imposed limits. Today, even insular Chasidic groups struggle to maintain Internet limits; more open communities have no chance for success. In a contemporary Western society, a direct fight against autonomy and freedom will lose.

Since the times of Korach, Torah leadership has faced challenges to its authority. Each generation needs its own way of protecting our sacred tradition and community against what Rav Joseph Soloveitchik aptly called a "common-sense rebellion" against Torah expertise. To address the unique dangers of the Internet, we need an approach that is appropriate for today.

DEALING WITH DEMOCRACY

I hesitatingly propose here a three-pronged approach to address this dramatic advance in the democratization of Torah knowledge: Clarification, Courtesy and Circumscription.

People now want to be convinced, not just informed. Leading rabbis ought to expand on their halachic and hashkafic decisions beyond brief statements, in a format and language that is widely accessible. They ought to explain why they reached their conclusions and discuss the possibilities they rejected. Rabbis should expect to face bold challenges and prepare in advance by including in their *teshuvos* and statements arguments against potential objections. In the past, only the most expansive thinkers wrote at such length. Today, however, all rabbis must clarify their views in depth before subjecting them to the inevitable challenges. This method will not prevent challenges but it will convince many readers and will gain the respect of many others who find themselves forced to think hard about the subject.

Courtesy is probably the most important element of this approach. If one rosh yeshiva denounces another in unpleasant terms, he teaches the public that insulting leading rabbis is acceptable in communal discourse. It does not matter that the general public is unqualified to judge who is truly learned or that this behavior has great precedent. Harsh language is a weapon that will always be turned back on its speaker. In today's environment, when you insult one rabbi, you insult them all, as well as yourself. The first step to protecting the respect due to the Torah and its teachers is to speak pleasantly, even if strongly, about the people with whom one disagrees most.

Finally, we have to recognize that the drive for autonomy is the strongest force in Western society. No one can win a frontal attack on personal autonomy. Rav Yosef Shaul Nathanson (*Divrei Shaul*, third edition, Devarim 21:11) offers a profound psychological interpretation of the Torah's response to an

unstoppable desire. He explains that rather than forbid that which will be committed anyway, the Torah creates a structure of laws around the action to limit its impact (compare with Rashi, *Mo'ed Katan* 17b d"h mah and *Moreh Nevuchim* 3:32). Rav Nathanson derives this approach from the eishes yefas to'ar and finds it elsewhere. This approach can be applied in contemporary society without permitting anything that is forbidden, which is of course beyond our ability.

For example, consider a rabbi who is approached by a congregant who has studied the issue and concluded that *halachah* permits using an umbrella on Shabbos within an *eruv*. The rabbi can respond that this is incorrect or that the poskim have considered and rejected this possibility. The congregant may or may not listen. Alternatively, the rabbi can make a deal with the congregant as follows: In public in their community, the congregant has to follow the rabbi's rulings for the sake of communal harmony. But if the congregant is able to write his thoughts in the traditional Hebrew style of halachic discourse and publish the article in a respected Torah journal, thereby entering the discourse of *halachah*, then the rabbi supports the congregant's right to follow his opinion in private or when away from home. Encourage his additional learning, challenge him to conduct a rigorous analysis that will pass the review of an experienced Torah editor, and genuinely respect his sincere search for *devar Hashem*. In this way, individual initiative and autonomy are supported, the congregant feels valued, but his opportunity for deviance from communal norms is limited.

This is just one possible example. The goal is to offer legitimate opportunities for personal autonomy without undermining the *halachic* process and the authority of Torah scholars. If this particular application is deemed untenable, perhaps a better example can be constructed of limited religious autonomy, circumscribed by rules to protect the integrity of community and tradition. Similar approaches can also be adapted for *hashkafah*, within the bounds of the thirteen *ikkarei emunah* (principles of faith). Complete autonomy yields communal chaos. Limited autonomy, within a cohesive community, allows people the independence they crave while preserving tradition.

In sum, democratization cannot be defeated. Printed books, summaries, Torah databases and the Internet are here to stay. The ideal answer to this dilemma is *mussar*. When people grow in humility and learn to recognize their own shortcomings, they inevitably learn to respect the expertise of great Torah scholars. The arrogance and desire for shortcuts give way to an appreciation of mastery gained through hard work.

However, if we wait for everyone to become masters of mussar, we will be waiting a long time. In the meantime, we can cautiously change the discourse in our community and allow, even encourage, limited autonomy.

Rabbi Efrem Goldberg

Technology – Playing With Fire

There is no denying that technology has significantly improved our lives. The proliferation and increasing sophistication of appliances, gadgets, electronics, devices and software provide ever-greater convenience, comfort and enjoyment. And technology has enriched our spiritual lives, as well. Torah learning opportunities have exponentially increased, and access and exposure to Torah personalities have blossomed. Technology has enabled immeasurable advances in the coordination of *chesed* activities and *tzedaka* projects, as well as facilitated global prayer efforts. Through technology, friends have been reunited, and family members living across the globe can share and participate not only in each other's lifecycle events but in daily life, as well.

With all of its benefits, however, technology is also replete with dangers, risks and challenges. It is seductive, intoxicating and, for some, addictive. Ideas that are both spiritually and socially destructive are now readily available. Similarly, without much effort and often without even trying, we find lewd images flashing before our eyes, compromising our holiness, as well as the health and integrity of our relationships and our attitudes towards intimacy.

The dangers of technology have been well documented. While internet filters and connectivity time regulators are both imperative and invaluable, internet access poses threats in content and risks of excessive use that no filter or program can eliminate. In fact, even the most noble and virtuous use of technology often presents unintended adverse consequences.

Rejecting technology entirely, however, is no longer a viable strategy. Such rejection would be as practical as eliminating telephone use because it can be the conduit of gossip or vulgar speech, or swearing off cars and buses because they often transport passengers to inappropriate places. While communal calls for the wholesale rejection of technology may be effective in messaging its dangers, these calls surely cannot be undertaken with an authentic aspiration for success. Moreover, if successful, elimination of the use of technology would deprive the Jewish community of enormous advances in Torah, *avodah* and *gemillus chasadim*.

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The community, thus, confronts a conundrum. The benefits of technology are enormous, but tolerating unbridled and unregulated access by oneself or one's family is reckless and irresponsible. Car travel is invaluable, but it would be inconceivable for a responsible society to allow everyone, regardless of age or training, to drive anywhere, at any time and in any manner or speed. Non-regulation would be grossly negligent and most certainly result in injuries and worse.

THE STATE OF "ABSENT PRESENCE"

Vayomer Hashem el Moshe, "alei eili haharah veheyei sham, v'etna lecha es luchos haeven v'haTorah v'hamitzvah asher kasavti lehorosam."

Hashem said to Moshe, "Ascend to Me to the mountain and be there, and I shall give you the stone tablets and the teaching and the commandment that I have written, to teach them."

Commentators are bothered by the seemingly superfluous phrase in Hashem's invitation to Moshe. After Moshe is directed to ascend the mountain, it surely was unnecessary for Moshe to also be directed *"veheyei sham,"* and "be there." Obviously, once Moshe ascends the mountain he will necessarily be there.

Perhaps the *pesukim* are messaging the following contemporary lesson: Hashem, as it were, summons Moshe up the mountain. "Come Moshe," says Hashem. "I am the infinite, omnipotent and eternal Being. I seek to share with you the truth and mysteries of the universe." Moshe climbs the mountain as directed, and Hashem then says "Moshe, I recognize how many congregants, disciples and followers are emailing and texting you. I know how many responsibilities are demanding your immediate attention. However, when you are with Me, I expect you to disconnect entirely and actually be with Me."

Veheyei sham, "be there," means "be in the present." Don't be distracted, interrupted or unfocused. Hashem is telling Moshe that He does not want to compete for attention, even for the most noble of distractions, such as caring for the Jewish people. "Put them aside when you are with Me, and be with Me." Kenneth J. Gergen, a psychologist and professor at Swarthmore College, has coined the phrase "absent presence," the experience of being

totally absent in spirit, even when physically present in body. The Torah is teaching that absent presence is unacceptable; it is antithetical to healthy relationships.

Technology introduces a constant and consistent diversion from living a life of *veheyei sham*, from being fully, spiritually present in whatever conversation, activity, event, davening or learning we are supposedly engaged in. Unfortunately, people experiencing absent presence can be observed everywhere: in our homes, in the workplace, on public transportation, at doctors' offices or when simply walking down the street. Nevertheless, we must consider absent presence to be intolerable. Being in a state of absent presence is essentially a form of cheating on one's spouse, neglecting one's children or simply being unfair to one's co-workers or *chavrusa*. Most of all, however, one who is absent present is suffering a life devoid of mindfulness, consciousness and presence.

We cannot resign ourselves to viewing absent presence as an unavoidable consequence of 21st-century living. It is critical that we always retain the capacity to disconnect from technology at will. Only those who can disconnect at will really own their technology, rather than being owned by it.

I once took a tour of the West Wing of the White House. I noticed a container outside of the Situation Room with numerous slots. I asked what the container was for and was told that everyone, regardless of rank or office, must deposit their devices into the container before entering the Situation Room. What is being addressed in that room is simply too important to risk distractions.

The *Mikdash Me'at*, the Sanctuary of our Shuls, is our spiritual Situation Room. A personal pledge not to bring our cell phone into Shul, let alone ever take it out of our pocket, would yield immediate benefits to our concentration in prayer, to the atmosphere of our minyanim and, most of all, to our creating sacred space in which we truly disconnect from our mundane life and focus on developing our relationships with Hashem.

Our family relationships are also invaluable, and also require effort and focus. Often, couples supposedly spend quality time together, but in fact are only physically in close proximity while their minds are on whomever or whatever they are addressing on their devices. Families would do well to introduce an inviolate rule that electronic devices cannot be brought to the family dinner table. In so doing, both parents and children would be much more present. Similarly, relationships would surely benefit from a practice of leaving devices in the car, or placing devices in the middle of the table, when a couple is on a shidduch date, or on a married couple's night out or even talking at day's end. Commitments of this nature not only eliminate distraction and interruption, but also reflect a deep devotion to the relationship.

ABILITY TO BE ALONE

Science Magazine[1] recently discussed a study in which participants were asked to rate the unpleasantness of receiving an electric shock, and how much money they would pay to avoid repeating the experience. The participants were then asked to sit alone with nothing but their thoughts. While sitting alone, however, the participants were given the opportunity to press a button that would trigger a shock to themselves. Of those prepared to pay to avoid being shocked, 67 percent of men and 25 percent of women eventually pressed the button rather than sit alone with nothing but their thoughts.

For many, technology has cultivated a deep discomfort with and aversion to being alone with nothing but their own thoughts. Too many instinctively reach for their phone in the elevator, at a red light, in the waiting room or while waiting for *chazaras ha'shatz* to begin. The preoccupation with being distracted precludes our ability to reflect, introspect, and ultimately, to grow.

Vayivaser Yaakov levado, vayeiaveik ish imo ad alos hashachar (Yaakov was left alone, and a man wrestled with him until morning – Bereishis 32:25). It was only when Yaakov was left alone, when he was by himself, that he wrestled with what many label his alter ego, his *yetzer hara*, a battle from which he emerged the victor. Only alone, with the noise of life shut out, can we make space for imagination, creativity, breakthrough and personal growth.

In addition to our need to disconnect from technology in order to connect with others, we need to do so in order to truly connect with ourselves. It would be worthwhile to schedule five uninterrupted, disconnected minutes a few times a week – time to just sit and think. Actually, put these time slots on your calendar and set reminders to do it. Sit in a room by yourself without any media, cell phone or computer. Be truly alone. Solutions to problems, breakthroughs to emotional barriers, ideas, insights and clarity will suddenly arise in the quiet space you have created for them. You will be amazed by the

[1] http://news.sciencemag.org/brain-behavior/2014/07/people-would-rather-be-electrically-shocked-left-alone-their-thoughts

creativity, innovation and thoughtfulness that emerge in the quiet space that our brain and soul crave, but that we rarely provide.

If the thought of shutting down electronics and disconnecting causes you to break out in hives or suffer a spike in blood pressure, you know you have an addiction and an even more urgent need to disconnect. Most of us have an aversion, actually a borderline allergic reaction, to turning off our phone. We have convinced ourselves that others' access to us at all times is critical and indispensable. And yet, even doctors, rabbis and others who constantly address emergencies manage to disconnect (at least from cell service) when flying for hours at a time. If this is possible while traveling through the air, it must be equally viable with feet firmly on the ground.

If you are going on a date night and are worried about your children or elderly parent, give them or their caregiver the phone number at the restaurant. If there are people that rely on you, let them know in advance that you won't be reachable for a few hours and arrange alternative coverage. Most often they can wait for the time period to conclude.

If we were honest with ourselves we would stop blaming everything around us for our inability to shut down. Change begins by admitting that we are the only ones blocking and preventing ourselves from disconnecting. We are using technology as an excuse to avoid connecting to ourselves, connecting to others and connecting to Hashem. Impose upon yourself the practice of shutting off technology when connecting with others, and eventually disconnecting when appropriate will become second nature.

PRESERVING PATIENCE

The instantaneousness of technology is also eroding our capacity for patience. In the words of Dr. Larry Rosen[2], professor of psychology at California State University, "The newest generations, unlike their older peers, will expect an instant response from everyone they communicate with, and won't have the patience for anything less. They'll want their teachers and professors to respond to them immediately, and they will expect instantaneous access to everyone."

People not only expect instantaneous access to others, but also expect instantaneous answers to their questions. In an article in the New York Times, "For Impatient Web Users, an Eye Blink Is Just Too Long to Wait[3]," Steve Lohr writes, "Remember when you were willing to wait a few seconds for a computer to respond to a click on a Web site or a tap on a keyboard? These days, even 400 milliseconds—literally the blink of an eye—is too long, as Google engineers have discovered. That barely perceptible delay causes people to search less. 'Subconsciously, you don't like to wait,' said Arvind Jain, a Google engineer who is the company's resident speed maestro. 'Every millisecond matters.'"

Rav Shlomo Wolbe, *zt"l*, explains that the root of the Hebrew word savlanut is sovel, which means to carry a heavy load or to bear a burden. For example, in recounting Hashem's promise to redeem us, the Torah states, *"Vhotzeisi eschem mitachas sivlos mitzrayim*, I will take you out from under the burdens of Egypt." *Sivlos*, the burdens of Egypt, is based on the same root word as *savlanut*, patience. A patient person bears the burden or endures the suffering, and never reacts with impulsiveness or impetuousness.

A more literal translation of savlanus is actually suffering. One who is patient can live with discomfort or inconvenience, or even suffering. The ability to cultivate a sense of forbearance and to live with patience, particularly in the face of relatively small challenges or delays, is a critical tool for a life of serenity and inner peace. Tragically, it is at risk of becoming a lost art.

It is vital that the instantaneousness of technology not compel us to forfeit our capacity for patience. When a download is taking time or a computer glitch occurs, don't lose your cool. Getting angry, mad or frustrated will expedite nothing, but will actually make it feel like it is taking longer to resolve, and will likely make achieving a solution harder. Take a deep breath, put the delay in perspective and show forbearance.

CONNECTING, NOT PROMOTING

Modesty is a core Torah value, and is intrinsic to the character of a Torah Jew. When the prophet Micha rhetorically challenges us, *"Mah Hashem doreish mimecha?"* "What does Hashem seek from you?" Micha responds, "… *vehatzneia leches im Elokecha*, …walk modestly and humbly with your God."

[2] http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/10/weekinreview/10stone.html?

[3] http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/01/technology/impatient-web-users-flee-slow-loading-sites.html?

The popularity of social media, and to some extent text messaging and email, are all tapping into the less than attractive human inclination to disseminate personal information. While it is wonderful to use technology to connect with family and friends, that is not at all the same as sharing details of our lives and thoughts with a wide web of friends, including those who are "friends" in cyber-speak only. Not every picture needs to be posted. Not every financial success needs to be flaunted. Not every intimate experience or observation needs to be shared, online or offline. Certainly, we can (and perhaps even should) employ the tools of social media to connect in meaningful ways with those around us. However, we must be judicious in determining what we share and why we share it. If we are sharing in an effort to be self promoting, we are violating the fundamental principle of walking modestly before God.

Moreover, when we boast or ostentatiously divulge indulgences, when we brag or even just publicly celebrate our successes, we are inviting others to look at us jealously, perhaps wondering whether we truly deserve the good fortune they may be lacking. Rav Eliyahu Dessler (Michtav Mei'eliyahu, Vol. 5, pp. 4-5) explains that when questions are raised in one's mind regarding someone else's entitlement to good fortune, such speculation serves as a prayer of some nature. This prayer, whether or not so intended, elicits God to also revisit the other person's good fortune.

We have all repeatedly heard of the need to avoid an *ayin hara*, and may have wondered whether this concern is real or merely an old wives' tale. The Maharal explains that *ayin hara* means that God hears the pain of the one who is lacking and is now suffering the added anguish of having another's good fortune cast in his or her face. Upon hearing this cry of pain, even when silent, God responds by re-examining the good fortune that had been bestowed, and reconsiders whether it was actually deserved. Certainly an *ayin hara* should be avoided at great cost; after all, who would wish to invite a re-examination of their virtues and entitlements?

The Talmud (Bava Metzia 42) cautions us, *"Ein haberacha metzuya ela bedavar hasamuy min haayin,* Blessing is not found except in something that is hidden from the eye." Showing off about a vacation, the brilliance and beauty of our children or grandchildren, our frequent hobnobbing with the rich and famous or our latest luxury purchase invites others to cast jealous glances (and thus prosecuting eyes) upon us.

A wise person once offered sage advice regarding sharing information or thoughts through technology. Before pressing send, enter or post, always ask yourself, "Am I sharing this to be a promoter or connector? Will this be productive and valuable, or is this self serving and grandstanding? Will this result in my being closer to others or will it create distance, jealousy and gossip? If I had to print this picture to show it, or if I had to say this out loud to someone in person and in public, would I still share it?" When in doubt, keep it *samuy min haayin* – hidden from view.

"NEW" IS NOT NECESSARILY BETTER

Change is inevitable. Attitudes and social norms are constantly changing, as are career opportunities and artistic tastes. Perhaps the most perceptible arena of constant change is in the evolution of technology. Through the millennia, enormous advancements in science have revolutionized fields ranging from medicine to warfare, and innovative technological discoveries have dramatically altered normative modes of travel and communications. Each advancement introduces new products, new procedures, new ideas and new opportunities. But never before has "new" occurred at such a frantic and feverish pace, particularly in the arena of technology.

New devices, appliances and software are constantly being introduced. We are bombarded with advertisements and social pressures, encouraging us to upgrade every aspect of our lives. "Upgrade your cell phone, upgrade your software, upgrade your apps, upgrade your car." We are made to feel inadequate if we don't have the latest, the most recent and the best of everything.

In the second paragraph of *kriyas shema*, we recite the words *"vhaya im shamoa tishmeu,"* which translates literally as, "and it will be if you listen, you will listen." Why the double language? Rashi, quoting the medrash, explains: *"im shamoa beyashan, tishmeu bechadash.* If you listen to the old, you will hear it in the new." What does that mean?

"Old" often has a derogatory connotation. It implies outdated, antiquated, stale, tired and no longer useful. New, by contrast, implies something fresh, exciting, cutting edge and superior. Such perceptions dominate today's technology-driven world, where old is obsolete and discontinued, while new is sought after by everyone (and likely already sold out). Alas, this paradigm is flawed. The new is not necessarily an upgrade. Often, the old is superior.

Perhaps Rashi is teaching that if we pay attention, and indeed hearken, to the messages, principles, ideals and teachings of the old, namely our Torah, then

we will develop the sensitivity to actually hear what's really new; we will know which of the 'new' is authentic, acceptable and worthwhile.

Innovation in technology, medicine, social progress and even application of Jewish practices all bring much opportunity and blessing. However, much of the new is simply incompatible with our existing,, timeless and inviolate values, teachings and practices. In religious life, ideas and practices that are presented as upgrades and progress are often, in fact, downgrades and regress.

As we develop a technology-induced mindset that innovation is necessarily progress, we must be careful to avoid allowing this attitude to spill over into our views of other spheres of innovation and modernization, particularly when innovation is introduced into Torah *hashkafa* and Jewish practice. As Torah Jews, it is our *mesorah*, the old and ancient wisdom passed down from parent to child, which serves as the guide and determinant of which new opportunities we are to embrace and integrate. We turn to our elders, as the guardians of the tradition, and value their guidance as the entrusted authorities to tell us which of the new is an upgrade and which of the new is actually a step backwards.

