

Jewish Counterculture Oral History Project

BELLA AND GEORGE SAVRAN

Interviewed by Jayne K. Guberman

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

Jayne Guberman (JG): My name is Jayne Guberman, and today is Monday, September 19, 2016. I'm here with George and Bella Savran in New York City, at the home of Barry Holtz, and we're going to record an interview for the Jewish Counterculture Oral History Project. George and Bella, do I have your permission to record this interview?

George Savran (GS): Yes.

Bella Savran (BS): Yes.

JG: Great. We'll be discussing your experiences in the late sixties and early seventies, particularly your involvement in Havurat Shalom, and also the impact that the *havurah* has had on your own life and beyond. I'd like to start by talking with each of you about your personal and family background, and to flesh out a little about who you were at the time that you first got involved with this experimental Jewish community that was getting started in Boston.

So, George, let's begin with you. You were born in 1947, in Brooklyn. Can you tell us a little bit about your family when you were growing up?

GS: Yeah. It was, as I wrote there, we grew up in Borough Park, but it was Borough Park before it turned religious, so, it was very much a kind of middle class, immigrant community. In other words, my street was Italian, largely. There were plenty of Jews along with — Italian, Greek, lots of communities like that. Jewish involvement was — we were members of a shul. My grandparents lived upstairs from us. They were more observant. But any kind of formal Jewish thing wasn't much of importance to us. Mostly it centered around ethnic issues and family issues and things like that. So I had the normal experience of that sort, going to Talmud Torah.

JG: Tell me a little bit about your parents, before you launch into that.

GS: They were already second-generation Americans. Their parents had come from Europe at different times, except my mother's mother actually had been born in America. They spoke Yiddish or Russian to each other. My parents knew to understand a little bit of that, but not very much. On one side, my mother's side, they were more religious, and on my father's side less religious.

JG: What did your parents do for a living?

GS: My father managed a factory. My mother worked as a bookkeeper for a couple of years before she had my sister, and then she didn't work after that. Later on in her life,

she did bookkeeping for my father's company. So — the business world. The home was, again, I think it was sort of a typical Jewish home in the fifties. We value books and learning, but we don't read a lot. We think Judaism is pretty important, but we don't practice a heck of a lot of Judaism. We keep kosher in the home, but we'll go out to eat in a Chinese restaurant. (00:03:00) That sort of milieu.

JG: So, at what point did your family move to Upstate New York?

GS: We moved to Upstate New York — my parents both wanted to get out from the circle of my grandmother's family in a sense, because it became a kind of magnet. She had seven brothers and sisters. All of them would come every Sunday, and on the one hand there was this nice family feeling, and on the other hand they felt invaded, and they were not happy. For a variety of other reasons, they were not happy with living in New York, so we moved upstate. My father's company had decided to move upstate, and he got an advance on his job.

JG: What kind of company was it?

GS: They made plastic sunglasses. So, we moved to this small town called Gloversville, which was about two hundred miles north of New York City. It had a small but active Jewish community, and for me it was very important, because both it being a Conservative shul and also the Hebrew school situation was very different. I began to take a much more significant interest in Judaism and learning Hebrew and in going to shul and leading services and things like that. So, that was very important for me.

JG: What do you think drove that change and growing interest in Judaism?

GS: Partly the environment was more hospitable. Otherwise I don't know. My grandparents would say, "Well, you're taking after your grandfather," but I don't think so, because I don't identify those particular things with my grandfather. I give a lot of credit to the rabbi, the Conservative rabbi who was there for one year when we moved Upstate. Rabbi Vanderwald. He then moved away to another community, but somehow, he was for me the first significant Jewish teacher. I can't remember very much of what he taught me. I was in the sixth grade. But he was a significant figure for me. He was a significant figure. So, I would give him more credit than, perhaps, whatever. I don't know.

JG: You mentioned also in your pre-interview questionnaire that you developed an interest in the Holocaust, and also in Zionism.

