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**THE INTRICATE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ULTRA-ORTHODOX AND USE OF
THE INTERNET IN ISRAEL**

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Abstract: Ultra-orthodox Jews have a complex relationship with the internet. Many ultra-orthodox indeed object to concepts of progress and modernity, but they do not reject internet use per se so long as they can filter its negative impacts such that the internet does not serve as a tool that might change them. The desire of the ultra-orthodox is to retain their traditional values versus the moral hazards involved in use of the internet while also ensuring their complete seclusion. As a rule, the ultra-orthodox (as well as other religious groups) relate to the internet as a tool with a significant hazardous capacity to destroy Jewish values, constituting a considerable moral danger. Therefore, they initially forbade any use of the internet within their community. But in time, some understood that considering the major technological advances it is not possible to completely disregard the internet, and they started using it for various purposes such as work, purchases, and even Torah lessons. At the same time, they restricted its use through various filtering systems. This article seeks to present the complex attitude of the ultra-orthodox to internet use in general (so no segmentations and statistics are noted) regarding different issues and how they deal with the problems, advantages, and disadvantages of internet use.

Key words: Ultra-orthodox, Internet, Social behavior, religious customs

1. Introduction

In their attitude to internet use, ultra-orthodox Jews display conservative social behavior and religious customs based on strict observation of Jewish law (halakha) and rejecting modern values (Stadler 2002).

As they see it, the ultra-orthodox practice seclusion to preserve their faith and Torah-oriented education. This dissociation has managed to safeguard the ultra-orthodox from the values of western culture (Malach 2018). Since the time it became a commonly used tool on all levels of society and in different areas, the internet has become one of the major challenges encountered by the ultra-orthodox community (Stadler 2002, 457-458). Internet use began to enter ultra-orthodox society through the textual dimension, such as commentaries on the weekly Torah portion and addressing halakhic issues (Tsarfaty and Blais 2002, 48). This new virtual world has changed all dimensions of life in the last twenty years, on the social, economic, educational, political, and other dimensions. Until recently, many ultra-orthodox have avoided using the internet (Malach 2018). In recent years, however, this has changed slightly and some began to use the internet as a way of accessing mass media and for purposes of interpersonal communication.

2. General use of the internet by the ultra-orthodox

The internet, until several years ago a sphere utilized clandestinely and attracting strong rabbinical resistance, has over time become almost legitimate among parts of ultra-orthodox society (Tucker 20015; Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai 2005, 31, 33). These elements understood that, in light of modern progress and particularly in light of the widespread use of the internet, use of computers is inevitable and the prohibition against using computers and the internet was not widely accepted (Cohen 2015, 195-196). The attitude of the ultra-orthodox is divided into two main approaches, one that is stricter and that fundamentally prohibits all use of the internet and the other that permits use of the internet for practical purposes related to religious needs or subsistence, as stricter supervision is employed at work.

Nonetheless, it can still be said that most ultra-orthodox comply with the prohibition against using the internet, at least on the declarative level, such that the impact of the internet is still not absolute (Cohen 2011, 111). This results from the considerable ultra-orthodox criticism of the internet and rejection of its use (Cohen 2015, 195; Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai 2005, 35) as well as its many hazards (Campbell 2011, 369-371). But as stated, ever since the early 1990s internet use has been on the rise (Tsarfaty and

Blais 2002, 47).

3. Ultra-orthodox use of the internet for various purposes

Ultra-orthodox use of the internet is aimed at various purposes. For example, there are shopping sites intended primarily for the ultra-orthodox community. The products sold on them meet strict standards and types of supervision that suit this community (Katz 2011, 129). A large proportion of the ultra-orthodox use the internet for various needs such as work (Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai 2005) and news – the ultra-orthodox are known as consumers of information on current affairs (Tucker 2015), and not only on ultra-orthodox news sites. There are also internet celebrities who advertise extensively for the ultra-orthodox, and the latter follow them mainly in areas that interest them, such as food, fashion, makeup, family matters, religion and Judaism, childcare, finance, and jobs (Sharoni 2023). The ultra-orthodox use filtered internet for business purposes as it is a major tool in the business world (Cohen 2015, 196).