ARROGANCE AND OVERCONFIDENCE

The Talmud (Sotah 49b) tells us, "As the time for Moshiach approaches, chutzpah will proliferate." Technology has emerged as a tremendous vehicle and platform for brazenness. The abundance of information available instantaneously at our fingertips is breeding an inflated sense of confidence.

A Harvard Business Review article, "The Internet Makes You Think You're Smarter Than You Are[4]," quotes the research of Yale doctoral candidate Matthew Fisher and his colleagues who asked people a series of questions that seemed answerable but were actual not. The questions concerned things people assume they know, but actually don't—such as why there are phases of the moon and how glass is made. Some people were allowed to look up the answers on the Internet, while others were not. Then the researchers asked a second set of questions on unrelated topics. In comparison with the other subjects, the people who had been allowed to do online searches vastly overestimated their ability to answer the new questions correctly.

In his recent book, David Weinberger, co-director of the Harvard Library Innovation Lab and a researcher at Harvard's Berkman Center for the Internet and Society, addresses the Internet's impact on how we learn and what we know. The book's title succinctly encapsulates his thesis: "Too Big to Know: Rethinking Knowledge Now That the Facts Aren't the Facts, Experts Are Everywhere, and the Smartest Person in the Room Is the Room."

A false and distorted sense of confidence in our knowledge and, by extension, in the resulting opinions we form, is not benign or insignificant. Technology has enabled and empowered anyone with a keyboard to express his or her opinions, and to do so confidently and with a voice of authority. Credentials, credibility, expertise and peer review are the way of the past. Before an event could possibly be fully absorbed or an issue could be properly researched, pondered or deliberated, countless posts, blogs and online articles appear with the authors having no sense of modesty or humility regarding the correctness of their position.

Due to the Internet, the lines between news and opinion, fact and fiction, expert and novice, authority and ignoramus, are increasingly blurred. The impact of this is bad enough when the subject is sports, politics, or entertainment. However, when the topic is a *halachic* issue or a contemporary *hashkafic* perspective, this phenomenon is downright dangerous.

Halacha and h*ashkafa* adopted by Torah Jewry have never been formulated by analysis of stark information or knowledge alone. Our sacred *mesorah* (tradition) has always placed great emphasis on the accumulation of experiential knowledge and sensitivities, and placed a premium on guidance from those who have amassed the wisdom of life and serve as loyal conduits of the wisdom of the prior generations. A brilliant scholar who is familiar with vast amounts of Torah but has never been *meshameish talmidei chachamim* (i.e., "apprenticed" with Torah scholars) is not qualified to issue opinions deserving of communal deference. The Talmud (Berachos 7b) tells us that *"Gedola shimusha yoser milimud*a, Being mentored by a *talmid chacham* is even greater than the learning of his Torah." According to the Mishna in *Pirkei Avos,* one of the 48 ways that wisdom is acquired is through *shimush chachamim*.

The *ratzon* Hashem, the will of the Almighty, on any given issue cannot simply be Googled or searched on the Bar Ilan digital library. In the famous eulogy delivered by Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik for his uncle, the Brisker Rav, the Rav distinguished between those who are betrothed to the Torah (*erusin*) and those who are married to the Torah (*nesuin*). An engaged couple shares a familiarity, but complete knowledge of one another has yet to be achieved.

[4] https://hbr.org/2015/07/the-internet-makes-you-think-youre-smarter-than-you-are

Solutions to problems, breakthroughs to emotional barriers, deeply personal ideas and insights about one another can typically be enjoyed only by a married couple– two individuals who have actually lived together and have shared intimacy over time. Married couples can often finish one another's sentences and may intuit and predict what the other is thinking. The Rav explained that those who study Torah are betrothed to it, but it is only the greatest of our *talmidei chachamim* who are actually married to the Torah, and on whose intuition and instinct we rely when we seek the Torah position on a given subject that is less than clear.

It is remarkable to observe the humility and modesty of our greatest *talmidei chachamim*, those married to the Torah, when they approach the *devarim haomdim berumo shel olam*, the complicated issues of our day. This is particularly evident when contrasted to the tone of others, who have barely started dating the Torah, who confidently and stridently espouse their positions on what the Torah and Hashem want from us. In strong terms, the Talmud (Sanhedrin 99) cautions us not to be *"megaleh panim baTorah,"* understood by many as guiding us not to be presumptuous by arrogantly and inappropriately voicing an opinion about Torah when the gravity of the issue exceeds our stature.

The Talmud (Shabbos 119b) tells us, *"Amar Rebbe Yitzchak, lo chorva Yerushalayim elah bishvil shehushvu kattan vegadol."* Rebbe Yitzchak said: "Jerusalem was destroyed only because the small and the great were made equal." The Internet has allowed many to equalize the opinions of the small and the great. While in many respects giving voice to the lesser known can be a positive societal development, that is not the case with regard to *halacha* and *hashkafa*. In those areas, equating the great and the small results in c*hurban* – erosion and destruction.

When reading internet content, we must be discerning and we must employ great discipline in restraining ourselves from focusing exclusively on the persuasiveness and attractiveness of the content of an article or blog. When developing a view, we must also consider the qualifications, credentials and competency of the author. Only we, not any program or software, can filter the opinions and positions we consume. The burden is on us not to be ignorant and naive consumers of information and ideas. Moreover, when becoming actual participants in the conversation, we should avoid being lured into thinking that we, too, are smarter than we really are, and before we comment, we should ask ourselves about the accuracy and tone of what we want to say.

CONCLUSION

While filters and other software are enormously important and helpful in confronting some of technology's threats, it is imperative that we remain collectively aware of the many perils presented by connectedness that can be filtered and controlled only by the individual, with no assistance from technology. Whether as educators, parents or simply on our own behalf, we must remain vigilant and mindful of technology's impact on our lives and we must learn how to employ it judiciously, discriminately and carefully. Furthermore, we have the opportunity to add wisdom to "smartness"—to educate our children and students how to be thoughtful in managing and filtering their own ever-growing use of smart technology.

Dr. Gavriel Fagin

Towards a Model of Self Regulation for Internet Behavior Challenges In Adulthood

This article presents research and clinical experience regarding the prevalence of "addiction" to technology, and suggests some solutions. Technology-based addiction may take a variety of degrees and forms, such as addiction to pornography, texting, shopping, and social media consumption. The word "addiction" is increasingly used rather loosely, and its meaning, and thus import, have been obscured. The term addiction, as it relates specifically to sexual behavior, will therefore be defined and clarified below, in order to conduct a more meaningful discussion.

Though this article will primarily use male sexual behavior as the example of the dominant challenge posed by technology, the discussion would apply almost identically to other technologically driven behavior. The impact of technology on male sexual behavior was chosen for two reasons. First, my clinical experience has found that the most deleterious impact of technology is on this area of behavior, even if this behavior does not rise to the level of a formal addiction. Second, and perhaps selfishly, the vast majority of my personal clinical practice relates to male sexual behavior problems. This is not to imply that females are not impacted in their sexual behavior by technology. While most researchers report that online behavioral issues relating to technology seem to have a male preponderance, there is some research that suggests that women have an equal or greater struggle.[1]

HYPERSEXUAL BEHAVIOR VS. SEXUAL ADDICTION

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[1] See Shaw, M. & Black, D. W. (2008). Internet addiction. *CNS drugs*, 22(5), 353-365 for a meta-analysis of 13 studies.

Sexual addiction is best defined, in comparison to hypersexual behavior, as being greater in degree and characterized by a greater loss of self-control, while including other personality components as well. According to researchers,[2] hypersexual behavior is characterized by a pattern of behavior, continuing for a period of six months or longer, which often includes some of the following components:

(a) an excessive or disproportionate amount of time consumed by sexual thoughts, urges, and behaviors; (b) using sex in response to unpleasant affective states or to cope with stress; (c) multiple unsuccessful attempts to reduce or control sexual thoughts, fantasies, and behavior; (d) continued preoccupation with and pursuit of sex despite negative consequences to self or others; and (e) volitional impairment in interpersonal, social, or occupational domains of life.

Sexual Addiction is characterized by the presence of an increased number of these elements that are manifest in more extreme and persistent forms.[3] For example, while individuals with hypersexual behavior use sexuality to regulate negative emotional states, such individuals commonly use other healthier coping mechanisms, as well. Sexual addiction, by contrast, is often diagnosed when sexuality is the only mechanism used to manage emotional mood states, most frequently depression or anxiety. Individuals with sexual addiction also tend to have much lower general inhibition and increased difficulty with self-regulation as features of their overall personality pattern. Low inhibition referrers to a personality pattern that can be seen as extroverted, flirtatious, overly friendly, and/or unintimidated by new situations (think: being tipsy). Additionally, individuals with low inhibition tend to treat familiar stimuli in the same manner as they would new stimuli, often leading to experiencing (and seeking) constant thrills.

Third and possibly most significant, sexual addiction is most common in individuals who tend to have a dissociative quality to

their sexual behavior, and in the most extreme cases, to their overall functioning. Dissociation refers to a state of perceived detachment, be it cognitively, physically, or emotionally. Dissociation is sometimes characterized by a sense of the world as a dreamlike or unreal place and may be accompanied by poor

[2] Kafka, 2010; Reid & Carpenter, 2009a, 2009b

[3] Bancroft, J., & Vukadinovic, Z. (2004). Sexual Addiction, Sexual Compulsivity, Sexual Impulsivity, or What? Toward a Theoretical Model. *Journal Of Sex Research*, 41(3), 225-234.

memory of specific events. This level of dissociation is often highly correlated with a history of significant interpersonal trauma.

A final point should be made regarding efforts to distinguish between hyper-sexuality and sexual addiction. Several medical and/or psychological diagnoses have increased sexuality as part of a symptom cluster. For example, if an individual has a lesion, or experiences a stroke, in the temporal lobe or basal ganglia, hyper-sexuality might be present, as well.[4] Similarly, bi-polar disorder often accompanies hyper-sexuality, and individuals with ADHD are at greater risk for hypersexual behavior. Therefore, it is imperative that sexual behavior be evaluated in the context of the "biggest picture" of the individual's medical and psychological functioning.

ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN SEXUAL DYSREGULATION

What are the dynamics that might lead an individual towards hypersexual behavior, and what role does technology play in the process?

As reflected in the diagram on the next page, a recent study[5] of over 200 Orthodox Jewish males ranging in age from 19 to 67, over three-quarters of whom were married and who were associated with a broad spectrum of affiliations (Yeshivish, Modern, Chassidish), yielded interesting findings. Study participants were presented with a four-question measure of hyper-sexuality, seeking to assess the potential for sexual addiction. Twenty-five percent of the respondents stated that they engage in sexual behavior that presents negative consequences, and just shy of that number reported that their sexual behavior is inconsistent with their personal beliefs. While there is no exacting formula that is applied to reach a definitive diagnosis, the more questions that are positively endorsed certainly suggest the presence of unfettered hyper-sexuality and possible sexual addiction.

Perhaps most significant, however, is the study's finding that nearly seventy-five percent of the respondents involved in problematic sexual behavior reported that this behavior involves the use of some sort of online medium.

These statistics confirm the clinical experience of mental health professionals in both the secular and frum world: marriages are falling apart, workers are being fired, and relationships are suffering because of technology-driven hyper-sexuality. This is true even if the behavior does not meet formal criteria for sexual addiction. In the past ten years alone, I have seen a dramatic spike in the sheer number of individuals who are struggling with their online sexual behavior. This is across the spectrum of Orthodoxy, socio-economic class, and employment type. The age of onset of those that are struggling is getting younger, and some of those who are ensnared are having an unbearable time breaking free.

On the most practical level, this level of consumption is not surprising: getting online is very easy, very accessible, and very private. There is Wi-Fi everywhere, and the sheer number of devices that are capable of connecting to the Internet is staggering. Major search engines have "privacy" modes, which one teenager I treated called "porn mode."

On a slightly more fundamental level, there seems to be a "pornification" that people are being indoctrinated into at some pretty early ages. This pornification is characterized by being able to access pornography freely and being able to view content across a colossal range of interests, fetishes and fantasies. I have found, clinically, that particularly in single men, pornification results in a highly disturbed view of both women and sexuality, a deep narcissism that is promulgated by being able to click "x" if something does not suit your fancy, and some very troublesome assumptions about the appropriate nature of a true partnership. In married men, the impact of pornification includes increased difficulty in both the physical and emotional capacity to connect to a "real other."

As noted, most people will not meet the above-referenced criteria for sexual addiction, yet their online consumption is having a deleterious impact on their capacity to form and maintain relationships. For example, regarding shiduchim, there has always been a segment of society that has placed great emphasis on external appearance, reflected in questions that are answered in reference to dress sizes. I have increasingly found that bochrim who have had even modest exposure to pornography have an added demand for external features that are both impractical and misogynistic. Married men are increasingly making demands of their wives regarding external appearance, where women are being "pushed" to dress, exercise, groom, and perform in a manner that comports to a digital image that has been photo-shopped, hair-dressed, and body-tanned. Some women are being asked, or feel an internal pressure, to keep from having additional children for the purposes of

[4]Libman, R. B., & Wirkowski, E. J. (1996). Hyper-sexuality and Stroke: A Role for the Basal Ganglia? *Cerebrovascular Diseases,* 6(2), 111-113.

[5] Fagin, G. (2015). The Moderating Effect of Religion and Spirituality on the Relationship Between Childhood Sexual Abuse and Negative Outcomes Among a Sample of Orthodox Jewish Men

maintaining a certain external appearance. Finally, spirituality is a connection, a relationship, to the divine. The impact of pornography on the relationship with G-d deserves an article in its own right. Suffice it to say, the spiritual broken-ness that accompanies even modest inappropriate online behavior is impacting large segments of our society.

Hypersexual behavior is advanced by technology because the very nature of online consumption breeds disinhibited behavior. The notion of disinhibited behavior applied to online sexual behavior is more fully explored in a study conducted by Suler (2004).[6] In a most concise and simple summary, the online medium offers anonymity and privacy, thereby allowing the participant to become whomever he wishes, and to explore fantasy in an unabashed manner. As one client aptly shared with me: "Online, I can be anyone, to anyone, doing anything, anywhere."

IS THERE A SOLUTION?

The exploration of potential solutions to the problems discussed above begins with two fundamental questions: (1) Do communal rules and practices impact these types of behaviors? (2) Do individuals confronting these challenges recognize and acknowledge the nature of their difficulties?

The first question centers on the role of community rules and mandates to shape adult behavior (as opposed to children's behavior, which seems to be positively impacted by such policies). Specifically, there has been a strong trend amongst a significant portion of our communities to strenuously urge restrictions on, and controls of, use of the Internet. In fact, many schools, Yeshivas and Shuls even mandate adherence to an internet safety policy. A comprehensive discussion of the history and implementation of filtering systems amongst unlikely partners, Orthodox institutions and secular technology companies, can be found in the work of Campbell and Golan (2011).[7]

While the efforts have been extensive, and based on a desire to promote the most wholesome environment for religious homes, there is little data to ascertain whether these policies are producing actual change in internet behavior, or "only" serve as a reflection of the values of a particular community or institution. In fact, many argue that the efficacy of communal rules is secondary to the sense of shared purpose engendered by policies regarding internet and/or technology. The essential question regarding behavior, however, remains: do mandates and policies actual do anything to positively impact adult behavior?

It has been my clinical experience that the vast majority of individuals who have online behavior problems adhere to communal policies "in the home" but not at work or when using their personal devices. Additionally, in my professional discussions with clients and casual conversations with colleagues or acquaintances, I have found that most people are not content with the policies they are asked to adhere to, albeit for (often) conflicting reasons. It seems that most people feel that the policies are ineffective, too restrictive, too open, too vague, not well enforced, enforced too harshly, etc. These "goldilocks" conversations leave me with the prodigious notion that externally imposed internet policies are not doing very much to shape or control behavior, but are leading to a sense of being "disgruntled." It should be noted that while these external policies might have a negative impact on adult feelings towards the "mandating" agent, the same policies seem to have a positive impact regarding protecting children from unwanted exposure. There certainly seems to be a balance that needs to be struck, somehow, if the same policies seem to be doing "mostly" good with regards to safe-guarding children, but might be creating negativity amongst adults. This is an area of research that is sorely needed.

The second question is whether individuals struggling with internet consumption recognize and acknowledge the nature of their difficulties. First, a word of explanation is in order, as one might naturally expect that Orthodox Jews accessing pornography online, for example, would certainly view their behavior as wrong and likely be affected immediately by feelings of guilt.

Research in the area of behavioral change – and sexual addiction specifically[8] – makes an important distinction between feelings of "guilt" and "shame" in response to problematic behavior. Guilt refers to feelings about the specific behavior (or pattern of behavior), and tends to include a recognition and acknowledgement of the nature of the problem. Interestingly, an individual who feels guilt about sexual behavior tends to seek proactive solutions

[6] Suler, J. (2004). The online disinhibition effect. *Cyberpsychology & behavior,*7(3), 321-326.

[7] Campbell, H. A., & Golan, O. (2011). Creating digital enclaves: Negotiation of the Internet among bounded religious communities. *Media, Culture & Society*,33(5), 709-724.

[8] See for example, Gilliland, R., South, M., Carpenter, B. N., & Hardy, S. A. (2011). The roles of shame and guilt in hypersexual behavior. *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity,*18(1), 12-29.

to their problem. Shame, on the other hand, refers to a general state of feeling inadequate as a person.[9] Not "I did something wrong" but "there is something wrong with me." In fact, many Orthodox Jews engaging in hypersexual behavior primarily experience overall shame and fail to recognize and acknowledge the nature of their specific difficulties. Therefore, they tend to revert to the very pattern of maladaptive coping to ease those feelings of shame, utilizing denial to address their cognitive dissonance. And so it is important to address whether Orthodox Jews recognize their difficulties even when they consider the behavior to be wrong.

In the late 1980's, two researchers (Prochaska and DiClemente) introduced a model addressing an individual's readiness to change. This model proposes that there are six possible stages that an individual might cycle through before, during, and after seeking to address undesirable behavior. The first three stages focus on the individual's willingness and motivation for change. The chart below characterizes these stages.

The first stage, *"Pre-contemplation,"* is essentially characterized by the thought and feeling of "problem? What problem?" While still at this stage, the individual fails to acknowledge the undesirability of any behavior. There is, thus, no motivation for change. The second stage is "*contemplation*," when the individual acknowledges that an issue might exist, but remains unsure whether corrective action is necessary or appealing. It is only when the individual reaches the third stage, "*Preparation,*" that a modest commitment to change is undertaken. The steps taken by the individual after this mini-commitment will dictate whether real change will occur, or whether the individual will simply revert to previous patterns of behavior.

A PROPOSAL: SHIFT TO A MODEL OF SELF-REGULATION AND ASSESSMENT

I believe that any community effort to manage technology's impact on its members must begin with acknowledging that technology is an inescapable presence that is going to continually increase. Strategies can no longer be founded on the aspiration of isolating individuals from access to technology. It is, therefore, my view that any solution must rather be founded on the aspiration of inculcating a sense of individual responsibility to regulate one's self, and to provide the tools by which such self-regulation can be become normative and ordinary course. That is not to suggest that communal expectations and standards not be promulgated, but rather that they be focused on developing self-regulation.

Based on the two questions briefly explored above, a model should be introduced that merges self-regulation with externally mandated controls. This model would first encourage the individual to ask himself (or herself) some basic questions:

1) Do I feel in control of my internet and/or technological behavior?

2) Does my internet/technology behavior include viewing images or composing/viewing messages in a manner inconsistent with my beliefs and values?

3) Does my internet/technology activity produce negative consequences, such as harm to relationships, difficulty focusing, or poor performance on the job or in Torah study?

4) Do I need privacy and secrecy to continue my internet/technology behavior?

5) Do I feel overly preoccupied with using my computer or accessing the Internet?

Once this portion of the self-assessment has been made, phase 2 is for the individual to identify the degree of his personal motivation for change. This can be accomplished by reference the model presented above, or by asking oneself: *"Do I feel prepared to make any changes? If yes, when would I like to start making those changes? If not, is there a time or event that I can foresee that would cause me to reconsider making those changes?"* I do not believe it is unrealistic to imagine this self-assessment process being widely encouraged and the stages of change being widely distributed – perhaps handed out along with the internet policy contract that parents are asked to sign by various institutions.

