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The internet revolution and Jewish law

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INTRODUCTION

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Communication is the key to civilization. When methods change the economic, social, and political world is transformed. - sometimes with enormous speed as in our own time. The internet initially influenced only the western world, but then everywhere. This new form of communication has amplified speech and made knowledge universally available. Much more lies ahead.

Even as this revolution has changed our life - the way we think, work, communicate, and relax; it has yet to engage us fully morally and ethically. We welcome the avenues which have been opened, but do not yet understand the changes to values, relationships, and institutions which are occurring around us. The outer forms of the great world religions appear eternal, but few have looked behind that facades

The handful of essays in this book look at a few issues which confront us. They deal with some practical implications and begin to review their philosophical bases as we experiment with the new media and attempt to integrate it into our tradition.

These essays investigate very different ways in which the internet affects us. They sensitizes us to the potential dangers of the speed of communication, its anonymity, and our lack of caution. They confront us with new views of Shabbat as a day of rest, and challenge our patterns of worship. They question our restrictive view of intellectual property. They demand a thorough review of some fundamental assumptions in a longer essays.

We, obviously, are dealing with far more than a means of communications as the internet shapes the way in which we look at ideas as well as people and our relationships. There are enough questions to fill a dozen volumes and we hope to turn to these and related questions in the future. The revolution has only begun.