GS: Well, then what happened was, one summer I went to Tel Yehudah Young Judea camp, and that was a very important experience. That was after my tenth year in high school. There I was exposed for the first time to all sorts of things about Judaism and Jewish life, even though Tel Yehudah was not a religious community. Still it was the first time that I would say I experienced Shabbat in a group setting that wasn't sitting around the table with the family and eating gefilte fish but was something of a spiritual experience. The Holocaust came up around Tisha B'Av. That was the way that Tel Yehudah dealt with (00:06:00) the whole business of fasting and things like that. Then after that, the time was quite — I think it was after Wiesel had already published *Night*. It was 1963, and there was a growing awareness and a willingness to talk about the Holocaust in non-survivor circles, as opposed to, say, what you were —

JG: Among non-survivors as well.

GS: Yeah. So those things sort of came together, and I was very active in whatever Jewish youth movements were around, USY and Young Judaea and other groups as well. All of that sort of fed into this very — can I actually say intense? — yes, a sort of intense involvement in and concern for Jewish life. I had interest already at that time about going to rabbinical school. I was very taken with Jewish culture in the sense of Israeli dancing. I didn't know anything very much about Jewish texts and learning, but those things were very important to me at that time.

JG: At some point you worked at Camp Ramah.

GS: Right.

JG: When was that?

GS: That was at the end of high school. I worked there for two summers, in the kitchen.

JG: Which Ramah was this?

GS: This was in Wingdale, in —

BS: The Berkshires.

GS: Yeah, it's called the Berkshires. Yeah, I worked two summers in the kitchen staff, and those were very important experiences for me.

JG: How did you end up working in the kitchen staff?

GS: There was a program. I mean, I didn't know anybody who went to Ramah, and I think I was looking for work. I forgot how I heard about it. I knew it existed because I had been active in USY, but I didn't know anybody who had been to Ramah. It was very important to me. Even though I wasn't on the educational staff or a counselor or a camper or any of those things, still it was one of the first opportunities that I had since Tel Yehudah to really participate in some larger Jewish framework that wasn't a USY convention or a Young Judaea convention or something like that.

JG: What drew you in? What appealed to you in that setting? Can you put your finger on it or try to articulate?

GS: One of the things about growing up in a small town in Upstate New York was that there just weren't very many other Jewish kids. Relatively speaking, Gloversville was pretty good. There were two hundred Jewish families, which was fairly sizable, and an active community. On the other hand, there were very few different kinds of Jewish people. That is to say, either people who had gone to yeshiva or people who had gone to day school and people who were learned and people who came from more religious homes. Part of the attraction, I think, for Ramah was meeting all sorts of people like that, meeting sometimes rabbinical students (00:09:00) who were at JTS, people who had gone through Ramah for many years, people who were counselors. That was very attractive to me.

JG: Had you ever experienced the kind of services or the spiritual life that Ramah tried to foster?

GS: A little bit at Young Judaea, a little bit at Tel Yehudah. That was the first time that I experienced what I guess one comes to call "Shabbat in white —" [*laughs*]

JG: What does that mean?

GS: In the Jewish camp experience — you know, where everybody dresses up and everybody takes a shower and everyone goes to services and there's Kabbalat Shabbat. I don't think I had —

BS: And wears white. [*laughs*]

GS: And white, right. Of course. I mean, that's essential. I don't think I had a close relationship to the *tefilot* as a spiritual experience. The whole, you know, the whole

avirah, setting, was spiritual in that sense, in the sense that it was different from the rest of the week, but different from what I'll talk about later with regard to the *havurah*.

JG: So you went to college in the mid-sixties, 1965 to —

GS: Sixty-five to sixty-nine.

JG: At the University of Rochester. So, how did you decide where to go to school, and what were you interested in?

GS: I wanted to go to Brandeis, partly because I had met some people from Brandeis, and partly because I was interested in Jewish Studies, and partly because I was thinking about rabbinical school. And Brandeis, you know? Brandeis already had this kind of cachet. But, I didn't have a scholarship. I was from New York State, and New York State had these wonderful Regents scholarships, and the regents scholarship covered the largest part of my college tuition if I went in-state. So I looked into where to go in-state. I decided I didn't want to go to a city, so I didn't want to go to Columbia. I didn't want to go to places like Albany and things like that. Then Rochester was there. I got a good education.