Some ultra-orthodox are connected to the internet for social media, such as WhatsApp that is an inseparable part of their way of life, or to receive updates and information on various topics, and not only as a means of communication with family and friends (Swissa 2023). In addition, many discussions on various topics are held on ultra-orthodox WhatsApp groups. The ultra-orthodox are known as heavy consumers of information on current affairs and they also display considerable involvement in social media such as Facebook and Twitter (Tucker 2015).

The number of ultra-orthodox who access websites is constantly on the rise (Deutsch 2009, 5). As a result, large advertisers have begun to appeal to ultra-orthodox internet users as well. Many companies are discovering the potential of this new target population and adapting their products and advertising accordingly (Tucker 2015). Various websites provide news and religious contents such as Judaism and Torah, as well as contents such as tourism, food, economics, and fashion (Lerner 2009, 162-163). There are ultra-orthodox talk shows, as well as an entire industry that produces CD movies with religious contents or contents suitable for ultra-orthodox society (Tsarfaty and Blais 2002, 48).

4. Ultra-orthodox concerns regarding potential dangers of internet use

Ultra-orthodox individuals who object to use of the internet contend that its harm is greater than its benefits. The internet is threatening to destroy the segregation of the ultra-orthodox from secular modern society. Ultra-orthodox who use the internet have many concerns involving its use.

The large majority are afraid of becoming addicted to the internet or that it will result in a waste of time (Aviv 2013, 32-33). Others are concerned that their children's ethics and their own lifestyle will be harmed. Regarding harm to children's ethics, many ultra-orthodox seem to think that the internet is not good for children, and particularly for girls (Aviv 2013, 34-35).

Other ultra-orthodox concerns related to internet use are the danger of hurting "good" *shidduch* (matchmaking) possibilities and the option of being accepted to educational institutions (Harari 2022), in addition to unsuitable contents. With regard to ultra-orthodox parents' concern of compromising their children's *shidduch* possibilities, at present it is indeed customary in most ultra-orthodox circles to meet the potential spouse and date before marrying. But some ultra-orthodox youth on the margins of society have a bad reputation. They hang out at secular entertainment venues and consume alcohol, recreational drugs, and pornography. So ultra-orthodox parents prefer to be the initiators or at least be involved in the relationship between potential couples to inspect the quality of the match and avoid bad matches that will give the couple, the parents, and the entire family a bad reputation. Hence, online dating is undesirable because it is hard to form a true impression of people through the internet (Galili 2005).

Another concern related to use of the internet is the easy access to various criminal acts, including the most severe, which can be committed clandestinely and immediately. Another concern is that the internet is a source of temptation. Ultra-orthodox see the internet as the greatest source of temptations (Aviv 2013, 25). Yet another concern is the possibility that information will be available on the computers of ultra-orthodox users with no supervision or in a way that undermines ultra-orthodox discipline. Additional concerns are improper utilization of one's time, which affects the study of Torah and halakha, as well as distractions that are a risk to upholding traditional values, which cause a desecration of God's name due to various temptations such as sex, gambling, etc. All this is because the ultra-orthodox have no control of contents on the internet (Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai 2005, 35).

The ultra-orthodox are concerned that the internet will expose members of their society to secular messages that might endanger their moral codes (Horovitz 2000), such intimate language (Deutsch 2009, 6), gossip, or slander (Aviv 2013, 35), and social encounters not devoted to matters of Torah or that encourage lascivious and sinful thoughts (Sinnereich 2020, 64).

Use of the internet by ultra-orthodox individuals cannot be monitored by family or by the community because unsupervised internet allows access to secular and sinful contents that the ultra-orthodox may

encounter easily and unintentionally. The internet makes it possible to breach ultra-orthodox boundaries and the supervision of recognized religious authorities (Campbell 2015, 5-6; Campbell and Bellar 2015, 83; Campbell 2011, 373). The internet can spread heretic ideas and secular ideas among ultra-orthodox society (Campbell 2011, 375; Horowitz 2000, 8-9), as well as facilitating acculturation within the secular world and erosion of religious strictures. It might also be used for purposes of online conversion (Sinnreich 2020, 65).

