

Jewish Counterculture Oral History Project

ARTHUR GREEN

Interviewed by Jayne K. Guberman

August 5, 2016

**A Project of the Jewish Studies Program
at the University of Pennsylvania**

Jayne Guberman (JG): My name is Jayne Guberman. Today is Friday, August 5, 2016, and I'm here with Art Green in his home in Newton, Massachusetts, and we're going to record an interview for the Jewish Counterculture Oral History Project. Art, do I have your permission to record this interview?

Art Green (AG): Yes, indeed you do.

JG: Great, so as you know, today we're going to explore your experiences during the late sixties and early seventies in particular, and particularly your role in founding the first *havurah*, Havurat Shalom, and the period of its early years. I'd like to start by talking about your personal and family background to set the stage for your involvement in the late sixties, so can you tell me a little bit about your family when you were growing up.

AG: My family — I grew up in Newark, New Jersey. My parents both came from Patterson, New Jersey. Family background is important somehow. My father, Martin Green, was the first child of a couple who immigrated just before he was born. He was born the year after they arrived. He was born in 1907; they'd arrived in 1906. They came from Lodz, western Poland, but both their families had come from *shtetlakh* before Lodz. In Lodz, his parents had both lost the hasidic religion of their parents and became quite secular. My grandfather sort of labor movement secular; my grandmother also very secular. Her siblings were all Communist party members; she was not a Communist but shared their view of religion. They were completely anti-religious, thought religion was the opiate of the masses, and my dad was raised in a strictly atheist, secular household. Now, that grandmother, as I like to say, when I got under foot as a little kid playing in the kitchen, she would say to me, "Go *shlug kappores*," and I'd ask her what that meant and she said, "Go swing a chicken around your head." It was the funniest thing I had ever heard. I didn't know there was anything Jewish about it, but that's how Jewishly knowledgeable she was in her very secular, anti-religious world. We were in Newark because Dad was a history teacher, at Weequahic High School; that's the all-Jewish public high school that Philip Roth describes in his novels. And that's what Dad did. He was a thirties' intellectual: social, and economic matters were what were important, psychology; certainly anything spiritual was just all nonsense and bullshit and he felt very strongly about that. He married my mother Ethel, who was the daughter of a traditional — not Orthodox but traditional — old-world Jewish family also in Patterson. When I say traditional but not Orthodox I mean grandpa's tailor shop was open on Shabbos. But upstairs from the tailor shop in grandma's house you couldn't sew you, couldn't write, she lit candles; everything was strictly kosher. When they retired — he retired from the tailor shop when I was six years old — they moved, and then he started going to shul every Shabbos and eventually shul every day, maybe as much for the Yiddish conversation and schnapps and herring as much as the *davening*, which he knew by heart. He wasn't a great believer — she was a believer, he wasn't a great believer — but they were traditional Jews, traditional *balabotishkeit*, sort of Yiddish speaking,

Art Green, 08/06/16

Judaism was their world. This is all — I give you all this detail on my grandparents because they are very important in my life.

JG: You have a sister also?

AG: I have an older sister named Paula, with whom I'm very close now. We were not terribly close as kids, but yes, the four of us lived in this apartment on South 20th Street in Newark. When I was seven years old mom developed cancer; we don't know what exactly what kind — “women's cancer” it was called in those days. You didn't mention the “c-word” and you certainly didn't mention words like “uterine” in front of a child. She died when I was eleven. And that was sort of the traumatic event of my childhood and probably the determinative event in the course of my life in many ways.

JG: How so?

AG: I remember going to synagogue with my mother when I was maybe seven or eight years old. Friday night service was at Temple B'nei Abraham, which was this big, liberal temple in Newark. That's the place I went to Hebrew school. The rabbi there was Yoachim Prince; he was a very world known orator. People went Friday nights to hear Rabbi Prince speak and to listen to the cantorial choir concert; nobody opened the book. I remember going with mom and opening the book and being interested in what was going on there. Why she and I were there I'm not sure. Was she interested in religion and less of an atheist than my father was, or was she just escaping the cigar smoke of his Friday night bridge game at home? Hard to know. But when I was eight, Dad took me aside and told me, “You have to do this terrible thing for your grandmother called Hebrew school.” Because every boy in the family had to have a bar mitzvah; that was taken for granted in the Atkin family.

JG: This was the grandmother —

AG: My mother's mother. My sister received not a day of Jewish education because girls didn't need to, but I had to go to Hebrew school to please Grandma. He said, “If you hate it, you can quit.” And I took to it like a duck to water; I loved it. I'm a rare success story of the afternoon Hebrew school system. Three days a week, in a very sort of Hebraist, Labor Zionist atmosphere, *Ivrit b'Ivrit*. By my second or third year in Hebrew school we had a pen pal in Israel and I was exchanging letters with him in my broken Hebrew, which of course the teacher corrected and it was all very exciting. I just loved it. Now part of it was that the tough kids from elementary school weren't there, the tough kids, meaning kids who beat you up, the Catholic kids, they were across the street being punished at Blessed Sacrament. So Hebrew school you didn't have to pretend you didn't know the answers and things like that. It was my first exposure to a second language and I was obviously good at language, and I just loved it and thrived in it.

JG: Your childhood also coincided with the war, essentially.

AG: Well, I was born in '41. I don't remember the war or the end of the war, but I remember mom and grandma, again mother's mother, sitting and looking at lists of survivors after the war, looking for a cousin who had been left behind. And I was there with my grandfather when he found out what happened in his shtetl, very traumatic memory somehow. So yes, the background of the war was there. Dad was a history teacher, as I said. When I was eleven or twelve I read John Hershey's *The Wall*. I discovered something called *The Black Book of Polish Jewry* at a very young age, and that sort of told me what had happened in the war. What I didn't know and found out only very recently was that my father's family, the atheist side, the Communist side of the family, who we were out of touch with for many, many years, I just made contact three or four years ago with cousin Eleanor, a little older than I am. She said, "Do you know about the other sibling?" and I said, "What are you talking about?" She said, "There was one brother who remained *frum*, refused to go to America, and he and his wife and eight children died in the Lodz ghetto." Nobody in the family ever mentioned that when I was a child. Did they try to get them out and fail? Did they say, Who needs a crazy religious brother? and left him there? I have no idea, but that's a piece of family history I found out much, much later. So, I was brought up in this secular home, not only secular but assimilationist home. I remember Christmas stockings; I hear we had a tree one year and grandma had a fit, but I don't remember that. I remember Christmas stockings, hamsteaks with pineapple rings on the kitchen table — very, very trying to be American. Even my name, Arthur Eliot. I was named for Dad's grandfather who was Avram Itzhik, but that became Arthur Eliot in that generation, and assimilation is what my dad, presumably my parents, wanted. When I applied to rabbinical school, to jump ahead, I received a letter from Grandma Green, Dad's mother, and the letter read like this — I still have it upstairs. I just showed it to somebody, in night-school English, one sentence — "Dear Arthur, I hear you still want to be a rabbi. I would be prouder of you if you were a teacher and teach people things that are true because if there was a God in the sky he would be shot down by Sputnik already. Period." That was Grandma Green. This religion thing was all nonsense and her son completely agreed — so he was horrified when I started taking to it. By the time Mom died, I was quite interested in religion. I remember going to minyan sometimes to say *Kaddish* for her, which Dad thought was an awful stupid thing to do. You'll be with all those old ladies, grim, and crying and who wants that and that was his image of it. But my grandparents' hold, my mother's parents' hold, was very strong. (00:10:02) They were wrecked when she died, and their only son died two years later. This was their son the doctor, who the tailor put through medical school, dropped dead on the golf course at age forty-nine. So my grandparents were completely devastated. And I was the grandchild who was interested in Yiddishkeit, who

wanted to do Shabbos, who wanted to learn Yiddish. I would go to my grandparents' house and read their Yiddish newspaper and try to figure out the Yiddish newspaper.

JG: How did you know Yiddish to even begin to do that?

AG: Well, they spoke Judeo-English, and I picked it up, and I was good with languages. In highschool I took two years of German in order to learn Yiddish. So, therefore, , go make your grandparents feel better, go to them for this holiday. And Dad, a year after Mom died, started dating. "Too soon!" my grandmother would constantly say. And he wanted to be rid of me for a weekend, and so "go to your grandparents." So I would say, Shabbos at least once a month, every Jewish holiday, I was with my mother's parents in shul, in their shul, which was an old world, old fashioned shul. Men and women sat together, but everything was in Hebrew, and the language among the congregants was Yiddish, because I was the youngest person there — by forty years, pretty much. And it was a very traditional, old world kind of shul and I liked it. It was emotionally very real. Grandma cried the whole time, pretty much, especially on *Yizkor* — that's my big memory of that shul. Grandma cries all day, Mrs. Markovitch screamed every during *Yizkor* when her husband's name was read from the memorial tablet. So I grew up with that being very powerful. The summer I was thirteen, I went to Ramah for the summer. The summer I was thirteen, I went to Camp Ramah for the summer. That was very important.

JG: How did you get to Camp Ramah?

AG: That's a good question! How did I get to Camp Ramah? The last year I was at RRC [Reconstructionist Rabbinical College] in Philadelphia — I was president of RRC — the secretary calls and says, "There's a man here who says he was your teacher and wants to talk to you." And Arieh Rohn, my Hebrew teacher from Newark, and his wife and another couple whom I knew came up to visit. They were in Philadelphia and decided to come visit. And Arieh said to me something I had never known, he said to me — in the only language we ever spoke together, in Hebrew — he says, "*Ani adayin zocher et aba shelkha she-amar, 'Over my dead body you'll go to Camp Ramah!' V'ani nitsachti oto!*" — "I still remember your father who said, 'Over my dead body you'll go to Camp Ramah!' And I beat him!" So then I understood Dad was getting married to Freida, my stepmother, that year, and he wanted his kid out of the house. Arieh wrote and said "Camp Ramah?" My father said, "Absolutely not." And he didn't have another alternative and he let me go to Ramah. And I took to it like a duck to water. (00:13:00) I spent three summers in Ramah, the summers I was thirteen, fifteen, and sixteen. They became the center of my social life, of my intellectual life. My teachers at Ramah the summers I was fifteen and sixteen were Yosef Yerushalmi and Gerson Cohen. The camp librarian saw I'd never — because I came from Newark and not a day school, my Hebrew was quite good, but I'd never opened a page of Talmud. So the camp librarian says, "I'll

teach you a little Talmud.” The librarian’s name was David Weiss Halivni — one of the world’s great Talmudists today. When I was fifteen, I read Heschel, *God in Search of Man* and *The Sabbath*. They were the most profound things I could ever imagine reading at age fifteen. Compared to what was going on at the public high school in a small town in New Jersey, this was on such a higher intellectual level that it just — it swept me away. And beginning after that summer when I was thirteen, (00: 14:00) I came home and started trying to be observant. I wouldn’t eat certain things, or if I had to eat in my father’s house, I would try to — I remember washing my hands before eating and Dad would say, “What’s this sudden nonsense about washing your hands? What’s this nonsense? What’s that nonsense?!” We would fight furiously about religion. It was the way we fought out our adolescent battles. Of course, religion was a convenient battlefield between father and son, I realize in retrospect, but it was fierce, nasty. He became very nasty and abusive, I would say verbally abusive, which he turned out to be for quite a few years. And that of course pushed me farther and farther away from him, towards my grandparents, towards religion. I was a football, essentially, between those two families, between my father and my mother’s parents. And I was attracted more and more to their world and more and more to religion and became increasingly observant. (00:15:00) I was emotionally young and not very psychologically self-aware, so that observance had a lot of guilt and a lot of compulsive behavior attached to it. And by the time I started Brandeis, as a sixteen-year-old freshman, I was pretty much a budding Orthodox Jew, you would say. I was *davening* at least once a day, trying to *daven* three times a day. My freshman roommate reminds me that every time he wanted to go to the beach, I wanted to go study more Talmud or something like that. I was in that place. At Brandeis, we had a very dynamic young Hillel director my freshman year, who only lasted one year. His name was Yitz Greenberg. And he was a big influence on me, too, sort of pulling me more into that kind of Orthodox self-understanding. So, I moved in that direction. I was pulled that way. (00:16:00) And, let me just say that I was always attracted to the old world. Europe was very powerful in my imagination. The best thing Dad did when I was a kid was stamp collecting together. Dad had been a stamp collector as a kid and passed it on to me. Our favorite stamps were those of Ukraine and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Those pictures of the Emperor Franz Joseph over printed for use in this place and that place. And Dad was interested in Europe also. He said his master’s thesis had been on Tomas Masaryk, the founder of Czechoslovakia, and he was very interested in European socialism. And so in Newark — I won’t give you the details, there’s a chapter on this in my memoir — we shared a house with our Ukrainian neighbors upstairs who were our landlords, and so I learned to speak a little Ukrainian when I was a kid. So Ukrainian, Yiddish, old world stamps, old world stuff, (00:17:00) my grandparents’ world. My grandfather’s brother and sister-in-law — we went to visit every Saturday night when I was at my grandparents — were Uncle David Mayer and Tante Shifra Sarah and they spoke only Yiddish. And so it was, I was pulled by that world. I was attracted by that

Art Green, 08/06/16

world. Before I discovered Hasidism or the spiritual teachings that were involved, I already had a foot and a half in Eastern Europe. And that all happened in the course of this relationship with grandparents and attraction to that world.

JG: Did you find echoes of that attraction among your peers at all in those years or was that just something —?

AG: No, I was a weird kid. I was a weird kid. So, when I met Halivni, I was attracted to his Yiddish accent, I imagine. There were other people, certainly my Ramah friends, my Ramah and what was called LTF, that was Leaders Training Fellowship, which was the elite youth group of the Conservative movement. (00:18:00) They were all — we were all interested in Hebrew. We were all interested in Jewish stuff, but not much in the Yiddish version of it. That was pretty unusual, even in that world.

JG: How about Zionism at that point?

AG: Zionism was a big part of that. The summer I was thirteen — I was just sharing this memory with an old friend — the summer I was thirteen we met our first real Israelis aside from our Hebrew teachers — and a lot of Zionist patriotism. Turns out that Zvi and Miriam Westreich, those Israelis, this friend reminded me, were survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto. And so romantic Zionism was the currency of the day. The first whole Hebrew book I ever read after textbooks was Agnon's novella, *B'levav Yamim*, which I read the summer I was sixteen. And I was sort of in love. I was in love with this romantic Zionism. That's the story of a hasidic (00:19:00) young man in the eighteenth century who sails to *Eretz Yisrael* on a kerchief across the sea and longs for the true vision of Eretz Yisrael. And so that was very much part of the romantic Zionism, singing all these songs about the *emek* and the farmers and about the sunsets in Eretz Yisrael. That was all very much a part — I had never been to Israel but dreams of it, dreams of it, including some military stuff, "*Shir Hapalmach*" [Song of the Palmach], but more attracted really to the sort of agricultural fantasy. Kibbutz and Agnon's stories, worlds, that was all there in that adolescent vision. But the Eastern European part, I would say, I think I was somewhat unique in that.

JG: So this was a momentous decade obviously, the sixties. In your life, you started Brandeis (00:20:00) — over that period you did your BA at Brandeis; you did a master's at JTS, right? Followed by —

AG: I did rabbinical school at JTS.

JG: Rabbinical school, right. So, can you sort of walk us through what you think of as the highlights in your development and personal evolutions Jewishly over that period?

AG: Sure. I should say before — how much time have you got?

JG: Exactly, that's why I said, highlights, because we could obviously go through this in enormous detail.

AG: So freshman year: increasing Orthodoxy, already Jewish Studies courses at Brandeis. Nahum Glatzer became a teacher of mine my freshman year and he was very impressive — Glatzer, who had been a Rosenzweig student. That year was a bible course, the book of Isaiah, but other things, too. My sophomore year, something happened to me that changed my life. I saw (00:21:00) increasingly that I was unhappy with religion, that I had been fooling myself with all this religion. And the eve of my eighteenth birthday, March of whatever that year was, 1958 I guess, I went out and ate two *traif* hamburgers in Waltham, and that was the end of my observance. I like to say that after the first hamburger I repented, but after the second, I was finished. And, why? I decided that it had all been fooling myself; it had all been more neurosis than faith. This was my way of hiding from the world and dealing with my mother's death, which I had never come to terms with well. I didn't have real friends except the friends with whom I shared this Jewish obsession. But people who were really the kinds of thinkers and seekers I was, I was running away from. That year, I kind of fell in love with a few people, new friendships opened up. And these were people outside the little Hillel world, (00:22:00) they were other people at Brandeis, a lot of them studying psychology. We were all reading Erich Fromm's *The Art of Loving* and *The Little Prince* that year. That was the big discovery, self-discovery books. But that was also the year that I probably — you know, at Brandeis you could get the best Middle European education in North America. All our significant professors were Middle Europeans. I think I read Nietzsche in four or five different courses at Brandeis. In addition to Glatzer and Alexander Altmann who becomes important later in the story, who taught Jewish Studies, I had philosophy with Herbert Marcuse, Aron Gurwitsch, and it was just a very, very highly intellectualized world. So, Nietzsche was important because Nietzsche was the death of God and rejoicing. Once you broke out of that framework and that compulsive religion you realized you didn't have to do it anymore; there was a great joy, a great liberation: God is dead! But Nietzsche soon gives way to Kafka, which is to say: (00:23:00) God is dead, but so are you. Life is dead, there is no meaning, you are living in this barren universe of *The Castle* or *The Trial* and where do you go from here? And that's sort of the emptiness. I remember Sartre's *No Exit*. I remember the sort of existential loneliness being part of the self-description. And then reading Camus: Well, you have to go and make meaning for yourself. You have to reconstruct meaning. I remember Nikos Kazantzakis was very important to me, a favorite writer in those days. You construct meaning for yourself, you go on a pilgrimage, and you find meaning. So, for those couple of years, the end of my sophomore and junior years in college, I considered myself a Jewish secularist, all right? I was very involved in Jewish life still. I was very — I had taken so many Jewish studies courses at Brandeis that I had almost completed the major already. I thought of switching my major from Jewish studies (00:24:00) to CompLit — Comparative Literature,

Western literature. I sometimes think had I walked away from Judaism at that point in my life successfully, I probably would've been a literature professor, maybe Russian and German or German and English, something like that. And studied existentialism and loneliness in modern literature, and things like that. But I had done so much in Jewish studies already and I loved it so much even though I was secular, so I tried secular Judaism. I became president — I became head of the Zionist Organization of Greater Boston. I started going to meetings of the Yidisher Kultur Club in Boston, bringing down the average age of the Yidisher Kultur Club by sixty years or so, going to their lectures. I remember once hearing Soloveitchik lecture to these secular Yiddishists, very fascinating experience. And I was trying on secular Jewish identity for size. Those were just important years in personal growth, too, of sort of coming out of my shell and discovering who I was. (00:25:00)

JG: Had you met Zalman also in those years?