JG: What did you study?

GS: I studied English literature primarily. I got a very good education. I met all sorts of interesting people. It did very little for me in terms of my Jewish life. At the end of my — or, in the middle of my freshman year, I thought about transferring to JTS and transferring to the joint program. I even went so far as to have an interview, but for various reasons I decided not to do that. So, my college experience was very rich, and very good in terms of growth, intellectual growth and things like that, but in terms of contributing to my Jewish life and my Jewish experience, minimal.

JG: Did you spend your junior year at Hebrew University?

GS: Yeah. That was very important for me.

JG: This was '67?

GS: Sixty-seven, sixty-eight. This was right after the war.

JG: Right after the war.

GS: Yeah. I arrived there a month after the war was over, and it was a very exciting time, and I was right for it. It was the right time for me. It was not the right time in terms of learning, knowing Hebrew. I didn't know very much Hebrew, so many of the classes I took were (00:12:00) either in English language, or sort of were called "*Anglit kalah*," which meant —

BS: *Ivrit kalah*.

JG: *Ivrit kalah*.

GS: *Ivrit Kalah*, but we said *Anglit kalah*, which was "easy English," because basically there was very little difference between the two.

JG: I see.

GS: But it was very important to me, again in terms of having contact with all sorts of other Jewish people my age, in terms of being able to study texts for the first time. This was the first — really, I would say — the first real encounter I had with Jewish texts. It was nowhere near as intense as it was later, but I was ready for it. I had been studying English literature, and already I had a kind of deep feeling about English poetry and ancient languages and things like that, and so I was ready for it. It was a wonderful experience. It was a wonderful experience.

JG: What do you remember about the Six Day War, and what impact was that having on you and others who were there in the immediate aftermath?

GS: In the immediate aftermath there was general euphoria in the country at the time. Prior to that, I wasn't that aware. I knew what was going on, but mostly my concerns were very self-centered. Like, if there's a war, I won't get to go on my junior year abroad. That sort of thing. My concern for the welfare of the Jewish people at that time, much less I would say. [*laughs*] It was appropriate for someone being nineteen or twenty years old, in a certain extent.

JG: So how would you describe your Jewish identity at that point, and how did your feelings about Israel figure into that?

GS: It was very important to me, but it was important as a resource, and once I was in Israel living for the year, in some ways I appreciated the country, and in other ways it did not make me want to move back there. I did not feel at home there. I felt like I'm a product of the American counterculture, and the counterculture is happening in America

and not happening in Israel, as witnessed by, let's say, 1967, when the Sergeant Pepper album came out from the Beatles. Some of us brought it to Israel and played it for Israelis, and they said, But you can't dance to it. That sort of defined it in a certain way, you know? It's not about the experience. It's about what you can use it for. So, Israel was not on the horizon for me as a place to live. On the other hand, as a resource for me in terms of learning Hebrew, in terms of study, in terms of cultural things, it was very important for me. But until I came into serious contact with Bella, I would say that I had not really thought that I would ever end up in Israel, living.

JG: When did you two meet?

GS: We met in Camp Ramah, both of us working as counselors in the same age group in 1969. (00:15:00)

JG: So, this was later.

GS: This was later, right. I had finished college, and Bella had just finished her junior year in Israel.

JG: We'll come back to that. So, were you still thinking about rabbinical school at this point?

GS: Absolutely. That was my plan my senior year in college, and I went and applied to JTS, and I had every intention of going to JTS, and then JTS had the great wisdom of rejecting me. At the time I was floored. I said, "How could they possibly reject me? I'm so wonderful!" But they had the foresight to see that this was not good. Also it was 1969, and all sorts of guys were trying to get out on draft deferments, and I think from their standpoint I fell into that. There were many ways in which I was antagonistic, contrary, deliberately provocative in ways that only looking back at the interview process and the application process, I could see that they could not possibly take me seriously as a candidate for what JTS was at the time.

JG: Can you elaborate at all?