The internet provides access to secular websites that allow discussions and debates between the ultra-orthodox and other communities regarding their worldviews, which are normally not encouraged by ultra-orthodox society. Some ultra-orthodox individuals access secular apps anonymously, primarily forums where they discuss different communal topics. The ultra-orthodox fear this anonymity as it could lead to a decline in ultra-orthodox communal discipline, since anonymous users are not concerned of sanctions. Anonymous forums are not under religious supervision, so the concern is of the debates and discussions, which might incite against the ultra-orthodox and, as stated, might weaken discipline within ultra-orthodox society (Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai 2005, 35). Another concern is that internet use allows unsupervised access to “the wisdom of the gentiles”, philosophy that undermines the Jewish faith and tradition and might lead to heresy (Horowitz 2000, 10).

Although not common knowledge, some ultra-orthodox rabbis contend that it is not possible to completely forbid use of the internet (Horowitz 2000, 14-15) and do not object to all use of advanced technologies. On the contrary, they welcome any innovation that contributes to what they see as major issues: saving lives, health, earning a living, Torah study. Also quality of life, personal well-being, and leisure are not considered unworthy (although these are not necessarily their terms of choice), but they are not given high priority (Aviv 2013, 36-40). Nonetheless, the main concern is to what degree the ultra-orthodox are capable of separating material culture from spiritual values (Tsarfaty and Blais 2002, 50).

When use of technology does not contradict a life guided by halakha, the rabbis do not intervene. The concern is of those problematic cases that become the subject of halakhic rulings, primarily that the internet allows one to see “hazardous” contents (Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai 2005, 35). One example is the violent and pornographic contents accessible on the internet, which are the reason that most rabbis agree that although use of the internet is permitted by necessity for purposes of work it is forbidden for purposes of entertainment and leisure (Aviv 2013, 36-40). Use of computers per se is not forbidden because it would be impossible, as at present computers are used for all purposes. The problem is not the

computer but rather the internet and its potentially immoral contents.

5. The immediate risks and dangers of the internet as perceived by the ultra-orthodox

As perceived by the ultra-orthodox, the internet is a particularly potent threat also because it is a readily available, attractive mass platform that allows private and anonymous access to messages, texts, images, and even external and unsupervised interactions, which include a great deal of challenging contents. The internet is portrayed as a formidable system capable of breaking down the walls of segregation, due to the exposure both to inappropriate contents and to messages that criticize the ultra-orthodox leadership (Black 2022). When use of the internet is through a laptop then the mobility, minimization, and possibility of concealment produce an even greater threat (Tsarfaty and Blais 2002, 48).

The ultra-orthodox are aware of the internet's immoral potential to provide easy access to sexual contents that might lead one to sinful thoughts and actions with a detrimental impact on the moral codes of religious society. This is because the internet allows visual aspects such as images of immodest women, as well as blatant sexual contents, and therefore the internet is a danger particularly to men in religious society (Campbell and Bellar 2015, 83). In ultra-orthodox society, images of women on the internet are erased for reasons of modesty (Sinnereich 2020; Deutsch 2009, 11). Also, among the ultra-orthodox, women are being excluded from the public sphere as the internet becomes more and more accessible to the wider world. Nonetheless, it is notable that ultra-orthodox communities have diverse modesty standards (Sinnereich 2020, 64-65).

According to the ultra-orthodox, use of the internet is also a type of cultural threat that might unravel ultra-orthodox society and undermine the ethical and educational foundations of its users, particularly in the case of children and teens. For example, children who play online computer games become active players who are caught up in the story's content or become excited about new places around the world that were previously unfamiliar or interesting adventures that are almost realistically attractive. This changes the leisure culture of children and teens (Tsarfaty and Blais 2002, 52).