If the community is successful in empowering the individual to recognize and acknowledge the impropriety of his technology-based behavior, and there is a self-induced motivation to change, several options exist. First, having a filter on a specific device is helpful, but is often ineffective. A more effective and productive manner of filtering is by utilizing a filtered router. That way,

[9] If discussed in the *beis medrash*, the *gavrah/chefza* distinction would be most applicable in distinguishing between the constructs of shame and guilt, respectively.

[10] Adapted from http://www.cellinteractive.com/ucla/physcian_ed/stages_change.html [11]

every device connected to the Wi-Fi is filtered. But such efforts can also be circumvented since, as the adage goes, where there is a will, there is a way.

Another potential intervention is utilizing an online forum where a culture of sharing challenges and potential solutions regarding internet behavior is normalized. The Orthodox world has such a resource: a site called "Guard Your Eyes" (https://guardyoureyes.com/). Additionally, I believe that our time honored chavrusah system can be a wonderful resource for everyone, those with identified issues and those without. Would it not be wonderful if it became normative for each member of the community to have a trusted c*havrusah* with whom to share accountability for being honest and forthright for themselves? Such a chavrusah system can include ongoing conversations, but can also include a "monitoring" program, such as Mspy or covenant eyes (http://www.covenanteyes.com).

Certain individuals are likely to be uncomfortable sharing these issues with even a single *chavrusah*. For them, other, more traditional "self-help" options exist. There is a wonderful workbook called "Treating Pornography Addiction: The Essential Tools for Recovery" by Dr. Kevin Skinner. Dr. Skinner's book offers a step-wise approach to breaking online behaviors. Additionally, Dr. Patrick Carnes has several books/workbooks that serve as a guide to behavioral change.

Finally, there are some individuals who, based on personal history and/or personality constellation, would benefit from the help of a qualified mental health practitioner. When seeking such help, it is wise to identify a practitioner who specializes in this particular area of practice. The decision to seek the help of mental health professional should, in part, be based on an honest assessment of the potential etiology (i.e., possible origins) of the problematic behavior. While the etiology of "addictive behavior" is a topic worthy of an article in its own right, the following are suggested guidelines.

First, people who have a suffered a history of sexual trauma are at greater risk of hypersexual behavior.[1] If there is a history of trauma, the only way to fully address hyper-sexuality is often to first treat the trauma, and only thereafter any lingering hyper-sexuality. Second, if someone has genuinely tried several "interventions" without success, a qualified and experienced mental health practitioner might be able to help identify the roadblocks impeding successful and lasting change. Finally, an evaluation by a mental health professional is likely warranted if during the course of an honest self-assessment one realizes any of the following: (i) that they are utilizing technology to soothe intense emotions, (ii) they are forming one or more online relationships because their current relationships are significantly lacking, (iii) online behavior results from being constantly bored and uninterested in life, or (iv) they are unable to stop the behavior despite suffering serious consequences.

CONCLUSION

In summary, there is likely no solution to the challenges of "technology in modernity" if the term "solution" means "a quick, painless, universal, foolproof way to solve a problem." The likelihood of success, however, rises considerably if the effort to address concerning behavior includes the nurturing of a culture of self-regulation, peer support, personalized interventions, and professional support. And, as noted above, where there is a will there is a way.

Dr. Eli Shapiro

The Need to Teach our Children Digital Citizenship

Technology today is ubiquitous and inescapable. Everyone is expected to be proficient in email and web navigation, there are social pressures to engage in social media and workplace requirements frequently deem participation in the digital realm a necessity. Beyond work and social obligations, the web is used in many daily routines, such as bill payment, medical transactions, travel plans and school-related communications. Much of day-to-day life is simply more productive when utilizing a digital medium.

As our relationship with technology becomes more enmeshed, it is increasingly important to be able to assess the healthy or unhealthy nature of this relationship.

The challenges of technology are particularly acute for children and teenagers.

While adults are capable of identifying the changes and impact that new technology has brought about, children, who have never lived in the pre-hi tech era, are less likely to be able to do so. They never were limited to connecting with family and friends overseas only with a pre-set date and time, and they do not recall unfolding and studying a map when planning a family trip. Many youngsters never even visited a library when researching a school paper. Like many adults, teenagers increasingly rely on social media to establish and maintain relationships, but unlike adults, many have never developed relationships otherwise. Responsible adults can use social media as an "add on" tool. But in the absence of other relationship- building skills, many youngsters rely on social media as their exclusive tool for relationship development.

The increased role of new technologies in children's lives, such as social media, texting, smartphone apps and gaming, and the increased attendant dangers, impose a parental obligation to understand these technologies well enough to step in and set healthy boundaries and guidelines for their children. The goal of such boundaries and guidelines, of course, is to maximize the benefits of technology while minimizing its potential consequences.

Parental involvement in children's use of technology, however, is far from satisfactory. A recent, unpublished survey (Shapiro, 2015) of 164 middle school students in Modern Orthodox and Conservative Jewish Day Schools found that 70% of respondents own smartphones, 59% own computer tablets and 70% belong to at least one social networking site. Only 15% of the respondents, however, reported having any filters or parental control settings activated on their personal devices.

In addition to technology's impact on children's social skills, exposure to inappropriate content is particularly profound for both younger children and teenagers.

Communal dialogue has long focused on the graphic and disturbing nature of much of the content of the Internet. These concerns are well taken. Suggested parental interventions have ranged from the absolute prohibition of web-access to various forms of filtration and software. Perhaps, however, a broader spectrum of review is necessary, with particular attention to technology's daily impact on children.

SOCIAL DYNAMICS

As noted above, technology has a subtle yet very significant impact on the individual's social development and experience. Innocuous implications include children failing to develop various social skills, such as making eye contact, active listening and asking follow-up questions. More profound, however, is the compromising of children's ability to focus on, and develop meaningful connections with others. The risk is an overall diminished quality of interpersonal relationships.

A May 2013 article in the Wall Street Journal (Shellenbarger, 2013) reported a decline in the frequency and length of eye contact in face-to-face interactions, even among adults. The reduction in eye contact is primarily attributed to the distraction of checking texts and emails and is expected to lead to a decline in interpersonal emotional connections. Texas-based Quantified Impressions (Zandan, 2013) found that adults make eye contact in a typical conversation only thirty to sixty percent of the time, while the creation of an

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emotional connection requires eye contact during sixty to seventy percent of a conversation.

A subsequent study out of UCLA (Uhls, et al., 2014) finds a similar trend among middle-school-aged children. In only five days of participating in an outdoor education camp without devices, pre-teens significantly improved their social skills and their ability to read social cues. FaceTime, Skype, Vine, etc. are simply no replacement for good old fashioned face-to-face conversations and social engagement. While the UCLA study indicates that technology is having a negative impact on socialization, it also indicates that technology's negative social impact on children can be repaired through a process of disconnecting.

Perhaps more alarming than the struggle for healthy social development, the online realm tends to promote social disinhibition that causes many people to engage in behaviors incongruous with their ordinary-course, baseline behavior. The two behaviors most significantly triggered are sexually explicit behavior and online aggression.

A study by the University of Texas published in Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine (Temple, 2012), found that nearly 30% of teens are engaging in sexually explicit messaging via text or e-mail, including the sending and receiving of immodest or explicit personal photos, behaviors they were not known to engage in otherwise. A survey conducted by The National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy found similar results, with 20% of teens having shared immodest or explicit images or videos of themselves, and 39% having sent or posted sexually suggestive messages.

On the online aggression front, a 2011 Pew Institute study (Lenhart, et al. found that 88% of teen social media users report witnessing online cruelty or cyber bullying. The issues of cyber bullying and online aggression came into focus for the education and mental health community after the 2010 suicide of Tyler Clemente, a Rutgers University undergraduate student who took his life by jumping off the George Washington Bridge after a secretly-taken video of him in private was made public. A study out of Dalhousie University in Halifax (LeBlanc, 2013) identified 23 cases of cyber bullying-related suicides taking place between 2003 and 2010, and they continue to be reported in the news on an all-too-frequent basis. In 2011 and through the first four months of 2012, there were 18 cases on record of adolescent suicides related to cyber bullying. While suicide represents the most extreme result of cyber bullying, there are many serious consequences that can be felt by children and parents alike.

Our yeshiva community is not immune from this form of aggressive behavior. In a recent study on cyber bullying in Modern Orthodox Jewish middle schools, students reported engaging in cyber bullying at rates of roughly between 9 and 12 percent, similar to the rates reported in published studies in the secular population (Novick & Shapiro, 2012).

In his article "The Online Disinhibition Effect," psychologist John Suler identifies "invisibility" as a key factor in individuals behaving online in a markedly more uninhibited manner than in their usual offline behavior. The invisibility and anonymity allowed by the Internet gives people the courage and confidence to act in a way that they are unlikely to replicate in the non-cyber world.

The triggering of disinhibition and cruelty via anonymity is not a new, nor is it exclusively manifest in the use of technology. Various studies (Rogers & Ketchen, 1979; Solomon, Neigher & Solomon, 1978; Zimbardo, 1969) find a positive correlation between anonymity and aggression. In Zimbardo's 1969 study anonymous students administered longer and more severe shocks on helpless test subjects than their non-anonymous counterparts. Perhaps this behavior is best be explained by Aronson (2008), who posits "that anonymity induces "deindividuation," a state of lessened self awareness, reduced concern over social evaluation and weakened restraints against prohibitive forms of behavior" (Aronson, 2008 p. 278).

Further evidence of the differences in individual behavior between non-anonymous face-to-face interactions and anonymous or semi-anonymous online behavior, was noted by the adolescent responders in the focus groups of the Pew study (Lenhart et al., 2011). The teens reported "that the people they see online often act very different on social media from how they act in person and at school" (p. 29). One middle school girl stated "they won't say it to your face but they will write in online" (p. 30). One middle school boy stated "I know people who, in person, refuse to swear. And online, it's every other word" (p. 29).

This behavioral combination of impulsiveness and disinhibition can have profound effects on our children's present and future opportunities since the online realm is both public and permanent.

PSYCHOLOGICAL

In addition to the impact technology has on social dynamics, technology also affects individuals' psychological functioning in a variety of ways. Online activities are found to contribute to addictive and compulsive tendencies, such as online pornography and shopping. Technology has also been tied to an increased tendency to disconnect from the realities of existence, as well as to anxiety, depression and isolation.

For the developing emotional stability of school-aged children, the risks of negative psychological impact from internet technology are greater. For example, exposure to graphic content puts them in an even higher risk category than adults. A study by the University of New Hampshire (Sabina, Wolak, & Finkelhor, 2008) found that nearly 93% of boys and 62% of girls had been exposed to online pornography before the age of eighteen, with most exposure occurring between the ages of fourteen and seventeen. Such early exposure is correlated with a variety of emotional distress issues as well as potential long-term impact on intimacy and marital relationships. In the study of Jewish day school students (Shapiro, 2015), nearly fifty percent of respondents report having accidentally viewed a web site of which their parents would disapprove and over 14% in total, and 27% of eighth graders, reported intentionally seeking such web sites. More than 50% in total and nearly 69% of eighth graders replied "yes" when asked, "Have you ever seen an image or video clip that disturbed you?"

In addition to the potentially traumatic impact of technology, there is evidence of a correlation between avid technology use and increased anxiety and depression. Numerous studies suggest that the stronger and more enmeshed our relationship is with our technology, the more negative psychological impact we tend to experience (Pierce, 2009).

One area of technology's impact that has not yet been adequately studied and discussed is the degree to which negative tweets, texts, emails, comments or posts decrease people's subjective well being. In a study conducted by psychologists Christopher Peterson and Martin Seligman (2005), "participants were asked to write down three things that went well each day and why every night for one week." A parallel control group had no such tasks. Upon conclusion of the week-long study period, not only did the experimental group reflect higher levels of subjective well being (happiness) than the control group, but those in the experimental group also displayed "increased happiness and decreased depressive symptoms for six months" following the study.

Just as positive journaling results in a more positive attitude, the litany of negativity that individuals write in blogs, texts, status updates, and tweets could have similar but negative results on their attitudes and perspectives. In a 2011 study regarding twitter sentiment, Kouloumpis, Wilson and Moore, found that negative hashtags (i.e.. #fail, #ihate, #worst) appeared at twice the rate of positive ones (#success, #thingsilove, #bestfeeling). Other studies find similar behaviors where individuals use the digital realm as a medium to express negativity, anger and discontent, often impulsively and without inhibition.

DAY-TO-DAY

The ever-present role of technology in the lives of children, and the public and permanent nature of the online realm, creates potential challenges in the day-to-day functioning of our children. For example, while it might be hoped that technology would allow for improved academics, absent proper adult oversight, technology may actually lower academic achievement.

A Harvard University study (Chang, et al., 2014) compared sleep that immediately followed reading a traditional book to sleep that immediately followed reading from a screen, such as an iPad. The study found that users of an electronic device had more difficulty falling sleep, had a less restful sleep and were more likely to be sleepy and less alert the following morning. The impact on student functioning is immense. Nearly 60% of Jewish Day School students report sleeping with their cellphone within reach, and that online activity delays their going to bed. Additionally, 44% of students report "often" playing games or staying online longer than they intended (Shapiro, 2015). The oversaturation of technology interferes with homework tasks, and results in inadequate sleep and the attendant consequences to academic alertness and concentration, as reported in studies by Kent State University, Centers for Behavioral and Preventative Medicine and The National Institute for Educational Policy.

Another ordinary-course challenge is the frequency of teens posting impulsive and disinhibited or other ill-considered content to their social media accounts. College admissions offices and employers increasingly research online postings of candidates. Posted photographs, articles, group affiliations and other comments often play a significant role in a selection process. An individual's digital footprint may eventually be more influential

on one's career opportunities than actual academic performance. Youngsters, however, do not appreciate that a casual post may come back to haunt them many years down the road.

In addition to the effects of personal devices, concerns arise from the blended, computer-based learning that is being introduced in many schools. Inevitably, a correlation develops between the extent of scholastic online use and a student's extracurricular preoccupation with technology. In the Jewish Day school study referenced earlier, students reported using the Internet for school related activities daily or multiple times a day at rate of 50%. However, they also reported using the Internet for non-school related activities at a rate of 76%,

This data, combined with the findings of Ravizza, Hamrick and Fenn (2014) which suggests that "non-academic Internet use negatively predicted exam scores," and "those with higher intellectual ability reported using the internet more over time," should become an increasingly influential factor in decisions regarding in-school use of technology.

WHAT ARE WE TO DO?

As is true regarding many challenges, the most effective response may be empowerment through education. We need to teach our children how to be healthy and responsible with technology and we need to empower parents to effectively manage their children's technology. As writer Allison Slater Tate identifies in her 2014 Washington Post article "We are the first generation of parents in the age of iEverything," we "had the last of the truly low-tech childhoods, and now are among the first of the truly high-tech parents," and it is our obligation to learn how to be parents of this new generation.

The emerging term for healthy and responsible use of technology in the literature and in the field of technology education is "digital citizenship." Digital citizenship is more than Internet safety. It recognizes our role as citizens of the digital realm and how our behaviors and interactions can have a positive and negative effect on others as well as on ourselves. As the issue of digital citizenship education is a relatively new area of exploration, only a limited number of good resources exist.

Common Sense Media is an organization that helps kids thrive in a world of media and technology. Their approach is to empower parents, teachers and policymakers by providing unbiased information, trusted advice and innovative tools to assist in harnessing the power of media and technology as a positive force in children's lives. Among various resources, the Common Sense Media web site provides assessment toolkits, interactive and downloadable curricula and educational videos. The standards of Common Sense Media may often differ from the standards of the Orthodox community, but it is a start.

I have been involved with the development of The Digital Citizenship Project (DCP), which seeks to provide common language for addressing the challenges of technology and its solutions in a sophisticated manner, beyond the traditional rhetoric.

Working with individual schools, the DCP conducts a formative assessment of technology ownership, attitudes and behaviors of the student population. A survey is conducted that allows for benchmarking against both the general secular population as well as the populations of other Jewish day schools that have completed the survey. The data produced is then used to assess the specific needs of the particular school population, which is then shared with the school's students and parents, to be accompanied by faculty workshops conducted by the DCP. Borrowing from Dr. Rona Novick's BRAVE bully intervention program, the DCP seeks to shift school and community cultures by educating and empowering all parties. The goal is to educate communities about the clear evidence of technology's impact on the social, psychological and behavioral domains, as well as on day-to-day functioning, and then provide practical and implementable tools to address these challenges in a meaningful and lasting way.

Recent communal efforts to promote filters and monitoring software have served as a double edge sword. Organized campaigns to promote the utilization of filters and monitoring software have created a tremendous awareness of the benefits of this important tool, but it has also given us the false sense of security that these are "the" tools to minimize the negative impact of technology. (Despite this widespread awareness, as reported above, only 15% of Jewish middle school respondents reported having any filters or parental control settings activated on their personal devices.)

In addition to filters and monitoring software, there is a primary need for families to set clear policies and expectations (perhaps some form of "terms of use" agreement) for the use of technology in the home.

Technology education expert Mrs. Temima Feldman highlights some

recommended policies in her article "Practical tips for Parenting your iTeen" (2015), where she suggests the following rules:

- Have a set time when devices (cellphone, iPad, tablets, and the like) must be off and out of reach.

- Have a central charging station where teens have to leave their phones and iPads to charge overnight. This is one of the best ways to combat both sleep deprivation and late-night texting.

- Set a tone in your house that technology use is a public activity – this includes a policy that requires doors to bedrooms to be open while technology is being used. This creates an environment of open communication.

- Model the behaviors you want to instill in your child.

- Above all, have the dialogue with your child about both your and their technology habits.

Other practical suggestions include promoting non-digital recreational activities that will promote genuine social connectivity with their family members and peers.

Digital citizenship teaches what it means to be a responsible citizen in the digital realm. Whether utilizing online resources or participating in a formal program, it is our responsibility to educate and be educated about how technology impacts our lives both positively and negatively, and to provide our children and community with the necessary tools to succeed in maximizing the benefits of technology while minimizing its potential negative impacts.

Dr. Yitzchak Schechter

Breathing Life into the Golem of Technology

It is both obvious and an understatement to say that technology permeates every aspect of our lives. It is equally clear to me that in order for our community to continue its development, creativity, growth and the deepening of our religious and communal life we need not only to be conscious of technology but to embrace it in all its forms. While this may sound contrary to the reigning religious oeuvre of today, it is far from it. We all fly in airplanes, get medical procedures, use the telephone, use timers for electricity, drive cars and benefit from technology despite the great fears and potential prohibitions that were first cast on these emerging technologies. This is already playing out the same way with the Internet and new technologies we use for our work, household management and even learning.

This next wave of technology is no different; our job is to somehow arrive at the new normal and adjust to that equilibrium. Since technology is here to stay, we must attempt to understand the role it now plays in our lives – including its effect on our psychological functioning and on our families and relationships – and the change it has brought to our communities and to our society. The future religious stability and growth of our community is dependent upon our acknowledging the inevitable role of technology and exploring how to both protect against its dangers and fully utilize its benefits. A denial of reality will only lead to misguided responses, outdated strategies and squandered opportunities, as we continue to fight yesterday's battles without addressing today's urgent needs. Similarly, as often happens with topics that appear too big to address, the impulse is to avoid or deny the issue completely, with a net effect of reduced parental, educational and clinical involvement. This result has already been observed in some of the "digital life" research conducted by the Institute for Applied Research and Community Collaboration (ARCC, a group under my direction), which

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found that children report less adult guidance about their use of technology and social media than expected, even in communities that place great value on internet safety.

This article explores how individuals, families and communities can safely and effectively embrace technology as a powerful and positive tool that can be effectively employed with creativity and vision for the benefit of both individuals and the community. I write this at the intersection of my role as a psychologist and director of a large behavioral health clinic, serving yeshivas, parents, rabbonim and the community, and as the founding director of ARCC, a research organization dedicated to understanding the experience of the frum community and using technology and science to inform and provide actionable guidance to its community stakeholders.

A New Era

It is far from hollow rhetoric to say that we stand at the threshold, or, perhaps just inside the doorway, of a new era, in which technology has created a new *metzius* (reality). It must be emphasized that the power of technology is not in *gizmos* and gadgets. It is in the fundamental restructuring of social patterns it has brought about and the opportunities it provides to be *mechadesh* (innovate) in powerful new ways, potentially revolutionizing our approach to what can be accomplished – both in learning about the true needs of the *klal* and in developing strategies to meet those needs.