GS: One of the stories I've told many times is that on the application question, one of the questions was, "What is the greatest problem facing mankind?" Then, it was mankind and not humankind. What is the greatest problem facing mankind, and how can Conservative Judaism help to solve it? Okay? Which is a fair question for a rabbinical school to ask. Basically, they wanted to hear a sermon. My response was, "Do you want to hear a sermon? Don't you want to get to know me? How can this possibly help you get to know

me?" They didn't like that at all, okay? In fact, in my interview, they said, "Tell us, elaborate on this." And it was — contrary.

JG: [*laughs*]

GS: That was, I think, you know — describes the situation, to some extent.

JG: In general, your college years coincided with a tremendous period of social ferment, especially among American youth. To what extent were you personally involved and/or influenced by the general counterculture and all the social movements that were —

GS: I mean socially, certainly influenced. It, I would say, enabled me, as it did a lot of people in my generation, to feel a kind of combined alienation with certain aspects of American life, and yet a feeling like there was a larger group around me that shared my values, and I shared their values, in terms of politics, in terms of the openness of relationships, and things like that, that there were certainly things to be gained here. I was not terribly active politically, like most college kids. You know, I went to SDS demonstrations and anti-war stuff and various kinds of things like that, and at the University of Rochester where I was, there were all sorts of protests against big business. (00:18:00) At the time, Kodak and Xerox were the dominant forces, and naturally they were the forces of capitalism, and they were bad in our eyes — all of those kinds of things. I would say I was a fellow traveler in many ways. I enjoyed the benefits of all those things, and yet I was not out in the foreground. What wasn't there for me, and wasn't there until I got to the *havurah*, was any connection between that world and Judaism. My friends in college were very lovely people, none of whom were involved in Jewish life. I had one friend, slightly younger than me, who was involved in Jewish life. In fact, she became a closer friend, and we met later on in graduate school again, in Brandeis. But, no, there were very little to combine my Jewish concerns with these kinds of general countercultural feelings.

JG: Yeah. By the time you returned from Israel, there was a tremendous amount of free-floating anxiety about the draft. How did that affect you?

GS: Very much so. I mean, again, I was serious about rabbinical school, but I knew that rabbinical school would give me a deferment, and certainly that was an important thing. So, I didn't even think of the possibility of doing something else at the time. In 1969, that was the name of the game, you know? We had to find something. Either you were going to run away to Canada, or do something else underground, or find some way to get out.

JG: So when you look back on that period, what do you consider to be the most formative experiences of that period, in terms of your own evolving identity?

GS: What I said, primarily. I said on one hand, this countercultural feeling and this sense of intellectual awakening in college, a kind of sense of openness about relationships and society that was there, and on the other hand, a real thirst for something significant, and significantly related to that in terms of Jewish life.

JG: So how would you describe your sense of self Jewishly, your Jewish identity, at that point that you were graduating college, and on the verge of getting involved with Havurat Shalom, which we'll get to in a minute?

GS: It wasn't suppressed. In other words, my friends knew I was observant to some extent. I would go back and forth with regard to things like Kashrut. I would go back and forth with regard to things like going to services. I'd go back and forth with regard to a whole bunch of things like that. So, it wasn't a secret that I was certainly more Jewishly involved and Jewishly interested than any of my friends, but it wasn't as if I became a Jewish leader or sought to express myself more in terms (00:21:00) of what was available in college. What was available in college was a kind of mediocre Hillel experience, and lots of social situations. There were many Jewish students at Rochester, but, very little beyond that.

JG: Would you describe yourself as searching?

GS: Yeah, very much so. Very much so. So, searching was essentially focused on intellectual things at the time. I read a lot. I was focused on learning Hebrew. I had some — one or two courses on Hebrew texts, but nothing like what happened when I went to the *havurah*. So, yes, I would say searching in that sense, but I didn't quite know. The only model for Jewish life that I could think of seriously, if I had any kind of — I think the thing to compare it to was the rabbinate. In other words, I didn't know anything about Jewish academics. I didn't know anything about Jewish social — the Federation world, things like that. I didn't know very much about Jewish education. So, like not a few people, one went to rabbinical school in order to become a knowledgeable Jew, because there really weren't Jewish studies programs around, except for something like Brandeis. So, I would say that —

JG: What did you see the role of being a rabbi as being at that point?