In addition, use of the internet leads to various dangers. One of these is the harm to religious values. Ultra-orthodox society is characterized by seclusion from the dangers of modern society. The ultra-orthodox avoid modernity to maintain their religious values. According to their worldview, the modernism manifested at present in the internet is detrimental to religious and moral values because the internet is not supervised. Another

hazard is the possibility of receiving undesirable information about the Jewish faith or about processes within other Jewish denominations (Cohen 2015, 183-184, 196).

Another hazard of the internet is the possibility of circumventing communal surveillance (Deutsch 2009, 8), removing all barriers and all supervisory mechanisms. In this way any person can connect to global virtual society and to different cultures, which is in contravention of the ultra-orthodox outlook. All these constitute dangerous hazards for the ultra-orthodox (Katz 2011, 120-121).

The internet might also expose the ultra-orthodox to acts within modern secular society (Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai 2005, 31) or secular culture (Cohen 2015, 196) that are a desecration of God, and influence them dangerously (Tsarfaty and Blais 2002, 48). The intrusion of western culture through use of the internet is not limited only to problematic issues such as violence and modesty but rather also encompasses western secular ideas and the heretical lifestyle rooted in western culture, which are even worse than the prohibition of idolatry (Aviv 2013, 31-32). Therefore, use of the internet is extremely problematic and a danger to ultra-orthodox society (Campbell 2011, 365).

Theoretically, the prohibition against using the internet is allegedly based on the Mishna "New [produce] is prohibited by the Torah in all places" (*mOrla* 3:9), as interpreted by R. Moshe Sofer (Schreiber) (Frankfurt, 1762-1839), better known by the name of his book as the Hatam Sofer. He objected to modernity and applied the phrase "new is prohibited by the Torah" to the Enlightenment movement that emerged among Central and Eastern European Jews in the 18th century. Hence, according to the ultra-orthodox view, this prohibition should also be applied to the new usage of the internet in contemporary times (Horowitz 2000, 15).

Another danger is that certain ultra-orthodox websites are used as a platform for speaking out against rabbis and religious institutions (Cohen 2015, 198). The internet is considered a hazard that encourages the violation of communal behavioral controls and protocols, leading to social disintegration of ultra-orthodox society, or a source that spreads erroneous and disruptive information within the community (Campbell 2015, 5). Objections to use of the internet also stem from the potential harm to the ideal of Torah studies, namely, coming physically to the yeshiva, locating the necessary books for studying or teaching, and paging through them (Horowitz 2000, 14).

The internet can serve as a tool for raising ideas that will stimulate political ideologies and thus distance many young people from ultra-orthodox society (Deutsch 2009, 10). Also, use of the internet is hazardous because it might have a negative effect on marital harmony as it causes

many problems among spouses, harms marital relations because its use is at the expense of quality time the couple could have spent together, arouses feelings of lack of mutual attention, and in graver cases leads to infidelity. Another danger is that the quantity of information on the internet might cause users confusion due to analysis of the considerable information, loss of cognitive ability, loss of independent capabilities and of the ability to reach decisions. All these might result in the loss of users' personal, social, and national identity (Aviv 2013, 34-35).

Use of the internet also creates new halakhic problems, for example copying texts from the internet leads to copyright infractions (Cohen 2015, 186). It is necessary to detect what the author noted about users' right to use a compilation or work and what happens when the author is not Jewish (Aviv 2013, 94-95, 121).

6. Ultra-orthodox reactions and actions against the dangers and hazards of the internet

In response to the hazards and dangers mentioned above, ultra-orthodox society has declared war on use of the internet. At first, the rabbis prohibited any use of the internet (Black 2022). The ultra-orthodox established a "special court" for matters concerning the media and forbade members of their community to connect to the internet (Horowitz 2000, 22-23; Katz 2011, 121), as use of the internet is hazardous and might destroy the Jewish people (Tsarfaty and Blais 2002, 49).

