

Technologies of Transmission: Torah and New Media
Class #2: The Print Revolution

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<p style="text-align: center;">גיטין ס' ב:ב'-ו'</p> <p>אמר רבי אלעזר: תורה – רוב בכתב ומיעוט על פה, שנאמר: "אכתוב לו רובי תורתי כמו זר נהשבוי". ורבי יוחנן אמר: רוב על פה ומיעוט בכתב, שנאמר: "כי על פי הדברים האלה".</p> <p>ואידך נמי, הקתיב: "אכתוב לו רובי תורתי"! והוא, אתמוהי קא מתמה: אכתוב לו רובי תורתי?! הלא "כמו זר נהשבוי"!</p> <p>ואידך נמי, הקתיב: "כי על פי הדברים האלה"! והוא – משום דתקיפי</p>	<p>Gittin 60b:2-6</p> <p>Rabbi Elazar says: The majority of the Torah was transmitted in writing, while the minority was transmitted orally, as it is stated: "I wrote for him the greater part of My Torah; they were reckoned a strange thing" (Hosea 8:12), meaning that the majority of the Torah was transmitted in written form. And Rabbi Yohanan says: The majority of the Torah was transmitted orally [<i>al peh</i>], while the minority was transmitted in writing, as it is stated with regard to the giving of the Torah to Moses on Mount Sinai: "For on the basis of [<i>al pi</i>] these matters I have made a covenant with you and with Israel" (Exodus 34:27), which indicates that the greater part of the Sinaitic covenant was taught orally.</p> <p>The Gemara asks: And according to the other Sage, Rabbi Yohanan, as well, isn't it written: "I wrote for him the greater part of My Torah"? How does he understand this verse? The Gemara answers: This verse is not a statement, but rather a rhetorical question expressing bewilderment: For did I write for him the greater part of My Torah? In that case they, the Jewish people, would be reckoned as strangers, meaning that there would be no difference between them and the nations of the world if everything was written down. Rather, the majority of the Torah must remain an oral tradition.</p> <p>The Gemara asks: And according to the other Sage, Rabbi Elazar, as well, isn't it written: "For on the</p>
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<p>לְמִיגְמַר־יְהוָה.</p> <p>דְּרַשׁ רַבִּי יְהוּדָה בַּר נַחֲמָנִי, מִתּוֹרָגְמָנִיָּה דְּרַבִּי שְׁמַעוֹן בֶּן לֵקִישׁ, כְּתִיב: "כְּתוּב לָךְ אֶת הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה", וְכִתִּיב: "כִּי עַל פִּי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה" – הֲאֵא כִּי צַדִּיק דְּבָרִים שְׂבֻכְתָּב אִי אַתָּה רִשְׁאֵי לְאוּמְרוֹן עַל פֶּה, דְּבָרִים שְׂבֻעֵל פֶּה אִי אַתָּה רִשְׁאֵי לְאוּמְרוֹן בְּכֻתָּב.</p> <p>דְּבִי רַבִּי יִשְׁמַעֵאל. תְּנָא: "אֵלֶּה" – אֵלֶּה אַתָּה כּוֹתֵב, וְאִי אַתָּה כּוֹתֵב הַלְּכוֹת. אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: לֹא כָּרַת הַקְּדוּשׁ כְּרוּךְ הוּא כְּרִית עִם יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֲלֵא בְּשִׁבִיל דְּבָרִים שְׂבֻעֵל פֶּה – שְׂנַאֲמַר: "כִּי עַל פִּי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה כְּרַתִּי אַתָּה כְּרִית וְאֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל".</p>	<p>basis of these matters I have made a covenant with you and with Israel"? How does he understand this verse? The Gemara answers: That verse, which indicates that the covenant was based on that which was taught by oral tradition, is stated due to the fact that it is more difficult to learn matters transmitted orally, but not because these matters are more numerous than those committed to writing.</p> <p>Rabbi Yehuda bar Nahmani, the disseminator for Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish, expounded as follows: It is written: "Write you these matters" (Exodus 34:27), and it is written later in that same verse: "For on the basis of [al pi] these matters." How can these texts be reconciled? They mean to teach: Matters that were written you may not express them orally [al peh], and matters that were taught orally you may not express them in writing.</p> <p>The school of Rabbi Yishmael taught: The word "these" in the mitzva recorded in the verse "Write you these matters" is used here in an emphatic sense: These matters, i.e., those recorded in the Written Law, you may write, but you may not write halakhot, i.e., the mishnayot and the rest of the Oral Law. Rabbi Yohanan says: The Holy One, Blessed be He, made a covenant with the Jewish people only for the sake of the matters that were transmitted orally [be'al peh], as it is stated: "For on the basis of [al pi] these matters I have made a covenant with you and with Israel" (Exodus 34:27).</p>
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- What's the use case for Oral Torah? What is it really good for? What does it add to the user experience of Torah?
- What's the use case for Written Torah? What is it really good for? What does it add to the user experience of Torah?
- How is digital Torah like Oral? How is it like Written?
- What are some aspects of Torah or ways of studying that aren't captured by either

Oral or Written which you would like the digital age to provide?