GS: For me, at that point, it was entirely standing up before the congregation, leading services, giving sermons, and things like that. I had no understanding at the time of the

pastoral role of a rabbi, and ultimately that was one of the things that I finally came to understand and realize that that wasn't me. That moved me away from wanting to become a rabbi.

JG: So, let's turn now to focus a little bit on how you came to become involved with Havurat Shalom, and the beginnings of your experiences as a member of it. Bella, we're going to talk to you, and then we'll sort of come together and talk about the *havurah* experience. So, when did you first become aware of the idea of creating a new Jewish intentional community?

GS: So, in my junior year in Israel, I was in a class on the Five Megillot, together with David Roskies. Dovid had a copy of the first issue of *Response Magazine*, and in that issue of *Response Magazine*, Art Green had his famous article on psychedelics and Kabbalah.

JG: What did he do in that article?

GS: Well, he talked about psychedelics and Kabbalah. And, you know, I said, "Oh! Here is somebody trying to combine issues of the counterculture with Jewish life. This is very interesting." I still at that point thought only of going to JTS and thought only in terms of a rigid model of what a rabbi might be, and what a Jewishly knowledgeable person might be. But that was the first spark. (00:24:00)

JG: What was Art's point in this article?

GS: Art's point was that — as I remember it, it's been a long time — was that the religious experience, the experience of the divine, a sense of spirituality, was not the opposite of what he described as psychedelic experience and drug experience, but in fact the drug experience could enhance the sense of spirituality. That was a real surprise. I wasn't a big drug taker. I smoked marijuana like most people my age did at the time, but just the very notion —

BS: No psychedelics. [*laughs*]

GS: Yeah, I didn't drop acid, you know, which the article was talking about. But for the first time, it struck me that there was some sort of meeting ground between these things, and also being in Israel and being a little bit more regular about going to services and things like that, questions about what a spiritual life might be started to form in some ways. I mean, I was always involved in some ways in Jewish prayer, and yet it was not something that was close to my heart, okay? In other words, through music, Jewish

prayer became important to me, I would say, at that time. Later on, the words took on meaning in a different way. So, I would say Art's article then was very, very important, but it was the very beginning. It did not convince me to say, Hey, I want to continue and look into this business of Havurat Shalom. That only happened when I got back to college. I applied to JTS. I had my bad rejection experience. In the meantime, I had read something more that the *havurah* had begun. So I wrote a letter saying I'd like to come and visit, and I did, and I found it to be much more something of an expression of who I was. They were interested in me, and I was interested in them. For the first time, I would say — I didn't know quite what I was getting into, because I didn't really have a sense of the kind of depth of spirituality and the concern with a religious life that really was central to a lot of things in the *havurah*. The university that I attended at the time was University of Rochester, and it was opposed to religious studies at the time. It was 1967, '69, and there was interest on the part of students. There was a big seminary outside of Rochester called the — I forgot the name of it — but there was a very significant person in 1968 named William Hamilton, who wrote a book about the death of God. He was invited together with a number of other people to a symposium, which was (00:27:00) massively attended by students, about the whole business of the study of religion. So, there were people who wanted to study religion, but the university was not interested. There were various reasons given. Some said that the university had a religious past and wanted to separate itself from that. It's not quite clear. Some say it had to do with the president of the university and his lack of interest in it. Later on, in the seventies, the University of Rochester did, in fact, start some Jewish Studies and some religious studies. So, going to the *havurah* and suddenly seeing that, let's say, what I had been reading about in a book by Gershon Scholem was something that could be taken seriously by somebody who wasn't a Kabbalist. That the notion of prayer could be something other than performance, okay? — or something other than an entirely personal, private experience. This was new to me. This was new to me, and I didn't feel that I knew very much about that so much about when I visited the *havurah*.

JG: So, visiting the *havurah* was part of the process of admissions?

GS: It was the process of admission. I was, in fact —

JG: I'd like you to really describe that process.

GS: Okay. I was the first person to do —

JG: And you were coming into the second cohort.

GS: Right, 1969.

JG: Right, so this was in the first year of the *havurah* that you went to visit.