Over the years, however, as use of the internet became a growing need, ultra-orthodox rabbis understood that they must find a practical solution that would allow everyday ultra-orthodox existence alongside use of the internet. While intensifying their condemnation, the rabbis also allowed individuals to use the internet for purposes of subsistence on an individual basis (Horowitz 2000, 19-20), under certain restrictions. Later, when use of the internet became almost a necessity for large parts of the public, private initiatives emerged, offering filtered internet infrastructures for PCs and mobile telephones. These infrastructures were permitted while restricting them to needs of subsistence and emphasizing that even kosher and filtered internet should be used only in private and minimally (Black 2022). In addition, mobile telephones with internet access used for purposes of earning a living were restricted to electronic mail, WhatsApp, and specific websites approved by the rabbis. Most ultra-orthodox who use the internet do so mainly for purposes of subsistence. Ultra-orthodox rabbis gave permission to use kosher internet to those who need it for their work and these are not considered having breached the walls of segregation from modernity.

In light of all the above, it can be said that the social strategies and

technological practices utilized by the rabbis were very efficient. Most of ultra-orthodox society is continuing to comply with seclusive principles that suit its outlook, while using available technologies judiciously and as sanctioned in order to create the necessary separation from modern secular society (Black 2022).

7. The main causes of increasing internet use among ultra-orthodox society

Two main causes of the considerable increase in internet use among the ultra-orthodox can be noted. The first was the Covid-19 pandemic during 2020-2023 that stimulated increased internet use among the ultra-orthodox. During the time of Covid-19, use of the internet was transformed from being widely banned to being recognized as an existential need required to continue one's life routine, including work, school, family connections, and Torah study (Roiter 2022).

The second cause is financial pressures that led to practical changes permitting use of the internet, which had become an integral part of the modern economy (Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai 2005, 32-33). Daily exigencies among ultra-orthodox society grew. The socioeconomic pressure generated led to lifting the ban on internet use for women, so that they could both work from home and take care of the family from home (Raucher 2015, 60; Campbell 2011, 371, 373-375). This also had the effect of preventing ultra-orthodox women from the need to be physically present at their workplace, which might have created undesirable interactions between men and women or with secular society.

Some rabbis allowed members of the community to acquire various professions, even academic professions, at secular institutions in various disciplines, such as computers (for both men and women, Deutsch 2009, 5; Horowitz 2000, 16-17), graphic design, architecture, and various technologies. Some ultra-orthodox, both men and women, began studying in the system of higher education and joined the labor market, creating additional income. Part of this income remained unutilized, forming gradually developing awareness of the consumption and leisure culture and the emergence of a modern discourse among the growing middle class within ultra-orthodox society (Roiter 2022).

Women were allowed to use the internet because it helped ultra-orthodox men free time for Torah study (rather than working, Stadler 2002). A change was also evident in employment rates among some ultra-orthodox men and even more so among the women, however it is notable that not all workplaces in the computer field welcomed ultra-orthodox employees due to their demands regarding modesty and not having to be in the presence of members of the other sex. Some employers were

considerate of these requests and some were not (Horowitz 2000, 17).

Thus, the gap between the ultra-orthodox and others in all life areas, including internet use, began to diminish. Accordingly, ultra-orthodox socioeconomic integration in general society also intensified (Roiter 2022). This included interactions with the global economic world. Hence, use of the internet allowed the ultra-orthodox to subsist economically while retaining their unique features (Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai 2005, 33, 35-36).

8. Solutions proposed by the ultra-orthodox for internet use

8.1. Use of content filtering software (“kosher internet”)

Most ultra-orthodox heed their rabbis, who outline the optimal religious path and request that they refrain from using the internet. As a disciplined homogeneous community the ultra-orthodox usually obey the instructions of their rabbis (Cohen, 2015, 183, 185; Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai 2005, 34). Ultra-orthodox rabbis have an important role in reaching decisions and policy related to the internet, whereby they supervise its use and strive to regulate interaction with the internet (Campbell, 2011, 367). The internet has been adapted to the needs of ultra-orthodox society (Barzilai-Nahon & Barzilai 2005; Cohen 2015, 187) and not only to those of secular society. Ultra-orthodox developers have created content filtering software, such that people who already have computers at home can install filtering devices that block undesirable websites, thus allowing them to avoid inappropriate websites (Cohen 2015, 190, 192, 196-197).