Rather than ignore these profound developments, or treat them solely as threats to be shunned, our community should be clamoring for forward-thinking, engaged leadership to explore the opportunities and implications of this new *metzius* in terms of all areas of our *avodas Hashem* (service of G-d), including both *halacha* and *hashkafa, chinuch* (education), parenting, klal work and the experiential dimensions of living life as a frum person.

Some illustrative, current real-life examples of this include:

- How do we address the "foreknowledge" newly afforded through personalized genetics for both personal decision-making and shidduchim? ARCC's work with Columbia University Medical Center has found that shidduch implications have discouraged women from getting the potentially life-saving test for BRCA gene mutations, despite a tenfold increase in risk for Ashkenazi women (Schechter, 2015).

Will the next era of shidduchim involve a resume, photo, and sequenced genome? Who will evaluate all the potential risks of genetics for a match and how, and what are the nafka minahs lehalacha (relevant halachic distinctions)?

- How will the brave new horizons of genome editing, including the ability to use "molecular scissors" and edit the very code of life, be understood by halacha and applied in the frum community?

- How are robots and automated machines (such as driverless and preprogrammed cars) to be treated under hilchos Shabbos and yom tov? What if events or tasks are preprogrammed, or if information is streaming to devices without human input? One emerging example is the Internet of Things (IoT), where everything gets connected to the Internet so that an appliance, such as a refrigerator, automatically orders new milk when the supply runs low, or calls in repairs when it is broken.

- Perhaps even more profound questions must be confronted regarding advances in the understanding of human behavior through big data and the application of this knowledge to various principles such as chazaka and eidus. Does aggregate data influence the parameters of pikuch nefesh?

- How does educational methodology shift, if at all, when we educate children and teenagers in a world of technology? How are children conditioned to cope with their eventual need for computer and internet access, whether to apply basic job skills or maintain a home (online bills, etc.)? How are children protected against, and trained to cope with, exposure to pornographic images, foreign ideas and concepts, non-Torah perspectives and social interactions?

CAPACITY, COMMUNITY & CHANGE

A useful framework for the consideration of the influence and challenges of technology is identifying three interrelated categories – Capacity, Community and Change.

I. CAPACITY

Frequently, the introduction of a technological innovation not only advances a particular function or idea, it facilitates a radical expansion of capacity.

Such expansions enable any individual, group, community, corporation or country to effect, know, experience or accomplish so much more than ever before. Not only can technological advances provide for greater qualitative achievement, the dramatic expansion of capacity has already altered the fundamental assumptions about what goals are achievable and realistic, the potential influence and impact of individuals or groups and the necessity for various functions or providers. For example, the newly introduced capacity to search all of human written history or to explore the entire sequenced genome or to have ready access to aggregate data that would have been unthinkable a decade or two ago[1] are each capabilities in expanse, not just in quality. And in each instance there are readily identifiable implications.

The volume and ready accessibility of information provides any school child with access to encyclopedic knowledge that rivals that of the geniuses of earlier eras. Similarly, the ease by which information can now be disseminated instantly across the Earth makes Gutenberg's earth-shaking printing press now seem as primitive as passing notes in class. This change in capacity for individuals and communities advances the standing of every individual, triggering an entrepreneurial spirit of empowerment. Now, one individual or small group can leverage technology to exert influence in multiple orders of magnitude from previous times, whether exploiting the greater access to knowledge, productivity, communications or wealth. While this seismic shift in power may pose a threat to the frum community's quest for homeostasis, it also represents an enormous opportunity. The community's goals can be much more easily brought to fruition and there is an exponential increase in the ability to accomplish great things and to share values, Torah knowledge and overall influence.

But questions abound. How should this enhanced capacity for greater knowledge, access and creativity influence the current realities of the contemporary Orthodox Jewish community? Are we equipped to handle the freedom and autonomy that is facilitated by the Internet and other technology? Can empowerment and openness be encouraged in some domains, such as regarding parnassah (livelihood) and advertising and marketing, but not in others, such as in exposure to ideas and trends not consistent with the sacred worldview of the community? Is such a dichotomy healthy and sustainable, or are new adaptations necessarily uncontrollable, and once embraced in one regard necessarily going to spread to others? For example, can an entrepreneurial spirit be encouraged for efforts within the frum world without risking a recasting of the social orders? Does a *yeshivish* or *chassidish* community in reverence of *daas torah* and institutional wisdom have room for the "disruptive" innovation of technology?[2] And doesn't the contemporary Orthodox community (and perhaps all communities) strive for homeostasis and stability, necessarily resisting paradigm shifts?

Technology creates and expands the capacity of human potential, but simultaneously requires accepting the risks attendant to that increased capacity, including attitudinal shifts and the democratization of knowledge.

Similarly, there are currently many non-standard or non-sanctioned outlets for creative thinking and for the unofficial dissemination of communal information. This esteemed publication, for example, along with others such as TorahMusings and Hakirah serve as conduits for communal thought, while many online forums and news outlets (e.g. *Vos Iz Neias,* Yeshiva World, *Matzav, Chadrei Chareidim*) provide news and information, filtered and selected on a private basis. What impact do these vehicles have on the centralized voice of communal or rabbinic authority?

In addition to providing vehicles for the transmission of ideas and views from both within and outside the Torah community, technology has fundamentally altered communal thought by producing heretofore-unavailable data, now more readily compiled and categorized. If exploited thoughtfully, such data can lead to knowledge, which will no doubt lead to important insights.

This is one of the most important capacities we develop as a result of technology – the ability to evaluate meaningful data and make more informed decisions. Utilizing such data is now standard fare for business, healthcare, marketing, non-profits, etc. From the aggregate monitoring of steps taken on a pedometer to the total productivity of multiple factories across the globe, technology has become the vehicle for informed decision-making. We can only make the right decisions to the extent that we have accurate knowledge of the metzius, and data provides that *birur hametzius* (clarification of reality). It is fair to ask whether ignoring the availability of such data today amounts to negligence in communal decision-making.

[1] For example, someone with certain symptoms can search every article ever published on the topic, or wear monitoring devices (Fitbit, etc.) to track multiple body functions over an extended period of time. Consider also how Google can track and predict contagious diseases such as the flu by analyzing the search terms for its users (flu, flu symptoms, etc.) and create a social network of contagion spread. This method has been faster, more accurate and easier than any other attempt of medical researchers (Ginsberg, et al., 2008).

[2] Disruptive innovation is a term coined by Clayton Christensen to describe changes that disrupt the status quo of a community, society or industry.

In an incredible recent study, Dr. Martin Seligman and a team of researchers from

Honesty and striving towards improvement is a hallmark of the *mevakesh* (seeker) and the religious personality. Just as there is a real and important move towards evidence-based medicine and mental health in the world of healthcare, we should think equally about evidence-based initiatives for the betterment of our community. Measuring our goals and assessing our progress towards them, and not just relying on charisma, history or trust, can and should become more a part of our all-important *klal* work. Although this will inevitably disrupt the status quo and be unsettling to some, all those who are *oskim btzarchei tzibbur be'emunah* (faithfully involved with the needs of the community – undoubtedly the overwhelming majority) will soon embrace this approach as they learn how it can vastly improve the success of their efforts.

To a large degree, this is the mission of ARCC (see above) which was established to gather such data through careful study and communal collaboration in order to improve the community's efforts to recognize and serve its most important needs. Work has already commenced on various projects of this nature through multiple research, clinical and communal centers with potential for wide-reaching meaningful impact.

Dangers Imposed By Increased Capacity

While the increased capacity provided by technology can be invaluable if used responsibly and effectively, it can also be a source or trigger of enormous damage.

First, the absolute flood of information can be both overwhelming and distracting. It takes great effort to maintain the proper perspective and focus and to differentiate between the essential and the non-essential.

Second, all the data in the world is only worth as much as our ability to master it. As the adage goes, a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. In fact, studies show that people often consider the Internet and search engines like Google as extensions of their own knowledge, taking pride in it as if they own that information, and making them feel smarter than they actually are (Fisher , Goddu, & Keil, 2015). With so much data at one's fingertips, it's easy to feel the confidence of a distinguished expert with virtually no understanding of what any of it really means. Without the intimate knowledge that comes from careful, responsible study, there is a risk that mounds of powerful data will result in expertise that is at best a mile wide but an inch deep.

A third potential danger of technology's immense capacity is the side effect of boredom that results when the stimulation is removed. Technology has oriented our brains to anticipate new input on a constant basis. The need for ever increasing stimulation is also reflected in the ever increasing loudness of advertising (in volume and content), the shortening of video clips and the intensifying of messaging, whether in the news, educational programming (ranging from academic conferences down to Sesame Street) or the workplace. Indeed, many *mechanchim* regularly report that they have great difficulty reaching an over-stimulated and quickly-bored, digital generation.

In fact, 93% of 18-29 year olds currently use their devices to avoid boredom, with 82% of 30-49 year olds but only 55% of those age 50 and older doing the same (Smith, 2015). The desperate need to avoid the pain of boredom is so strong that many people prefer getting electric shocks than being alone with their thoughts! (Whitehead, 2014)

Two manifestations of the impact of technology-induced boredom on children is their attitude towards Shabbos and the increased presence of the "fear of missing out" (FOMO), a byproduct of the always-on and connected culture of social media.

In a soon to be released study conducted by ARCC and Magen, research of nearly one thousand 6th to 8th graders across multiple schools reported that boredom on Shabbos, while relatively low, decreased dramatically among those students who do not have phones and who have lower rates of regular internet use. Even more dramatic, the percentage of students reporting FOMO was close to half among those without phones and those with lower internet usage.

COMMUNITY: THE GLOBAL SHTETEL

As we become increasingly wired and connected through our devices and the Internet, our definitions of community are changing; it is now less about physical place and more about connected space. Owing to technology, we are able to connect and feel connected to many more people than ever before, be it family members living abroad, children going on a trip when they are young drivers or elderly parents.

But in the rapidly shifting creation of community, there is an important question. Who is in our community?[3] This is soimportant because to a large degree, a person is shaped and ultimately defined by his community. For an

increasing percentage of Orthodox society (including throughout the yeshiva world), online connections – whether simple or advanced – play a major role defining our sense of community.

Asked differently, who are the people with the clout[4] in our lives and the lives of our children to influence us the most? Are we being influenced more by online sources – whether social connections or online content – than by those we actually look up to? Considering the power of online sources to influence us, is it time for Torah leadership to have more of a presence online? Or is that a bad idea for other reasons? If it's a bad idea, how can we increase the influence of Torah leaders throughout the community?

Considering the available technologies, how is Torah best to be disseminated today, and how are *shiurim* most effectively transmitted to their proper audiences? Will the comments said in a private shiur with known *talmidim* translate as well when broadcast across the world? Is the injunction of *chachamim hizaharu be'divrechem* (scholars, be cautious with your words [as others who hear them may misunderstand]) a warning not to publish online at all?

Rabbi Yitzchak Sagi Nahor, the son of the Raavad and rebbe of the rebbeim of the Ramban, was the driving force behind much of *toras hakabalah*. In the introduction to his commentary on Sefer *Yetzirah*, he responds to an inquiry about why he has not written and published more extensively by noting "*ki haksav ein lo adon*" – because that which is written has no master. If that was true in the 13th century, by how many orders of magnitude does that ring true today! These are important questions that Torah teachers, institutions and concerned students must be thinking about as Torah continues to be taught and transmitted.

The ongoing contraction of the globe poses many new questions in the realms of *halacha* about the definition of a local community. Has the operative definition of *aniyi irech* (the local poor) changed? Does *minhag hamakom* (local custom) retain its historical application? What is the impact of globalization on *psak*, and is there an ongoing role to be played by a local community *posek*? (See the classic article about the potential loss of *mesorah*, "Rupture and Reconstruction" by Rabbi Dr. Haym Soloveitchik (1994).[5]

Furthermore, how does instantaneous accessibility of every *psak* and *teshuva* impact the decision-making of the *posek*? If a *dayan* or *posek* works to formulate a complex response to a heart-wrenching and difficult local situation, how influenced are they by the concern that their complex decision will be subject to instant review and snap judgment in the ultimate "coffee room" of the blogosphere?

CHANGE

Changes in technology and society are happening at an increasingly fast clip. Our community must take note of the impact of these changes on even the most basic of concerns as how to guide our children in preparing to earn a livelihood. Technology has caused the elimination of not only jobs, but even of entire industries. Skill sets once integral are replaced by others, and training for the contemporary needs of the workforce must continually be studied. Is the community's educational system adjusting to the challenges of the future workforce?

Remarkably, the opportunities afforded by technology may provide professional and parnassah options that are increasingly accommodating to Torah sensitivities. Education for technology positions largely avoids the influences of western culture. The technology-related employee enjoys increased flexibility in choosing the venue within which to work, as well as the degree of face-to-face interaction with customers and co-workers. In certain regards, it is akin to becoming a shleifer (diamond polisher) or diamond dealer in years past, a practical parnassah of umnus kalah unekiyah (a clean and comfortable craft). In fact, many former kollel students and their wives have enjoyed the opportunities afforded by this emerging sector (Shapira, 2014).

[3] University of Pennsylvania (Eichstaedt, et al., 2015) found that the best predictors of a population's cardiovascular disease mortality rates are no longer the classic indicators of demographics, socioeconomics or even health, but rather the content of twitter accounts! Regardless of geographic location, people connected to angry, negative or hostile content suffer increased rates of heart disease and conversely, those with more positive, supportive and hopeful content had significantly lower levels of heart disease. This was a more powerful effect than almost any other factor studied (Eichstaedt, et al., 2015). Aside from what this says about the effect of attitudes on heart disease, it demonstrates the powerful effect of online community (as well as the ability to extract useful data from cyberspace).

[4] There is actually a website called Klout.com that provides a score summarizing how much clout any person has to influence others online.

[5] Available at http://traditionarchive.org/news/article.cfm?id=104639.

WHAT DOES NOT CHANGE: THE SOUL OF THE MATTER

Notwithstanding the changes triggered by technology, certain underlying fundamentals remain constant. Regardless of how bold and dramatic the new horizons of technology may be,[6] the innovation is absorbed into foundations of the human experience as well as into life within the context of Torah. Consequently, the degree to which external innovations affect or compromise the Yiddishkeit of an individual or community will correlate to the degree of Torah authenticity already in place.

For those whose religious observance is merely a function of behavioral obedience or conformity, technology's threat is very real. Assumptions may be challenged when exposed to information, multiplicity of perspectives, joining new communities or secret places of subterfuge. Change threatens to unseat observance born of rote, and religious affiliation tied primarily to social connections is easily compromised by alternative and attractive connections.

The communal response must therefore be an increased focus on the inculcation of its deepest, authentic Torah values and commitment. Torah, and the values and models it offers, is the sam hachaim (elixir of life) – providing the soul to the golem of technology and elevating it to meaningful purpose. It is exactly in this context that Torah as a profound *Toras chayim* (i.e., living quality) has so much to offer, and where it must impart its deepest imprint.

It is only this authentic connection to Torah that can provide the desperately needed anchor in the turbulent storms of change. With an authentic connection to Torah, the key elements of the Jewish community's response and attitude to technology need be no different than it was with all the previous changes and shifts it has faced throughout our long history.

RESPONSIBILITY, MIDOS, AND VALUES

An authentic connection to Torah depends primarily on three pillars: Responsibility, *midos*, and values. Personal responsibility remains a hard and fast rule: as parents and children, we are responsible for our actions and the consequences we bring upon ourselves. *Midos* are the tools we use to build our character, and character cannot be downloaded from anywhere else; it comes only from within ourselves and our values. Our values are the guideposts for how we act and the image we set for ourselves. All three require constant attunement and development. By bringing them to bear on our engagement with technology, we can use technology boldly and confidently to fulfill our aspirations and our mission. We drive a car with the responsibility of steering a two-ton speeding bullet, we drive in accordance with our *midos* and character – not aggressively, disrespectfully or illegally – and finally we drive to get to the destination we chose based on our values. Accordingly, we must drive the unstoppable freight train of technology as well in accordance with responsibility, our *midos* and our values.

In considering the many dimensions of the great opportunities and challenges we face with technology, there is one principle we must keep in mind if our children are going to benefit from any wisdom we might hope to acquire and transmit: Are we leading by example? Here, perhaps more than any other area, children are entirely dependent on the messages they receive and behaviors they observe in the adults in their lives if they are to find their own way in managing the unyielding demands of the various devices around them. If their parents are not managing well, with strength and direction, how will they fare and with which strength will they cope? "Do as I say, not as I do" is a failed message in any context, but experience indicates it is even worse when it comes to technology. In fact, in our study of technology in yeshiva students, we found that parents are far and away the largest single source of information and guidance regarding the Internet and technology, yet only a small percentage of students report their parents speaking to them directly, or providing any guidelines, about technology and its use.

Let us then take full ownership and responsibility, and express our most refined midos and greatest values, in how we proactively and consciously lead our lives in order to become true masters of technology. It is too central to the quality of how we live our lives and ultimately to the legacy we leave to our children. The opportunities and challenges are extraordinary, ceaseless and ever-present and by embracing them, we can truly fulfill our loftiest goal of b'chol derachecha dayahu (Mishlei 3:6) – to know Hashem in all our ways.

[6] This is clearly demonstrated in science fiction which, although set in some distant future, surprisingly always features the same social and human issues present when the stories were written.

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Dr. Shmuel Mandelman

Technology and Media's Impact on Child Development and Cognition

Technology and media have dramatically changed the world and the human experience, and will certainly continue to do so at an exceedingly rapid pace. While the benefits technology offers its users are clear, the effects it can have on the developing child are not. There is a scarcity of literature and scientific consensus surrounding this topic. The relative dearth of clear and definitive literature on this important topic can possibly be explained by the fact that technology and its novel applications evolve so rapidly that quality scientific literature simply cannot keep up. Scientific research takes time to be designed, conducted and published in a peer-reviewed outlet. In the currently constantly evolving technology environment, by the time a research cycle has been completed, the technology that had been the subject of the research is typically antiquated and has either been replaced or had its application dramatically changed since the design of the research. For research to be meaningful, it needs to ecologically valid, which means it must be reflective of and generalizable to the real world, which is exceedingly difficult considering the speed that technologies and their application change in today's world.

This article provides a brief survey of some of the major themes and topics that emerge from the literature that does exist concerning the impact of technology and media on human development and cognition.

For the purposes of this article, a wide definition of technology and media will be adopted. Technology includes television and video, computers, internet and mobile devices while media is the content which is consumed or may be referring to social media platforms. Though there is some commonality between all of these mediums, there can be differences in terms of their impact, and often there are challenges more specific to one or another of these

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technologies. Much of the older research is focused on passive consumption of media, whereas today there are video games and other digital experiences that require a great deal of physical activity. As such, each form of technology must be evaluated independently. Additionally, attention must be paid not only to the medium itself, but also to its content.

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Technology's impact on child development is profound and complex. While formal cognitive development stage theories end in mid adolescence at around the age of sixteen, some research suggests that brain development extends well into a person's twenties. The earliest years of development are thought to be most critical, as they serve as the foundation for all future development. Every child's development unfolds within a unique environment, and factors within that environment directly impact the child's developmental trajectory.

How does one define a child's environment? How far do various environmental influences extend? In some of the most influential work in developmental psychology, Urie Bronfenbrenner, the force behind Head Start programs, developed a model that serves as a framework for understanding environmental effects on human development. In his Ecological Systems Theory, Bronfenbrenner (1974, 1977, 1979, 1994) posits that a child's development is affected by nested factors and the interaction between these nested factors. He describes these factors "as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls" (1979, p.22). These nested factors are classically depicted by multiple concentric circles, the smallest and innermost circle representing the microsystem and the outermost the macro system. He argues that the influence of far more distal or seemingly remote forces than the immediate home environment (microsystem) are more significant than once prevalently thought. He includes among possible environmental influences such factors as societal and cultural norms, global economics, laws of the land and bodies of knowledge (which undoubtedly includes technological advances) – factors commonly thought of as far removed from the child (macrosystem, Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

Technology and media, possibly more so than any other influence, transcend all of the spheres of influences and their interactions suggested by Bronfenbrenner, since technology permeates so much of a child's life and environment, as well as the world at large. Some scholars (Johnson & Puplampu, 2008) have gone as far as constructing an ecological techno-subsystem within Bronfenbrenner's Ecological System.