GS: Right. They didn't quite know what to do with me. I mean, they all were interested, and I didn't know what to do with them. There wasn't a formal process. They said, Well, you should meet with Michael Brooks, and you should talk to Art, and you should meet with Barry Holtz, and you should meet with this person, and so I stayed for three or four days and had conversations with all these people.

JG: Over Shabbat, or during the week?

GS: This was just during the week. It was during the week. During that year, Shabbat services were much more limited than they became later on. But during that year, there were Shabbat services, but not on a regular basis. Well, let me talk about my own experience. So, when I got there, I met all these people. I had lovely conversations with them all. I sat in on a couple of classes, which were wonderful.

JG: What was your impression of the classes, and the people there?

GS: The classes were, like I say, you know — like, there was a seminar on, I think, Zohar that Art was teaching. I had some knowledge of stuff from reading Gershon Scholem, from reading other things, but I didn't have knowledge of texts, you know? And here we were sitting around discussing a text. Oh, this is something. This is a new kind of experience. I also became aware of the fact of one of the things that became very important to me, and that was the communal aspect of it — to some extent because people were living together, but to a larger extent because people were sharing their concern about Jewish life in a communal way. That was amazing to me.

JG: And that was right from the beginning.

GS: Yeah.

JG: From that first —

GS: Yeah, right from the first few days. I mean, my friends who (00:30:00) went to JTS also lived together, and yet when I went to visit them, as I did when I applied to JTS and stayed in the apartment of a number of friends, I didn't get the same feeling. I mean, it was clear that the *havurah* was concerned with communal experience. How that was going to be defined was something that would come up in the next couple of years. But yes, that was really a crucial thing. So there was an informal interview process where

they talked about me and I thought about them, and then they wrote me a letter back in a couple of weeks saying we like you, and the feeling is pretty much unanimous, da da da da da, and we'd like you to become part of the community, if you're interested. Well, that's wonderful.

JG: How important was the fact that this was billing itself as an alternative seminary?

GS: Very important, because I was still considering — again, my model of — to be an educated Jew was to be a rabbi. My career interest at the time was to be a rabbi. And the draft. All of those things still were important. So, yes, it was very important to me.

JG: So, what did you understand yourself to be committing to when you decided to become part of this second cohort?

GS: I knew it wasn't living in a commune.

JG: Not everybody lived in the *havurah*.

GS: No, only a couple of people did, because during the first year — well, during the second year, yes, there were three or four people. There were never more than three or four people living together.

JG: Living together in —

GS: In the house, in the house. Let me think how to phrase this. What was I committing to? I knew, as I said, I wasn't moving into a commune. I knew I wasn't moving into a religious situation where there would be requirements of me, as there would have been at JTS, saying you have to eat kosher, you have to keep Shabbat, and things like that. Yet it was also clear to me that I was moving toward a communal situation which was brand new to me, that the external things were going to be less important than the internal things. That was, in fact, something that was new and scary to me. I had friends, you know? And some close friends. My living situation when I was in college was somewhat communal, but it was not intense in the same sort of way. I would say that from the beginning, my sense of what I was committing myself to was — I was committing myself to study. I was committing myself to being part of a community. And hopefully I was committing myself to becoming a rabbi, as well. That's what I would say my understanding was in 1969.

JG: Okay. Bella, let's turn to you now, (00:33:00) and start again by talking about your family and your background, to the point that you also became involved with Havurat

Shalom. So, tell us about where and when you were born, and the circumstances at the time.

BS: My parents were Holocaust survivors from Poland. After the war, they went to Germany, so I was born in Germany in Bayreuth.

JG: In '49.

BS: In 1949. My father survived with his brother, and my mother survived with her two sisters and her mother.

JG: Survived the camps?

BS: Survived various things. Labor camps, ghettos, hiding. Three of my grandparents were killed in the Shoah, and of course most of their community. My parents were very Zionist already in Poland. My father was in Ha-Noar Ha-tsioni, and my mother, I don't know if she was in a youth group, but she was in a school where she learned spoken Hebrew, Israeli-style spoken Hebrew. So everyone who survived from her town speaks or spoke Hebrew very well.