<p>ליקוטי מאמרים, חודשים ומועדים ז</p> <p>פירוש כי הבדל בין כתיבה לדיבור כי בכתיבה הוא רק התגלות החכמה שבמוחו ומחשבתו אבל הדיבור הוא התגלות הבינה שבלב שזה נגלה בדבור כפי איכות הדבור ותנועתו ניכר עליו מה שבלבו, כידוע שיש הכרה בדברים אם יוצאים מן הלב ואם מדבר בתוקף או בנחת ככעס או רצון</p> <p>רק תורה שבכתב המכתב מכתב אלקים בדקדוק צורת אותיות שאם נשתנה כל שהוא פסול... שהם מגלים ורומזים על הבינה שבלב שהקב"ה הטמין בה</p> <p>וכמו שהשיגו כל פילסופי יון וערב, הקדמונים מחכמתם גם כן, רק מכל מקום לא נשתנה על ידי זה לבם בקוצו של יו"ד ולא היה הקב"ה דר בלבבם כלל רק בלבות בני ישראל שלהם נמסר התורה שבעל פה, פירוש התגלות הבינה שבלב על ידי הדבור ולכך דברים שבעל פה אי אתה רשאי לאומרם בכתב (גיטין ס':) כי עיקר דברים שבעל פה, בדבור שעל ידו מתגלה מה שבלב, וכמו ששמעתי על לשון חז"ל בכל מקום אליבא דר' פלוני כי כל המימרות שלהם היה כפי לבו ובמקום אדעתי' אמרו אליבא שהוא מן הלב</p>	<p>Likkutei Ma'amarim, Months and Festivals, 7 Rav Zadok HaKohen of Lublin,</p> <p>This means that there is a distinction between writing and speech. Speech reveals only the wisdom in a person's brain, and their thoughts. Speech reveals the understanding of the heart. This is revealed in speech in accordance with the quality of the speech and its movement - it reveals what is in a person's heart. It is known that you can recognize when something comes from the heart, and whether a person is speaking with force, or gently, with anger or appeasement...</p> <p>The written Torah is the writing of God, who was able to be precise in the letters, such that if they are changed at all, the Torah is not kosher...the letters reveal and hint to the understanding of the heart that God hid within it...</p> <p>...and similarly, all the early Greek and Western philosophers drew on the Torah's wisdom, but nonetheless their hearts weren't changed at all by it, and God did not dwell in their hearts at all, only in the hearts of the people of Israel, to whom the Oral Torah was given - meaning, the revelation of the understanding of the heart via speech, and that is why words that are given orally may not be written down, because the essence of spoken things is that they reveal what is in the heart.</p> <p>That is why in all places in rabbinic writings, it says "<i>aliba</i>" (according to) when someone is quoted, because all the words are according to that person's heart, so instead of "according to the opinion of" it says "according to the heart of."</p>
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- How might we capture the most important aspects of Oral Torah in our learning and our teaching?
- What forms of media today - if any - do the best job capturing some of the

advantages of Oral Torah?