Kosher internet filters grant a safe environment for using internet because they restrict access to sites considered problematic (Campbell and Bellar 2015, 86-87) or unacceptable in ultra-Orthodox society for various reasons such as immodesty or violence and so on. Content filtering software is intended to “place a fence and a safeguard for the commandments so that [one] should not violate them” (Ben Avraham (Gerondi), Avot 1:1), as it says in the verse: “You shall keep My charge” [*Ushmartem et mishmarti*] (Lev. 18:30), from where the sages of the Talmud Bavli learned: “Therefore shall you protect [*ushmartem*] my prized possession [*mishmarti*]” (bYevamot 21a). Namely, it is necessary to establish obstructions to avoid causes of sin. This indicates that anyone who uses the internet must install content filtering software to avoid bringing himself to a situation where he might sin (Aviv 2013, 26-28).

The need for filtering and monitoring websites led to a need to give “kashrut permits” to the internet, designated “kosher internet”. Some websites offer filtering and information services to anyone interested in accessing only “kosher” websites, i.e., sites with no sex or violence (Campbell 2011, 372, 374). This also allows control of undesirable websites

that parents wish to prevent their children from accessing (Katz 2011, 123).

Some ultra-orthodox use content filtering software to ensure that they access online sites and contents that are ethically-religiously suitable for them (“kosher”) and avoid accessing websites that do not fit their religious values (Harari 2022; Cohen 2015, 200). Various web filtering companies are stricter, and some provide different levels of blocking, block negative contents, or filter undesirable articles and images (Katz 2011, 124). The large majority of ultra-orthodox individuals are not interested in accessing those services blocked by the web filtering companies (Harari 2022). However not everyone is of the opinion that partial blocking of the internet can solve the problem of non-kosher websites because there is no way to completely block these sites (Brandes 2011, 38).

8.2. Teaching judicious use of the internet

In addition to content filtering software, another solution proposed for using the internet is teaching to choose well, to practice judicious and controlled consumption. According to the ultra-orthodox conception, the multiple barriers are intended to prevent any possibility of attraction to various types of temptations. But there is another solution to this problem that can be appropriate for the ultra-orthodox as well, which is to teach all types of internet users, both young and old, to choose right, in a judicious and controlled way. They should be taught media literacy to help them use the internet judiciously, employing discretion (Cohen 2015, 200), as it is not possible to disregard or to completely block use of the internet over time. Judicious use of the internet, however, must be done through familiarization with its features, benefits, and shortcomings (Tsarfaty and Blais 2002, 50). In this way the ultra-orthodox will not be negatively affected and, on the contrary, they will have a good influence on their surroundings. There are various ways of contending with the temptations of the internet, both educationally (Brandes 2011, 33-34) and using pedagogic ethical approaches (Galili 2005).

A similar but stricter proposal is relevant for children. Parents have an obligation to educate their children and to closely supervise them (Aviv 2013, 32). But there is also a conservative-halakhic approach that completely forbids children from accessing the internet (Galili 2005). A lack of internet access at home is another way of providing children with absolute protection against the immorality that is accessible on the internet (Campbell and Bellar 2015, 86).

9. The benefits of internet use

Since it is not possible to completely ban internet use and since

anything that was created or invented can be used either for good or bad purposes, it is worthwhile to focus on the benefits of the internet, such as saving time that can be used for Torah study. Another example is the possibility of rapidly locating a book needed for studies instead of wasting time finding it in the library (Horowitz 2000, 15). Hence, use of the internet can be positive if utilized properly.