While technology and media are not inherently good or evil, their potential impact must be carefully considered. There are obvious benefits that technology can offer to developing children, such as easy access to information, platforms on which they can communicate and an incredible number of educational programs, games and apps. The benefits afforded by these resources, however, must be examined within the context of the startling negative impact that technology and media can have on the developing child.

Major policy bodies and developmentalists have warned of possible detrimental effects of technology on the physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of children. In a 2013 policy statement, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) lists possible physical risks of large amounts of media consumption, including childhood obesity, aggressive behavior and sleep disturbances. They recommend generally limiting the amount of time children and teens interact with media to a maximum of two hours of entertainment screen time per day, and for young children under the age of two, they recommend having no screen time at all. Additionally, they suggest that there should be a technology and media curfew that is enforced consistently and that screens should be kept out of children's bedrooms. They further suggest educating parents, teachers and doctors about the risks of media and encouraging parents to establish clear parameters for their children's media use. It is important to note that in the October 2015 issue of the American Academy of Pediatrics News, Brown, Shifrin & Hill (2015) highlight the fact that policy and research are well behind the rapid technological advancement and that the AAP guidelines must be updated to stay relevant. While the Academy has not yet issued new guidelines, they are in the process of evaluating available research and data to serve as the basis for their new statement, which will more closely reflect current realities of technology use. A special journal issue on the subject of technology and child development, edited by Brooks-Gunn & Donahue (2008), contains articles demonstrating the range of the possible impact of technology on development, including articles on technology's impact on a child's learning and academic achievement, aggression, fear, socialization and communication with peers, relationships with parents, emotional well being, anxiety, use of violence and other behavioral issues.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children, in a 2012 position statement on the use of technology and media in early childhood education, echoes the American Academy of Pediatrics position on screen time in young children and stresses that when children do interact with technology it must be in intentional and developmentally appropriate ways that consider the amount of time, the format and, obviously, the content.

They warn that the use of technology, even in an educational setting, must not interfere with the child's interacting and socializing with peers and adults, physical activity and engaging in age-appropriate behaviors, such as play. They further emphasize the need for children to gain digital literacy along with an understanding of responsible use. Digital literacy includes a person's ability and knowledge as to how to use and navigate technology and to be able to find information and evaluate it and its sources. Beyond this, digital literacy includes knowing how to use technology responsibly. Most importantly, they encourage decision makers to keep up to date with the latest research on this topic.

COGNITION

The human memory system is comprised of multiple components that collectively allow for memories to be made and stored and for learning to take place. After information is perceived, it is held in sensory memory and working memory, where one begins to makes sense of the information. The information then proceeds to short-term memory and, finally, on to long term, or remote memory. Throughout the process, simultaneous attentional and executive control functions support memory encoding. While it is beyond the scope of this article to go into greater detail regarding the components of the human memory system, what is relevant to this discussion is that each component is thought to be susceptible to influences of technology and media (Ziegler, Mishra, & Gazzaley, 2015).

Forms of technology and media are typically not used individually, particularly by digital natives. Instead, multiple forms of media are most often in constant, simultaneous use. This is known as media multitasking. Media multitasking multifactorially increases the risks and concerns of media consumption and, since media multitasking is so ubiquitous, it is heavily represented in the literature (e.g. Baumgartner, Weeda, van der Heijden, & Huizinga, 2014; Bowman, Waite, & Levine, 2015; Cardoso-Leite, Green, & Bavelier, 2015; Junco & Cotten, 2012; Minear, Brasher, McCurdy, Lewis, & Younggren, 2013; Rosen, Carrier, & Cheever, 2013; Rothbart & Posner, 2015) and is the focus of this discussion.

When people multitask, be it with media or anything else, they are dividing their attention. Attention can be thought of as the individual's cognitive bridge and connection to all they would like to engage in and with all they would like to connect. Similar to any other cognitive resource, an individual's attention is limited. Therefore, when one is multitasking, one's attention may be spread too thinly, which can compromise their ability to process information properly and efficiently. One might suggest that an individual's constant multitasking may actually help develop and refine multi-tasking ability and allow more effective processing as a result. There is literature, however, that suggests that that is not at all the case (Ophir, Nass, & Wagner, 2009). In fact, constant media multitasking increasingly diminishes general multitasking abilities.

Attention is just one of the cognitive processes that are subsumed under executive control or function. Other included processes are metacognition – the monitoring of one's cognition –impulse control, decision making, systematic problem solving, allocation of cognitive resources and task switching. Baumgartner, et al. (2014) demonstrates that media multitasking has negative effects on many of these areas of executive function.

Not all research on executive processes and technology and media is negative. For example, research indicates that certain types of media, particularly first player action video games, can help with visual spatial abilities, reaction time, attention (Cardoso-Leite & Bavelier, 2014; Dye, Green, & Bavelier, 2009) and multisensory integration (Lui & Wong, 2012). In fact, specifically designed video games are being used to train older people to lessen the cognitive expenditure on multitasking (Anguera et al., 2013). It is, of course, somewhat paradoxical that the very media that raises concern about negatively impacting attention and learning is the same media that is relied on heavily by neuropsychologists performing cognitive remediation interventions via websites such as Cogmed (similar to the popular site Lumosity). These sites contain game-like tasks that help remediate working memory, attention and executive function. As mentioned in the introductory paragraphs, not all technology and media types are made equal and significant differences do exist between them.

Attention, memory and executive function underlie the ability to learn. A more applied way of examining the effect technology has on these processes is to review the literature on technology and academic achievement. Junco and Cotten (2012), Kirschner and Karpinski (2010); Rosen, et al. (2013) all suggest that media multitasking and its connection to the use of social media have a negative impact on grade point averages. This negative impact on academic achievement is attributed to distractions during studying, lessened cognitive resources such as attention, inability to stay focused on one task as opposed to the need to multitask, poor study skills and spending less time actually studying. While currently there is limited research on academics and

social media, it will no doubt be of significant focus in future research.

So where does all this leave us, as parents, educators, community members and leaders? Technology and media are powerful forces that are here to stay and will only continue to proliferate and permeate even more aspects of our lives. They are neither inherently good nor evil, but their very existence has changed child development forever on multiple levels. We must recognize this reality in order to deal with it in an informed manner. While the literature base may not be as robust as one would expect or desire, and while we honestly do not yet have clear and definitive answers as to the full effect technology and media has on development and cognition, there is still much for us to learn from the existing literature and we must be committed to keeping abreast of new emerging research.

It is our responsibility to ensure that the great benefits technology offers do not come at the expense of children's physical health, at the expense of socialization and interactions with their parents and peers or at the expense of their engaging in age appropriate behaviors. Children's usage must be developmentally appropriate. On the cognitive front, we do know that media-multitasking comes at a significant cognitive cost in memory and learning processes. While the trend of media-multitasking is certainly going to continue, we have to be conscious of its negative effects and take steps to mitigate them by limiting the amount of time that our children spend engaged in media use. Most importantly, it is not only the parents and educators that must be mindful of the negative effects, it is imperative that children and teens become informed consumers of technology and media. As parents, we must establish clear guidelines for our children's use of technology by limiting the amount of time they use it, keeping screens out of their bedrooms and restricting use during dinner and other family time. And in particular, given the research concerning technology's impact on learning and academic achievement, children should not have access to unnecessary technology during study hours. Finally, we must promote our children's digital literacy through explicit instruction and continued conversations that will lead to responsible use.

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Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein

Paradigm Shifts: Authority and Truth

In times of frustration, parents of teens will often reference the age-old Yiddish observation: "Small children, small problems; big children, big problems." The Internet has outgrown its childhood and is well into adulthood, and we are now looking at some rather large causes for concern.

Some contributors to this issue of Klal Perspectives have examined specific problems that are hugely important. They have doubled down on particular issues, examining single areas of a large painting. In some ways, however, our community has shifted to an altogether different canvas. In certain regards, the impact of the Internet on our community is so significant that it has changed the entire way we think. Such changes, whether for a community or for general society, are called paradigm shifts.

Five hundred years ago, the Copernican Revolution was one such paradigm shift for the general community. Previously, man had seen himself as the physical center of the universe, surrounded by heavenly bodies neatly revolving around him in perfect circles. For much of the world, discovering that this was not so led to a crisis in human self-esteem. John Donne put it perfectly:

> *'Tis all in pieces, all coherence gone,*
> *All just supply, and all relation;*
> *Prince, subject, father, son, are things forgot.*

More recently, some thinkers are trying to create what they hope will be a new paradigm shift in the way we understand the essence of being human. Transhumanism is a movement urging us to accept that the survival of mankind can be assured only by destroying it in its present form and restructuring it through technology. They are not talking about robots meant to serve man. Rather, as they see it, the best of what it means to be human might be more efficiently perpetuated by shifting mankind's essence to silicon. According to political science professor Charles Rubin at Duquesne University, this effort involves, among other things, blurring the lines between Man and machine:

> *The virtual reality expected soon to make movies and games more immersive is just a precursor to direct connections between our brains and computers, and even that is merely a prelude to uploading our minds into computers – providing us with a kind of immortality (so long as proper backups are made).*[1]

While this paradigm shift-in-the-making may never happen, the Internet has already brought several paradigm shifts to the Torah world, even if we don't all recognize them yet. We will consider two of them.

I. AUTHORITY

While much of Western Culture is intoxicated with the notion of personal autonomy, Torah Jewry has pretty much retained its commitment to the value of authority. Committed Jews accept both the ultimate authority of a Divine lawgiver, and the surrogate authority of human leaders who oversee the translation of Hashem's will into practical policy for the Torah community. Though without a central, infallible leader, and even without a Sanhedrin for many centuries, Jewish communities dealt effectively with countless local and regional issues. Though the community has always been "blessed" with often intensely divisive differences of opinion, it understood that communal decisions had to be made. Our forebears intuitively knew to whom to turn and to whom to defer. Torah Jews have recognized, and continue to recognize, the authority of the community rov and beis din on the local level, and that of the einei ha-eidah, the greatest Torah luminaries of a generation, regarding broader issues.

It might seem that, at least within the Charedi world, the notion of communal authority as vested in human leadership seems safe and secure. The Internet, however, has fundamentally changed the dynamic of authority within the community. We can be optimistic about the notion of Authority surviving. But, it is certain to be met by increasingly frequent challenges. Moreover, these changing societal and attitudinal dynamics may compel changes in how authority is wielded and in how it is maintained.

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[1] Charles T. Rubin, *Eclipse of Man*, New Atlantis, New York, 2014, pg. 4 See Avodah

The paradigm shift in the dynamic of authority stems primarily from the community's democratization, which itself is an outgrowth of being a "connected" community. Every Jew has always had an opinion; the Internet has now given every Jew a voice.

Not so long ago, most people knew that unless they had substantial wealth or powerful friends their complaints or gripes about a communal issue had little chance of being addressed. That was simply the way it was. The public microphone was carefully controlled, whether it was being heard at a Q and A session at a public meeting, or the allegorical mike of a public voice in the dynamics of community discussion.

Today, everyone has the mike. Any idea can quickly get into the hands of many, many people. Good ideas, bad ideas – both quickly have their day in the court of public opinion.

This is a mixed blessing. First and foremost, the connected community is one in which far less can be swept under the carpet. Festering sores in community policy began, in some cases, to make plodding progress only after the Internet generated waves of concern and anger. It is hard, if not impossible, to believe that much of the progress we have made in dealing with abuse and its cover-ups could have happened without that attention. The Internet has helped (under the guidance of poskim to organizations like ORA) shame recalcitrant husbands to unchain their wives. This is all positive.

Additionally, social media and the blogosphere allow for effective and speedy collaboration and sharing of good ideas. A moving story, a sharp vort, an essay that works, a novel suggestion – all can be sent off before retiring to bed, with multiple layers of response waiting by morning. The effective communicator or creative thinker can now quickly develop a following, where for most this was impossible just a few years ago.

Unfortunately, bad ideas gain traction using the same tools. Character assassination, negativity, skepticism and plain vanilla viciousness take off on digital wings. Warped individuals also develop followings; some of the worst are cowards, spreading their poison without fear of repercussions. Bloggers and commenters regularly choose to hide behind pen names, allowing them to shout out what they had previously been reluctant to whisper. While this can often be valuable, breaking the grip of intimidation and suppression that met whistle-blowers in the past comes with a more sinister side as well. The troublemaker, the passive-aggressive personality and the ordinary citizen with an unwarranted gripe can share all kinds of thoughts without their spouses, children, *rabbeim, chavrusas* or employers ever getting wind of it.

We can pretend that this does not affect the committed Jew. We would be kidding ourselves. As a blogmaster of a heavily moderated blog, I get to hear what people are thinking. In countless comments, we witness people who publicly pay lip service to authority but privately take many liberties, and digitally share their skepticism with many, many people.

We can foresee two primary consequences of this revolution in communication. Neither is inherently bad or good; both will cause deviations from what we are accustomed to.

The first is that we are likely to see change in the way new ideas and policies are introduced. Many of us are used to thinking of Torah leadership as being exclusively top-down, meaning that *gedolim* (on the national level) and local *talmidei chachamim* (on the local level) respond to situations with ideas and plans that they then press into action, using the authority and trust vouchsafed to them. During the decades of post-Holocaust reconstruction and transplantation of intense yeshiva learning to America, top-down leadership was crucial. We cannot imagine a Torah community in the United States without a Rav Aharon Kotler.

A generation or two of Torah Jews forgot that there was a different, competing model. Looking back at *teshuvos* over centuries of limited Jewish self-rule, however, we find a different model, sometimes working side by side with the first. It is reasonable to expect that the Internet is going to drive us towards resuming use of this second model. Often, ideas were floated by laypeople and then brought to Torah leadership for evaluation, modification, oversight and approval. One early example of this practice can be found in Bava Basra 9A, where decisions reached by professional associations about hours, fees and the like (and which would impact on the greater public) were validated, albeit with the requirement that they be brought to a resident talmid chacham for review, if one was available.

We could look at this as the mirror image of the first model, and call it bottom-up. With far more internet-generated churning going on at the connected bottom, we will likely see more ideas coming from the Torah "street" and getting sent "upstairs" for consideration and approval. In the past, new ideas might have simply gone away after a brief initial peak. Today, these ideas do not fade so quickly, and can often build up to a sustained

buzz and pressure that will reach the ears of our *gedolim*. (In an increasingly complex world, our *gedolim* find more on their plates than mortals can deal with. They must function as *roshei yeshivah*, fundraisers, board members – and providers of guidance and succor to a burgeoning population. In my own limited discussion with several of them, they have stated that they are more than happy not to have to do all the strategic thinking on their own, and are pleased when good ideas are brought to them.)

In the days of *Chaza*l, a new *gezerah* had an incubation period. If it proved to be too onerous to the public, it stood to be pulled.[2] We can speculate as to whether *Chazal* today would wait as long as they used to. Our new world requires far less time to determine public reaction, and to assess whether some well-intentioned edict may be too draconian for the masses.

Without unassailable evidence, we can at least imagine that decisions that might have been initially unpopular could still have been viable. After a short period of time, dissatisfaction would wane, leaving a public perhaps grumbling, but equipped with some necessary corrective for the public good. Today, the grumbling at times will be louder and sustained longer. This may indicate that some of the practical tools of leadership that worked in the past will no longer be effective. Bans on activities that are seen as unhealthy (but not natively *assur*) might have to be used very sparsely – if at all. The *kol koreh* (rabbinic pronouncement) of the near future might have to offer fuller explanations of the reasons for a decision, rather than just make a statement and gather some signatures under it. Failure to do so might mean that the inevitable public discussion – justified or not – will prove to be a larger problem than the one the *kol koreh* was designed to remedy.

The most important changes, however, must come from the rest of us non-gedolim. If our authority figures are going to increasingly depend on our input, we need to be there to provide it. We need to stop complaining about "self-appointed askanim" (activists) until we suggest an alternative. There will always be people who jump at a chance for honor and recognition, and push themselves into positions of power. We need to be aware of them. There are others – well meaning but not always the best suited – who become the lay askanim simply because no one else is willing to step up to the plate. Lay leadership shouldn't just happen; it needs to be cultivated.

[2] Zarah 36A. Shemen akum is one example of a gezerah that was simply rejected by the public, and therefore un-legislated.

We have become, in this regard, victims of our own success. The explosion, *baruch Hashem*, of commitment to serious years of learning came about, in no small part, through narrowing the chinuch we provided our children. Like would be Olympian competitors, we focused on learning – and often one kind of learning – to the exclusion of all else. Not so long ago, yeshiva students led more varied lives, especially during *bein hazemanin*. At camps, summer jobs, volunteer work they discovered not only inner strengths and talents, but lay leaders who inspired them. This practice has gone out of vogue, especially for the best and brightest of the more traditional *yeshivos*.

It won't be easy, but we need to find ways to expose young people to leadership models without diminishing their opportunity to reach for the sky in learning. As far back as the Pressburg yeshiva of the Chasam Sofer in the 19th century, *bochurim* were trained for the professional rabbinate within their *makom* Torah, with classes in homiletics and public speaking. (They were held on Friday mornings, when the Torah energies of students anyway tended to flag.) Not so long ago, *Torah Umesorah* planted for a future crop of better-trained *mechanchim* by offering classes (held during the lunch break) in classroom management and even *dikduk* (grammar).

There are different classes and experiences that ought to be assembled knowing that there are another 999 who will emerge from the beis *medrash* who are not the *echad yotzei le-hora'ah* (one who emerges as a preeminent *halachic* voice). Within that group are bright, talented people who will need to be the lay leaders, the ones providing many of the bottom-up suggestions, within a few short years of leaving yeshiva. Minimally, they need to learn that there are haphazard ways of running institutions, and professional ways. The latter often require some background in sundry disciplines: management, economics, psychology, and even history and philosophy. Programs like the Tikvah Summer Institute for Yeshiva Men,[3] which exposes bright and curious yeshiva men to the interface between Torah thought and political action, should be expanded and duplicated.

It certainly isn't all – or even primarily – about yeshiva students. We need to look at the pool of young people already in the workplace and identify those with leadership skills and talent. We should be running programs to develop Torah lay leadership, the way that the Wexner Program does in the

[3] Full disclosure: I am one of the two co-directors of the program. And I entertain other biases as well. One of my sons founded and directedKids of Courage for years, which did provide an opportunity for young yeshiva men and women to try their hand at some rather trying but rewarding chesed to children with chronic illnesses.

general Jewish community. By making an invitation to participate a badge of distinction, Wexner finds some of the most suitable Jewish men and women, and motivates them to share their talent with Jewish institutions.

Hashgacha (Providence) has it that the timing of our need for trained and prepared bottom-up input is exquisite. Apart from everything discussed above, another vacuum is rapidly opening in Jewish life in the United States. The steady disintegration of the non-Orthodox community, as shown in the recent Pew Report, means that we have to be prepared to step into roles we avoided in the past. The response of much of the non-Orthodox world – not just J Street – to the Iran deal has made it clear that the Orthodox community must assume an ever-increasing role in the political defense of Israel's interests; too many others care more about abortion rights than about the future of the Jewish State. From the large number of yarmulkes on exhibit at AIPAC, we see that many members of our community have gotten involved – but there are large gaps that still need to be filled. Do we expect our *gedolim* to subscribe to Foreign Affairs – or do we need *bnei* Torah to digest the reading and help them formulate strategies for dealing with our elected officials?

Yogi Berra famously said, "It's hard to make predictions – especially about the future."[4] We can't really know all the parameters of change that the democratization of the community will force. But it is more than reasonable to suppose that the Internet, chief among other factors, will drive a paradigm shift. The worst reaction to its eventuality would be to pretend that it is business as usual. With *siyaata deshmaya* (Divine assistance), we will adapt to it, just as HKBH has allowed us to weather all other storms.

II. TRUTH

Two contradictory observations about frum Jews leaving the fold had left me puzzled for decades. It took a bad bout of conjunctivitis to see my way through to the resolution. Through bloodshot eyes, I gained perspective about what I believe to the single most serious unwanted consequence of the Internet.

I have long taken an interest in the intellectual issues that some people have with Torah observance. Over the years, I've sat with many people struggling through ideas or issues that gave them no peace, whether apparent conflicts with science or history, or some of the attitudinal assumptions of contemporary Torah living. It was a steady stream – not a torrent, but not a trickle either. I have met a good number who went beyond that, pointing to some of these issues as the reason they firmly chose to reject *halacha*, or even belief in G-d.