AG: I had met Zalman already my freshman year. Yitz Greenberg brought Zalman to do a *Shabbaton* at Brandeis, I was very impressed by Zalman, who was still a good Lubavitcher Hasid in those days. That was my first contact with Hasidism per se, was Zalman, representing Lubavitch. But then I became quite secular, quite rebellious, but still interested in studying Jewish things. My junior year at Brandeis, Alexander Altmann came from London to be professor of Jewish philosophy. He taught a course called “Classical Jewish Thought” in which he taught major Jewish ideas from the biblical, rabbinic, philosophic and mystical perspectives. Now there, I first encountered Kabbalah. My senior year in college he taught the first course on Kabbalah ever taught in American university, “Intro to Jewish Mysticism.” I was in that class. By that point, I was turning twenty — nineteen or twenty, (00:26:00) I realized I was still a seeker, I was still a religious person. I still had religious questions. Even though I didn't accept any of the answers I had given myself in adolescence, I was still interested in religious questions. I was still in this business for ultimate meaning, not just for Jewish cultural education. Glatzer was helpful because Glatzer got me to read Buber and Rosensweig, of course. My senior year, somebody — either Altmann or Zalman, more likely Zalman, maybe Altmann — gave me an essay by Hillel Zeitlin. Hillel Zeitlin was a neo-hasidic thinker, died in the Warsaw Ghetto, or on the way to Treblinka, and Zeitlin had written an essay called “*Yesodot ha-Hasidut*,” “The Fundamentals of Hasidism.” I read that essay in Hebrew and I fell in love. I said, “This will be my religious language the rest of my life. This is a Judaism that is not about guilt (00:27:00) and is not about how much you observe and not about worrying did you turn the light on on Shabbos or did you carry a handkerchief in your pocket. This is a Judaism that's about very profound ideas and spiritual quest and this will be my religious language.” I said. I promised myself I would translate that essay into English and I would spend my life studying this stuff. And that was it. That was it. I knew what I wanted to do with my life. I graduated Brandeis in

spring of '61 and I went to Israel for a year to study with Scholem. I would just sit in on Scholem's lectures and took a *targila Zohar*, readings course on *Zohar* with one of Scholem's students, Rivka Schatz. And that's what I wanted to do with my life. That was pretty much set by then. I was already starting to read Hasidut, I think, my copy of "*Sefer Baal Shem Tov*," Baal Shem Tov's teachings, says 1960 next to my name in it. *Taf Resh Kaf* in Hebrew, so I know I was already reading that stuff my senior year in college. (00:28:00) So that was it; that sort of made the decision for me.

JG: What about the American counterculture and what was going on in the larger world; what kind of an impact and interaction, if any, did you have with that?

AG: First of all, let me say something about, going back to Dad. Dad was an American liberal, an American Leftist, Socialist leanings, but essentially an American liberal, and I was raised in that kind of liberal, internationalist household. He subscribed to *The Nation*. We sort of talked about ideas all the time. Dad wanted to talk about ideas, he wanted to raise his son to be a liberal intellectual, and that was part of my upbringing. And it never left me. (00:29:00) Brandeis junior/senior year I participated in the Civil Rights pickets. We picketed Woolworth's in Roxbury to try to convince African-Americans in Roxbury to picket Woolworth's because they were discriminating at lunch counters in the South. That was sort of taken for granted, that you were part of this liberal, leftist-leaning way of thought. Max Lerner was teaching at Brandeis and Irving Howe and all these people represented that political culture, and I felt myself a part of that political culture. There was no sense at all that my Judaism was in conflict with that. My Judaism was sort of liberal Judaism. Israel was very progressive and there was no conflict about that at all. Glatzer and Altmann didn't talk about those things, whether they shared those politics I don't know, but I certainly did. By the time I was a rabbinical student at JTS —

JG: In the mid-sixties?

AG: (00:30:00) I was at JTS from 1962-1967, the Vietnam War was becoming a big issue. And then things began to change, we were moving in that leftist direction. I was certainly against the war very early but my culture hero, Heschel, was against the war too. Heschel was the co-head of the Clergy Concerned About Vietnam (CALCAV). So we — I, I should say — some of us students were leftist and we were with Heschel. Outraged that most of the faculty thought Heschel should shut up, because if we opposed the war, what will Nixon do Israel? Dot dot dot. And so Jews are not in a position to protest, and I was outraged by that. I remember my fourth year at the seminary, I had a certain Talmud professor who would say things, make comments about the war and about the *shvartzes* and about things like that, racist comments. And I said if I heard those things (00:31:00) from my kosher butcher I'd have to put up with them, but I will not listen to them from my Talmud teacher and I started cutting his classes regularly because I just couldn't stand listening to his political opinions. So by the mid-sixties, I was

becoming somewhat more radicalized, I would say. Certainly thinking again, Heschel was a fine example, that that was the Jewish thing to do. Of course, if you were Jewish, you should be on the left. That was just taken for granted.

JG: But it was rare, as you said.

AG: He was rare but that was all of a piece for me, I would to say. And that's important — when we get to the *havurah*, that was all of a piece for me. That is to say, being counterculture to American bourgeois values. American bourgeois values were something we looked down on. Going back to Brandeis already, going back to Brandeis — 1961 we weren't hippies yet. We were still beatniks. These were the girls wearing long black stockings (00:32:00) and the boys with the torn jeans. This was a sort of beat identity. And yes, we looked down on American bourgeois values, including the American synagogue, which was this bourgeois place. The ladies with the mink coats and the rich guys who would show up once a year — that was what the American synagogue was, and that was hypocrisy. Bourgeois values. Anti-personal liberation. Personal liberation meant discovering who you were; that might mean sexual exploration, or that might just mean reading kinds of unconventional things. I like to say that I walked into JTS with, in one pocket of my jeans, a copy of Allen Ginsberg's "Howl;" in the other pocket a copy of *Kedushat Levi*. And both were equally unwelcome at the seminary. Yes, I was reading Ginsberg already by my senior year in college, (00:33:00) I think, or whenever "Howl" and *Kaddish* first came out, so I sort of saw myself as part of that world of protest against the shallowness of American life and American culture and American Judaism. Again, Heschel agreed with all of that condemnation, of American, particularly of American Judaism, so I was looking for something more profound as an alternative. That profundity for me came spiritually out of Hasidism but also out of people like Alan Watts and others who were already writing about the new journey to the East, spirituality. We had all read Herman Hesse, of course, as sophomores in college and then had moved towards Doctor Suzuki and studying and reading about Zen Buddhism and reading Alan Watts, the discovery of Indian spirituality and so on. And that went along with a political condemnation of the shallowness of American bourgeois (00:34:00) culture and values — and that those bourgeois values, people were also supporting a disgusting war in Vietnam, which was clearly destroying a relatively innocent people who were seeking their own liberation. That was pretty clear to us. By the late sixties it was becoming pretty awful. That political culture was interrupted, I should say, by another political cause of around 1965 and that was discovering the cause of Soviet Jewry. While I was a rabbinical student at JTS, I became one of the early leaders of something called SSSJ, Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry. I discovered a fellow named Jacob Birnbaum at Yeshiva University who was the founder of it, and I was one of the first people along with Hillel Levine and a couple of others to try to bring it out of the Orthodox ghetto. Heschel was very encouraging about that; Heschel, too, felt Soviet

Jewry was a cause we needed to take up. And young Elie Wiesel, (00:35:00) whom I'd originally met through Zalman. The same day Zalman introduced me to Kathy, he introduced me to Elie Wiesel; that was summer of 1964. And, so, Heschel and Wiesel were very encouraging of our activism for Soviet Jewry and that became an important cause in my life for two or three years. I didn't abandon that cause, but I became somewhat disillusioned with that cause when I discovered that a lot of the young people around me that were organizing the rallies that I was going to for Soviet Jewry were also supporters of Meir Kahane and represented this lower middleclass, New York Jewish population who were struggling against something other than just the Soviet Jewry cause; they were struggling against the Left. They were going to wind up Rudy Giuliani supporters. And so I sort of sniffed that (00:36:00) by 1967-68, I became a little bit disillusioned with the kinds of bedfellows I had in the Soviet Jewry cause. I was often disillusioned; I was often suspicious of bedfellows. In the Soviet Jewry cause I became suspicious of bedfellows on the right and sort of pulled back from that cause because, of course, by 1968 or '69 all the federations and Jewish establishments had taken up Soviet Jewry and they didn't need people like me anymore. But a few years later I was going to early meetings of Breira. I was very attracted after the crisis of '67. By '69, I was clearly outraged by the settlement movement in the West Bank and by the messianic Jewish triumphalism you were beginning to hear. And Breira was organized and I started going to Breira meetings. My friend Max Ticktin was a founder of Breira and others. But then Breira was, it turns out, (00:37:00) a coalition of people like ourselves who loved Israel but were very concerned about its moral course, and Jewish old Lefties. Leftovers from my father's Communist relatives who had always hated Israel, and were using the old-time Bundist, old-time Jewish Communists, who were using the new Israeli aggression or settlement building as a way of denouncing Israel which they'd never liked. And I was very uncomfortable being in bed with those people. So I stayed on the edge of Breira and did not get very involved. So in both directions I was nervous about what kinds of political allies do you make. I constantly argue with one of our graduates of the rabbinical school I now run who works for Jewish Voice for Peace, and I say, "What kinds of bedfellows do you have? Who are you in bed with? Who are you planning rallies with? If you're planning rallies together with (00:38:00) Hamas supporters, I can't have anything to do with you." You know, sort of asking that question of who else is, who else is your next-door neighbor at that rally you're part of? So I've been asking that question for along time.

JG: Can you talk a little about the development of your relationship with Heschel, which became so important for you while you were at JTS and part of the impetus for your starting Havurat Shalom.

GS: Heschel. So as I said, I read Heschel when I was fifteen years old. It was wonderful; it was brilliant. I got to JTS in 1962. I was very much a sort of counterculture type by

then, you might say. Saw myself as a very independent learner. It was an awful place; they were taking attendance in classes. Nobody did that to me since junior high school. There was so much that was offensive about the way students were put down and treated badly. I was a pretty successful student (00:39:00) but others in my class weren't and I could see them being harmed in many ways at that institution. The details are not important for us. I was ready to walk out after one year. And my Talmud teacher, Seymour Siegel, toward whom I had somewhat feelings, said to me, "If you had a private program with Abraham Heschel would you stay?" And I said, "Yes!" and he arranged for me to be Heschel's private student, which meant I was exempt from all my practical rabbinics courses, the homiletics and so on. And I studied privately with Heschel, meeting with him I think bi-weekly, if I remember right. And also I was in a little seminar with Heschel and several other students. So I became Heschel's student for four years; that was a great privilege. I did not go along with everything Heschel said, by then I had rebelled against religion, so I had rebelled against Heschel too and thought sometimes Heschel was just lost in his own beautiful language and pretty words (00:40:00) and there wasn't really any substance behind it. I was questioning of Heschel. But it was a great privilege to study with him. I'll tell you about the last conversation I had with Heschel, several years after I graduated. He died in '72 so this must've been 1971. I said, "Professor Heschel, it never quite worked with us, did it? When I needed a rebbe you wanted to be a professor. When I wanted a professor, you needed to be a rebbe." So Heschel asked me to — Heschel gave me a huge assignment, it was a wonderful assignment. I'm eternally grateful for that assignment to read a certain Kabbalistic volume in Hebrew and to write a paper about it. And I wrote him a 100-page paper in Hebrew and I don't think he ever read it. And I would say, "Professor Heschel, have you read my paper yet? Do you have any comments on my work on Ibn Gabbai?" And he would say, "Arthur, how are you?" in this ultimate, existential way. And then I would say, (00:41:00) "Professor Heschel, I'm having trouble. I just don't know if I believe in prayer. Prayer is so hard for me." And he would say, "Have you read Maimonides part two, chapter twenty-one?" You know, it was sort of this back and forth game. Some people wanted to be Heschel's disciple. I was afraid of giving myself to a rebbe. I had two great candidates who wanted to be my rebbe: Heschel and Zalman, and I never let myself be a disciple of either one of them. I was just too afraid of discipleship, too afraid of giving myself over to anybody. Maybe a shrink would say this had something to do with my father, who was authoritarian, and once I had rebelled I needed to be away from authority figures. But whatever it was, I just could not give myself entirely. Nevertheless, I'm very grateful for having had the opportunity for to study with Heschel. I've been teaching Heschel for the last fifty years. I've been having ongoing conversations with Heschel, unfortunately one-sided, for the last fifty years. (00:42:00) If you look at the footnotes to my book, *Radical Judaism*, and especially to the footnotes to the new Hebrew addition which I just sent the final version of off to the publisher

yesterday, you'll see I'm still arguing with Heschel, still learning from Heschel. So he's been very important even though my theology diverges from him in some ways. The combination of deep spirituality and activism and the fact that spirituality calls for an active life and so on; that's right out of Heschel.

JG: So, why don't we get to the seminar that you took with him in your studies at JTS?

AG: So you've read the story, yes?

JG: I did, but I want you to tell it.

AG: So, there were about six of us in Heschel's seminar that met in his office, which was a very smoke-filled room. Heschel smoked big cigars; we called them "Heschel Specials." And the room was full of cigar smoke. He was not a very good pedagogue; he was a wonderful figure to be with. (00:43:00) We walk into his seminar one evening, the six of us. And there's this fellow sitting in a turtleneck shirt and we've never seen him before. And Heschel says, "I want you all to meet my friend, Dan Berrigan." Dan and Heschel were co-chairs of something called Clergy Concerned About Vietnam, which was the religious opposition to the Vietnam War. We had all known the name Dan Berrigan; I knew the name Dan Berrigan by then. And Heschel said "Father Berrigan is here this evening to convince me to go to jail with him." They were about to pour blood on draft files or something like that and get arrested for it. "And your assignment this evening is to decide whether I should go to prison or not." Well, Heschel had already had his first heart attack; he looked ancient even though he was only about sixty, or early sixties, and we were all very protective of him. Of course immediately the Emerson-Thoreau conversation — in here, out there — was in the background; we were talking about that. And we were convincing Heschel that he could do more for the cause "out here" rather than "in there." (00:44:00) I'm not sure if we were right or not. But that was the assignment. And then after that Heschel turns to Berrigan and says, "So tell us what's going on in the Catholic church." And then Berrigan gave us a very 1966 version, just immediately post-Vatican II or in the midst of Vatican II, of the great changes happening in the church: The Catholic Worker Movement and Dorothy Day. And the great parishes are going to have to break up because there are no priests for them, so the Catholic Church will have to give way and allow for non-celibate monasticism. And these new monastic communities will become the kernel of a renewed church. And the church will be reborn out of these communities. And it was all very active, it would be workers communities — it was all very exciting to me. I am still excited by that vision. I want you to know; this morning at five o'clock in the morning today, I was writing to my students Ebn and Ariel, something that comes directly out of that vision, because we're talking about creating such communities yet again, in 2016. (00:45:00) So that's how formative this all was for me and remains to me. And Berrigan then turns and says, "So tell me what's happening in the Jewish community." And I was immediately struck by this great

embarrassment: Nothing is happening in the Jewish community! The Jewish community is dull, self-satisfied, still living in the “edifice complex” of building these great suburban synagogues that are empty and spiritually vacuous. And the Jewish community is identified with upper middle-class culture, and pushy, get-ahead, addicted to the great drug of American Jewish life, which is the drug of success and high-status achievement. And that’s what’s happening. I don’t think I made that speech, but that’s what I felt was happening in the Jewish community. I had enough self-respect not to say that out loud to Berrigan, probably. And I just said to myself, as I came out of that evening somewhat zonked, I said, I’m going to do something different. (00:46:00) I’m going to start a different kind of Jewish community. There has to be a different kind of Jewish community for people of our generation that will have different values, that will be a kind of like this, like this, non-celibate monasticism that he’s talking about. Now, by then, I had already read an essay by Zalman Schachter called “Toward an Order of B’nai Or,” published in *Judaism Magazine* in 1964, where Zalman talked about wanting to create a Jewish monastic, non-celibate order. Zalman, by that time, had broken with Chabad, was seeking a new Jewish identity, a lot of details should be filled in there. But Zalman wrote an essay on a new Jewish religious order that he would like to create. It was to be called B’nai Or. (00:47:00) We would live more or less communally. We would work eight hours a day at spiritual life, at prayer and devotion, and spiritual creativity. And he began talking about this and he began going from place to place. When he came to New York he would tell us about various people who wanted to be part of this spiritual community. And he would talk about Brother Joe in Minneapolis and Sister Kreindel in Chicago and Sister Dvorah in Chicago. This is Sister Kreindel; she’s sitting next to me. We met, Zalman introduced us in 1964 in the context of two people who would like to be part of this spiritual community, this Jewish monastic community that he would like to create.

JG: So you had been in contact with him over that period as well?