<p>תלמוד ירושלמי שבת ט"ז:א'-ד'-ט'</p> <p>בְּרִכּוֹת שֶׁכְּתוּב בָּהֶן עֲנִינּוֹת הַרְבֵּה מִן הַתּוֹרָה אֵין מְצִילִין אוֹתָן מִפְּנֵי הַדְּלִיקָה. מִיכּוֹן אָמְרוּ. כּוֹתְבֵי בְּרִכּוֹת שׁוֹרְפֵי תּוֹרָה....</p> <p>אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי. הֵדָא אֲגַדְתָּא הַכּוֹתְבָה אֵין לוֹ חֵלְקִי. הַדּוֹרְשָׁה מִתְחַרְדֵּי. הַשּׁוֹמְעָה אֵינוֹ מְקַבֵּל שְׂכָרָה. אָמַר רַבִּי יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בֶּן לֵוִי. אֲנָא מִן יוֹמוֹי לֹא אִיסְתַּפְּלִית בְּסִפְרָא דְאֲגַדְתָּא. אֲלֵא חַד זְמַן אִיסְתַּפְּלִית.... אֲפִילוּ כֵן אֲנָא מִתְבַּעֵית בְּלֵילְיָא.</p> <p>רַבִּי חִיְיָא בַר אַבְבָּא חָמָא חַד סִפְרָא דְאֲגַדְתָּא. אָמַר. אֵי מַה כְּתִיב טְבִאוֹת. תְּקַטֵּעַ יָדָא דְכְּתִיבָה. אָמַר לֵיהּ חַד. אַבּוּי דְהוּא גִבְרָא כְּתִיבָה. אָמַר לֵיהּ. כֵּן אָמַרְתִּי. תְּקַטֵּעַ יָדָא דְכְּתִיבָה. וְהוֹת לֵיהּ כֵּן כְּשִׁגְגָה שְׂוִיָצָא מִלְפָּנֵי הַשְּׁלִיט:</p>	<p>Jerusalem Talmud Shabbat 16:1:4-9</p> <p>“One does not save benedictions which contain pentateuchal materials from a fire. Because of this, they said: Writers of benedictions are burners of the Torah....</p> <p>Rebbi Joshua ben Levi said, one who writes down sermons has no part, one who preaches them is going to be singed, one who listens to him is not rewarded. Rebbi Joshua ben Levi said, I never looked into a book of sermon concepts, except that once I looked...Nevertheless I was frightened in the night.</p> <p>Rebbi Ḥiyya bar Abba saw a book of <i>agadah</i>. He said, even if what is written in there is good, the hand who wrote it should be amputated. A person told him, it was written by X’s father. He said, I was saying, the hand who wrote it should be amputated. That happened to him, <i>as an error which is coming out from the ruler’s mouth</i>.</p>
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Rabbi Dr. Yaakov Elman, “R. Zadok Hakohen on the History of Halakha.” Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Thought, (21)4, Fall 1985

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With the completion of the Babylonian Talmud and its reduction to written form, came the same mystical linkage of each Jewish soul to Oral Torah as to Written Torah. In kabbalistic terms, just as each soul has its root in a letter or stroke of Written Torah, so too with the promulgation of the Babylonian Talmud, did each soul find its root in its words. Moreover, with its appearance in written form came the Oral Torah’s inclusion in the Written one. The process did not end here. Each successive effort of codification of Oral Law added to the Written Torah, and each code, as it became part of Written Torah, generated still more layers of innovation in Oral Torah. In practical terms, each portion of Oral Torah as it was reduced to writing generated new commentaries whose authors approached the newly incorporated work as the sages of Oral Torah had approached the original Written Torah. Thus, if we may be permitted to draw out the line of reasoning a step further, the Amoraim applied to Mishnah methods similar to their creative reinterpretation (*derasha*) of Written Torah, the Rishonim continued the process on Talmud as a whole, and the Aharonim used the works of the Rishonim as a point of departure and treated them the same way. And the process continued apace. Progressive revelation continues through

the medium of sage and text.

- How does the experience of hearing Torah compare with your experience of reading Torah?
- How does your experience of writing compare with your experience of speaking?

"The Ashkenazi Elite at the Beginning of the Modern Era: Manuscript versus Printed Book," by Elchanan Reiner, pg. 87

“Just as a person likes only the food that he prepares for himself, in accordance with his own appetite and taste...thus he does not like another person’s rulings unless he agrees with that person. All the more does he not wish to be dependent upon the books of other authors, whom he does not trust, just as a person likes only the food that he prepares for himself, in accordance with his own appetite and taste, and does not aspire to be a guest at their prepared table. And for that reason the ancients refrained from writing any special book to lay down customs and halakhah to the general public.” (quote from Hayyim ben Bezalel of Friedberg, 16th century, brother of the Maharal of Prague)

<p>הרב יעקב עמדין, מגילת ספר אעפ"כ לא משכתי ידי ממצוה שהתחלתי בה, ולא עזבתי מלאכת ה', כל זמן שהיו בידי מעות להוציא מלאכת הדפוס... לא מנעתי עצמי שעה אחת מלהרביץ תורה בישראל, בדרך זו שיזכו בה קרובים ורחוקים.</p>	<p>Rav Yaakov Emden, Megillat Sefer Even so, I did not withdraw my hand from the mitsvah that I began, and I did not leave the Divine work, the whole time that I had enough money to produce printed work....and I did not hold back for a moment from spreading Torah in Israel, in this way so that many, far and near, might benefit.</p>
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- What are the drawbacks of printed text?
- What are the advantages?