On the other hand, virtually every communal professional I've come across – left, right, and center – assured me that no one left observance because of intellectual issues alone. The challenges to belief inevitably followed issues of a different nature, usually dealing with family dynamics, abuse or personal unhappiness. The intellectual issues sometimes served as a pretext for abandoning a Torah lifestyle, or the way in which a formerly Orthodox person justified to himself why he opted out.

My ophthalmologist – one of the absolute best in Beverly Hills – resolved the conflict. He studied my eye, asked some questions, and observed, "Probably viral. I'm going to give you an antibiotic."

"Huh?" said I. "I thought antibiotics are of no effect against viruses."

"True," he responded. "But we prescribe the antibiotic because often enough the infection can be followed by a secondary, bacterial one. If you don't ward off the secondary, you'll be in trouble after the primary wanes."

It may very well be that people discover deal-breaking intellectual issues with their adherence to Torah only after suffering some primary shock to their internal systems. Once established, however, these secondary problems have a life of their own, and persist even if the primary cause for dissatisfaction is remedied.

We are, I believe, heading for a good deal of heartache in this area. One of the consequences of ubiquitous connectivity is that our community will be encountering a good deal more "secondary infections." And, while in concept we have effective ways of addressing these challenges, none of the alleged products are currently on the shelf, within easy reach. If Amalek is equivalent to *safek* (doubt), Amalek today is wired to the max.

The short version: More than anything before, Google has put more questions, more challenges and more skepticism in the hands of the curious. While pornography is certainly destructive to the *kedushah* of the individual and the community, introducing successive waves of challenges to *emunah* is potentially even more damaging.

[4] Others attribute the line to Nobel laureate Neils Bohr, who while not halachically Jewish, had a role in persuading Gustav V of Sweden to make public Sweden's willingness to accept Danish Jews fleeing the Nazis. But Bohr couldn't play baseball.

The longer version: It has long been customary to parry unanswerable questions from our children with, "Fun a *kasha, shtarbt* men nit"– no one ever died of a question. In certain segments of our community, questions are not simply dismissed, they are received with hostility; if questions are posed too frequently (or too thoughtfully), the inquiring child will be essentially sequestered for fear that he or she will corrupt others.

There are both good and not so good reasons for attempting to suppress questions in a classroom setting. It is usually only a minority of students who share the question. A rebbi or morah may feel that it is not justifiable to introduce doubt in the minds of the other students by addressing the curiosity of the few who would, in fact, benefit from a discussion. If the questioning child is blessed with the right teacher, the student may be pulled aside and the questions addressed privately.

In many cases, however, the child is never pulled aside and the questions are left unanswered, largely because the teacher may be equally uncomfortable with the question. The rebbi or morah may or may not have once shared the same questions. Either way, the teacher does not have any idea how to address the question, or even where to turn to find an answer.

This is tragic, and about to become even more so. For many centuries, Torah giants were at the forefront of generating Torah responses to the intellectual issues of the day. To be sure, only a minority threw themselves into this arena of activity, but their oeuvre became available to others who needed a reliable Torah approach. In pre-modern times, think of Rav Saadia Gaon, Rav Yosef Albo, Ralbag, Rav Yehudah Halevi and the Rambam. More recently, while some communities responded to the haskalah – in some cases with great success! – by isolating community members from maskilim, and even their areas of interest,[5] others took a different approach. R. Tzvi Hirsch Chayes, the Netziv, Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch engaged the ideas and their authors, using their superior Torah knowledge to counter the lesser knowledge and lesser commitment of the *maskilim*. Some excelled in particular segments of the battle, like Rav Dovid Tzvi Hoffman against early Biblical criticism, and Rav Yitzchok Isaac Halevi Rabinowitz against the historical aspects of Jewish Wissenschaft. Whatever the issue, Torah Jews knew that their greatest minds were meeting challenges head on.

[5] At one point, proficiency in Tanach was required for admission to the great yeshivos. One of the reasons that the study of Tanach is largely absent from our yeshivos today is that maskilim took a strong interest in it. Whatever maskilim did, Torah loyalists were going to bolt in the opposite direction. We still haven't recovered from the original sprint away from what arguably is a major part of Torah study.

These *gedolim* ensured that those community members whose commitment was strong but struggled with questions could base their faith on the insights and articulations of contemporary giants. While challenges to *emunah* were floating in the marketplace of ideas, ehrliche Jews told themselves that if great people shared their questions and still put on *tefillin* in the morning, they could do the same. Fun a kasha, shtarbt men nit was a satisfying position to many. They at least were comforted that those greater than they had stared the same questions in the face, and did not flinch in the slightest.

For quite some period, this comfort has no longer been provided. Perhaps compelled by the need to focus on post-Holocaust reconstruction, and the recognition that Torah scholarship and psak needed to be replenished, the yeshiva community has not committed elite human resources to the study of contemporary intellectual challenges. We withdrew from those who were hurling bricks at our windows, choosing instead to board up the openings in the walls. It is no wonder that questions are not always appreciated. This strategy, however, is likely going to have to change, because no boarding-up can keep out the Internet.

Both adult and child now have access to the worst kinds of kefirah (heresy) at their fingertips. Moreover, even if someone is available and willing to address difficult questions and provide substantive answers, there is a good chance that the answers will be insufficient. Within minutes of arriving home, the questioner is likely to find multiple websites that punch holes in the arguments the rebbi had proffered. A rebbi who uses approaches developed by the kiruv movement decades ago might later learn that their effectiveness has long since waned or disappeared. Using inadequate arguments will backfire, causing the student to question or even mock all else the rebbi teaches. If the rebbi references outdated science or scientific theories propounded by outliers rather than mainstream figures, the questioner will become more alienated than before. The assumption will be that Torah's best response has been offered – but has come up lacking. Responses must be as sophisticated, thought out and compelling as are the questions. Serious study of the challenger's positions must be undertaken. Alas, there are far too few Torah scholars dedicated to this undertaking, and an enormous paucity of effective responses.

If the community is to be prepared to sustain itself against the ever-growing access of our members to significant challenges in thought, there must be a much more vigorous effort to provide a truly compelling presentation of our *hashkafos* – not just the "whys and wherefores" of practice but the pillars of our beliefs and their application to contemporary life. We will probably need,

in consultation with *gedolei Torah*, to be more anticipatory in inoculating our children by addressing what they will, in most cases, likely be exposed to in their progressively more open and intrusive society. We need to recalculate the cost-benefit ratio in addressing issues that might, in some cases, be raising questions in some students where none existed before.

But most importantly, we need to become much more savvy in our answers. Anticipated responses must be formulated to the counter-arguments offered by our detractors, even before we present our approaches. We must encourage and expand the work of organizations like Ani Maamin and Project Chazon, which have been working for years to bring programs of Torah hashkafah to our schools. They continue to mine the richness of our mesorah from Chazal and the Rishonim, which is the first tier of response to intellectual challenges and skepticism.

We will need, however, to exercise ever-greater vigilance in ensuring that those presenting the Torah hashkafa are equipped with best material that our Torah community can offer. In many instances, this will of necessity mean consulting with those of the Orthodox world where observant Jews are encouraged to wade into the sometimes murky waters of academic study. We certainly will not blindly accept any one person's conclusions or approach. Every idea and approach must be vetted and reviewed by our community's Torah leaders. But we must also recognize that the yeshiva community[6] has chosen to discourage the sophisticated study of these challenges, and so we need to hear out those who have plowed those fields, and consider which of their approaches can be safely used or modified.

The one thing we cannot afford to do is pretend that greater skepticism is not infiltrating our community. It is, and not just the minds of troubled souls.

Bayard Rustin, the great African American civil-rights advocate, is widely credited for the expression "speak truth to power." The paradigm shifts in a connected Torah world are going to change how and where we uphold the eternal truths of Yiddishkeit, as well as how we see the authority of leadership utilized.

[6] For example, I am aware of plenty of pushback against our assumptions coming from the world of modern Biblical scholarship. I am not personally aware of a single individual "home grown" within the yeshiva world who can address the issues from a position of strength. But I can easily point to people within the Israeli Dati-Leumi community who are both *bnei Torah* and conversant with the material.

Dr. Rona Novik

Cyber Bullying in the Jewish Community

An eighth grade girl checks her phone on motzaei Shabbos and finds a group text message to her entire class encouraging her classmates to boycott her party on Sunday because "her idea of fun is totally lame and babyish."

A fifteen year old Yeshiva student has established a fund raising website for a chesed project. An anonymous post on the page has a doctored picture of him in an embarrassing position with the caption, "Wouldn't you run a marathon to avoid this guy?"

After she spoke up in a school program about social relationships in her grade, Chana was de-friended by ten girls in her grade on various social media sites. Her emails to peers about homework are bouncing back unread and she has received voice messages from unknown phone numbers referring to her as a "rat" and a "slut."

These are examples of the new face of bullying. Bullying, the abuse of power to cause harm to another, is not a new phenomenon; in fact, the Torah community has never been immune to bullying, whether in schools, camps or in the community. Research I conducted[1] in Jewish day schools found rates of bullying in grades 6-8 remarkably similar to those found in the general US population. Jewish values and the observance of the *mitzvoth* of *bein adam l'chavero* (interpersonal) and *lashon hara* (negative speech) notwithstanding, bullying happens in Jewish schools and communities. With the current widespread use of communication technology and social media,

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[1] Paper on Bully Prevention in Jewish Schools presented at Nefesh Association of Orthodox Mental Health Professionals National Conference, Norfolk, Virginia, 2002.

cyber bullying amongst children and teens has emerged as a new and virulent strain of a dangerous problem. In the Orthodox community, where there is a clear appreciation for the numerous challenges posed by computer use and the Internet, parents and schools must broaden their understanding of the technological connections accessible to children and teens via the various available devices, and the implications of such access.

WHAT IS CYBER BULLYING?

Originally, cyber bullying referred to harmful actions and communications via computer, including email and social media sites. The vast majority of Internet activity by teens is now on devices such as smart phones, tablets and gaming consoles, and so the definition and dimensions of cyber bullying have widened. In fact, a 2015 study by the Pew Group[2] found that more than 75% of teens[3] have smartphones, underscoring the proliferation of highly accessible devices for perpetrating cyber bullying.

Cyber bullying is currently understood as not specific to a particular technology, but rather any bullying that takes place using electronic technology. This can include sending mean text messages or emails, spreading rumors by email or on social networking sites, and posting or disseminating embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or imposing fabricated profiles.

Coupled with the statistics above, which indicate the broad accessibility of internet access and the fact that studies of teenage internet usage are obsolete the moment they are published, it is not surprising that exact information on the rates of cyber bullying is hard to find. The 2013 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance Survey[4] found 15% of high school students were electronically bullied that year. Two years earlier, the National Center for Education Statistics found 9% of students in grades 6-12 experienced cyber bullying. Though there is no research to confirm that similar levels occur in Yeshiva settings, there is also no compelling reason to believe that they are immune.

CYBER BULLYING IS DIFFERENT THAN TRADITIONAL BULLYING

How is cyber bullying qualitatively different from conventional bullying? What are their similarities and differences, and do these distinctions impact how they should be addressed? Moreover, are there issues particularly germane to the Orthodox population that require special consideration?

The significant research on traditional, face-to-face bullying identifies an imbalance of power as a critical component. Technology exacerbates this potential imbalance since the very nature of technological communication empowers potential bullies and renders victims powerless. This enhanced power is derived, in part, from the anonymity that cyber communication offers. When sending toxic messages to peers, an otherwise reticent teen can hide behind false screen names or adopt an alternate identity. Psychological research documents the powerful disinhibiting factor of anonymity, with individuals engaging in acts of cruelty that they would never do if their identities were known. This is a factor in the often-vicious behavior of on-line bullies, and contributes to the devastating consequences such behavior can have on victims.

Also different from traditional bullying is the reach and permanence of cyber bullying. Whereas a schoolyard taunt can be heard by a few nearby peers, a post on social media can quickly spread to dozens, if not hundreds of viewers. Unlike the spoken word, which may be forgotten, technological memories are timeless. Hence, cyber bullying follows its victims, transcending the boundaries of time and place to inflict seemingly endless pain. The words of Rav Pam's introduction to the 1998 Chofetz Chaim Heritage Foundation program on onaat *devarim* (hurtful speech) appear prescient: "Certainly everyone should understand the imperative to be extremely careful in avoiding words that inflict wounds that perhaps will never heal, or may linger on for a long, long time."

[2] The Pew Teens, Social Media and Technology Overview, 2015. See http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/04/09/teens-social-media-technology-2015/

[3] There is no research to date on the rates of use in yeshivot and day schools. However, given research on the relationship between affluence and usage, and given the relatively high socio-economic status of yeshiva day school families, it is reasonable to assume the rates are similar.

[4] See http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/

Despite their differences, perpetration of, and victimization by, cyber bullying and traditional bullying often overlap. Most cyber bullies engage in bullying behavior in person as well and most victims of cyber bullying are also victimized in live situations. Unfortunately, there is less overlap between the available solutions.

Successful traditional bullying interventions usually involve bystanders in pro-social acts of supporting victims and derailing bullies through distraction, humor and compassionate confrontation. Employing these techniques in response to cyber bullying, by contrast, is challenging in multiple ways. The same anonymity that facilitates cyber bullying makes it easier for those witnessing it to hide behind their screens. Recent research at the University of Texas found that the invisibility that online witnesses experience decreases their adherence to societal norms. There is reason to believe that for observant Jewish teens, this invisibility may also enable behavior inconsistent with religious norms and precepts. The same research found that the greater the number of witnesses, the less likely anyone is to intervene. Familiarity and friendship with the victim was the only factor found to actually increase online bystander intervention.

THE IMPACT OF CYBER BULLYING

That cyber bullying imposes deep scars is clear. High profile cases in the secular world have documented the connection between victimization and depression and suicide. Victims experience no respite from the pain or torment, report intense alienation, and are more likely than their peers to avoid school, suffer from decreased self-esteem and turn to alcohol or drugs. While no statistics on these phenomena exist regarding the Jewish community, practical factors may well cause the devastating impact of cyber bullying to be equal to, or greater, in the Orthodox community. I receive multiple calls each week from day schools, families, and mental health professionals, struggling with bullying and cyber bullying. Not infrequently, bullying and cyber bullying often compel victims to alter their social sphere, and occasionally even warrant the extreme measure of changing schools. Unlike children in the general population, however, children of observant homes have neither an unlimited choice of schools, nor ready access to alternate socialization venues. When an Orthodox child is humiliated within his or her social group, they often have no place to turn since that very same social group will frequently be identical to or overlap social groups in their camps, shuls and extracurricular venues. While this is true in smaller Jewish communities, it is also a problem in larger metropolitan areas with substantial Jewish populations.

RESPONDING TO CYBER BULLYING

How should the Orthodox community better address the threat of cyber bullying, particularly since it can occur anywhere and at anytime, and can leave its permanent mark on our children, families and schools? This is particularly challenging since the leaders of our communities and institutions, like most parents who struggle to help their children, are adults who tend to be Internet novices, or "cyber immigrants." By contrast, of course, perpetrators of cyber bullying are typically children and teens who are extremely knowledgeable and comfortable with the "tools of their trade" – certainly far more so than we will ever be.

Rather than cede the technological universe to the next generation, however, parents and community leadership (or their designees) need to up their game and increase their familiarity with the cyber world in order to properly supervise what goes on there.

There is significant evidence that parents and educators typically underestimate the prevalence of cyber bullying, and so it is particularly important that we to take seriously our children's and students' reports of misbehavior in the cyber world. Moreover, unlike the circumstances of a physical or verbal assault, which tend to be fairly straightforward, cyber bullying is often a function of a range of technological interactions that few adults would even understand. Absent some initiation to the technologically dependent social environment of today's youth, the true meaning of an email or text message may be ambiguous or easily misunderstood. For example, without the background information and context, one student "de-friending" another, or blocking someone on a website, may seem innocent. But such actions may be vindictive and devastating.

It is also critical that children be made comfortable sharing information with adults, and that they can be confident that the response will be reasonable. Children should also be taught to save all evidence, notwithstanding the natural temptation to hit the delete button when confronting an offensive message. Such evidence is often the only means to confront and stop cyber offenders. Caution, however, is warranted before considering any confrontation. An important rule of thumb is to consider the after-effects. Will your actions make the victimized child safer, or might you be putting the child at increased risk?

If we are to control this phenomenon in our communities, it is critical for schools and parents to develop, disseminate, teach and enforce clear expectations and policies for cyber behavior. These must be consistent with Torah understandings of *v'ahavta l'reyach kmocha* (love your fellow as yourself), AND cognizant of the psychological realities of disinhibition that occur in technological communications. Parents, educators and Torah leaders need to know enough about the technology to set these expectations. And because technology is constantly evolving, they can never become complacent. Chances are that as much as adults know, children and teens know more, and so we must invite our children to serve as our teachers.

An equally critical role for adults in addressing cyber bullying is supervision. Despite their superior knowledge about technology, children's and teens' understanding of the world and of human nature lags behind that of adults. Very intelligent middle- and high-school students have incorrectly assumed that simply because access to a site is password protected, or because they only shared an item "in their network," no unwanted viewers would ever see it. I have heard equally bright students maintain that since they deleted a post from their phone or web based site, there is no further evidence of its existence.

Perhaps most disconcerting is the frequent willingness of children and teens to believe that people whom they encounter on the Internet are who they say they are. This expectation can result in inappropriate relationships and even agreements to meet in person with characters who troll cyberspace for just such naïveté. Adults, even those who are cyber novices, usually recognize these various errors of judgment.

Often, adults are uncomfortable ramping up their supervision of youngsters' cyber lives, feeling it is an invasion of privacy or a compromise of their relationship. Both adults and children, however, need to understand that there is no true privacy in the technological realm, and therefore there is no right to demand privacy from those who love and wish to protect them. What teens share in cyber space, which is or may become public, needs to be shared with caring adults, as well. Inevitably, teens will protest. They would be incorrect in arguing that a parent's access to their internet postings is tantamount to reading their private diary, or listening in on their phone conversations. If such supervision appears intrusive, if teens complain that their privacy is being invaded, parents should take comfort in the fact that through this supervision our children are also being taught that their cyber footprint is both public and permanent; and that their parents care. It is an opportunity to teach our children that we live our lives as Torah Jews, both in person and on line, when we are known and when we are anonymous.

By engaging with children both about and within the cyber world, adults have the opportunity to not only address bullying and other cyber threats with children, but also to demonstrate the positive power of technology. The developments in cyber space allow us to be informed and stay connected. Children can be taught that it is improper to stand idly by the suffering of others, whether they are physically present, or connected in cyber space. Children can be taught to recognize the power of our actions and especially of our words. Consider the scenarios at the start of this article. Imagine if a classmate of the eighth grader accused of "lame, babyish parties," rather than further sharing the post, sent the alternate message "let's find ways to celebrate together." What a powerful statement it would make if, in response to the doctored picture of our chessed runner, four peers agree to join the race and run with him. If the girls in Chana's grades checked their phones and tablets to find a message from three girls urging them to stop their name-calling and end the animosity towards her, they would discover the positive power of the group.

Chazal in Sefer Hakanah tell us that with each word we utter a fragment of our neshama is released into the world. Our words, whether in person or on-line, are what the Chafetz Chaim refers to as our Divine spark. When we help shape our children's cyber personae – the words, pictures, and actions

they share through technology – we teach them to give chizuk (strength), to express care, and to become avdei Hashem (servants of G-d). We may be teaching these lessons in modern times, with modern challenges, but as we do so, we fulfill an ancient and timeless vision for klal Yisrael.

Rick Magder

Exploring New Possibilities in Online Torah Learning

Today's technology has become so intimately intrusive in our lives that it is often impossible to assess whether we are consumers of technology or whether technology is consuming us. While, "smart" technology allegedly makes our lives easier, more productive and less stressful, the question is, does it make us smarter? In any event, one thing appears all but certain – technology is here to stay.

The unavoidable and increasingly pervasive and powerful impact of technology implores us to confront the unprecedented opportunities and avenues it can facilitate for Jewish growth, education and learning, despite the many imposing challenges it presents. Below is a brief exploration of some of these opportunities and challenges as they concern several of Torah Judaism's most cherished values and practices.