AG: Yes. I could tell you more about that if you want to know. Yes. As I said, Yitz brought him when I was a freshman in college. When I was a senior in college and I was president of Hillel, I brought Zalman (00:48:00) back for a weekend at Hillel. I hated him: I thought he was a phony. At the end of a long weekend I sort of parted with him in despair. And he said to me as I tried to pour out my soul to him, “‘The *Ribono shel Olam*’ is playing with your *neshamah* like a yoyo.” And something in the back of my mind said, Fuck you, if that’s all you have to say. And I walked away from him very hurt and disappointed. Two years later, three years later, I met him at the cafeteria at JTS when he was visiting my dear classmate, Neil Rose, who became a lifelong friend. And I said, “Zalman Schachter, I’ve hated your guts for two years for telling me God is playing with my soul like a yo-yo. What are you going to do about it?” And that was the beginning of our real relationship. And we became friends. It was immediately set up so that he was not to become my rebbe. (00:49:00) It began with a challenge to him. And then we began

a series of conversations that have never ended. And Zalman is very important to me. And a year after that conversation, I guess, he introduced me to Kathy, and introduced me to B'nai Or. Neil Rose and I were both interested in joining that community he was talking about; Neil and Carol were married then. And Kathy and I were introduced in that context. And there were several other people who were interested in this community — apparently or maybe — at least in Zalman's fantasy were interested in this community. So that was in the background. So when I heard Dan Berrigan, there was some echo of a Zalman conversation in the background there already, yes. When I graduated JTS in 1967, Zalman was interested in creating that community in Winnipeg, where he lived. I was not interested in going to Winnipeg. There was one job in Winnipeg as Zalman's assistant at the university. Neal Rose took that job and lived in Winnipeg for the next thirty or forty years. Kathy and I instead moved to Boston, (00:50:00) but the background of both Zalman's vision of B'nai Or and the conversation with Dan Berrigan were somewhere planted in my head by the time I moved to Boston in the summer of 1967.

JG: And what were you coming to Boston for at that point that was strong enough to pull you away from —?

AG: I wanted to get a doctorate. Remember, JTS had really been a preparation for doctoral work in Jewish mysticism. That's what I wanted to do. There was some thought of going back to Israel or staying in Israel and getting a doctorate there. Everyone said, "Scholem hates Americans and treats his students miserably. So Alexander Altmann might teach you at Brandeis." He was offering a doctorate in Jewish mysticism at Brandeis. And I went back to Brandeis to study with Altmann. Here's a scene I'd like to share with you: maybe January or February 1968. I'm sitting in the Brandeis cafeteria with two other first year doctoral students, (00:51:00) Michael Fishbane and Paul Mendes-Flohr. The three of us sitting there having coffee in the Castle cafeteria. I look up and there's a kid I had known as an undergraduate who was suddenly walking into the Castle cafeteria, but what was he doing there? So I get up and say, "Abbie Hoffman, what are you doing here?" And Abbie says to me, "Well, we're looking for some people to cut up next summer at the Democratic Convention, 1968 convention. Do you want to come join us?" And I looked around, and I shared Abbie's attitude towards things happening politically and towards the war and so on, and I looked back at Buzzy and Paul and said, "I just started graduate school. I think I'll stay here and not do that." It just felt like a moment to me, you know, but I could've gone with Abbie Hoffman, I had known Abbie fairly well; we weren't close, but I had known Abbie fairly well; we had a lot of friends in common in that world of the Brandeis counterculture by 1968, very anti-war people. But I had just started the doctoral program. (00:52:00) So, in the middle of that year, I'd been thinking of maybe starting some different kind of synagogue, counter synagogue, counterculture Jewish something — I didn't know what it was called or what form it would take. Sometime that winter, I get a call from Alan Mintz. Alan Mintz was later a

professor of Hebrew literature at JTS. I had known him when he was a USY-er in 1960s from Worcester. I remember counseling him on whether he should run for national president of USY. Alan says to me, "How'd you like to start a yeshiva to keep your friends out of the draft?" And I said, "What do you mean?" And we talked about it for just a few minutes, the idea that a yeshiva could give draft deferments. Draft deferments were very important in 1967-68. It was before the numbers came out, anybody could be drafted, or maybe it was the year of the numbers. And I said, "That's interesting." (00:53:00) And maybe a few days later I walked into Al Axelrad's office and said, "Al, how'd you like to be *rosh yeshiva* with me?"

JG: How long had Al been there?

AG: Al had been at Brandeis since sometime during my JTS years; he had been there a year or two I would say. I said, "How'd you like to be *rosh yeshiva*?" He said, "What are you talking about?" And I said, "Well, maybe I'm thinking about starting a yeshiva that will give draft deferments and that will do some kind of Jewish learning." And I didn't know exactly what. And he liked the idea. We talked about it a little bit. He never became really involved but he liked the idea, supported me in it. And it sort of churned around in my mind; I'm sure I discussed it with Kathy at the time.

JG: You were married by then?

AG: We were married mid-May of that year; we got married in May, '68. We were both living in Boston. Nominally we were living separately. I was rooming in Cambridge with a fellow named Moonie Berenbaum, Michael Berenbaum, who is a well-known Holocaust scholar now. (00:54:00) Moonie and I were living together and Kathy was living with some female friends. This was to please Kathy's grandmother. But we were in fact all living in Cambridge. And then in May of that year we got married. But we began talking about it and I began talking to a few people about it, "What do you think about this idea of starting a Yeshiva?" So there were a few peers I talked to about it. Al was the first one. I'm sure I mentioned it to Ben Gold [see addendum] and, at some point, to Joe Lukinsky, who was the assistant rabbi at KI, Kehillath Israel, in Brookline, and had been a mentor of mine in the sixties. At some point I mentioned it to Everett Gendler though he was off at Princeton and was not in the immediate scene. No, Everett was then in Mexico, I'm sorry, not important. (00:55:00) And I began talking to a few young people, younger people who I knew who might be members of such a community. One of them was Barry Holtz whom I'd known since he was 13 through connections related to USY and so on. One of them was — there was this — I had to take elementary Latin because Altmann, "If you're going to be Medievalist you have to know Medieval Latin and Medieval Arabic." So I was in Latin class. There was this redheaded kid sitting next to me in Latin class named Michael Brooks. He was an undergraduate and I was a first-year graduate student and I talked to him about it and he sounded interested.

JG: What kind of people were you looking for, do you think? Or sounding out?

AG: People with strong Jewish interest, bright people, strong Jewish interest, wanting to learn. For me, this was immediately about Jewish learning. It wasn't — the draft deferment was an excuse, a way to get people to do this. (00:56:00) Why would people take a year, or take a couple of years to do this? Well, there was getting them out of the draft. But I was interested in getting people to create some kind of alternative Jewish community. I didn't know exactly what.

JG: Did you take the seminary seriously in the sense of —

AG: Yes, yes. Because I'd been so — wounded by the experience at JTS that the idea that there could be another way to teach this stuff, another way to train what Jewish spiritual leaders should be. I didn't know if it would be the word "rabbi." I didn't like the word rabbi much in those days, I thought it was very corrupt. I almost turned down JTS's degree because I thought the rabbinate had been so corrupted in America. Of course, I was then glad I didn't, because I couldn't have done this draft deferment thing without it. But I was really interested in creating some kind of spiritual community. (00:57:00) I guess I would've said some kind of spiritual brotherhood, not noticing the sexism of that word in those days. Some kind of spiritual brotherhood. Some kind of — definitely a community that was about learning. I was definitely looking for a different approach to Jewish learning. That year and the year after I was teaching study groups on Hasidism for Brandeis Hillel and for Harvard Hillel and getting some very interesting, bright young people in those groups. Getting them excited about studying text. That was probably a year or two later, actually, '68, '69. So, I remember talking to a few people about it and they all sort of got interested. I remember Barry must've been early in the process, maybe —

JG: Joe Reimer yesterday described you coming to New York, to Queens I think, to speak with him and his parents about it.

AG: Yes, but how did he first hear about it?

JG: I don't know if there was a Ramah connection — (00:58:00)

AG: You'll have to ask Joe how he heard about it first. So I remember Barry, I remember Michael Brooks sitting next to me in Latin class. Joe got interested very early, I don't remember how. Ben Gold said to me, "I have this young man who's a draft counselor at Harvard Hillel and I think he might be interested." His name was Jim Kugel. And I found in the Havurat Shalom files Jim Kugel's letter where he writes to me and says — You know, he wasn't yet a draft counselor at Harvard Hillel, he became a draft counselor at Hillel after that, because he writes me this letter he says, "I don't know much about Judaism. I went to an Episcopal boarding school, but I'd like to learn, and if you are

creating this community I'd be interested in joining." It's a very touching letter from Jim Kugel, maybe a senior at Yale or something like that. And then he came to Harvard Hillel and worked as a draft counselor for Ben. (00:59:00) Hillels in those days had draft counselors on staff. So we began to think about a group of people and exactly what we would do in this community. What its nature would be was not clear. We did not have the word *havurah* in our vocabulary yet. This thing, this new synagogue, this synagogue-seminary. Yes, it had to be a seminary to give deferment; you couldn't get a deferment being a synagogue. So once we're talking draft deferment, we're talking about seminary. It was counter-seminary, counterculture seminary, counter-seminary. It would be a different kind of seminary, different values. To jump ahead a year, in maybe 1969, *Judaism Magazine* wrote a symposium on rabbinic education in America. They invited representatives of the three denominational seminaries and two upstarts who had just started new seminaries. Ira Eisenstein had just founded RRC in Philadelphia and Art Green had just founded Havurat Shalom in Boston. (01:00:00) I was the junior in the group by several decades. And we were asked to talk about rabbinic education, what it should be. And I remember — it's printed in *Judaism* in '69 — I gave this Heschelian, radical self-righteous speech. The problem with the rabbis in America is they earn too much money and they share the same bourgeois values as their congregants. And the rabbinate has to be about prophecy and justice and tearing down the old fabric of society and building a new society. And that was the kind of rubric I was thinking in 1968. It was revolutionary; we used the word revolutionary about ourselves all the time, probably too casually. Did we mean politically revolutionary or spiritually revolutionary? The answer was absolutely yes. We meant both. I was probably interested more in the spiritual side than the political side but was completely open to both. (01:01:00) And so this language of creating some kind of new Jewish seminary community, community of intense learning, I meant the learning very seriously. I don't want anybody to think that the seminary was just an excuse for draft deferments, not at all. The draft deferments was a way to create — it was an opportunity to create this community I was interested in creating.

JG: Were the people that you were pulling in to this community, in fact, interested in the rabbinate in general, or were they basically just very interested Jews?

AG: Very interested Jews. Interested in Jewish learning. Liked the idea of intense learning. I would say seekers, intellectual types, seeker types. They did not especially want the rabbinical degree, no. They would be willing to be in something called a rabbinical school in order to get the deferment. They liked the idea of studying and liked the idea of engagement with community. Now, 1968: Commune is a word that people are using. (01:02:00) We're hearing about young people going to Vermont and creating communes. You drop out, you leave the world behind you and you go and create a commune in Vermont. With a lot of dope — we haven't talked about that yet — with a

lot of dope and a lot of, maybe free love, and a lot of genuine creating a new brotherhood of humanity. A new way of living, a new way of thinking about what interpersonal relations mean. That was all the sort of rhetoric of the age and we were part of it.

Theodore Rozsak, *The Making of a Counterculture* was a big book for us. But so was *The Harrad Experiment*, which was sort of sexual fantasy community around — taking place around Cambridge.

JG: What about other sort of models of community, of Eastern religion and thinking about what you were after in this —

AG: Impact of Eastern religion, a little bit. (01:03:00) The Zen monastery was sort of there. The Eastern religion we knew about by then was Zen Buddhism. We didn't know much about Indian religion then, I don't think, though we were reading Alan Watts, and he was Indian religion, sort of neo-Indian religion. By '68 or '69 Shlomo had created the House of Love and Prayer in San Francisco. More or less parallel to us. That was another piece of this Jewish counterculture vision. And the romanticized hasidic community. We were all readers of Buber's tales, and in Buber's tales the hasidic community looked like something very beautiful and very touching. The fact that it was a mostly male community was something that wasn't too much on our radar screen yet, but we certainly would welcome women to be part of it. So, all of those sort of went into a vision of what this new community was. (01:04:00) And the people who were interested in joining this group were all very excited about that vision of new community. All very excited about it being deeply Jewish and deeply intellectual and involved with study. That was fine. Rabbinat? Well, okay. It doesn't mean that they wanted to become rabbis in the sense of we thought of rabbis in synagogues. For most of us, it would've been "God forbid!" For me, too. I never could imagine myself in a congregation of rabbinat. But the learning part sounded good.

JG: In that first cohort or so, were many of the members of the first cohort also engaged in external study in other universities and with other career goals, in fact, in mind at that point?

AG: Yes, we'd have to think about them one by one and try to remember exactly when they did become involved in those extra career goals. (01:05:00) Did they come to the *havurah* and then find those other things? I don't remember. I'm not very good at remembering the details of exactly whose biography went how. Barry Holtz is terrific at that, if you're going to talk to him.

JG: I am indeed.

AG: He will remember the details of exactly who did what, in what sequence.

JG: But in your mind, as you're imagining this community, was it one that was absolutely at the center of people's lives, taking up the bulk of their time and energies, or was it —

AG: It was to be central to people's lives, but you could do something else at the same time because we knew people had to do something to help make a living. We knew we had no money. And even though we were all *luftsmenchen* and people wanting to live on the margins of society and the margins of the economic world, you still had to do something. So I was a doctoral student at Brandeis; I hadn't dropped out of my doctor program. Other people — Buzzy Fishbane was going to be with us; he wasn't going to drop out of graduate school either. And if Michael Brooks wanted to start a program in classics or whatever it was, (1:06:00) or Barry was doing his doctorate I think already, I think in English at Tufts if I remember rightly, and other people might have part time jobs, that was okay. Everybody would get a job to make some money, teaching Hebrew school or Hebrew high school or running youth groups. I was doing that to make a living. So it was assumed you would do some work. It might be assumed that you would do some other study. When we created Havurat Shalom, I think — to be a full-time member of the *havurah*, if I remember rightly, you had to take three courses. And those three courses would meet for three-hour, hour and a half sessions during the week. It would also be assumed that you would come to a communal meal once a week and a community meeting once a week. And we would do some form of Shabbat together. That's what it required. But the rest of your time, you could be and probably would be doing something else and that was okay.

JG: Right. I wanted to ask you about just some more details about how you went about getting this idea off the ground, (01:07:00) since in many ways you're the one, you're the source.

AG: Let me say a word about the name Havurat Shalom. We were not yet thinking *havurot*. The word *havurah* was not in our vocabulary. After the fact, after we became well known, two claimants came along and said, "Oh, yes, you took it from us." The Reconstructionists, it turns out, were using the word *havurah* in the 1960s. I was quite unaware of that. And Jack Neusner, who had written a book called *Fellowship in Judaism* had talked about the *havurah* in first century Judaism, and he said, "You took it from me." And as far as I remember, neither of those is true. Being interested in this ongoing issue of communal efforts at intentional community in Jewish history, counter-communities and so on, I came across a group that existed in eighteenth century Jerusalem called Ahavat Shalom. (01:08:00) Ahavat Shalom was a brotherhood of Kabbalists who lived in Jerusalem, disciples of Rabbi Shalom Sharabi in eighteenth century Jerusalem. And they wrote a document, a kind of covenant among themselves, about how they would share their lives. It was very beautiful and I found it that year. And it made a big impression on me, Ahavat Shalom. And I remember once, Kathy and I were traveling to New York — this is now in the spring of '68 — and we stopped in New

Haven on the way back to visit Dick and Sherry Israel who were our friends. Dick was the Hillel director at Yale. And I told Dick about this idea, this new community we wanted to create. And he said, “What are you thinking of calling it?” And I said, “The name that’s in our mind now is Kehilat Kodesh.” And Dick said, “That’s the most pretentious thing I’ve ever heard in my life.” And so it couldn’t be called Kehilat Kodesh. (01:09:00) And then somehow in my mind Ahavat Shalom morphized to Havurat Shalom. And Havurat Shalom was really named after this Ahavat Shalom community in eighteenth century Jerusalem. And how that happened, Ahavat Shalom, Havurat Shalom, it just sort of clicked in my mind. I don’t think any other *havurot* were in the background, but it could be. So we had this idea, Havurat Shalom Community Seminary, that’s what we were going to call it — we were both a community and seminary. And both of those, those two pillars, we are creating a new kind of community and we are creating a new kind of seminary. It’s about living, it’s about learning, it’s about the love for one another and the fellowship we’re going to create among ourselves. And the learning will be part of that and will direct that and shape that. All of that was our rhetoric. So in that spring of 1968 I start looking for people. As I said, Michael Brooks was there in Latin class, Barry Holtz was an old friend. Arnie Cover was a friend of Barry’s who had also been my camper when he was 12 years old. Michael Brooks had this friend, (01:10:00) Steven Zweibaum whom he’d been to Israel with who was a senior at Colby. Jim Kugel wrote to us. Joe Reimer discovered us. I’m trying to think — there are six or seven more people I’m not thinking of right now. A couple of people contacted us and we said, “No, he’s really in it for the deferment.” And we said no to them. There was a fellow named —

JG: How would you know?

AG: You could just tell. We interviewed, of course. I interviewed — once there were a couple of people who were confirmed members, they interviewed with me. So Joe — you have to ask them again, but I think Joe or Michael, I think, or Barry would’ve been interviewing others already for that first group. And when we sensed that it was really about the deferment, and nothing much else. There was a guy named Steve Cohen who reintroduced himself to me many years later in Washington. I knew he’s the fourth or fifth Steve Cohen, you know, me too. He’s a scientist in Washington. He said, “I interviewed and was rejected by Havurat Shalom.” He left Havurat Shalom immediately (01:11:00) and we could tell it wasn’t the right match (1:11:05). There were a couple of other people like that. There were a couple of wonderful people whom we accepted and then dropped out: Jim Sleeper, a later well-known social critic at Yale. Danny Pekarsky, a well-known educator. Too many personal complications for both of them. Danny Pekarsky, who was the son of Maurice Pekarsky, had lost his father, a great Jewish educator, and could not handle the Jewish intensity. For Jim Sleeper, I think we were too narrowly Jewish and he was really more on the revolutionary side and less on the Jewish

side. And he dropped out very quickly. But we began putting together a pretty remarkable group of people.