The internet is a tool that can be used for the purpose of providing information. If used in prescribed ways it can support religious goals and values, for example the Chabad Hassidic sect utilize online work as it centers on meeting community goals for outreach and religious education (Campbell 2011, 368, 370-371; Campbell 2015, 7; Lerner 2009, 164-165; Sinnereich 2020, 68-69, 78-79). Other websites, such as that of "Aish Hatorah", focus on returning secular Jews to the fold and to a religious life style. In this way, they sanctify the internet and bring a Torah-based lifestyle to the digital sphere (Campbell 2011, 370; Campbell and Bellar 2015; Lerner 2009, 164-165). Online presence can be seen not only as acceptable within a halakhic lifestyle but as an essential part of a religious mission as well (Campbell 2015, 9). Chabad and those who focus on bringing Jews back to the fold have discovered the potential of the internet for their causes and they use it in various ways (Galili 2005) to spread religious messages. There are also websites of charity organizations and responsa websites on halakhic subjects (to be expanded on below) (Galili 2005; Tsarfaty and Blais 2002, 47).

The internet can serve as a tool for enlisting political support, for instance the Israeli Shas party uses the internet to recruit voters (Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai 2005, 36). The internet also allows access to excellence. For instance, high quality professionals, experts knowledgeable in different areas, can give lectures in any field and these will be available to the general public. Members of the audience can also be in contact with these experts. The internet allows the formation of communities in different shared fields of interest, independent of geographical location. It also makes it possible for any person to be a member of a large number of online communities, allowing the development of creativity unrelated to geography. For example, a person who thinks that he has discovered a new method of analyzing a Talmudic passage can check online whether his method is indeed revolutionary or whether it has already been proposed, or perhaps he will find an expert who is familiar with the subject and can help him find support for the new method or even develop the method (Pupko 2015, 131).

The internet affords the utmost freedom. There is no need to identify oneself or to receive approval to access the internet. It is active at all times and it is not necessary to reserve a time to access the internet; it can also be accessed from any place. The consequences of the open internet are

evident in the world of Torah and halakha. Anyone who wishes to do so can “wear the crown” of Torah, take part in the labor of Torah, express an opinion, even if one is distant from the centers of Torah study.

The internet allows any person to study Torah on a high level even if it is not possible to study directly from teachers. It contains lessons on many varied topics that relate to almost any area related to Judaism, on Torah, halakha, legal rulings, and customs (Pupko 2015, 133). The internet is also a tool for collecting information and everything is retained in its memory. Many throng to hear lessons on Judaism on the internet such that, for instance, if we take a certain topic related to Judaism that was discussed on the internet, reaching some halakhic conclusion, it will be possible to continue discussing this topic in the future between the generations. Namely, future generations will be familiar with this halakha, watch and hear the debate, and will even be able to express their opinion as equals despite the generation gap (Pupko 2015, 134).

There are ultra-orthodox websites aimed at spreading religious texts and religious information. The websites regulated by the ultra-orthodox are intended to preserve and enhance the hierarchy of the ultra-orthodox community and they are strictly supervised by the rabbis. The ultra-orthodox also use the internet to exchange information on various events in their community, halakhic studies, and debates on internal or national matters (Barzilai-Nahon and Barzilai 2005, 34, 36). There are also ultra-orthodox blogs that call upon the ultra-orthodox to use online forums devoted to the ultra-orthodox in different sects such as Satmer (Deutsch 2009, 5).

10. Conclusions

Many ultra-orthodox indeed object to concepts of progress and modernity, but they do not reject internet use per se so long as they can filter its negative impacts such that the internet does not serve as a tool that might change them. At present, most ultra-orthodox in Israel use the internet in the restricted patterns approved by the rabbinical leadership. The desire of the ultra-orthodox is to retain their traditional values versus the moral hazards involved in use of the internet while also ensuring their complete seclusion.

The association between internet use and its influences and the restrictions of its use according to the moral values of the ultra-orthodox attests to the complex attitude of the ultra-orthodox to use of the internet (Tsarfaty and Blais 2002, 54). Thus, also the large discrepancy between the prohibition against use of the internet and its initial dissolution through specific permits for different matters, such as for purposes of religion, work, or women’s work at home, while mandating use of strict content

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filtering software, attests to the complex relations between the ultra-orthodox and use of the internet (Deutsch 2009).

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