A fundamental dimension of sustaining the Mesorah is the central role of the rebbe/student relationship. Historically, an individual would develop this relationship relatively early in life, and naturally sustain it thereafter to one degree or another. Technology, however, has revolutionized access to communication as well as transportation, altering many of the dynamics underlying the rebbe/student relationship, both negatively and positively. For example, ease of travel has introduced the common practice of talmidim studying in a variety of yeshivas in both Israel and the U.S. rather than maintaining roots in one environment. This practice impacts the stability that is needed for students to build and sustain a meaningful and lasting relationship with a particular rebbe.

On the positive side, these same dynamics afford greater opportunities for students to encounter new rebbeim who may be more appropriate for their particular intellectual and temperamental needs, and with whom they are

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more likely to maintain a long-term relationship. Moreover, ease of travel and communications allows this relationship to be sustained and nurtured long after the rebbe and student have parted ways.

The Internet and its myriad learning opportunities introduce a similar dichotomy regarding the rebbe/student relationship. On one hand, enormous breadth of access increases the chances that a seeking individual will find a teacher who "speaks their language." On the other hand, an individual's tilt towards online learning can seriously threaten the unique and invaluable impact of the personal energy that accompanies a rebbe teaching students sitting before him. I recently saw a teshuva discussing whether one can make a siyum after listening to the recording of a mesechta being taught, though not actively involving oneself in engaged study.

Unfortunately, online Torah study introduces even more blatant and noxious challenges. Many online platforms deliver rich and profound media but at the same time may also inadvertently serve as the conduit for severely inappropriate material. A most beautiful and impactful shiur watched on YouTube may be followed by a YouTube pop-up introducing a variety of images linking to other wholly inappropriate videos on their site.

Increasingly popular alternatives for dissemination of Torah are video streaming services such as LiveStream or Ustream. These services allow the user to broadcast a live video feed, and they are wonderful for delivering a live shiur to which students and friends can be invited. In fact, one blog recently posted an article entitled "Could Live Streaming Be the Key to *Kiruv?*"[1], which presented two mobile streaming services – Periscope and Meerkat. Sites like these, however, generate revenue from ads, and retain exclusive control over ad placement. The most unholy and inappropriate content can, therefore, follow the holiest of classes. Educators and their administrators must therefore be mindful and evermore diligent about anticipating these kinds of issues.

Another challenge heightened by technology is the degree of stimulation and "razzle-dazzle" that is now necessary to capture someone's attention. Age-old wisdom about how to reach people with meaningful Jewish ideas seems increasingly outdated in this rapidly changing, fast-paced, technological age. In a YouTube and Instagram world, attention spans have been shortened and people are accustomed to information being seamlessly and painlessly delivered to the palm of their hands. Moreover, even when a student can be convinced to venture out of his or her immediate surroundings to embark on a search of Judaism – whether on Birthright or even for a stint in a yeshiva or seminary, maintaining follow-up presents the same challenge.

One solution that addresses these very challenges is ProjectSinai.org, which I created with my brother Gary under the auspices of the Afikim Foundation. It provides a clean and protected platform for online deliverables of Jewish content, such as live classes, videos and other media, and allows technology to be used to reach current and potential students around the world. A wide variety of organizations and individuals have utilized the platform to create and teach their own interactive, online classes. With the assistance of the Afikim Foundation, Project Sinai continues to grow and flourish, with thousands of registered users around the world participating in classes regularly.

Online Torah learning is just beginning to become normative, and will likely continue to flourish. In the secular world, online classes have become commonplace, and these developments are allowing the Torah community to learn from others how to most effectively utilize this mode of study. About 5.3 million students took at least one online course in Fall 2013 – up 3.7 percent from the previous fall, according to "Grade Level: Tracking Online Education in the United States," an annual report by the Babson Survey Research Group. The Babson study also reports that in 2014, an unprecedented 70.8% of academic leaders reporting that e-learning is critical to their long-term strategy.

The next obvious query regarding online study is its effectiveness. Among the same Babson cohort of academic leaders, about 74% reported that online study produced results equal or superior to face-to-face instruction. In fact, a growing majority of chief academic officers rate the learning outcomes for online education "as good as or better" than those for face-to-face instruction. While the 2013 results show a small decrease in the percentage of academic leaders who view the learning outcomes for online instruction as the same or better than face-to-face, they attribute this to the fact that leaders at institutions without online offerings are generally more negative regarding the impact of online learning.

These results reflect the trend toward more immersive and experiential online learning experiences. Experiential online learning environments include a range of online experiences, such as purposeful games, thought-provoking scenarios and consequential simulations. They may even include 3-D worlds, which tend to significantly increase student engagement.

[1] http://nleresources.com/2015/07/could-live-streaming-be-the-key-to-kiruv/

The Financial Times recently published an article addressing the future of online learning. In the article, Anant Agarwal, chief executive of edX – an online learning platform created jointly by Harvard and MIT – suggests that students worldwide will soon have free access to virtually any course subject in just about any language, adding up to tens of thousands of free, open courses, offering everything from fine arts to engineering. Learning will likely become even more personalized , offering multiple pathways to navigate courses that fit specific learning styles and speeds.

The blended model incorporating a combination of online and in-class, live learning will become more commonplace. It is projected that by 2020, 50% of all college campus coursework will combine in-person and online learning – a shift driven by student demand[2]. MIT's recent task force report on the future of MIT education, for example, was unequivocal in its support of the blended model.

An article appearing in the US News & World Report, by Kelsey Sheehy[3] noted that high schools nationwide include at least one online course as a prerequisite to matriculation. Many states have enacted laws making online learning a mandatory prerequisite for graduation. The article quotes Kathleen Airhart, deputy commissioner for the Tennessee Department of Education, in a discussion with Education Week, "The reality is, when a student leaves us, whether they're going to a four-year college, a technical college, or going into the world of work, they're going to have to do an online course. This helps prepare the students."

How do these trends impact Jewish learning? Jewish education has traditionally lagged far behind its secular counterpart with regard to innovation. Perhaps we feel that "If it's not broken, don't fix it," and that may be true. For example, even the staunchest frum advocate of online study would be hard pressed to argue that online study is superior to the chavrusah model of one-on-one study. On a full-class basis, however, online study often generates an energy that has no equal, even in a live face-to-face event. When participants observe others logging into a shiur from across the globe, a feeling is generated that is quite exciting. One recognizes that one is part of something special.

Through programs run on ProjectSinai.org, I see firsthand how this technology is impacting secular students. The online classroom allows them to connect with like-minded students throughout the country in a way that could not happen otherwise. For the most part, these are students who would find a face to face interaction with a rabbi far too intimidating.

Online learning is having an impact on Jewish day school education as well. Many forward-thinking schools have integrated some form of online learning into their curricula, This is commonly referred to as "blended learning," referranced above. It incorporates computer or online based learning that takes place in school or at home as part of the live teacher/classroom experience. Secular institutions are proving this model as very effective at raising the level of education while at the same time reducing costs.

While many yeshivas and day schools are not inclined to use such technology, newer startups and tuition paying parents are taking note. They are exploring this model as a way to lower tuition costs while at the same time improving the quality of education. While we have traditionally been slow adopters when it comes to new models of education, I believe online learning can and will revolutionize Jewish education in a way that makes it more affordable.

Faced with the reality of the tuition crisis, and in many cases substandard secular education, our educational institutions need to take note. With today's technology, these types of needs tend to pave the way for "disruptive innovation." If you are unfamiliar with the term, just think of Uber, the user-driven taxi service that spawned a whole new industry in transportation. Uber is a classic example of how a new opportunity provided by technology upended an age-old and well-established industry worldwide, literally overnight and without warning. It caused people to change their expectations about travel, and the worldwide taxi industry had no choice but to respond. Perhaps online learning will become our version of disruptive technology, demanding a rethinking of the age-old model of yeshivas and day schools.

Without question, technology comes with a price. When it is harnessed for good, it can be the most effective tool we have in our arsenal that combats ignorance, apathy and assimilation. The Malbim (Tehillim 85) explains that for tov (goodness) to be achieved, it must be led and mentored by tzedek (righteousness). A gift of tov left unrestrained will never achieve its purpose. When evaluating the good and the bad of the Internet, and by extension all its portals and applications, we must acknowledge how destructive and empty they can be when used improperly. At the same time, there is goodness beyond what could ever have been imagined decades ago that is being shared

[2] http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2/f8a03bbe-9802-11e4-b4be-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3k7xyEjWG

[3] http://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/high-school-notes/2012/10/24/states-districts-require-online-ed-for-high-school-graduation

every day, everywhere, through the growing benefits of these technologies.

It is therefore vital that we approach our engagement with technology with great care and foresight. Clearly, we cannot look the other way and pretend that it doesn't exist. Nor can we hide it from our children or simply prohibit everything and expect that all will be well. Such an approach is an irresponsible recipe for failure. So how can we take advantage of the extraordinary opportunities and avoid the dangers of online technology? A few suggestions:

1. If it's free, beware. Before adopting tech just because everyone else is using it, you must do your homework. There is a good chance that somewhere along the line, you and/or your users will see something you don't want to see. While it's very enticing that sites like YouTube offer you access to tens of millions of potential viewers, weigh the pros and cons. As an educator, you know that what makes you relevant is your content, not the platform on which it is delivered. Of course, there may be advantages to using YouTube to showcase video content rather than posting it on your own website. Examine if and how that impacts your bottom line. You may have more success by controlling where and how your content is presented, and there are platforms that have been designed to accomplish that. Platforms that are "closed" (i.e., that do not allow anyone anywhere to post content) offer a level of control that promises to make sure content is appropriate and there will be no surprises during the user experience. These services provide more of a "safe" environment, but it is nevertheless unlikely that any service using the public Internet is 100% foolproof.

2. If you are actively and successfully connecting with students online, you are probably using at least some social media tools and services. Research which platforms your constituents deem relevant. Regularly review their policies and make sure you are comfortable with them. These policies can change without you knowing. For example, many people will tell you that FaceBook is safe. Last year, Facebook announced changes to its privacy and advertising policies, extending Facebook's ability to track users outside of Facebook. This counters their 2011 position that they "do not track users across the web." Facebook said it will begin to disregard its users' choice of using their in-browser "Do Not Track" setting: Soon, anyone who clicks "ask websites not to track me" in their browser will be completely ignored by Facebook. Google and Yahoo already ignore people's "Do Not Track" settings, though Twitter, Microsoft and Pinterest still respect them.

3. Many social platforms "mine" user data and can lure users away from your content. YouTube, for example, is a very sophisticated social media platform. If they see that people are interested in "Jewish" content, they can automatically comment on your page, suggesting other Jewish content that you may not approve of. Obviously regular viewers can do this as well. Again, monitor this regularly.

4. If you use video conferencing, streaming video services or website development platforms such as Wix or Wordpress, make sure that they can provide a custom interface or integration that limits their ability to post other content on your page.

5. Invest time to understand how these platforms engage users. Everyone wants to be active on "social media." Many people spend significant dollars doing so with little or no success. The more educated you become, the more successful you will be online.

While there is much more to discuss, it is clear that the Internet has revolutionized education, and its ability to reach Jews across the spectrum of Jewish life is unprecedented and unrivaled. From the unaffiliated to the most learned, everyone in our community can benefit and grow.

While our community prides itself on institutions such as family, school and our spiritual leaders as the most important providers of information, tradition and moral orientation, these institutions are now sharing this valuable space with technology. While no one can classify technology as simply good or bad, many have said that it has become the most important storyteller and that the Internet in particular has impacted Western civilization in a way that hasn't happened since Gutenberg's printing press.

Let's embrace it, use it wisely and continue to transform the world.

Dr. Laya Salomon

Technology as a Learning Tool: An Educator's Perspective

The unprecedented proliferation of technological advancements, marked by an ability to access and manipulate content in unprecedented ways, compels a measure of reflection regarding the use of new technologies in educating our children. Our *hashkafa* embraces great respect for limits and modesty and, though it varies in degree among different sub-communities within Orthodoxy, we all maintain some degree of separation from secular trends and fanfare. How then, and to what extent, can we balance the threats and opportunities of the Internet for our children, when its regulation often proves too alluring, even for adults? The use of the Internet as an educational vehicle is incredible, but how can children's engagement with technology avoid becoming a terrible waste of their time - or worse, a contributor to their own spiritual, moral and academic decline?

My experience takes me to the classroom, where I supervise and mentor Judaic and General studies teachers in Orthodox Jewish elementary and high schools throughout North America. It is in these classrooms that I have observed and studied numerous contemporary uses for technology as teaching and learning tools. Summarized below are various potential opportunities and limitations in classroom technology use, as well some of the best practices that promote the use of technology in a productive and healthy way. No doubt these observations will have significant applicability beyond the classroom walls, and may even highlight reflective practices that transcend the spheres of technology.

EDUCATIONAL USES FOR TECHNOLOGY

When weighing the value and costs of a particular technology, it's important to be able to identify its intended purpose. Highlighted below are current technology's four most common educational uses. Some technologies aim to support student learning through just one of the noted uses while others serve multiple functions. This listing will be followed by a discussion of their respective benefits and limitations.

First, technology can aid student learning by **conveying the content being taught**. While classroom knowledge was once conveyed exclusively through either textbooks or the teacher's oral presentation, content can now be relayed through other mediums. On nearly every academic topic and for every grade level, there are podcasts, videos, and countless pages of written material that can be accessed online.

Technology is also used to **enhance student learning**. A teacher can supplement the base lessons taught in the classroom by directing students to additional material or interactive opportunities via technology. Students can access the same knowledge they confronted in class in new and innovative ways (such as via a game or video), or be introduced to additional but related content that expands or deepens the classroom lesson. In this regard, technology is a bonus enhancement – adding to a child's education, and/or making learning more enjoyable and accessible.

Technology is also utilized as an **assessment vehicle**. By responding to assessment questions, students can receive instant feedback indicating how they fare in relation to their previous quiz results or in comparison to their peers[1]. Other tools allow students to design and create materials that reflect the extent of their understanding of a topic or unit. Some applications may be rather directed, such as having a student punctuate lines of a *Gemara* online or record the proper reading of a *pasuk*[2] (verse), while other applications are more expansive and creative, such as asking the student to write a storyboard to showcase a *middah* in action[3].

Finally, technology is often used as a simple **organizational tool**. Programs, apps, and sites are available to curate students' necessary learning tools by housing worksheets, notes, photos, and links to information.[4] These tools aim to minimize lost and crumpled papers, heavy knapsacks, illegible homework pads and an overload of folders and notebooks.

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[1] e.g., https://www.polleverywhere.com, www.socrative.com

[2] e.g., https://voicethread.com

[3] e.g., https://storybird.com, https://animoto.com

[4] e.g., https://www.edmodo.com, www.blackboard.com

BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS

To what extent do these alternative uses of technology benefit our children enough to warrant their serious consideration? While all available educational uses of technology may be helpful to some degree or another, at least two, I suggest, deserve particular attention and discussion:

1. UNPRECEDENTED ACCESS TO MASTER EDUCATORS AND EDUCATIONAL CONTENT

I recently supervised a teacher who, while bright and capable, was not an effective lecturer. Her demeanor was understated, and though she prepared interesting worksheets and activities, when telling a story or repeating a *dvar torah*, she invariably lost the attention of most of her students. I introduced her to several online sites containing video and audio recordings of *divrei torah* delivered in dynamic and inspiring ways. I then suggested that she consider using some of her classroom time presenting the online material, and then engage the class in a discussion of the online presentation.

Certain passionate pedagogues are particularly brilliant and knowledgeable and have a unique knack for relaying information. With technology, distance proves no longer to be a barrier and access to master pedagogues who reside across the globe has become a possibility. Whether in real time or not, students can now soak in the teachings of gifted educators and acquire an understanding and quality of learning that the typical educator might not be expected to convey.

In almost any topic, grade level or interest, there is a wealth of online content that can address the requirements of any state curriculum standards. This availability carries over to *limudai* kodesh, as well. Websites and portals provide access to recordings, videos and writings on nearly every Torah topic, taught and explored by exceptionally talented and well-respected *bnei* Torah[5]. There are sites that produce weekly and monthly videos that capture salient Jewish ideas and core Orthodox concepts, which are sure to invoke students' curiosity and interests.[6] In addition, I've been personally involved in the creation of "all-in-one" sites – those that introduce new materials, allow students to engage in them in fun and interactive ways and offer multiple opportunities to showcase and assure understanding of the new learning.[7] While teachers often create invaluable materials tailored to their particular students, there is also a large reservoir of prepared materials available online that can be enormously effective.

A common resistance to introducing online offerings to the classroom is the concern that it will compromise the role of the teacher or rebbe. If utilized wisely and correctly, however, the opposite is true. Online educational tools can actually significantly enhance the role of the educator. By using online tools, the rebbe or morah can spend more preparation and classroom time developing topics for discussion and engaging in rich and meaningful conversation about the material being taught. Moreover, this extra capacity allows the educator more time to address the learning needs of individual students.

Utilizing online materials in the classroom offers significant educational opportunities, but success will depend on the particular material and the online teachers chosen. Choosing the right material requires an understanding of superior teaching and learning practices. Key considerations include whether the selection will directly aid in attainment of core curricular goals, reflect the ability level of the students, sufficiently challenge the students and call for mindful engagement that assures more activity than passivity. The task of identifying the appropriate online content, and orchestrating a classroom dynamic in which online use enhances the teacher/student relationship, carries great responsibility and cannot be underestimated.

2. UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY FOR INDIVIDUALIZATION

I have encountered students who are disconnected from learning in each type of school, in every grade level and in almost every one of the hundreds of classrooms I have visited. Whether it is an academically gifted child who immediately masters the content, a struggling student unable to keep up or perhaps someone who just doesn't find the lesson interesting, there are always children whose needs aren't met in the classroom. And the long-term repercussions of that are well known.

Our community recognizes the drawbacks of, and has lamented, our "one

[5] e.g., www.torah.org, wwww.yutorah.org, www.ou.org, www.torahweb.org

[6] e.g., Aleph Beta Academy - https://www.alephbeta.org/

[7] Jewish Interactive – jewishinteractive.net e.g., www.torah.org, wwww.yutorah.org, www.ou.org, www.torahweb.org

size fits all" approach in education. Educators grapple with the challenge, and search anxiously for ways to address it. Nevertheless, hard-working and dedicated teachers continue to bemoan their inability to meet the needs of all of their students, and lay the blame on limited time and resources and oversized classes.

Technology is by no means a panacea, but it does present opportunities to experiment and seek to address some of these struggles. When utilized correctly, technology can open an array of opportunities to fashion learning to individual needs and interests. Multiple paths may be explored:

- I often share with my students a Peanuts cartoon in which a forlorn Linus shares his teacher's theory with Charlie Brown: "She says teaching is like bowling. All you can do is roll the ball down the middle and hope you touch most of your students." Charlie Brown replies, "She must be a terrible bowler!" Well, there's truth to this bowling analogy. Teachers who aim to do their best and reach as many students as possible typically target their lessons towards the middle of the class's range. Given the limited time and resources, teachers see no alternative. Alas, so many students are not being "struck" as a result. Utilizing technology, teachers can direct individual students who need extra learning help, or have yet to master certain skills, towards apps or sites that will compensate for the teacher's limited availability. Similarly, gifted students who are stifled by the limitations of the materials presented to the entire class can be guided to more advanced and challenging learning in the same manner. The bounty of technology learning tools can, thereby, allow learning to be more individualized, mitigating the limitations imposed by scarce resources and large class sizes.

- Studies have evidenced that students acquire and retain information most effectively when it is actively used.[8] Rather than simply listening to a teacher as a passive recipient, students in an active learning environment are involved in the learning through reading, writing, discussing, interacting and problem solving. Students can be compelled by technology to actively engage in the content, with features that require that they respond to, manipulate and interact with the information in a hands-on manner. Active engagement of the student makes the learning more enjoyable and eliminates the option of daydreaming or affirmatively choosing to opt out of the lesson.

- Each child is an individual, with unique talents, interests and passions. Too often, however, this individuality is not fully identified and utilized, and neglected by our educational system. Students obviously grow much more from their academic experiences and advance more significantly in their subsequent endeavors if their individual attributes are developed. Technology introduces unprecedented opportunities to do just that: The students who are drawn to construction or architecture can virtually build a kosher sukkah or engage in an online engineering project; those who love to draw can depict their understanding of a perek or a unit through an illustrated e-book or comic strip, and so much more. Technology can also facilitate a student's exploration of additional spheres of study that are of particular interest. A student enamored with a certain topic – such as a particular gadol or era of history – can conduct extra research on that topic and share their newfound knowledge with the teacher and fellow classmates. By tapping into their interests and talents, students can develop a sense of ownership and joy in their learning that is personal and meaningful to them.