JG: Sounds like it was through networks, at the beginning at least.

AG: Networks, yes, personal networks. I think we advertised in one or two places. I don't remember. Maybe in the student Jewish newspaper or something. I'm not sure about that.

JG: Where there any written documents or a prospectus?

AG: Oh yes, I have them. I have some upstairs (01:12:00) and some more in the Havurat Shalom files. Yes, there's a whole series of documents. I have a document where I say to the prospective *haverim*, Kathy and I are getting married on May eighteenth. Will you all come to our *aufruf* at the Tremont Street Shul the week before? And I just rediscovered that and various other kinds of things, sort of draft documents and sending out several drafts. Once other people were — I was already self-conscious about being the founder and is this *my* thing, is this *our* thing? How do I make it *our* thing and not *my* thing? My ambivalence about leadership began very early, and so I tried to get other people involved in the process. So sending out drafts to people and asking them to comment and so on — I have several of those early versions in my files.

JG: That was all happening in the first —

AG: It was all happening between, let's say, between March and September of '68. (01:13:00) And September is when we actually began. We opened our doors in September.

JG: I wanted to ask you to talk a little bit about the recruitment of faculty and what your thinking was about who were the teachers that you were recruiting for this?

AG: Well, we knew immediately that it was going to be a different kind of learning than you did in graduate school. It was going to be serious —

JG: Graduate or rabbinical school, let's say.

AG: Or rabbinical school. It was going to be serious, but it was also going to be personal and engaging. That was the point. That your relationship to the text was important and could be talked about honestly and openly, even your unhappiness with the text. But you were going to learn to read the text in the original, and you were going to learn to read the text well and critically. But you were also going to be — this was going to be a personal engagement. Now, was Glatzer's influence, the memory of Rosensweig's *Lehrhaus* in the background? Very possibly. A few years ago I called my old friend Max Ticktin (01:14:00) and I asked him, "Who was the first person to use that word *lehrhaus* in the Hillel world for an alternative Jewish course of study?" We didn't know if it originated at

Brandeis, which would be very interesting, because of Glatzer, if it originated at Brandeis, or with Pekarsky in Chicago, or with Ben [Gold] at Harvard, but several campuses were talking about the “Lehrhaus of Jewish studies at Hillel.” And that meant, *lehrhaus* meant, intense study, but more personal, spiritual seeking, theologically open kind of study. The kinds of question you didn’t ask in a university classroom and you didn’t even ask in the JTS classroom. About what this means to me, and what the implications of this might be for contemporary Judaism. And the creation of a contemporary Judaism was on our minds. Let me go back a little bit to Heschel. When I was a rabbinical student, one of Heschel’s former students, Richard Rubenstein, published a book called *After Auschwitz*, (1:15:00) which was a devastating critique of theology, saying openly: After Auschwitz, we can no longer believe in the God of history. The God of history is dead. God is dead theology. What’s called radical theology was being talked about in Protestant circles in the late 1960s. And Richard Rubenstein was the spokesman for Jewish “Death of God” theology. You asked Heschel what he thought about it? “You may not mention Richard Rubenstein’s name in my presence. *Hu talmid she-sarah*. He’s a disciple of mine who went bad,” he said, “God is dead — that is blasphemy. You may not mention his name in my presence.” End of conversation with Heschel about Rubenstein. And Heschel was a Holocaust survivor, for God’s sake; his mother and two sisters died in the Warsaw Ghetto. He spent the last years of his life tormented about the Kotzker rebbe, and the Kotzker rebbe was his way of dealing with the Holocaust. But to say out loud “God is dead,” that’s blasphemy. (01:16:00) But we had all read Richard Rubenstein, and Joe Reimer was very excited about Rubenstein and Eddie Feld was excited about Rubenstein, so he dared to say the taboo things. So at Havurat Shalom you could say the taboo things; it would be all right to say the taboo things. And to raise the tough theological questions that even Heschel wouldn’t let you raise. So, it was going to be a new kind of Jewish learning. Deep, engaged, textual, but also humanizing. At some point in this process, we began talking with the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge, and the university has gone too far into the Tree of Knowledge, has abandoned the Tree of Life, and we have to reconnect the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge. I had all kinds of fancy poetic metaphors for it. But it meant a new kind of learning and a new kind of spiritually vibrant learning. And I knew who could teach that way: (01:17:00) Michael Fishbane — my dear friend Buzzy, fellow graduate student — could teach Bible that way. He was that kind of person. And Everett Gendler, who had been a mentor of mine years earlier, when we both were rabbis at USY encampments back in the early sixties. Everett had just come back from a couple of years in Mexico and had settled at a place called Packard Manse, a Quaker retreat house outside Boston, and he heard about this *havurah* idea and was thrilled with it and volunteered to teach in it. And Joe Lukinsky, who was a very progressive educator at KI [Kehillath Israel], also a little different type spiritually, not so much neo-hasidic, but definitely ethically very aware and ethically very open and cared about the tough issues.

He could teach in it. So it was clear I was going to recruit them pretty carefully. There were a couple of guys who had graduated seminary a year after me. I graduated in '67, they were just graduating seminary. One was Eddie Feld — Edward Feld — he came and joined us. There was David Goodblatt, the Talmudist; they were two of my good friends at JTS. (1:18:00) Yet another, maybe the following year, I'm not sure, was Hillel Levine. These were all people who graduated JTS and shared my values. And we were all people who were interested in doing this kind of teaching. So it was very much my own personal networks that created the original teaching group at Havurat Shalom. And, of course, we insisted — we were an egalitarian community. Egalitarian did not mean anything about gender in those days. Egalitarian meant that teachers and students were all equals. We would not take money for teaching because money corrupts, salaries corrupt. And so everybody who was going to be a member of Havurat Shalom would put in 500 dollars a year to support the *havurah*. And it didn't make any difference if you were a student or a teacher, you put in the same \$500. So Buzzy put it in, and I put it in, and Joe Reimer had to put it in. That's how the original community had its original budget. Everett was a teaching member. Did he also put in \$500? Maybe, I'm not sure, (01:19:00) but we were all equals. Now that was important because the question came up, does a teacher have any kind of authority? Can a teacher give you an assignment which he expects you to do and you have to do it, if you're all equals? So there was a confrontation between Buzzy and Steve Zweibaum. Steve Zweibaum was one of the more counterculture types in our group. He said, "I like to groove on teachings when I lie on the floor with my eyes closed." It drove Buzzy crazy. Buzzy was a very disciplined academic, and could Steve be in his class lying on the floor with his eyes closed while Buzzy talked? And I think in the end, we said yes. We couldn't say no to Steve because that was his style of learning. But Buzzy was, I remember, offended by it or put out by it, because was this really going to be serious if you could do that instead of taking notes — lie on the floor with your eyes closed? I remember that discussion about the nature of student-teacher relations. (01:20:00) But, so, it was a network of, an extended network of friends. Barry was also married that year, married the same year to Janet — you've probably heard about Janet. She was very close to Kathy. And Janet was also a very seriously spiritual person and good Hebrew background and so on. Hebrew Teacher's College and was interested in learning. She was one of the few women who really came in as a member of *havurah*. Barry and Janet both came in as members; Kathy and I both considered ourselves as members, though I don't think we paid double. I think we paid the same for a family membership as an individual membership. But Janet and Kathy were both learners in the *havurah* from the beginning, fully part of it. There was also another women who came singly in that initial group whose name was Debbie Wolin. Debbie Wolin came in as the only single woman in the original group. (01:21:00) She dropped out after a year or two, then became a Christian Scientist. Died very young. But she was a part of the group. The others, people like Gail [Reimer] and Bella Savran came in more or less as girlfriends and

Art Green, 08/06/16

then wives or people who were involved. They became socially involved in the group but were not initially conceived of as full members of the *havurah*. So it was mostly men, but not completely. Janet and Kathy certainly were completely taken as members of the group.

JG: So I want to delve in to some of the aspects of the life of the community as it got going. But before that, I wanted to ask you, do you have memories of the very, very beginning? What was the very first thing that happened when the doors opened on Franklin Street in Cambridge? (01:22:00)

AG: I'm sorry, I have no such memories.

JG: No memories of the first meeting, the first meal?

AG: I remember renting the house and it was a duplex and Kathy and I lived on one side of the duplex and we paid that rent. And on the other side of the duplex, the *havurah* rooms were downstairs, were the first floor. And upstairs there were three bedrooms, and three single guys paid rent for those bedrooms, and that's how the *havurah* supported its side of the rent for the duplex. The duplex, the doors between the two sides of the duplex were usually open. And Kathy remembers going into our bedroom and finding a meeting going on in our bedroom without anybody having told her, and things like that. It was all very, very communal living. And Kathy and I were sort of at the center of that. And the three guys living upstairs were Steve Zweibaum, Arnie Kover, and I don't remember who else. (01:23:00) And other people all lived in the area nearby in Cambridge. From the beginning, the idea was you had to live within walking distance of the *havurah*. It was not so much about not driving on Shabbat. It was that your home had to be open to members of the *havurah*. People had to be able to drop in on one another. I think most of us had been in Israel for a year, many of us had been in Israel for a year, and we were very impressed with Jerusalem Shabbat culture, where people just dropped in on each other. Now in those days, not many people had private phones in Israel; you didn't phone in advance. Shabbos afternoon, Jerusalem was divided between the visited and the visitors. And you just sort of walked in on people. They would expect you. And we loved that, and that ideal was you could walk in to one another's homes, you could feel yourselves always welcome in each other's homes. That was very important. So we lived within a radius nearby. It was very important to us. (01:24:00)

AG: you asked me about initial events at Havurat Shalom.

JG: If you remember any

AG: I don't remember an initial event. I do remember our first retreat, our first Shabbat retreat. And the memory there is that we had given out assignments: someone was leading *davening*, someone was leading kiddush, and somebody was leading some kind

of *brachah* after the meal. And Debbie Wolland was in charge of kiddush. And Debbie Wolland had no idea what kiddush was. You could stand kiddush on its head and she wouldn't know it from anything. She gets up and for kiddush she reads a little poem she had written for the occasion, something about "I am an egg, I am a potato," I remember. And she sits down and that was kiddush. And she held up the glass while doing it, and that was kiddush. And Joe Lukinsky was there. He didn't usually come to *havurah* events but he came to that one. It was, I think, the very first retreat. (01:25:00) And he gets up and says, "Does anybody mind if I make kiddush for my family?" And we were very relieved. Because we couldn't do it because that would be non-equal somehow, we would be telling Debbie that her egg and potato poem was not a legitimate form of kiddush. But Joe, who was sort of on the border, he was a guest, he was teaching but not really a member of the *havurah*, he wasn't part of this egalitarian ethos. He could sort of — from the side — say, "I want to make kiddush for my family." And people like Barry Holtz and myself and Joe and others were very relieved that someone was really going to make kiddush. And that was a moment in sort of, the liturgical history of the *havurah*, where we realized that we didn't want to do "anything goes." It was one of several such moments. But I remember it as the very first retreat.

JG: So we'll come back to that. I want to sort of just dive in a little bit more into the (01:26:00) ethos of community, as you were envisioning it at the moment. I wanted to ask you to describe what the *havurah*'s ideal notion of community was as you were starting, at that point?

AG: I don't think I can articulate it now, and I don't think we had quite articulated it then. We would use terms like "We will all be there for each other. We will all be fully present to one another as human beings." I think we would've said, "We will all love each other." And that meant somehow values like openness and generosity and caring for each other and listening to one another. Deep listening to one another would've been talked about. (01:27:00) Sharing values. There was talk about, "Does community happen because you're committed to community or because you do things together and that makes for community?" And the answer was both, so it was both self-articulated, you know, we are creating community. But it was also this, we have this shared project of the renewal of Judaism. And that's what binds us as a community. There was too much talk in the first couple of years about, "What do we mean about community? What is nature of community?" And eventually we used to parody ourselves, and laugh, "Another *havurah* meeting about the nature of community?" And you will see in the second year we began to have difficulties around that. There were many programs, projects, "Let's talk about the nature of community." And we beat it to death. But I don't know if we had a good definition at the very beginning.

Art Green, 08/06/16

JG: I read in a paper by Meredith Woocher (01:28:00). Are you familiar with her paper of the ideological beginnings, the context in which the first three *havurot* arose? It was written at Brandeis.

AG: No, I didn't know, but I spoke to Jonathan Sarna about, "Don't you have a graduate student who would like to do a history of Havurat Shalom?" And he wanted Meredith Woocher to do it and I don't think she ever contacted me, so I didn't know she actually ever did anything about it.

JG: It's a paper, it doesn't look like a graduate thesis, it's not long enough, maybe one hundred pages, sixty to one hundred pages, something like that. But in that, she mentioned a Havurat Shalom covenant.

AG: Yes, there was a covenant.

JG: Can you talk about that? It sounds to me like it might've been in some sense inspired by the eighteenth century Ahavat Shalom.

AG: Yes, it probably was. But I'm sorry — my memory isn't good enough. Was that the *l'hatchila* covenant? (01:29:00) Is it something we set out to do at the very beginning, or was that an attempt to resolve some early conflict? I don't think so. I think it was early. I think it was quite early.

JG: Early, I think it was an articulation of ideals.

AG: Yes! I just discovered it upstairs, I have it upstairs. And I was showing it to my student Ariel a month or so ago. We were going through that file, and I said, "Oh, here's the covenant."

JG: Just to jog your memory: what she says about it is that it was not something that anybody needed to sign onto. It was an expression of ideals and the idea was for people to post it in their homes or where they would be able to see it. But it was a sort of voluntary commitment, but it was a statement of what the ideals of the community were.

AG: Sounds right. Sounds like that would've fit us. We wouldn't have forced anybody to sign anything, but the voluntary — voluntary, consensual was the way we operated. (01:30:00)

JG: I wanted to ask you to talk a little bit about the kinds of ways that the community came together on a regular basis — that was part of the creation of the community. You mentioned several things over the course of our conversation already but in terms of traditional and ritual ways in which the community came together regularly: Shabbat, *chagim*, other kinds of things like that. Can you sort of talk about that?

AG: The typical events were: number one, classes. As I said, to be full-time and involved in *havurah*, I think you had to take three classes. And those classes would meet at various times during the week. So you came for your class. You came for a communal meal once a week. That was usually on a weeknight, not on a Shabbat. And there was also a community meeting, more or less weekly. Sometimes the meeting would follow the communal meal, but not necessarily. They could be a single, extended event (01:31:00), or they could be separate events. Those were the during-the-week commitments. You also came because you might have a job. There was a roster of jobs: cleaning the house, mowing the lawn, things like that. Taking care of the *havurah* place. So you might have to come because you had some kind of set-up job or clean-up job.

JG: And how were those assigned?

AG: Some kind of rotation roster, but I don't remember the details. On Shabbat, we had a Kabbalat Shabbat service, which was very important; it was more or less assumed that everybody who was in town would show up for Kabbalat Shabbat, and that Kabbalat Shabbat service was closed. It was only open to members of the *havurah*. And then we had Shabbat morning service that was open to the public. That was our public event — when people wanted to come feel like a part of Havurat Shalom or learn from Havurat Shalom or be with Havurat Shalom, they came to the Shabbat morning service. (01:32:00)

JG: Did you have regulars, I assume?

AG: Yes, we had regulars. Some of them local people, some of them Tufts students. Probably some Harvard students came up. I'm talking about in Somerville, closer to Tufts than to Harvard.

JG: So that was starting the second year.

AG: Yes. Two young women who were Tufts students whom I became very close to: one was Ruthie Pinkinson, now a well-known Jewish educator, early childhood person. And the other was Louie Elfant, later Lewie Ascher, two women from Philadelphia. Both Akiba graduates. And there were others who were regulars. Friday night, we wanted to keep closed because we wanted a more intimate *tefilah* setting for the *havurah*. That was discussed. Some people were offended by the idea that we didn't welcome everybody to come Friday night.

JG: Some people on the outside or the inside?

AG: Some people on the outside, and probably some on the inside too, thought we should open that up. But we didn't originally. (01:33:00) We did not have a communal meal Friday night because we wanted to have people invited to one another's homes. The idea

was that nobody in a *havurah* should be left alone Friday night, but there'd be a group at the Brooks' house, a group at the Greens' house, a group at somebody else's house. And that was sort of the way we did Friday night. Sometimes we'd have a retreat, either an in-town retreat or out-of-town retreat. And then that was Friday night together, and *seudah shlishit* together, and so on. But basically it was a Friday night Kabbalat Shabbat before dinner and then the Shabbat morning service, were two major Shabbat events.

JG: The *havurah* is often referred to as a Shabbat-inviting community. You and Kathy were regular inviters, clearly — everybody mentions that. Did there tend to be some people who were the inviters and some people who were the invitees? (01:34:00) How did that work?

AG: I think the couples were the inviters, generally speaking. We were more domestic types, somehow. And since I am a cook, I immediately want to say, it wasn't just the women who did the cooking. But Kathy and I — let me go back to tell you a little bit of Kathy's story. And that is, Kathy was an undergraduate at Northwestern in the mid 1960s. She came to Northwestern her sophomore year and she rather immediately went to National Hillel Institute. At National Hillel Institute she met the Ticktins and Zalman and Dick and Sherry Israel and became a sort of — very close to them. Kathy was an orphan. She lost both her parents in adolescence. So she was pretty much alone in the world. And I think the Ticktins and Zalman all discovered that and Kathy became a *bat bayit* (01:35:00) in two homes in Chicago. One was the Max-Esther Ticktin home, and the other was when Zalman talked about Sister Devorah along with Sister Kreindel. Sister Devorah turned out to be Zalman's sister. Sister Devorah, sort of Modern Orthodox, Hasidic-style and big Shabbos table always. And the Shabbos table of the Kieffers' home, Devorah and Kieffier's home, and the Shabbos table of the Ticktins' home, really became models for Kathy, I think. And for Kathy and me. And the idea, somehow, this Shabbos table was very much a center, a central part of our marriage. And the idea of having Shabbos and inviting people on Shabbos — that was the image of the home we wanted. From the very beginning. And so I think we conveyed that, for example, to Michael and Ruthie, and with Michael and Ruthie Brooks that got conveyed to people like Joe and Gail and people like Barry and Janet and people like Larry and Debbie Fine and George and Bella Savran. (01:36:00) We sort of became the couples, whether formally married or couples living together, who had Shabbos homes and Shabbos tables and wanted to invite people. The single guys tended to be the invitees, Steve Zweibaum or Arnie Cover, who were there as singles. What were these guys going to do for Shabbos? Someone was going to invite them for Shabbos. So I would say that was the pattern. That the couples invited the singles.