JG: This is in the thirties and early forties?

BS: Yeah, yeah.

JG: How old were your parents during the war?

BS: They were — let's see, my father was born in 1918, and my mother in 1922, so they were like — my father was early twenties and my mother was in her teens. One of my aunts married somebody who was a doctor, and he was older, and he got a job in Bayreuth, Germany. This group that I just described had all met in Poland, and they went together to Germany.

JG: After the war?

BS: Yeah. I'm talking about after the war. They were all kind of from the same area in Galicia, in Poland. They all intended to move to Israel after the war, once the state was formed. Then my uncle, my father's brother, decided to move to America, where they had an uncle. In the meantime, it was very hard in Israel, so my parents decided to go to America with my father's brother, but always with the intention of eventually moving to Israel. I was brought up very much with that idea.

JG: And your grandmother —

BS: My grandmother moved to Israel with my two aunts, to Haifa. I unfortunately never met her, because (00:36:00) she died when I was like three years old. So then my parents moved to the Bronx first, and then to Manhattan.

JG: You were born where?

BS: In Germany. I was one and a half when they moved to New York.

JG: So your sisters were born here in the States.

BS: Yeah. I don't really remember. I don't remember Germany or the Bronx. I do remember Manhattan. I was there from the age of three in Manhattan. We lived near City College in Manhattan, and I went to a very Orthodox yeshiva called Yeshiva Samson Raphael Hirsch, Breuer's, until sixth grade, and then to another yeshiva in New Jersey for three years.

JG: Your parents moved —

BS: Yeah. They moved. When I was in sixth grade, they moved to New Jersey. My father changed businesses. My father was — my father and my uncle were in business. They began with groceries, with one grocery, and then they expanded to another one and then another one, but they didn't like the fact that you had to work on Shabbat. So in shul —

JG: Even in their own businesses?

BS: They had to. Yeah, they had to. It was too much to leave to other people, which was true of many Jews at that time, in the fifties. So in shul, in synagogue, my father heard from a friend about another business in New Jersey, of building houses, and you didn't have to work on Shabbat, so they moved to New Jersey. *[laughs]* And then we switched schools as well.

JG: Had the family been Orthodox all along?

BS: Yes, yes. My father's family was more Orthodox than my mother's, but in Poland they were all Orthodox. After the War, my mother's family in Israel was not Orthodox, but my family in America remained Orthodox. My father was from a hasidic background, of the Chortkover hasidim, but gradually he also became less hasidic, even in his teenage

years, and became more Religious Zionist. So, I grew up kind of in a Religious Zionist home. The schools that I went to at that time were not especially Zionist. The Jewish world changed. In the fifties, the yeshivot did not (00:39:00) talk about Zionism or Israel very much. It was a good Jewish education, a good traditional Jewish education with good teachers.

JG: Seperate for girls and boys?

BS: Separate, always —

JG: All the way through, right?

BS: All the way through, until tenth grade. Then I went to public high school. So, it was separate, and very good teachers. So, I feel like I learned a lot, as much as one can learn up to tenth grade. But they didn't talk about Israel in school, and they didn't talk about the Shoah. That was quite difficult for me, because in my house, I would say the main subjects of our family were Israel and the Shoah.

JG: So the Shoah was talked about in your home?

BS: Yeah, yeah. In my house, the Shoah was talked about in a very natural way.

JG: Let's just go back and say, your mother died, though, when you were —

BS: My mother died when I was sixteen, in my last year of high school.

JG: So, during your childhood she was there and this was sort of a very natural topic of conversation.

BS: Yeah, yeah. We knew — you know, I actually think that they handled it — afterward I came to work with a lot of children of Holocaust survivors, so I heard many, many stories of how families dealt with the Shoah, and there were some where they talked about it incessantly and with too many gory details for children or even teenagers to handle. Then there were some families where they didn't talk about it at all. In my family, I would say they talked about it. They told us what happened with our grandparents, and, you know, they told us bits of what happened. And of course, it was always mentioned, but it was almost always mentioned in the context of appreciating, and almost being in wonderment about their own — that their life continued. It was really about having appreciation and faith in God, and in the future, and the State of Israel was considered a miracle — a total miracle. They weren't especially political or anything. It was more like,

this horrible thing happened to us, and now we have a country. It was, like, an amazing experience. That's why I moved to Israel.