- While some students in a classroom are interacting with learning via technology tools, the teacher can provide personalized instruction to others, individually or in small groups. Teachers can thereby maximize the students' learning experience and also connect with individual students on a personal level.

- Recently, a concept called "flipping" has surfaced as an educational trend. Students learn the basic material (such as the simple meaning of a series of *pesukim* (verses) in Judaic Studies or mathematical rules and formulas in general studies) at home via a website or app that supplies the content[9], or through a teacher's own visual and audio recording of the content[10]. Classroom time is then used to delve more deeply into the content already learned at home, as well as to apply, discuss and practice it. The traditional classroom model is "flipped" – instead of instruction taking place in school and practice and deep application being assigned for homework, technology allows for just the opposite. With the flipped model, students who struggle with the basic learning and core skills can view the recordings of the basic material multiple times at home, and at their own pace. Classroom time can then be used for more meaningful learning, offering more in-class opportunities for teachers to connect with students and target their needs.

[8] Prince, M. (2004). Does Active Learning Work? A Review of the Research. *Journal of Engineering Education,* 93(3), 223-232.

[10] A number of apps allow teachers to voice-record a lesson while using a whiteboard, document, or presentation to explain the material (e.g., ShowMe, EduCreations, Jing, Screen-Cast-O-Matic).

BEST PRACTICES

While the potential benefits of technology use in education as described are potentially invaluable, there are certainly risks and costs. To help mitigate these risks and costs, two practices are set forth below that should be employed when making decisions regarding technology use, whether in the classroom or at home.

TECHNOLOGY AS A TOOL

Webster's dictionary defines a tool as "something used in performing an operation or necessary in the practice of a vocation or profession; a means towards an end." It is imperative to remember that technology is a tool. If construed by individuals or institutions as being anything but a tool, technology will prove to be either useless or harmful. As with any tool, the impact and effectiveness of technology is dictated not by the nature of the device itself, but rather by how it is actually used. It is with the user of the tool that ultimate responsibility lies.

When using a tool, one must first recognize the benefits the tool is intended to provide and then identify the optimum manner for realizing such benefits. When used as a tool in education, the benefits and purpose of technology is to advance learning and personal growth. When, how, and why to use a form of technology in education, then, should first and foremost be guided by the extent to which it addresses these goals. How can a particular technology benefit or advance the child's learning? How can it provide him or her with an educational opportunity that exceeds traditional classroom instruction? How can it develop the student's love for learning? How is success measured? These are questions that we must be able to confidently answer with each child-technology interaction. I've seen classrooms in which students are working on devices simply because it's the fashionable thing to do. Educators and parents are sometimes blindly guided by what appears to be fun and in vogue, without recognizing that, devoid of a clear goal, the technology can be nothing but a distraction.

Just as a hammer is useless without the skilled hand that directs its every move, technology is powerful only to the extent that it is monitored and directed by knowledgeable and experienced individuals. In a recent article in *The Atlantic*, Kentaro Toyama, author and Associate Professor at the University of Michigan School of Information, describes technology's effect as an "amplification of current human forces." He asserts that access to technology is not a solution to educational challenges; if anything, it augments the problems. While children with a greater interest in learning will gravitate towards information-rich sites, the distraction to children who lack motivation will simply be exacerbated by video games. "If a private company is failing to make a profit, no one expects that state-of-the-art data centers, better productivity software, and new laptops for all of the employees will turn things around.[12]" The view and expectation that technology itself will fix our children's educational challenges is flawed. Toyama argues for high-quality adult training and supervision in the use of technologies, noting that only good teaching can address educational issues.

The benefits of technology to children are lost if technology is used as a babysitting technique and if, during its use, parents and teachers are physically absent or mindfully removed. Teachers must play critical roles in choosing the right technology, interacting with students during the process to ensure it's being used in a maximally beneficially way and overseeing progress and learning gains. As noted, the effectiveness of educational technology is dependent on the critical role played by parents and teachers, not on the technology itself.

Not only does misuse of technology reduce its benefits, but as with many tools, misuse can introduce enormous danger. It is unfair and unrealistic to expect a child to safely navigate the use of the Internet on his own. Adults need to carefully consider what safety features they must put into place, determine what barriers to build and determine how the child should be educated about the Internet's proper use.

Finally, it should always be recognized that, while technology may be a valuable learning aid, it should never replace core learning. A recent Yale study[13] revealed a cautionary element to technology. Two groups of people were asked random questions about life, history and science. One of the groups was able to seek answers online while the second group was not. Subsequently, both groups were asked another random set of questions but this time neither group was given access to online research. Participants who had online access in the initial round of questions displayed overconfidence in their ability to answer questions even when online access was denied. Connectivity to the

[11]"Tool" Def. 2. Merriam Webster Online, Merriam Webster, 2015.

[12] Toyama, K. (June 2015). "Why Technology Alone Won't Fix Schools." The Atlantic.

[13] Fisher, M., Goddu, M.K., & Keil, F.C. (2015). "Searching for Explanations: How the Internet Inflates Estimate of Internal Knowledge." *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 144(3) 674-687.

Internet created a false sense of actual knowledge attainment! Findings like these, which have been supported by other similar studies, point to the need to ensure individuals' internalization and comprehension of core knowledge and skills. Knowledge must ultimately rest in the hearts and minds of our children, not solely be accessible to them in the RAM of a computer device.

When technology is viewed as a tool - as a means, rather than as an end - adults can make responsible decisions regarding its use as a benefit for children. But first the end goals must be identified, and only then can it be determined how technology can help achieve those goals.

CONSISTENCY AT HOME AND IN SCHOOL

Research has conclusively shown that a child's education is profoundly enhanced by the existence of a partnership between home and school, marked by mutual communication, joint decision-making and agreed upon goals. In such conditions, students demonstrate more positive attitudes towards learning, enjoy higher achievement scores and improved behavior and put more trust in their schooling and education.[14]

Successful use of technology in a child's education similarly requires a partnership between home and school. Schools should articulate a clear philosophy regarding the use of technology, and the home should aim to convey an approach consistent with that vision. With such a partnership, the child feels trusting of both environments, and – with maturation – is better positioned to make informed decisions. This consistency results when schools collaborate with parents on decision making and policy setting, particularly on matters pertaining to technology and its use. Similarly, it is imperative that a consistent philosophy and vision for technology be communicated to children by their school's Judaic and secular studies divisions.

CONCLUSION

The Orthodox community has been wise in adopting a rather cautionary approach to the embrace of technology. With the rise of advanced technologies and the Internet, a new era has dawned, redefining the range of opportunities for communication, knowledge sharing and personal growth.

Aside from the religious and behavioral concerns that parents and educators must protect against when introducing children to online use, concerns abound regarding the use of technology in education. Does technology in education detract from a child's ability to learn in a traditional mode? Does the use of online learning accustom students to intellectual over-stimulation, with the bombardment of online glitz compromising children's ability to concentrate on conventional reading and writing? These questions must be addressed, as we search for clear and definite answers.

Technology continues to advance and to play an increasing role in all aspects of our lives, including education. New tools bring new questions and challenges but also bring new opportunities for learning and growing. We cannot ignore technology's potential in the education of our children, but rather must tolerate, if not encourage and embrace, its advancements in other spheres of their lives.

Like any new tool, technology offers opportunities but its proper use rests in the informed and deliberate hands that control it.

[14] National Education Association. National Council of Jewish Women (1996). Parents

Daniel Weiss

The Time In Between

Our world has been transformed into a place that would hardly be recognizable to people a generation or two ago. A tap of a button can provide access to all the world's information, navigate you to anywhere on Earth, or launch a video chat with a family member across the world. Within the Jewish sector, Torah is transmitted throughout the world in audio, video and text form in a matter of moments, and the elaborate network that is the world wide web creates *chessed* connections and *tzedakah* opportunities of which we have only dreamed. The benefits to the Orthodox community are unprecedented and life changing.

As technology has become easier to use and access, we have grown comfortable being connected at all times. Many who carry smartphones have come to consider them as an extension of themselves. They are the last thing we put down before we fall asleep, and the first thing we pick up when we awaken. Our phones are our constant companions, the address we turn to when we are bored and want some stimulation.

In my work as a User Experience Engineer, I study the intersection of people and technology, including the needs, perceptions and issues people have with digital devices of all kinds. As a result, the effect technology has on people is of prime interest to me, and making technology easier and more useful is the goal of my work.

In recent times, it has become increasingly common to see people multi-tasking, using technology to fill every free moment for digital productivity or relaxation.

It goes something like this: There's a moment of downtime too short to get anything real done. Maybe you are waiting for a bus or in a check-out line. Maybe you are in your car waiting for your spouse or child to come out of your home, or at a *chasuna* (wedding) waiting for the *kallah* to walk down the aisle. So you pull out your smartphone and catch up on your e-mail, message your WhatsApp group or check in with what your friends are doing on social media. After all, it's a moment of downtime. You might as well get something done. What's there to lose?

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A TIME TO PLAN

As it turns out, there is quite a lot. Recent studies have shown that these moments of mind wandering are important for us, giving us a much-needed opportunity to reflect and plan. Filling that time up with other tasks can rob us of something the research calls "Autobiographical Planning," the time we take to contemplate and plan what we are going to do in the future.[1] You might say it's akin to what we would call *cheshbon hanefesh*, taking time to assess who we are, what we want out of life and how we are going to get there. When we pick up our phones to fill that time, we are losing something of value, an opportunity that is vital to our futures.

Further, when we bombard ourselves with constant stimulation, many of us start to feel stressed out from it. Instead of having time to relax and think, we feel like we are constantly on call, constantly in demand with no respite.

In fact, this insight is identified by Rabbi Moshe Chayim Luzzatto (the Ramchal) in his epic work *Mesillas Yesharim*[2] as essential to our spiritual progress. When Moshe arrived to rescue the Jewish people from Egypt, the verse says they could not listen to him "*mikotzer ruach u'mavoda kasha*" (from shortness of spirit and hard work, Exodus 5:9). The Ramchal writes, "In reality, this is one of the most clever devices of the evil inclination – to mount unrelenting pressure against the hearts of men so as to leave them no leisure to consider the type of life they are leading… It is this consideration that underlay the counsel of the wicked Pharaoh when he said, "Let the work be heavier upon the people…" His intention was not merely to deprive them of all leisure so that they would not come to oppose him or plot against him. He was determined to strip their hearts of all considered thought by means of the enduring, interminable nature of their labor."

Pharaoh understood that any available down time provides an opportunity to think, to contemplate what's important and plan better futures. His primary goal, the Ramchal explains, was simply to distract the Bnai Yisrael from

thinking, which he knew would inevitably lead to a commitment to self-determination and a yearning to serve G-d instead of him.

This, the Ramchal teaches, is the ingenious ploy of the *yetzer hara*, to stifle any tendencies we might have to pursue a path of spiritual growth. The *yetzer hara* "knows" that if we feel like we are busy, we will not take the time to think about what we are busy with. In this respect, the smartphone is the perfect "pocket Pharaoh."

We live under the illusion that constantly filling our time with "productive" activities makes us productive. In reality, though, we frequently fill our time with non-essentials that simply make us feel overwhelmed and stressed out. And when we feel overwhelmed – when we feel like we don't have a moment to spare, without open space between our activities – we lose the opportunity to think about what has happened and recognize our mistakes. Worse yet, we lose the opportunity to plan better futures.

A TIME TO CONTEMPLATE

It is a well known psychological concept that information that is learned over time with breaks in the middle, is more likely to be retained long term than if it were learned in one block. Called the spacing effect, it has shown that cramming a mass of information into our brains will be less effective for long term remembering. We need time to think, to digest what we have learned, whether in our learning, per se, or in life in general. Rashi, when commenting on the word *Vayikra* at the beginning of the parsha by that name, discusses the significance of the "breaks" in between G-d speaking to Moshe. He says that the breaks are there in order to "give space for Moshe between each topic." We are talking about the most perfect teacher ever, G-d, delivering information to the model student. However, Hashem understood that Moshe would need time between each topic to contemplate, digest and commit them to memory. And if Moshe needed it, how much more so do we need it?

In addition to digesting information, the space in between activities also gives us an opportunity to turn the ideas over in our mind and see them from new angles that we may not have understood when we first heard an idea or experienced something in our lives. Having ideas percolate around in our minds gives us an opportunity to develop them further. As we turn ideas over in our heads, we come to understand them more clearly, we remember them better and they become part of who we are.

A TIME TO INTROSPECT

It's not only planning and developing ideas that fall by the wayside when we fill up every free moment. We also lose the opportunity to get to know ourselves. Rabbi Dr. Abraham Twerski poignantly tells the following story about how he discovered this. He recounts:

> *After completing three years as the clinical director of the Department of Psychiatry at St. Francis Hospital, I decided to take a vacation. I was thirty-eight years old and it had been three years of constant stress with no day and no night. I decided to go to Hot Springs, Arkansas for vacation because I wanted peace and quiet with no interruptions. I wanted to just sit and relax, and take advantage of the opportunity to enjoy the spa and soothe my bad back. I got into the whirlpool and said, "This is so wonderful! This is just what I wanted. No one can reach me." After a few minutes I got out of the whirlpool to move on to the next item on the agenda, a massage. The attendant said, "Where are you going? You can't get a massage until you've been in the whirlpool for twenty-five minutes. That's the way it works." So I got back into the whirlpool. The next twenty-five minutes were absolute hell. I didn't know what to do with myself.*
>
> *When I got back to Pittsburgh, I said to a therapist I know, "Three years in constant stress and I took that well but I can't take five minutes in paradise? I don't understand." The psychologist said back: If you ask people what they do to relax, they say, I knit, I read a book, I watch baseball. They are telling you what they do but that is not relaxation; that is diversion. Real relaxation is just sitting back and doing nothing. When you were in that hot spring, they took your diversions away from you and without them you were left immediately in your own presence. It's very difficult to be in a room alone with someone you don't like. There must be something inside of you that you dislike so much you can't tolerate yourself for more than five minutes.*
>
> *Through this, I came to realize that I did not know myself. It was unbelievable! Here I was, 38 years old, and I did not understand what made me tick! It took a few years of searching and internal work to really like the person that I saw in the mirror. After a few years, I was able to go back to the hot springs and sit there for forty minutes with no problem.*

When we spend every moment busy with something else, we are engaged in diversions that prevent us from understanding ourselves. Who am I? What are my strengths, and what are my weaknesses? Why do I react certain ways in this situation but not in other, similar situations? Self-awareness and understanding come from ongoing, meaningful introspection. When we fill up our available time, we lose the opportunity to get to know ourselves.

WHERE WAS I BEFORE I RUDELY INTERRUPTED MYSELF?

So if planning, contemplating and introspection are so valuable, you might think all you have to do is turn off the phone and set aside some time when no one can bother you. Unfortunately, it's not that easy. When Gloria Mark and Victor Gonzalez of the School of Information and Computer Science at UC Irvine observed people in the workplace, they found that, people tended to switch activities approximately every three minutes despite not being finished with a task.[3] Moreover, half of the interruptions were self-imposed, meaning the individuals were the cause of their own interruptions. And once someone got sidetracked, it took an average of twenty-five minutes to get back to their original task.[4] Getting interrupted is costly indeed, and we do it to ourselves.

In addition, new research from the last couple of months shows that even having a phone out on the table in front of us distracts us from what we are doing and impedes our performance. The authors of the study believe that just the reminder that there is a "broader social network" out there distracts people from the task at hand. One does not even need to interrupt themselves in order to become distracted.[5]

HOW DO WE GET HOOKED?

Most of us know intuitively that the way we use technology is negatively affecting us. We know we shouldn't browse the web while ignoring the children who need our attention. So why do we keep on doing it? Why does technology have such a hold on us? One possible explanation is the "fear of missing out" phenomenon, the attraction that many have to keeping up with the most up-to-date happenings. But that does not explain our behavior entirely.

It turns out that a powerful chemical in our brains called dopamine is likely what is driving us. This is the same chemical that fuels drug and gambling addictions. *Hashem* created us with brains that seek fulfillment for our needs and with feelings of pleasure associated with meeting those needs. Without this, we wouldn't do things like eating or reproducing. When we see something that we anticipate will cause us pleasure, we get excited and our brain is flooded with dopamine. The desire for the pleasurable feeling of dopamine in our brains is the reason for many healthy behaviors but also for addictions and compulsions.

That desire is even stronger when the reward does not come consistently. If every time we perform a behavior, we get a reward, then our brain receives some amount of pleasure. However, when the reward is variable, when we don't know whether our behavior will bring us to our goals or not, the dopamine levels go through the roof. This explains why services like e-mail, text messaging or social media are such powerful compulsions. We never really know whether looking at our phone will bring us an update that is interesting, uplifting or informative. That anticipation, that "not knowing," is what drives us to keep checking again and again.

SOME SOLUTIONS AND THOUGHTS

What can we do? Is it possible to overcome this type of temptation? At this point, as society is so swept up in the awesome capabilities of technology, there is precious little guidance as to how to overcome these hurdles. While these are by no means complete or authoritative, I would like to offer a few humble suggestions.

CREATE BOUNDARIES

In order to cultivate your downtime you need to protect it by setting boundaries, both on your time and on the technology. For example, it may make sense to set quiet times for yourself, such as a specific hour on a Sunday or every weeknight after 10pm. During that time, your phone gets turned off and you are not available. That time is non-negotiable. For some, it may make sense to start with smaller boundaries. Deciding not to take out one's phone

while in a supermarket checkout line or while eating lunch provides a short opportunity for one to reflect. It doesn't always have to be an hour or evening. Creating small opportunities is helpful as well.

As far as the technology, the relentless notifications on our devices are an unnecessary assault on our peace of mind and can be turned off or limited. E-mail newsletters can be cancelled (or moved to a secondary e-mail address you don't check as often). Do we really want a 10% off sale at Lowe's to distract us from our davening, spouse or job?

It's tempting to view responding to a text as just a momentary interruption that has no real effect on what we are doing. But as the research cited above shows, even a quick interruption or a phone sitting on a table in front of us can distract us and prevent us from accomplishing our goals. Ultimately it's about creating boundaries we are comfortable with, that reduce unimportant interruptions in a manner that fit our lifestyles and needs.

BUSY OR PRODUCTIVE?

There is a tendency to confuse being busy with being productive. Often, we add things to our list of to-dos that keep us busy but don't actually advance us toward any of our goals. Some of us to want to "do everything." There are so many opportunities in the world, so many commitments, so many desires that we frequently end up being pulled in multiple directions. Instead of trying to do everything, choose the items that are most important to you and then commit to focusing on them to the exclusion of all else. Keep in mind that the goals you are setting aside are not lost forever. You are just choosing to focus on what is most important to you for the time being. Later on, when you reach this goal, you can move on to the one you set aside. The decision to focus on one task or goal, while initially feeling limiting, will ultimately feel liberating when you get to where you want to be.

BE MORE MINDFUL, BE MORE SELF-AWARE

Of course, all of this is easier when we train ourselves to be more self-aware and think more about what we are doing. If we are able to pause and think twice before we instinctively reach to respond to a notification, we are more likely to have that time to think and contemplate. The mussar yeshiva of Kelm was well known for focusing on behaving thoughtfully, on always striving to think through their actions. In the secular world, the practice of mindfulness or meditation helps with creating space between thoughts and actions. Rather than thoughts and emotions immediately leading to action, creating a small space in between allows us to behave more mindfully.

No matter the method, the goal is to act more deliberately, to think twice before acting in order to deliberately cultivate that downtime. Ultimately, success in this area requires being aware of our actions and pausing to think about them beforehand. And of course, we won't do it correctly the first time. It's going to require trial and error along with repeated practice to be successful.

A MORE MINDFUL FUTURE

As we begin to realize the power within this new world around us, we are only starting to grasp the downsides. As someone who is a technology enthusiast, I believe that this future can bring benefits far beyond what we expect but it will also bring challenges. Learning to harness the power while making sure it doesn't overwhelm us is one of the subjects that must be studied on an ongoing basis. After all, technology should work in our service, rather than the reverse. I look forward to a time in which we use technology mindfully and in a way that benefits ourselves, the Jewish community and the world at large.