JG: So, can you describe what Shabbat dinner was like, as you both did it?

AG: No, I can't — I mean, it was Shabbos dinner!

JG: Well, you just talked about the model that Kathy was emulating, so what was that model? What did it consist of? (01:37:00)

AG: A lot of warmth, and a lot of good food. And singing — singing was definitely part of it, even though neither Kathy nor I could carry a tune, singing was definitely part of it. Singing “*Shalom Aleichem*” and singing *zemiros*. And in those days, did I teach at the table? Sometimes. These days I never do that, but in those days, I think there was probably some teaching at the table before *Birkat ha’Mazon*. It was just a lot of warm and good times together.

JG: Somebody described — does this ring right for you? A period of silence, almost a meditation period.

AG: We were discovering silence in those days, and liked silence. Sometimes you had a silent meal, sometimes *seudah shlishit* was a silent meal.

JG: *Seudah shlishit* would take place at the *havurah*?

AG: Sometimes, not formally. Not always, but yes, sometimes we did that as a silent meal. (01:38:00) I have to mention that during that first year at Havurat Shalom, Zalman was with us for the year. Zalman had a sabbatical from his teaching in Manitoba in 1968-69, and he came that summer. I think he came for our wedding and stayed — maybe came for our wedding in May and stayed. Moved in around the corner from us on Broadway in Somerville, with Malka. He had just gotten married to his second wife. They came along on our honeymoon, I remember, and I know that because their son was conceived on our honeymoon. Zalman — you have to understand, Zalman’s interest in monastic spirituality was probably because — and this is what I call Zalman’s Catholic period. He was going to a lot of monasteries and convents. (01:39:00) And Sister Miriam and Brother so-and-so, he was calling anybody who was interested in B’nei Or brother and sister, and he learned that from the Catholics, of course. Zalman in those years — *[laughs]*. I joke that, what did Zalman learn from me? I learned so much from Zalman, but what did Zalman learn from me? So the way that Jesuits signed their name, Robert McNamara, S.J., O.B.M., and so on, for Benedictines. He was signing his name “Zalman Schacter, B.O.” And I said to Zalman, “Maybe you better make it B.N.O and not B.O.” So, Zalman Schacter, B’nei Or. It was — silence was something he was learning from the Catholics, I think, or we were learning from Eastern spirituality and Catholic spirituality. So Michael Brooks loved long, pregnant silences. He would, in the middle of kiddush, would stop before *b’ahavah* and look around for a few seconds before he went on. And it was sort of part of the drama of the (01:40:00) spiritual revival we were creating. In our service, too, both *niggunim* and silence were very important. It was a way of involving people who didn’t know anything about the liturgy. If you had a Shabbat morning service people came in who barely could read Hebrew, but you could sing a

wordless *niggun* for a long time and then have a silent meditation for a long time, it was a way of bringing people in. And it all seemed more profound than just mumbling the words. And so those were important innovations. I would say silence began to become an important part of our spiritual lives. In the second year of Havurat Shalom, maybe the first year in Somerville, we had a meditation group. There were four of us who meditated every morning. Kathy, Richie Siegal, Janet, and I would meet for meditation in the *havurah* prayer room and that was a very powerful experience for us.

JG: What did you know about meditation? What were you learning or hearing about what you were thinking about or not thinking about? (01:41:00)

AG: We'd already read things about meditation. I had already participated in a very strange, Eastern spiritual group called Subud in New York for a while which wasn't quite meditation but something like it. And it was in the air; it was in the culture already.

JG: Insight Meditation Center, going in Cambridge.

AG: Was it going already? I don't know. I think Jack Kornfield's first books were coming out then. He's the guy from there. So meditation was in the air, so to speak. And that was very important. So yes, silence, pregnant silences were there. Some people loved them: Steve Zweibaum and I loved to share silences together. And then, I remember, other people like Arnie Kover and Michael Strassfeld, who came later. They called themselves "The Sons of Lithuania," (01:42:00) which means they were the neo-Litvaks who didn't like all this neo-hasidic spiritual intensity. And they were very uncomfortable with these silences. But I would say, a sort of quiet, quiet, often silent but passionate spirituality was in the air. And that was felt around the table on Shabbat, it was felt in the singing you did. *Yedid nefesh*, which was somewhat new in those days. The language of *Shir Hashirim*, of the *Song of Songs*, was somehow important. There was a kind of broadly conceived eros about this whole spiritual intensity that was very much there and that we were learning hard not to be afraid of. It wasn't always easy to learn that. Some people were more comfortable with it, some people weren't. (01:43:00) Zalman was very important in that. Zalman legitimized hugging each other. That you could hug, that you didn't have to do a sort of 1950s male-style handshake relationship, but that you could hug. Zalman was safely heterosexual enough and so on. I think the ethos of hugging and of a sort of spiritual intensity that went with it was very much there in the early *havurah*. I remember during that second year — no, even in the first year of Havurat Shalom — we had a visit from a young Orthodox rabbi in New York whom Joey Reimer knew Steve Riskin, now Shlomo Riskin. Steve Riskin came up and spent a Shabbos with us. (1:44:00) And he was very impressed with the Jewish seriousness of the group, and very uncomfortable about a certain style of spiritual intensity that he just couldn't take. And that was about some of that, that he just didn't know what to do with all that spiritual intensity. I wrote him a letter after that visit. "A Letter to an Orthodox Friend," I called it.

And I published it in Hebrew — the Hebrew version of it came out in a journal in Israel very early, and I just rediscovered the English version. And my student Ariel wants to give a lecture about that English version. He might do that one of these days.

JG: Since we're talking about services and liturgy, let us just dig into that a bit more. I wanted to — as you're talking about this, thinking about the ways in which you may have brought your own ideas and experiences about the Jewish mystical tradition, very consciously, to services and (01:45:00) to the spiritual experience you were trying to encourage and create at Havurat Shalom.

AG: Yes and no. That is, you didn't need the Jewish mystical tradition to find spiritual intensity. Spiritual intensity was — was our bread and butter. It was in the air. Part of the sixties character of this was a quest for spiritual intensity. Now, some of that — we haven't talked about psychedelics or grass at all. That has to come along in the conversation somewhere.

JG: It can come here.

AG: I think that the openness to that kind of more intense spiritual experience partly happened either because some of us had had such experiences, or because the culture was suffused with that experience. And everybody knew about spiritual intensity partly through the psychedelic culture. (01:46:00)

JG: Can you talk about —?

AG: Let me get there. And I think we were just also just young people in search of some kind of new intensity, new passionate intensity. And the passionate intensity was certainly about building a better world and about stopping the war. But it was also about how people saw one another in a true way, and that meant looking deeply into each other and getting to know each other. And that included being silent together, and not filling up the world, the empty space with a wall or words, as we would say. (01:47:00) And so that intensity that we experienced in *niggun* singing together and in being silent in the prayer room together, and in being silent around the table together was all prior to whatever specific content from the Jewish mystical tradition might come into it. That was part of the culture, the broader culture, but our particular communal culture on its own. And then when I began teaching very intense-sounding *kavanot* or directions for prayer from the hasidic sources. Barry Holtz and I translated a bunch of those for our book *Your Word is Fire*; we did that in the summer of '69, the summer after the first year of the *havurah*. Barry and Janet and Kathy and I rented a little house in Penobscot Bay up in Maine and we translated these hasidic *kavanot* on prayer that I had learned from Heschel originally. And then that became part of the language of prayer and was all about (01:48:00) spiritual intensity. That became part of our rubric, but it was Hasidism combined with Heschel combined with Buber combined with — just the sort of cultural quest for

intensity in our age, in our generation. And you could invoke that by an Emily Dickenson poem, too, and then you would be silent afterwards and think about that poem. Or by playing a cut from a Doors record and then sitting in silence after that. Those were all the same; they were not quite exactly the same. They were culturally different obviously. But they all led to that same place of inner spirituality and communion with one another across the silence, or through the silence.

JG: And they all had a place.

AG: And they all had a place. (01:49:00) And they all somehow fit together. And we were creating a Judaism in which there would be room for all of them.

JG: So you've mentioned psychedelics and drugs several times.

AG: Yes, so psychedelics. I had had my first acid experience the summer of 1965. Zalman had had acid a couple of years before that, I think in '63. Zalman had learned about it and he had met Timothy Leary, and Timothy Leary took him on his first trip. In '65, I was working at Ramah in Massachusetts, (01:50:00) Ramah in Palmer. It was the first summer of Ramah Palmer, and the head of the waterfront was a dear friend of mine named David Mendelson. And David was a junior at Harvard and was taking a psych course with these two cool professors named Albert and Leary, and they were giving out acid to their students in the course. And he had tried it, so he got some for me. So my first acid trip was at camp that summer on the waterfront of Ramah Palmer.

JG: You were fifteen or so?

AG: No, no, no. I was twenty-five or so. This is not when I was a kid in camp. This is when I was working in camp, summer of '65. I was a rabbinical student. And David was a few years younger; he was probably a senior at Harvard. Pre-med. And David was, a couple years after that, married to Martha Ackelsberg, who is now partnered with Judith Plaskow. You probably know them; (01:51:00) they're part of the New York Havurah, Ezrat Nashim group. But David was a dear friend, and he took me on that first acid trip. And it was very important to me; it confirmed a lot of the things I had already seen in the hasidic sources. Sort of a lot of the mystical language took on a new life, took on an immediate reality through psychedelic experience. It was almost a translation of the theoretical language in Hasidism to direct experiential front of what happened on an acid trip. So I was very grateful for it. I probably did acid between five and ten times between '65 and '70 or '71. I don't remember when I stopped. At some point I stopped in the early '70s, but it was in those years — my last years at JTS, the first years of the *havurah* — I was occasionally doing acid. And it was always in the context of a quest for mystical experience, (01:52:00) or the quest for some window into a deeper truth. I realized there was great profundity there. Zalman and I were closest in those years because we were two of the very few people who had done both acid and Hasidism. So I would read some

hasidic source and send it to Zalman and say, “Hey, look at this. This is obviously describing this part of the experience.” And so on. We were reading the sources as part of the experiential lens that almost nobody else shared. So those were very heady and exciting experiences for us. Grass went along with acid, when you didn’t feel like engaging as much on an acid trip, you could just get stoned. But it was never very important to me. It became very important to Zalman. Zalman spent the last forty years of his life stoned much of the time. And I sort of pulled away from that, but Zalman didn’t. In our culture at Havurat Shalom, (01:53:00) not many people tripped. I don’t think Joey or Barry ever did acid, as far as I know. Or Michael. I don’t think so. Steve Zweibaum had done a lot of acid and probably continued to do it occasionally at the *havurah*. So it was acceptable but certainly not expected; it wasn’t the norm by any means. And I think there were people that were a bit nervous that I talked about it so openly. But I did.

JG: And wrote about it.

AG: And wrote about it, yes. And Kathy had also done acid before that, so it was important to both of us. It was sort of accepted in that neo-mystical, post-psychedelic culture.

JG: Why did you stop?

AG: I stopped because — two or three reasons. (01:54:00) I became somewhat disillusioned with it. Zalman was a believer. Zalman said, “Soon everybody in the world is going to do this, and the whole world is going to change. It’s all going to be all about peace and love. And we have to become licensed LSD practitioners who will lead people in sessions. And we will change the world. And this is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius.” And I saw people taking acid and going to rock concerts and taking acid and going to dumb movies. And I said, “No, you get out of it what you put into it. It’s not that the acid changes peoples lives; it’s who you are.” And then we started reading about the Mansons — remember Manson? — and had people getting stoned and committing murder. And I was sort of horrified and realized this is pretty dangerous stuff. And what you really get out of it — if you got something beautiful out of acid, it’s because you have something beautiful in your head. So maybe you should concentrate on what’s in your head and not what’s in the acid. That was one thing. Then it became a little too hard to control sexual energies (01:55:00) on an acid trip. And I came to the edge of getting hurt, or hurting somebody, and said, “No, that’s not for me.” And it just felt like it was time to graduate from that and go on to more serious stuff, more serious spiritually disciplined stuff. And that’s when Zalman and I, to some degree, parted company. Zalman and I loved each other throughout our lives, but we parted company in a number of ways. He was more a counterculture person later on and I was more a conventional academic person later on. And he continued to believe in the psychedelic revolution, and I became disillusioned by it and said, No, that’s not where the truth lies.

JG: So, then the Havurat Shalom community in those first years, (01:56:00) what role were drugs, of any kind, whether it was just passing a joint or —?

AG: Passing a joint was taken for granted; if you didn't want to smoke, you didn't smoke. But that joints were passed around was easy. Acid was not casual in the *havurah*. People knew I had done it. My Itzik Lodzer article was out in the second or third year of the *havurah*.

JG: Published in *Response*.

AG: Yeah. And so it was talked about with Zalman and me, and we could have conversations about it. And some people like Steve Zweibaum — anybody else besides Steve Zweibaum was really an acid head in the *havurah*? Not that I can immediately remember. Danny Matt, but he came later. He came three years later, maybe. I remember a wonderful evening. (01:57:00) We were sitting in Havurat Shalom in Cambridge, it's got to be the first year. And we're sitting there; it's a late Friday night after dinner. A bunch of us are sitting around. And there's a knock on the door. I remember Joe Reimer was there, I'm pretty sure Jim Kugel was there. I don't know who else, but five or six of us are sitting around. And we opened the door and this young couple, very smashed looking young couple come in. And we say, "How do you do? What's your name?" And he says, "I'm Jesus Christ." And she says, "I'm Susan." "Come in! Jesus, this is Joe, and Jesus, this is Jim and Susan." And we sit down, and what are they doing there? Well, he's on an acid trip and he decided he wanted to go to synagogue. They wanted to go to the Tremont Street Shul. And they told them, No, you're in the wrong place. Go to Havurat Shalom. [laughs] So we tried to sort of (01:58:00) gently guide him through his trip and not do any harm and tried to involve him in the conversation in a normal way, the way you do when you meet somebody tripping. And it was an evening that stuck in my memory.

JG: And then they left.

AG: Is it he — Kathy — maybe I'm wrong. We had a little cartoon up on our wall of a teddy bear. And next to it, it said, "Sometimes love wears all your fur away." And somehow I'm thinking at this moment that that was this Jesus Christ who came back, who gave us that as a gift afterwards. But I'm not sure if it was really the same person. (01:59:00) [talks to Kathy for some time] I don't think we'll get it, that's what happens. (02:00:00) Sentences just don't get ended.

JG: Go back to services and how spirit infused it is. I wanted to ask you about the role of Torah readings, *d'verei torah*, approaches to interpreting Torah and discussing the parashah, et cetera, how it contributed to this whole ambiance that you're talking about — creating personal relevance, grappling with issues in ways that were very personal as well as traditional.

AG: The service, as I remember it, on Shabbat morning is that, (02:01:00) *niggun* singing and silence, and then some *davening*. There was a time in the early — in the first year or two — when we experimented a lot with what we called “creative liturgy.” And that meant playing Stravinsky in the background, and it meant reading poetry. “I thank you God for this most amazing day” by E. E. Cummings must’ve been read a hundred times until we got sick of it. Because that went with “*Yotzer Or*,” the “Miracle of the Day.” At some point already in the second year, I would say, we began to become more traditional. We realized we really wanted to *daven*. I remember Zalman saying to me at some point, “They’re going to kill *davening*!” And Zalman and I both realized that we both wanted *davening*, and most of us in the *havurah* wanted some form of *davening davening*. But it was relatively brief, and then we took out the Torah. We had a very low table, almost like just off the floor like this, on which we read the Torah. (02:02:00) And most of us were sitting around on cushions on the floor, so the Torah was very low. Somebody’s parents came, I think Bella Savran’s parents came, and were furious we were reading the Torah on the floor. That was a *Chillul Hashem*, that was disgusting. And that was insulting the Torah. And that became a big issue; are we reading the Torah too low on the floor, putting the Torah virtually on the floor? But that’s what we did. We read the Torah. We did not like having a series of aliyot where people went up and said the blessing; that took too much time. We said the blessing together, or one person said the blessing. Then we read as much of the Torah as we were going to read. I don’t know how much of the parashah we read. I do not remember. Someone else will remember better, and then we had a Torah discussion. Somebody would begin, throwing out questions and giving a brief talk, and then there would be a conversation. The conversation could go, I think a half an hour, forty-five minutes. And that was a very big part of the service, of a two or a two and a quarter hours of the service, the Torah discussion was more than half an hour. (02:03:00) And it was very no holds barred; you could say anything. You could say, “I hate this story.” That was legitimate to say. You could talk about why you hated it. And if you talked too much about, “This reminds me of my relationship with my mother,” we would start rolling eyes. That did happen; there were people who did that. I especially remember, Shabbat morning was open to the public so it wasn’t just us. So sometimes people came and were *nudniks* in that conversation.

JG: As participants in the conversations but not as leaders.

AG: Sometimes the person doing the *d’var torah* would —

JG: From the community?

