



# INVOLVING JEWISH MEN IN JEWISH LIFE

---

FEDERATION OF JEWISH  
MEN'S CLUBS, INC.  
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 832  
New York, NY 10115-0022

Tel: 212 749 8100

e-mail: [international@fjmc.org](mailto:international@fjmc.org)

website: [www.fjmc.org](http://www.fjmc.org)

Twitter: [FJMC\\_HQ](https://twitter.com/FJMC_HQ)

Affiliated Internationally with the  
Conservative-Masorti Movement

July 2013

Dear FJMC Convention Attendee and Conservative/Masorti Movement member,

I am writing to you prior to Convention in order to prepare you, and, if you are so motivated, to invite you to participate in an experiment that will take place Shabbat morning in our various sanctuaries.

In the winter 2012-2013 issue of *CJ: Kolot* magazine, I published an article entitled, "Can the People of the Book Become the People of the iPad?" The paper was written in response to my concern that "if we desire future generations of modern Jews to attend and become more comfortable on Shabbat and holidays in our sanctuaries, we need to recognize that the definition of a book is changing from one that is printed on paper to one composed of pixels, and we need to respond proactively. We have to figure out how we can incorporate this technology and at the same time maintain our sense of the holy. Our challenge is to learn how to retain our core values and, at the same time, make this technology work in a Jewish context."

My paper was preceded by calls to members of the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Rabbinical Assembly (CJLS), and it resulted in my having the opportunity to read a colleague's paper that focused on the permissibility of using electrical devices on Shabbat. The paper, written by Rabbi Daniel Nevins, stated on p. 37 "the use of e-readers as currently configured is not permitted on Shabbat" primarily because, in his eyes, the use of an e-reader on Shabbat would violate the "spirit of Shabbat." In other words, it is possible that people might surf, shop, or answer emails if they were using a tablet.

I took issue with this interpretation for a number of reasons. First, it is my belief that a number find the using a tablet for reading harmonious with the spirit of Shabbat and in fact part of the way they honor Shabbat. One needs to trust people and respect their choices. Second, on a tablet it is currently possible to have a clearer and larger text accompanied by a host of informative material more readily available than what exists in book form. Finally, fewer and fewer emerging adults are comfortable using books.

Rabbi Nevins' paper, called a *teshuvah* (a rabbinic response to a legal question), generated a dissenting response by Rabbi Elie Kaplan Spitz, also a member of the CJLS. In his twenty-seven-page response Rabbi Spitz said this:

Reading is among the joys of Shabbat. The resources for reading have changed slowly over time but are now morphing quickly. We, Jews, are the last group to actively commission hand-written scrolls on parchment. Scrolls replaced writing on shards or chiseling on hard objects-such as those famous two stone tablets. The printing press in the 15th century was a revolution that enhanced the availability, accuracy, and cost of the written word. Electronic reading devices are now swiftly replacing printed books.

He further states, "In my own congregation, I held a public conversation on the use of electricity and electronic devices during a Shabbat morning after the CJLS vote on the Nevins teshuvah. There were over one hundred and fifty people present. No one supported the majority vote banning the use of electronic devices on Shabbat. They spoke about how Judaism has evolved and how the question of what is *shabbasdik* is different than what is halakhically permitted. It made me pause and appreciate that CJLS *teshuvot* are written precisely for these Jews."

Leadership Innovation Community

He then concludes,

In sum, reading, warming [food], and conversing add to the joy of Shabbat. As with the use of electricity, electronic devices may enable us to both have greater comfort and knowledge and enhanced connection to loved ones. In sum on Shabbat it is *halakhically* permissible to read from an electronic device... It is permitted to read on Shabbat from an e-reader. It is forbidden to make purchases or to write with the intention of permanent recording on these devices, including the composing and sending of e-mails.

Within this context, I have asked Rabbi Edwin Farber, a rabbi in North Miami Beach, FL, to write a commentary for the Torah portion that will be read on Shabbat at the Convention. That commentary, accompanied by the text and translation, will be available for downloading to a tablet for study and use in any of the Shabbat morning services taking place at Convention. Unfortunately, because at this time a Siddur that is acceptable and in common use by Conservative Movement congregations is not available for downloading, I was forced to focus solely on the Torah and haftorah readings.

This is an experiment, and those of you wish to bring their tablets to any of the services being offered at Convention Shabbat morning have my permission to do so. This does not grant you permission to use your tablet on Shabbat in your congregation or any other congregation. In each instance the rabbi of each congregation needs to determine whether or not he or she finds this acceptable. (Aside from the issues involving the tablet itself, congregational rabbis will need to deal with the prohibition on carrying from each person's private domain to the public domain on Shabbat, a concern that we will not have at our convention because we will all be housed in the same building.) Personally, I can envision a day when men and women, standing side by side, pray and study from the sacred texts using a book, a tablet, or whatever comes next, using the medium from which they derive the most comfort in harmony.

One final item: The FJMC Convention is primarily composed of men and women who spend Shabbat at the hotel and thus will not be subject to violating the prohibition of carrying an electronic device on Shabbat from their private domain to the public domain. For those of us who seek to live within the *halakhic* system, this item like many others, requires appropriate guidance from either the local rabbi or the CJLS.

By agreeing to download the weekly Torah reading for the FJMC Convention 2013, the user promises to use his or her tablet in the spirit of Shabbat and to download it prior to Shabbat. Putting your e-reader or iPad into "Airplane" mode prior to Shabbat will help you observe the spirit of Shabbat.

The readings for Shabbat Eikev can be found at [this link](#)

In order to transfer the PDF file to your e-reader or iPad, please do the following **prior to Shabbat**. The instructions are dependent on which device you have and how you downloaded the PDF.

**Kindle 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation E-reader.** For a Kindle (2<sup>nd</sup> Generation) e-reader, you can either transfer the PDF to your Kindle via a direct connection to your computer or use the "send-to-Kindle" email address. Please consult the following web page (<http://www.amazon.com/gp/help/customer/display.html?nodeId=200375630>) for specific instructions on how to perform either of these tasks.

**iPad.** If you have navigated to a web page that contains the PDF download, "press and hold" the PDF document and a secondary window will open that enables you to use the iBook App or the Kindle Reader App (if you have it installed) on your iPad. Once you have opened the PDF in either of these apps, the documents will be in the "Library" of each App for you to open on Shabbat.

If you received the PDF as an email on your iPad, "press and hold" the attachment to the email and follow the steps above.

Thank you



Rabbi Charles Simon