AG: I do not remember if we allowed non-members to give a *d’var torah* or not. But I remember there were wonderful things that happened in most of those conversations. There were occasionally *nudnik-y* things about “The reason I’m uncomfortable with this parashah is” or “This reminds me too much of my mother and my mother’s synagogue,”

or something like that. (02:04:00) Those things, those echoes were there in the background sometimes. But what we're talking about in retrospect, there was sort of a rebirth of midrash. It was a lot of midrashic conversation, especially in *B'reishit* about family dynamics. Joe Reimer was so good at the psychology of family dynamics and Joel's poetic insights and there were just very exciting things going on in talking about the stories, a lot of them in interpersonal terms. What this meant — sometimes spiritually, but I think more psychologically, interpersonally — just very, very rich and heartfelt and open conversations. And a lot of the love in that community — there was a lot of love in that community — was expressed in those conversations. That was a place — that was one of our vehicles of loving, was sharing those conversations. What is your — (02:05:00) if you have a community that's loving and that's not a sexual community, what is the act of love? How do you share love in such a community? And some of it was in silences, in long, impassioned silences. And some of it was in singing *niggunim*, and some of it was in conversations like that across the room, around the parashah. That was a way of sharing love also. And those were all very important, and we saw that and felt that and smiled that to one another. We knew that was happening. We knew that we were being a loving community in the way we listened to one another and got excited about what one another were saying. That was the *havurah* Torah discussion at its best. As I said, there were bad moments too, but it was mostly an exciting and very loving kind of conversation.

JG: An expression of the openness of the kind of community.

AG: Well, love and openness go together. Yeah.

JG: Are there any different Torah discussions that stand out for you that you sort of particularly remember? (02:06:00)

AG: No, I'm not nearly that good. Maybe people with better memories. Again, try Barry. I always think of him as the custodian of *havurah* memory. Maybe some others do.

JG: To what extent would you say that —

AG: Excuse me, I do remember! Some of the most exciting *d'verei torah* were around the family of Genesis. The family, you know, that's why Joseph acted that way and this was the dynamic going on between the brothers. So I do remember a lot of excitement about that; realizing the family pathology that happened from Abraham preferring one son over the other and the pain of that son, and that being passed on through three generations. I do remember Torah conversations about that. And realizing that for the first time in that kind of conversation.

JG: What about political overtones (02:07:00) or undertones in these conversations and really contemporary issues that were growing out of what was going on in the world around you? Anti-war, struggles with war — that kind of thing.

AG: They were certainly there and we were all very peacenik-oriented. We weren't pacifists in any formal or absolute sense, but we were all very anti-war and very pro-peace. And so we were disturbed by *Parashah Beshalach*, the defeat of the Egyptians and the rejoicing of the defeat of the Egyptians, and the battle against Amalek. And when you came to these parashot in the summer when you get these awful things about — Well, we're going to see one tomorrow, aren't we? About "Go back and kill the women and children." (02:08:00) You know, we were horrified by some of those things and we expressed that horror quite openly. And certainly we were believers in peace. And in nonviolent resolution of conflicts. Everett was an influence and Everett is a pacifist. And Jim Kugel, as I said, was a draft counselor at Harvard and considered himself a pacifist in those days. He was debating about could he ask for a conscientious objector status in the war. And Stef Krieger was very much a sort of political leftist/peace person. And so talk about peaceful resolution and horror at some of things our ancestors did and felt were talked about pretty openly. So I remember that about war and peace. I do not remember how much (02:09:00) racial awareness was there in the *havurah* or how much the whole issue of Jews and non-Jews and Jewish exclusivity. I'm sure that was often felt and talked about but I can't remember anything specific about it.

JG: How about the whole *b'nei Avraham*? The whole Palestinian-Jewish relationship in the aftermath of the Six Day War, a very particular period in American Jewish history and its relationship to those issues. It certainly figures in a very important parashah.

AG: I just don't remember and don't want to project from later memories onto it. I don't want to make it up. So 1969 is really the beginning of the settlements. (02:10:00) And I was certainly opposed, and I think it's fair to say that the general ethos of the *havurah* was we were opposed to the settlements and horrified by news of Gush Emunim and the emergence of a new right in the Jewish world. But I don't think the *havurah* ever took any kind of formal stance on such things. And exactly what the chronology is, when Breira was started, and when I started going to Breira meetings, and feeling, as I say, partly uncomfortable there, I just don't remember the chronology of that in terms of its relation to the *havurah*.

JG: I was just wondering to what extent it came up in Torah discussions.

AG: I just don't recall.

JG: That's significant, too. I wanted to just at least touch on the issue of awareness of gender, issues around gender (02:11:00) in these very early years in the *havurah*. In your

recent article that was published in the current issue of *Pakn Treger*, there's this little conversation between —

AG: Eitan Kensky

JG: It was juxtaposed, you and Dovid Roskies. And you mention there that this was a pre-feminist, pre-women's liberation moment when Havurat Shalom was being formed actually. And there were a few women who were very much involved in the community as well as community members who were coming. Do you have any recollection of what women were doing in terms of any kinds of (02:12:00) pushback against gendered behavior in public worship, and what roles they were playing if at all, if any? Was anybody wearing a *tallis*, was anybody wearing a *kippah*? What about the issue of being counted in a minyan?

AG: That one I know. There's a classic *havurah* story, and that is in the second year of the *havurah*; we were on retreat. And at the end of the retreat, Saturday night I guess, Epi — Seymour Epstein — stands up, and says. "I have *yartzheit* on Tuesday and I need a minyan. Who can come?" And people raised their hands, how many people could come to the minyan. And he starts counting and he counts only the men. And Mona Fishbane — Mona Dekoven — who is maybe married to Buzzy, maybe just engaged to Buzzy at that point, stands up and says, "Excuse me, you asked how many people could come. I'm a person." (02:13:00) And we all stopped, and at that moment we began counting women in the minyan. That was the moment when it happened, and it just happened automatically. We all said, of course! And there was no opposition to it and no need to consult halachic precedence or ask *shailas*. It was obvious to us that she should be counted, that women should be counted. And we immediately became egalitarian. We started counting women at that moment, or that Shabbat. It was just so clear to us.

JG: That was '69?

AG: That was '69, I would say. Second year. Would've been fall '69, something like that. So that's a very clear memory. Before that, women were included. I don't — I think it was important to us. I think we were aware (02:14:00) that women shouldn't be in a subordinate role of being the cooks and cleaners and that kind of thing. I think, as I said, I was always a cook and I think we sort of modeled that. And I think Barry and Janet were a pretty egalitarian couple from the beginning. And it wasn't like Barry would invite people and Janet would be in the kitchen; it was never like that. And same with Michael and Ruthie. I think the couples were sort of — we were all people who were pretty sensitive to being balanced in those things, men taking an active part in the household, as far as I remember it. In terms of women taking up roles in leading services, I don't think there was a woman who wanted to or felt capable of it. Janet certainly would've been capable of it because her Hebrew was good and she knew all the traditions and so on, but

she was a sort of silent meditation person; she did run off to an ashram in India, you remember, (02:15:00) after she left the *havurah*. And I don't think that was her style to particularly want to lead. Nor was it Kathy's style. And I don't think there was a woman who really wanted to lead services until Sharon Strassfeld joined. Michael and Sharon joined probably year four — year three or year four of the *havurah*. And then she immediately started leading. But I just don't think there was a woman in the *havurah* who thought to do that or wanted to do that. And women having aliyot, we didn't have an up and down aliyot like that, so.

JG: Did they lead *d'vvar torahs*?

AG: Yes, I think women gave *d'vei torah* very early. When I told you that Debbie Wolland story at that first retreat, she was to do kiddush, so I think they were given roles equally. And I think maybe things like kiddush women did. I think I can imagine Janet doing kiddush. I'm just guessing. That's really a guess and not a memory, that Janet would've done kiddush or something like that. (02:16:00)

JG: Do you recall there being any sensitivity around issues regarding gendered language of traditional liturgy?

AG; No, that was much later. That was Havurat Shalom of a different generation. That was Aliza Arzt in the 1980s *havurah* with their famous prayer book changing everything into the feminine and so on. Which we of the early *havurah* sort of shudder at. No, that was not — I mean, we were already talking mother language, God-as-mother as well as father. Remember, Kabbalah is the format for that, (02:17:00) so *Shechinah* language and I was reading Erich Neumann, "The Great Mother," and so maternal language as well as paternal, or that God the father is really a feminized father figure, because he's (2:17:18) *Ha'av HaRachaman*, the *rachaman* is the *rechem*, is the womb. That was our language already in the sixties, I think. So the sense that there was room for a perspective that went beyond gender, beyond gender definition. I think we were already willing to say — we certainly didn't say gender is a construct. That's much later. But the idea that love transcends gender, and that love is about something bigger than that, and that divine love, the love of God, is certainly not to be understood in purely male terms. (02:18:00) That was already our language then. But in a pretty broad, spiritualized sense.

[Break for lunch]

JG: So we're back after a lovely lunch break. Thank you, Art. And I wanted to turn to the topic of social activism within the *havurah*. And clearly this was a period of tremendous activism on the part of American youth generally, and Jewish youth in particular. As we've been discussing. I wanted to ask you what role political and social activism within either the general American context — often anti-war — or Jewish

realms, played within Havurat Shalom. Both in terms of a general principle on what it was about, but also in terms of what actually happened on the ground.

AG: Well, let me say first (02:19:00) that the *havurah* happened in an era when this was very much daily in the news. You kind of have to imagine things that are daily in the news; in our era I would say racial tensions are daily in the news, and war was daily in the news then. And in 1968 or '69, there were riots in the streets of Cambridge. Yes, it was '67 and '68 because we were on Franklin Street when the streets around Harvard Square blew up. And then Kent State happened in 1970 and we were in Somerville, so this was very much on the daily news. And we were very upset about it, very concerned about it. As individuals, as citizens, as Americans, this was all very much part of it. Most of us were *New York Times* or *Boston Globe* readers, and we were very much aware of what was going on politically and militarily and the social fabric of the country being torn apart. And while we were all, (02:20:00) without exception, strongly anti-war, I think there were some of us who were more or less revolutionary. We even liked, most of us liked the word revolutionary, but exactly what did revolution mean? And when we saw the possibilities of anarchy, I think some of us were a little nervous about that. About how much we really supported this revolutionary thing and how much we really meant anarchy, and it was not quite as black and white as it might have seemed. There were a few people in the *havurah*, Stef Krieger as their main spokesman, who were very political and very concerned that we weren't political enough. They were constantly disappointed in the *havurah* for not being a more activist organization. Some people were pulled in that direction, but Stef was definitely the strongest, most articulate spokesman. I would say that Jim Kugel was pulled that way. (02:21:00) A few others were pulled their way and some people — Steve Zweibaum and others — were sort of totally disinterested in being activists. There was nobody who was sort of right-wing opposed to it, but it was more was that your thing or not your thing. That was more the way it was talked about. So Janet Wolfe, Janet Holtz would have been disinterested, Steve Zweibaum would have been disinterested. Joe Reimer would've been pulled, attracted to the Stef Krieger rhetoric, even though probably not willing to go there very much. We used the language of "the personal is the political," and just being in the community like this, is in itself a political act, because we're transforming our vision of society. And that's meant to be a nugget of a new society, of a new humanity, that we're trying to create. But some of the more activist people thought that was a bit of a copout because you weren't really changing the society. Then I remember, oh, in year two or year three, (02:22:00) we said, All right, we have to do something for needy people. And so we started something, a little project for needy teenagers called Brookline Light and Power. Brookline Light and Power was the *havurah's* youth project. And it met near Coolidge Corner and it was for needy youth, kids from the streets, kids from poor homes. Not particularly Jewish kids, or not specifically Jewish kids. But it was about reaching out to needy young people; this was going to be our community project and the activists in our community were all very

hot to trot with this idea. And it did not go very well. I think it lasted half a year or so. I do somehow remember some teenager messing up the place — (02:23:00) rolls of toilet paper all over the place — and people being very unhappy about how do you handle that. I don't remember the details; again, somebody else will remember better, but I remember that Brookline Light and Power was somewhat of a colossal failure. And there were a lot of recriminations within the group about, should we have done that differently, should we have done it better? Was that the right project to undertake? But that was our big communal attempt at sort of doing an activist thing. Otherwise it was more or less do-it-on-your-own and invite other people to come. There's a demonstration, Stef is telling us about a demonstration, who wants us to go, anybody's welcome. I don't think the *havurah* was, as a group, taking stands on particular political issues. I don't think we were issuing — we didn't like the idea of these Jewish organizations issuing pretentious public statements as though that had any value. I think that was kind of not our style. (02:24:00) People certainly went to demonstrations on various kinds of issues, including anti-war.

JG: And you went to the big March on Washington.

AG: Yes. And of course we were also involved in well known demonstrations against the federations. Pressing for more Jewish education, I think that was 1969. And Hillel Levine and Michael Strassfeld and others were very involved in that sort of, Where is the Jewish charity dollar going and what about education? And that was seen by Barry Shrage and others as a very positive revolutionary step in the history of federation involvement. But that's another kind of activism.

JG: So as you said, some members complained about the lack of political awareness. Did it create palpable tensions within the group? Did people leave over those issues, for instance? (02:25:00)

AG: As I said, Jim Sleeper left very early, and I think it was that kind of issue. I think he saw the group was going to become a more Jewish study-prayer-oriented group than an activist group, and that was not what he wanted. I seem to remember that. Again, ask Barry or somebody who might remember differently. Otherwise, I don't remember people leaving over it. I do remember tensions over it, yes. As I say, Stef being somehow perennially disappointed in the *havurah*. And expressing that disappointment and causing various degrees of guilt or resistance on the part of some other people in the group.

JG: So by the second and third year and beyond of Havurat Shalom, the New York Havurah had been founded. And my understanding — I haven't talked to anybody yet, but my understanding is that that was a much more overtly political group in its orientation.

AG: (02:26:00) The way we talked about it in those days is that there were three groups: there was Jews for Urban Justice in Washington, there was Boston Havurat Shalom, and there was the New York Havurah. The Washington people were the political ones, that was founded by a fellow, I don't remember — Arthur Waskow came in second. But they were very political from the beginning. We were the spiritual *havurah* and the New York Havurah called themselves the social ones. They were really interested in creating this group and creating a group feeling, a group dynamic. And that was their main thing. And then they became political around Burt Weiss and Murray Pomerantz and draft resistance. So they were sort of pulled into the political. But I don't think they started as political. I think they really started as a kind of Jewish counterculture social group. That's my impression. And I remember we used to use those three designations: the Washington people are political, we're the spiritual, the New York are the social. And social was not a put-down word — (02:27:00)

JG: So, given the impact of Father Berrigen's comments in Heschel's class and the impact that had on you, I'm curious as to why you think political engagement didn't turn out to be a focus of your conception of what this organization would be about.

AG: Because of who I am. Because I was always more interested in the inward than in the political. I was never a believer that we were going to do much to change things in the political sphere. Yes, stopping the war was an important goal, and eventually American young people's opposition, I think it's fair to say, did stop the war. So there was the example of an action that made a difference. But in terms of changing the society, changing the way people are, changing the social structure, I never believed much that political action was going to do it. I remember saying once (02:28:00) that there were really two kinds of Jews in the world: messianic Jews and non-messianic Jews. Messianic Jews included the Hebrew Christians, included the Lubavitchers, included the Gush Emunim people. They were Jews who believed that messiah is right around the corner if we only do the right things. Zalman was a messianic Jew in that sense regarding the Age of Aquarius. And I was a non-messianic Jew, which meant that I believed the wicked wind was here for a long time to come, and all we can do is what (02:28:36) Yohanan ben Zaccai did: create a little corner where there were enlightened people and sort of keep a little flame burning during the dark night. And I think I still believe in that; that's what we can do, preserve some bit of humanity, increase a bit of humanity in the world, and not really change the world and bring about the redemption. (02:29:00)

JG: Israel had just fought and won the Six Day War, as we were talking about earlier, the year before Havurat Shalom was founded. So how would you describe the feeling within the *havurah* about Israel and Zionism during the early years?

AG: Muted. We were very much American Jews, and creating an American Jewish project, and we knew that. There was certainly no anti-Zionism, and I think if you'd ask

most of us, we would've said, of course we're Zionists, which meant we supported Israel. Which meant we thought Israel was a right project, that the Jewish people needed a homeland and that it had done wonderful things. And there were some things we were concerned about already, no question about that. The integration of Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews was not going terribly well; the Israeli Black Panthers were out (02:30:00) and things like that. There was concern about the treatment of Arabs already, even before 1967, the military rule and so on. Things like that — the fact that Arabs were not given equal budgets for education and development and things like that. We all knew that and were concerned about it already even before '67. But that was in the context of generally being very supportive of Israel. But I would say the *havurah* was very much about being Americans and American Jews. I remember publishing something in a *Response* symposium sometime in the early 1970s where I said I could live for the next fifty years either on a kibbutz or in Mea Shearim and I would always be a New York City class of 1965, a Cambridge class of 1968, and that was referring to the anti-war demonstrations and what an effect they had on me, and how formative the experience of the sixties was in my identity. (02:31:00) And I think we all sort of saw ourselves as American late sixties people. And many of us had been to Israel, especially those with a stronger Jewish background. Not many had been for a year, I don't think. I had been for a year already. I don't think many had spent a year in Israel. But this was clearly an American enterprise, an American Jewish enterprise. And Israel was in some ways marginal to it. In the first *Jewish Catalog*, Michael Paley wrote an article about Israel, about travel to Israel I think. And it was a terribly embarrassing article, mostly about how you could get people to pay for your trip to Israel, get there free and sort of take advantage of it. And we all thought that was childish and annoying. I think Michael is probably embarrassed about it for many years since. (02:32:00) But Israel was not strongly on the horizon.

JG: And yet a group left Havurat Shalom, if I understand correctly, and went to become the founding members of Kibbutz Gezer early on in the life of Havurat Shalom. Do you recall that?

AG: I don't remember them as a group that left Havurat Shalom, not at all. Who was the founder of Gezer? Levi Kelman was the founder of Gezer, but he wasn't in the *havurah*. Was Jerry Shostak the founder from the *havurah*? Maybe Jerry Shostak [see addendum]. I remember we had connections to the beginning of Gezer, we knew people there. I do not remember who particularly from Havurat Shalom was in the first group of Gezer. We were all sort of related circles, (02:33:00) but I certainly don't remember a group leaving to found Gezer; it wasn't like that.

JG: So I want to go back now to the question of community —

AG: Give me another second; there was something else about Israel. *[pause]* Israel was very much a darling project of the Jewish establishment. And we were worried about that; we were already worried about vicarious Judaism. Judaism was about supporting Israel and saving Soviet Jews. And Judaism wasn't about your spiritual life and your own Jewish learning and your own developing identity. (02:34:00) And we were sort of pushing back against a Judaism that was a Judaism for others. And I think that's partly why there was a certain resistance to Israel advocacy as what Judaism was supposed to be. We were kind of building a community here, build a real Jewish life here.

JG: It was complicated, right? That Joel and Gail Reimer left and went to Israel; they left the *havurah* — the Savrins — and went to Israel. Others had deep connections and spent time in Israel.

AG: Gail and Bella are of the same generation, they're both children of Holocaust survivors, and strongly drawn to Israel partly because of that. They had a very strong Jewish peoplehood identity as coming out of their experience as second-generation Holocaust survivors. I think that's what particularly pulled those two couples there. (02:35:00)

JG: Right, and Joe was speaking about his experience there, during '66, '67, the war, sort of the vanguard formative period in his article also.

AG: And then his interest in kibbutz, study of kibbutz.

JG: Right, as a form of education, a form of living in that context. So I wanted to go back to some of the challenges that were happening in those first years of the *havurah* and, as part of that conversation, just wanted to talk about the role of these communal meetings. How they happened, and the kinds of issues that were surfacing that needed to be discussed. This was a very self-reflective community, it sounds like. And there was a lot of discussion, as you said, about what kind of a community you intended to be and wanted to be (02:36:00) and how you were going to get there. And were there, as you remember, were there conflicting visions of what that community would look like?

AG: Yes, there was constant discussion of that. I cannot tell you about the conflicting visions from the beginning except for the issues we already talked about, the activist and the contemplative. But I do know that by the second year, there were some tensions within the community about people who did not feel completely accepted, did not feel completely loved by the community. And then they began pushing an agenda of trying to legislate communal intimacy; you have to accept me, you have to listen to me, you have to care about me because I'm a member of your *havurah*. And people sort of pushing back on that. The whole question about how voluntary the communal thing was, (02:37:00) and how obligatory it was, was certainly in the air. And when we all felt that everybody was someone we wanted to get to know and care about, that worked well; and

if/when there were people for whom that wasn't true — Debbie Wolland was one such person, the first year, people didn't know what to make of her. And there were members of the *havurah* who certainly wanted to avoid too much dealing with her. We had, even in the original group but certainly for the second group, you had to apply to the *havurah* and we had interviews. And if in the interviews —

JG: And these interviews consisted of people coming and spending time?

AG: Yes, if you came from out of town, you'd come for a couple of days. And if you were in town, you might come back for two or three such conversations. And there were several members of the *havurah* who were on the interview committee. I was always one of them but there were others, too; (02:38:00) sort of the *vatikim*, the oldtimers of the *havurah*, one year oldtimers, half-year oldtimers. But people who were sort of the pillars of the group: Joe, Barry, Michael were sort of the original pillars of the group; they sort of became the interview committee. And the question is, on what basis did we accept people? How much should have to do with whether we liked them? How much should have to do with whether they were Jewishly serious and committed to our vision and so on?

JG: I've heard it described as also whether they were "interesting" people.

AG: Interesting people, yes. So there is a fellow with whom I've been touch over many, many years who was twice rejected by Havurat Shalom. He was very Jewishly knowledgeable, politically activist, believed in all the right causes, somewhat more Orthodox than any of us were, (02:39:00) sort of modern Orthodox, lefty type. And a difficult personality. Something of a *nudnik* of a personality. And he applied to the *havurah*, and I encouraged him. I already knew him and thought he would be a good candidate. And people just didn't like him. And Joe Reimer came up with a formulation, I remember: It will not be fair to him if we accept him nominally and reject him every day once he's here. Because he'll be in the *havurah* and people won't want to be with him, because he's just a difficult person. And so it's the kinder thing to do — is not to accept him. And we sort of bought that and were relieved, but I felt guilty about it. And then the guy applied again the next year, and the same kind of thing happened. And he always remembered it and I always remembered it, and I remained friendly with him for many, many years. (02:40:00) And now he's lived in Israel for half a century and is not well, but it kind of felt a little bit, in retrospect — like, suppose this were a fraternity, and then you could talk about fraternity blackball. One of the fraternity brothers doesn't like this person, and then he can't get in. In retrospect, it felt a little bit like that. And I was a little bit morally nervous about what we were creating. We thought we were creating a sort of meaningful spiritual community, and we were recreating a Jewish fraternity? There was something about that that made me nervous. On the other hand, what Joe had said was somehow true, that if there were people there that weren't likeable, that would make the

whole community less close. Because if this unlikeable person was hanging around the house all the time, we would avoid the house to avoid having to have conversations with him. (02:41:00) And I would say that was unresolved. But then, in the second year, we had one individual and a group of people who really felt marginalized by the group, not well accepted by the group. The individual was David Roskies' first wife, and I'm not remembering her name right now [see addendum]. And the group was a group of people, three people who were part of the *havurah* in the second year. Three people, all of whom had almost no Jewish knowledge, no Jewish background, unlike most of the people in the *havurah* who had something. Joe Reimer had a good Jewish day school education. Steven Zweibaum had none of that, but his parents were survivors and he spoke Yiddish natively. And Michael Brooks was a rabbi's grandson. (02:42:00) There was some connection — these three guys came in, three couples, they were all coupled. Charles Cohen, Steve Genden, and Jeff Sokol. And their spouses, their wives. They all came in, and they knew virtually nothing. And they were people who, especially Jeff Sokal, who really wanted to sort of become *frum*. They wanted to become observant and they wanted to soak it all in, and they wanted everything. And they didn't understand our degree of ambivalence. They didn't understand why we weren't more observant. If we loved Judaism so much, how come we weren't, I don't know, not carrying on Shabbos or whatever it was. The more they learned, the more they wanted to observe. But they didn't know anything. And we felt a little bit cynical about them, this *hasid shoteh*, foolish would-be hasidim who didn't know anything and were trying to be so strict. And there was a real (02:43:00) cultural conflict. They were also I think — I think two or maybe all three of the couples came from California and had been sort of California hills types. And they just weren't our kind of Northeast intellectuals. They were not intellectuals. Charles was — They were smart, but they were not intellectuals. Steve Genden had been a mailman or became a mailman afterwards. And they lived in a house together, we called it *Dorton* "over there" in Yiddish. And *dorton* meant "the other;" they were the others. Michael Swirsky, who had graduated seminary a year after me and had also joined, another one of my seminary friends, became their tutor and often tried to speak up to for them and make their feelings listened to in the group. (02:44:00) But they were just — there was just a cultural conflict between their style of Quick, give me more information so I can become more of a *baal teshuva* Judaism, and our Been there, done that, that's not really what we want, we came here to create something different, not to become *frum*. They could've fallen into Aish HaTorah or something, but they fell into Havurat Shalom.

JG: So what happened to them eventually? The *Dorton* group.

AG: Charles Cohen, when we had our fortieth reunion, he and his wife — he and a different wife — showed up. He's been a scientist in Vancouver for many years; very little connection to Jewish life. Jeff Sokol I had no idea, he just dropped off the face of the earth, but about two years ago, somebody said to me, "I have regards here for you

from Yitzhak Sokol from Lakewood.” He and his wife settled in Lakewood, twelve children. Jeff and Terri became Yitzhak and Tova Sokol and have twelve children, and after the twelve children moved to the Old City (02:45:00) of Jerusalem, became something of a Kabbalist, I understand. So he’s gone that way. The other one, Genden, is still off the face of the earth. Maybe he’s a mailman in California somewhere.

JG: So *Dorton* was basically these three couples.

AG: These three couples, yes. That was clearly what *Dorton* was. And the rest of us felt uncomfortable with them, but the more we felt uncomfortable, the more they insisted, What do you mean? This is a *havurah*, we’re a community. You have to live up to our expectations of acceptance of us! And I was sort of caught in the middle because I was sort of the elder figure. It was difficult. And then the more it became difficult, the more we had to talk about what is the nature of community. And then we all got sick of that conversation about the nature of community. So I would say in that second year there were some difficult times.

JG: Sounds like this came to a head at the end of the first year. And with some effort to try to talk it through, resolve this. (02:46:00)

AG: Yes, there were several rounds of that. My memory will not be good. I know I have papers where each of us had to submit our own vision of community, and then we’d have a seminar meeting and talk about them and pick up on different people’s visions. But when that was, what was in response to *Dorton*, what was earlier, and so on, I can’t sort out in my memory anymore. But there were several rounds of this conversation. Then at one point — was that in the second year or the third year — we decided the answer to our problems was co-counseling. The *havurah* wanted to have co-counseling as a way to get us to listen better and so on. So each of us would have a co-counseling partner. We would have these —

JG: What did you say that co-counseling was?

AG: Co-counseling — you have a session where you have a partner. You have to look in the person’s eyes and one person talks for fifteen minutes and then the other person talks for fifteen minutes. And you share everything in your heart in a non-judgmental way. (02:47:00)

JG: An effort to get to know someone deeply by listening.

AG: An effort to get to know someone, that’s right. My co-counseling partner was Debbie Fine, and that was very nice for us, and — that’s about all I remember about it. It was a thing, it was a fad the *havurah* went through in response to one of these — what is community, how can we become an intimate community again, how can we restore a lost

intimacy? There was a sense of loss, that we had something at the beginning and we got screwed up during the end of the first and during that second year. How could we create the lost innocence of our early community, and co-counseling was such an attempt.

JG: When did the idea of the Havurat Shalom community being a permanent community really arise and fade? It didn't become a permanent community for most of you who were involved in the early years, in the sense of (02:48:00) your all living in the house —

AG: We all knew — that we were in graduate school, and that we weren't making a living. Havurat Shalom, for me, was something like a full-time job without a salary. We were living on the margins, Kathy and I. I had a fellowship for my first three years at Brandeis which gave me \$10,000 a year or an \$8,000 a year stipend, and I was teaching adult education here and there, and then in the second year, once the idea of the *havurah* began to catch on in the Jewish community, I was sometimes invited to shul gigs and give lectures. So maybe I was making \$20,000 a year at most, probably much less than that, \$10,000 a year, and we were living on that, and Kathy had some savings because her parents had died. So we were digging into that to survive. But we knew that couldn't go on. At some point, it would have to end. (02:49:00) After five years in the *havurah*, I said, I need a job. And I got this job offer at Penn. And we moved to Philadelphia, and I had Penn mistreat me for a long time. And so the idea that we would be a permanent community there in the city was not really an option. We didn't know exactly when it would end for whom, but by the end of the second and third year, some people were splitting off and leaving, going to do the next thing in their lives. And we took that for granted. Oh, there was a fantasy about a rural community — We'll move out to the country and raise vegetables and be Jewish farmers. We heard about these communes in Vermont, and wouldn't we like to do that, and maybe we could be a rural community with a retreat house where people would come and spend weekends and send their kids, and we'd do programming for them. But we never developed that in a serious way. (02:50:00) Janet was part of that conversation, Kathy and I were part of that conversation. I don't remember who else, but it never developed seriously. I would say that, in our five years in the *havurah*, there was never serious talk about it being a permanent community. We all kind of knew that this was a certain phase in our lives. Only several years after I left did some people begin making the *havurah* their longterm community. Joel Rosenberg was our bridge to those people. He stayed around Havurat Shalom and around Somerville for a long time, so he got to know the eighties generation of the *havurah*. Which was a generation that we didn't know at all. And Joel, and then Aliza Arzt, really became the person who symbolized the long-term *havurah* of the later years. And there are people in Havurat Shalom now for whom it's been their community for twenty years. (02:51:00)

JG: Yes, interestingly, in some sense, it did become a permanent community.

AG: Became more like a synagogue, yes. (02:51:00)

JG: Which is ironic, in a certain way. So I want to look at some of the other challenges. We've talked a bit about the admissions process, and inclusivity and exclusivity. Somebody — I think it was Bill Novak — in a *Response* article in those early years, mentioned an issue of what he called “religious intimidation.” And I'm wondering if that resonates for you at all. I think he was referring, in some ways, to the idea that people who — despite the ideal of egalitarianism and a non-hierarchical structure in every aspect of community life, that in fact there were people who were tremendously knowledgeable at the center, with very strong backgrounds, and there were people with very weak backgrounds or no background at all, and there was (02:52:00) some kind of feeling of religious intimidation around what you could or couldn't do, etcetera. So any thoughts on that? Does that resonate for you at all in terms of the feel of the community?

AG: Not really. I think Bill may have felt that, but I don't think many people did. There weren't a lot of rules about what you could or couldn't do, certainly not in your personal life. Nobody told people, You can't eat non-kosher food, or You've got to do this on Shabbos. I think we were a community that cared a lot about Shabbos and spending *shabbatot* together, but nobody ever said, You can't go to a conference on Shabbos, or You can't go to a demonstration on Shabbos — there was none of that. Now maybe people felt it from the ethos of the community, but there were not strong rules. We were 1960s people; there were not a lot of rules. Yes, some of us had a lot more Jewish knowledge, no question about that. (02:53:00) That's myself, and Buzzy, and even some of the younger people like Joe and Barry, had a lot more Jewish knowledge than somebody like Bill did. Epi had a lot of Jewish knowledge. But I don't think — I don't recall that people felt intimidated by that, but if Bill says it, you've got to listen to him.

JG: It was also a long time ago, so, who knows. I wanted to come back to the question of power and authority in the community, which is sort of a related issue. This is something you clearly struggled with. You called yourself, in some ways, an “ambivalent leader.” You had to deal with this ambiguous position you were in given the egalitarian ethos of the community. How do you think those issues of authority and leadership and power played out in reality? What is it you were actually having to struggle with, (02:54:00) that the community was struggling with, around those issues?

AG: Everybody knew that I had founded the *havurah*. There was no secret about that. And when it came to the outside world, I was the spokesperson for the *havurah*. If somebody wanted to learn about Havurot Shalom, they came to Art Green. If somebody wanted a lecture about the *havurah* in their community, they invited Art Green. On the other hand, inside of the community, in the community meetings, I did not chair the meetings, I tried not to dominate the meetings. I tried hard to make sure my voice was not heard too loudly above the voices of others in the community. But then that was

frustrating for me. I was pissed off about what was going on in the community, but then I had to go out and talk about this ideal community we'd created. So I was in a kind of inner tension. Was I the leader of the community? The community did not want a leader, and I didn't know that I wanted to be leader of the community. (02:55:00) I didn't say, Yes, I want this, and I'm annoyed the community won't accept me as leader. I guess I was ambivalent about that role. Remember, I talked about Heschel and Zalman wanting to be my rebbe and I wouldn't want to have a rebbe — so I didn't want to be a rebbe either. Wouldn't want to have one, wouldn't want to be there. I don't like strong leaders in that sense. I really like the (02:55:19) charisma being located in the community, in the inner dynamic, and not in the individual. I was a reader of Buber's *I and Thou* and Buber's *Ideals of Community* before Havurat Shalom, and so I had — the charisma is supposed to be located in what Buber called the realm of the in-between, that which is in the center of the community, that empty space into which we all put our souls, that's where it is. But sometimes you get impatient waiting for that to happen. And especially if there's a whole group over there in the darkened corner that's just murmuring and unhappy. Then that doesn't happen. So then should the leader step in and try and become a leader again? No, I sort of pull myself back from that situation. (02:56:00) And then other people feel, Well, why don't you do something? This is your thing, why don't you assert some leadership? And I think I got mixed messages from the community about how much leadership they wanted me to take, and I myself gave mixed signals about how much leadership I wanted to take. So I would say toward the end of the first year onward, that was an ongoing sore point or unresolved point.

JG: For you and the community.

AG: Yes. How much I was leader, how much leadership I should take. And it didn't — it's not like we were constantly unhappy about that. Most of the time we were quite happy with each other. But I would say there were moments where that could bring a tension to the fore, about the question of what was my role and how much people were to count on me.

JG: Well, looking back on it from the vantage point of almost fifty years (02:57:00), was there a way to resolve that actually, or was that just inherent in the situation?

AG: I think it could have been put on the table more clearly and more forthrightly than it was. I think sometimes it was an unspoken issue. And I think, with the maturity of being a seventy-five instead of a twenty-eight-year-old, I can probably say, yes, it could have been dealt with more directly and more openly. Yeah.

JG: Did that issue of authority sort of pervade other aspects of life in the community? For instance, in the relationship between both the idealized notion of the relationship between

Art Green, 08/06/16

teachers and students, or teachers and learners, did teachers have any authority, as you were telling that story (02:58:00) about, I forget who it was?

AG: Buzzy and Steve Zweibaum.

JG: And the role of expertise in general.

AG: Yes, expertise was respected. I taught a course on Hasidism in the first year, and a course on Rabbi Nachman in the second year and had a wonderful group of people in each of those classes, and they respected my knowledge and learned a lot from it. And people certainly respected Zalman's knowledge the year that he taught, and Everett, Buzzy, people certainly respected their knowledge tremendously. And I think the members of the *havurah* recognized they had some exceptional teachers in their midst. I think we who taught felt appreciated by the *haver*. I think sometimes a teacher would feel disappointment that people didn't do assignments, or that people weren't, quote, taking it seriously enough. If you had a graduate exam (02:59:00) at Brandeis and you had a *havurah* class to prepare for, you did your graduate exam at Brandeis; that's where it counted. It was — and we said, Are we like Hebrew school? Are we becoming like Hebrew school where there's always something else more important in your life? And we tried to avoid that role in people's lives but sometimes it felt that way. So I think that how much time and how much psychological room do people have to take this as seriously as we think it's worth — I think we teachers sometimes felt that. We felt we were giving them a great deal, and they weren't always living up to it. They, people in the classes.

JG: As the years went on, one thing I'm not clear about — even in these early years, the first two years, you had recruited people who were there as faculty, who were members, but they were clearly there as faculty. As time went on, were there always faculty, or did members of the *havurah* (03:00:00) increasingly teach the classes? Who taught the classes? Could anybody teach a class, or were there people who were expected —

AG: No. This was not anybody could teach a class. It was more qualified people, more knowledgeable people, and that's what people wanted. It wasn't a sort of like, Havurah Institute where anybody with any degree of knowledge could teach a class and if people sign up, that's great. It was not that model. *[pause]* Were there people who came not as *havurah* faculty members but as *havurah* members who wound up teaching? I don't remember — did Joe ever teach in the *havurah*? Did he say he taught in the *havurah*? I don't think so. In our years, Joel Rosenberg didn't teach. Maybe Roskies — (03:01:00) Roskies might have taught in the *havurah*, might have taught Yiddish in the *havurah*, for example.

JG: He did, Joel Rosenberg talked about taking his class.

AG: So he would have been one. I can't remember who else.

JG: What's your sense of, as time went on — even after you left, but in the first five years and beyond, what role did classes play in the life of the *havurah*? Or did it become more of like a local, neighborhood shul?

AG: Well, the seminary part was really over after two years. First of all, the draft ended, and so draft deferments became irrelevant after the second year. And we realized that we were never going to ordain rabbis. And everyone was sort of relieved once we decided that. And —

JG: Were you? (03:02:00)

AG: I wanted learning to be a significant part, and I wanted learning to remain intense. And I think I had to convince myself that it still would. And I taught classes all through my five years that I think were pretty serious and pretty well-respected, and so I felt good about that. But the learning component declined somewhat.

JG: I guess, what I'm asking, particularly in light of how your own life and career evolved, to what extent you were really devoted to the idea of training and creating a new kind of rabbi?

AG: Yeah. I like the idea of creating a new kind of Jewish leader. I didn't know if I wanted to call it rabbi. (03:03:00) But a new kind of Jewish leader. We thought maybe we'd ordain people with the title *haver*. Rather than rabbi, because the title rabbi was so corrupted. And also we didn't want to train people to *paskin halakha*, to make *halakhic* decisions and things like that; that wasn't very interesting. But, you know that in the mid-1970s when I was teaching at Penn, a group of us, Everett and Zalman and Herschel [see addendum], Max Ticktin and I tried to create a seminary without walls because we wanted — we felt we wanted something different than rabbinic training. And then my years at RRC [Reconstructionist Rabbinical College], and then here of course, it's been my whole life. I have three times left the secular academy for this fly-by-night rabbinic school vision.

JG: That's why I ask!

AG: Kathy used to say, some guys every few years get a little red sportscar, and Green gets a little red rabbinical school every few years. To which my comment, my note is, "red" in that sense refers mostly the color of the ink in the ledger book of those rabbinical schools. (03:04:00) And a little bit to the students' politics. [laughs] But you know — but I obviously — it's what I have to do in my life, it's train rabbis, and I'm very happy with it, I'm glad I'm doing it.

JG: Exactly, but at that point — you were ready to let it go at that moment.

AG: I don't know that I — exactly. Yeah.

JG: Okay. So I want to spend sort of the next, last period of our talk this morning and afternoon, just on some larger reflections about the directions your career has taken, but also the meaning and impact of the *havurah*, both for you personally but also for American Jewry and beyond. So you started to mention just a few minutes ago, but I want you to talk about when and why you decided to leave the *havurah*. (03:05:00)

AG: I decided to leave the *havurah* partly for practical reasons; as I say, I needed a job; we could not go on living on the margins that way forever.

JG: This was '73?

AG: I left in fall of '73. I would have to get a job.

JG: Where were you in your graduate degree?

AG: Let me tell you that story. In the first two years I completed my coursework in graduate school. And then when I really got involved in the *havurah*, which is toward the end of the first year, I more or less dropped out of graduate school. I never told Professor Altmann I was dropping out. Altmann's idea was, you want to be a scholar of Jewish mysticism, that means you become a medievalist, you learn medieval Latin, medieval Arabic, you do a manuscript, and the whole thing seemed very boring to me in 1968. And I more or less dropped any involvement. I didn't prepare for my exams, I didn't prepare a dissertation topic, I just sort of stood on the side. For three years or so, I was involved in the *havurah*. That was (03:06:00) what I did, teaching in the *havurah*, preparing for teaching, lecturing about the *havurah*, adult ed and so on. I was not doing anything towards an academic career, and I thought maybe I would drop it. The Ph.D. was just too profane for me, too violating of the stuff I loved. To write footnotes about mystics was really not what I should be doing with my life — be a mystic rather than write footnotes about mystics. And then two things happened. Dick Israel came to me and said, circa 1971, "I want to offer you a job." Dick was by then Greater Boston Regional Hillel director. He said, "I want you to — I'm going to set you up in a storefront, either on Mass Ave or in Harvard Square or someplace — a storefront Hillel for all the people who would never walk into Hillel. And you won't have to raise money, you won't have to run dances and socials, all these things Hillel directors do for Jewish boy meets Jewish girl. (03:07:00) You'll have meditation classes, you'll teach text classes, you'll have a big Friday night Shabbat dinner for everybody, hundreds of people will come, sort of like Shlomo Carlebach style. And of course you'll be there all day talking to people and engaging with people. And I thought about it, and he said, "Probably it'll open around noon and you'll be there until around ten o'clock at night." And I remember thinking, "Noon to ten o'clock at night is a nine to five, only later." And I said, "This is the best job offer I'm going to get other than being a professor. And I think I don't want it. Because I think I want time for my own learning, and my own growth, and my own

thinking and writing.” And I said, I better go back and finish the doctorate. And then I saw also that two of my students, Larry Fine and David Roskies, were getting doctorates already, they were writing dissertations, and if they could do it, I could do it too. So then I went back to Altmann, and I said, “Professor Altmann, I want to write a book on Rabbi Nachman (03:08:00) of Bratslav. Would you accept it as a dissertation? And he said yes, he was very enthusiastic about it. I still have his letter inside my copy of Nachman’s teachings. And so I wrote what became *Tormented Master, The Life and Spiritual Quest of Rabbi Nachman* and that became my dissertation. So I was on that path already, and then this job at Penn came up. What happened was Larry Silberstein was teaching at Penn. Larry had been an older fellow student of mine at Brandeis in my undergraduate years. He was teaching at Penn in modern Jewish thought. They needed someone in classical Jewish thought. Larry turned to Altmann, and Altmann recommended me. And that was a very nice compliment by Altmann, a very nice job offer, and I went to Penn and I got a job at Penn.

JG: Seventy-three.

AG: Seventy-three. I was there for eleven years. After eleven years at Penn, after eleven years at Penn in 1984, I was earning \$27,000 a year. (03:09:00) Right. *[laughs]*

JG: Sounds like you were doing just as well as a grad student, ten years earlier. So from there, you moved several times, between RRC —

AG: So I went to Penn; I was at Penn for eleven years. At Penn I was in the Religious Studies department. I was the Jewish Studies person in the Religious Studies Department. Jewish Studies were also called — Semitics Department, Oriental Studies Department. The Oriental Studies Department never liked the Religious Studies Department very much, and the relations were not very good. When I came up for tenure at Penn after six years or so, two things happened that were interesting. One was my department chair said to me, “You know all those articles on your CV (03:10:00) about personal search, and about Jewish theology today, and about faith? Better take them off your CV. They don’t look good for a professor of religion.

JG: That was serious?

AG: That’s right. They’re too personal, they’re not strictly academic, and I then knew that that was not the place for me. It also happened that Judah Goldin, who was a senior scholar in Oriental Studies, refused to support me when I came up for tenure. I had to go to my department chair and say, if you made a list of Judah Goldin’s pet peeves in life, they would be mysticism, Hasidism, Jewish counterculture, everything I stand for. And I got tenure a year later, but it was just annoying to me. And I was very underpaid, and very badly treated. I did not have the good sense, or I was too damn proud, to go look for other jobs and negotiate and get a raise that way, play the academic game. I never played

it. And I felt very (03:11:00) disheartened by Penn. So then RRC came along. They were looking for a dean; they were looking for someone to make the place more serious, academically and Jewishly. I'd always been interested in rabbinic education. I went and taught a course there — wonderful students, enthusiastic, exciting. I took the job there as dean. Two years later, the president suddenly resigned. I wound up being president of RRC which was very strange, because I'd never been a Reconstructionist, I'd never been associated with Kaplan or the Reconstructionist Movement. Everybody knew I was a Heschel student. And I thought that was interesting, possibly a creative moment in American Jewish history. But it never quite happened the way I hoped it would. I had hoped that my being at RRC would lead to a sort of breakup of the Conservative Movement. That the left-wing of the Conservative Movement might join us instead, and — this is not our topic, so — that's why I was there, for ten years (03:12:00) and it was time for me to leave. My *shidduch* with Reconstructionists eventually did not work out, I saw, and I wanted to go. And then I got the very great honor of Brandeis offering me what had been Professor Altmann's chair, the Lown chair at Brandeis. So I came to Brandeis in '94. '93, actually. And I was at Brandeis until 2003, when I had these two terrific graduate students at Brandeis, Ebn Leader and Or Rose. Or was my doctoral student, and Ebn, whom I'd gotten to know in Israel, would come here to teach at New Jew [see addendum], did not really have a B.A. or anything, but he was an absolutely brilliant guy. And I talked to Joe Reimer, who was the faculty at Brandeis, and Joe got Ebn into a Master's in Education program, the idea being that Joe would teach him education, and I would continue teaching him Jewish sources. That was wonderful. (03:13:00) And I look at these two guys one day, and I say, "We have to do something here, we have to create something. I'm not sure what, but you guys are so talented and work so well together. There's real warmth between us." And I said, "We ought to create something like a Pardes North America — a one-year intensive Jewish living and learning program for people here, emphasizing the strengths of American Jewish life." And we all loved the idea, and what we wanted to do was too Jewish for Brandeis to be comfortable with it. I knew that, so I went to David Gordis, and David said, "That's a terrific idea, but we're thinking about opening up a rabbinical school."

JS: This is David Gordis at Hebrew College?

AG: At Hebrew College. And I became the founding dean of the rabbinical school, and they were my first two hires. That's how the rabbinical school happened, really.

JS: So actually, the rabbinical school was not on your mind.

AG: It was not on my mind. It happened. It was handed to me by David Gordis.

JS: B'shert.

AG: It was somehow. Even though I have lots of complaints about him — he handed me a rabbinical school without any money behind it, without any willingness to raise the money it needed. (03:14:00) We're still suffering from that, but nevertheless we are here.

JG: So are there key ideas and readings that you feel like you've taken with you to RRC, to the rabbinical school here at Hebrew College, that you first tried to articulate within Havurat Shalom?

AG: Yeah, so I want to tell you about a talk of Zalman's. Zalman, just before his death, got an honorary degree from Hebrew College. I guess it was graduation 2014. He came to graduation. After graduation, that was Kathy's seventieth birthday — which wonderfully he was at — and then he came to graduation, spoke at graduation, then he went to Isabella Freedman, then he died a few weeks later. He had exerted himself too much. (03:15:00) It was the eve of his ninetieth birthday. And he said — he looked around and he said, "This is Havurat Shalom. This is the continuation of Havurat Shalom. Everything you're doing here at Hebrew College is continuing the vision of Havurat Shalom." And he talked about what that vision was, and he realized that he articulated it more fully than I had ever quite articulated it to myself. But it was true. And that means: The intense quality of learning, but in a setting where personal questions and personal relationships to the tradition and the texts are on the table and welcome. The combination between learning and intimate community, and the intimate community especially built around the *hevruta* of learning, the groups in which we learned. And the sense that we are creating a model community that we hope other people out there will imitate and learn from, especially us people — this comes from training rabbis — people who go forth from our community and take that community as a model (03:16:00) of the kinds of communities they're going to create around the country. So that was all in some ways the *havurah*, the translation of the *havurah* into the world of professional training that rabbinical school is. So in many ways my whole life has been shaped by the *havurah* years, my whole project. I sometimes define my project as creating a seeker-friendly Judaism. Creating a Judaism that welcomes seekers, that has room for seekers, for people with more questions than answers, and so on, saying, Yes, you too belong in this tradition and have a place in it and can be leaders of it. Leaders of it because you're one step ahead of the people around you in seeking, not because you have all the answers. And all of that really is language I would have used, already, in the *havurah*. And sort of comes out of the matrix of that experience. So I think those were in some ways the critical years for me in forming who I am and what I've done with my life.

JG: Are there ways in which (03:17:00) those basic ideas that you formed back then, in the Havurat Shalom early years — are there ways in which you feel like your life or your subsequent thinking has diverged from any of the basic values or ideas that you articulated then or were living then?

AG: Well, I'm considerably less naïve. I do understand that people need to earn a living. So I see reality in a somewhat different way, I would say. But no, the essential values are very much the same. I feel I very much tried to live up to the values of those years. Which is to say, the model of spiritual intensity, the sort of values of a devotional life that I still care about. I have two students I'm very close to, and we all talk about had we been born Catholics, we probably would have been monastics, and I still think of myself as a married (03:18:00) monastic in some ways. I really am, sort of very committed to this devotional enterprise, that we're here to stand in the presence of God and make that real in our lives, and that's what life is all about. And that is a message I've tried to give to people in various garb, while being very intellectually honest about what I do believe or don't believe, both about God and tradition. But Radical Judaism's a very strong statement of where I stand on those issues. The devotional focus, that's — my life is about a kind of spiritual task, is very much still who I am. I'm involved, at this point, in lots and lots of writing projects, but one of them is a commentary on the Siddur which I've been working on for years and one day will be published with a Siddur, and it's very much a devotional commentary. Another is a two-volume work which I'm putting out with one of these students, (03:19:00) which is now going to be called *A New Hasidism*. And *A New Hasidism* has two volumes, one called *Roots* and one called *Branches*. *Roots* goes back to Buber and Zeitlin and Heschel and Zalman and Shlomo, and *Branches* goes, moving forward, to creating a new Hasidism, a hasidic community for American Jews today, and it has a series of essays by ourselves and by various other writers and thinkers and students. So that's all very much what I might have been thinking about in 1968.

JG: So you founded — and this is my last question — you founded Havurat Shalom almost fifty years ago with what you called a dream of changing the Jewish world. So, half a century later, how do you assess its impact?

AG: It is hard to know. Sometimes I feel we had a tremendous impact on Jewish life. (03:20:00) The synagogue, the American synagogue, has become a much less formal and pretentious place. It's a place where the values of community are taken much more seriously — in a good synagogue — and where the rabbi is much more a facilitator of community than he/she was trained to be in those days. Sometimes I like to think that's partly the impact of the *havurah* on the American synagogue community — that would be a huge impact. But I recognize also that the times have changed, and that same impact might have happened through other, broader cultural influences than just our voice. Still, I think there's a sense of that new Jewish learning, and a sense of the intensity and importance of real community; are messages that we have conveyed. I think we could have done better. We were purists. We never wanted to create a package. (03:21:00) This is how you create a *havurah* in your community. We never wanted to be what we called a "Holy Mother Church" of the *havurah* movement. That sounded repulsive to us. We believed that each *havurah* has to arise spontaneously out of its own situation and the

needs of its own people. And I think that was a mistake. We might have spread the ideal of the *havurah* more widely had we been less averse to public relations, and organization of effort and things like that.

JG: Do you see the *havurot* that sort of grew up within the synagogue context as direct outgrowths in any sense?

AG: Indirect outgrowths, I would say. There were people who were parallel to us. There were two guys, Harold Schulweis in California and Dov Elkins in New Jersey, who were starting to do it around the same time we were doing Havurat Shalom. So I don't mean to take the credit away from them, but many of those places invited me and many others to speak about our *havurah* experience there and used us as (03:22:00) the sort of strong example of that today where every synagogue in America has *havurot*. Even some synagogues have a *havurah*, but I'd like to see entire congregations divided up into *havurot*, and the *havurah* ideal much more strongly implanted in North American Jewish life.

JG: What about the idea of independent minyanim?

AG: So I have some disappointment that we didn't push it in a stronger and more organized way. Now the independent minyanim today are very interesting, because they annoyingly seem to feel that they've invented this thing. People like Hadar and the independent minyanim in various places make it look as though they, in the twenty-first century, came up with this idea that you could have an independent minyan, and that's a little bit annoying to us *vatikim* who think what they basically did was a second generation of what we did. (03:23:00) And they sort of enjoy taking credit for it, especially when they line up to take donations from federations which are using them to save the young people, something we never tried to do, and feel was — feels a little bit cheesy to us sometimes. But all right, God bless them.

JG: Any final thoughts you want to add before we close?

AG: I'm sure there are a hundred stories we didn't tell, and a hundred things that we could add to this.

JG: I want to just say that we're sorry that Kathy's voice couldn't be heard more.

AG: Yes, Kathy's voice is gone, and I feel very, very distressed about that. And she was very much a part of this in the beginning, and we did it as a couple, and I couldn't have done it without her. And I think our marriage, first, and then Michael and Ruthie Brooks, Ruthie *alav ha-shalom*, those two marriages were in some ways models for the next generation of young married people who came along. And Kathy was just very important

Art Green, 08/06/16

in that, in her quiet but very spiritually alive way. And I'm really sorry that she's, as you see, almost completely beyond language at this point.

Addendum

Pg. 16 — Ben Gold: Rabbi Ben-Zion Gold at Harvard Hillel

Pg. 44 — Steve Epstein rather than repeating Jerry Shostak.

Pg. 47 — David's wife was named Dina.

Pg. 53 — I misspoke when I said Herschel. It's meant to say Matt.

Pg. 56 — "New Jew" refers to the New Jewish High School, now known as Gann Academy.