JG: Did your parents give up at some point on the idea of moving to Israel themselves?

BS: Yeah.

JG: When was that?

BS: Probably when they moved to New Jersey, I think. Because in New Jersey, it was a better life. It was safer. It was safe. First of all, it was safe. They became more — and my father wasn't (00:42:00) working, so they became more a part of the Jewish community. It was a very strong Orthodox community, in Elizabeth, New Jersey. I think they just became more Americanized, although they continued to be in a social circle of survivors. But they were there already more years, and they realized that to make the move didn't make sense, and also my father was very, very, very close with his brother, and my mother with my aunt. Really, the two families did everything together, everything. So, after a certain while it became clear that they weren't going to move, but that they still thought that moving to Israel was a great idea.

JG: How did you feel about it?

BS: I always thought I would live in Israel. I always knew I would live in Israel, basically.

JG: Even when your parents decided to stay?

BS: Yeah. I didn't really think about the issues very much. It was kind of more like an almost abstract idea. I didn't think, well, if I live in Israel, my family is going to be in America, and that's far away. You know, as a child, I thought in much — I was very ideological in my way of thinking and my personality and in my concepts about the Jewish people. I was really the opposite of George. [*laughs*] I was very political in my perspective, and larger social change issues, and I became a social worker. I really wanted to change the world.

JG: Did you feel American?

BS: No, I never felt completely American, although I had a very good experience in America. I think after tenth grade, I became somewhat more American.

JG: Why did you leave the yeshiva?

BS: There wasn't a yeshiva in New Jersey.

JG: You mean, beyond eighth grade?

BS: Right. I went for one year to New York, and it was very difficult travelling. It was really hard, sitting in traffic, and I would come home exhausted. So I decided I was going to leave yeshiva, with a lot of regret, actually, because I knew I would stop Jewish learning. But, you know, I did it, and I don't regret that I did it, because it was good for me to meet non-Jews, and to expand the range of my experience. But I continued, of course, to be *shomer shabbat* and kosher. So, I was quite an outsider in high school, because I could never go to the football games and whatever activities were going on on Shabbat. I had friends, but I had a life that was very separate from my friends as well.

JG: There weren't other Orthodox Jews in that environment?

BS: No, not in my high school. No. (00:45:00) So, then I went to Douglas College, which was Rutgers University.

JG: In 1966.

BS: Yeah. I went to college, and —

JG: How did you decide that?

BS: My mother died. In 1965, my mother died. My sister is twelve years younger than me, so she was four at the time, and I needed to be close to home. Douglas was a half hour away. I was commuting, and it was close to home.

JG: You were commuting from home?

BS: Yeah, the first year I commuted, and after that my father remarried, to a woman from his town, also a survivor. She and he were among the twenty people who survived from their town of two thousand Jews. She had widowed, and my father had widowed, so they got together. I have two step-brothers, and we became a very successfully blended family, I'm grateful to say. Very successfully blended. Then I moved to the dormitory, after that. I enjoyed it. I had a liberal arts education. I studied sociology, and I learned all about racism and things like that, it was the years of Martin Luther King. Then I studied art history, and then I went on the junior year abroad. Just before going on the junior year

abroad, though, I did also go to Camp Ramah of the Berkshires, but I didn't know — George wasn't there. George was already in Israel then.

GS: I think something like that.

BS: When I went, it was 1967, after the Six Day War, and I heard Joe Reimer talk about the Six Day War [*laughs*], very inspirational Zionist talk.

JG: He was there that same year, is that right?

BS: He had been there —

GS: He was there the year of the war, '66-'67. I was there '67-'68, and Bella was there '68-'69.

BS: He was there during the war, I think. Anyway, that was also for me a life changer, going to Camp Ramah. [*laughs*] I mean for me, very much the Havurat Shalom is like a counterculture expansion of Camp Ramah.

JG: How so?

BS: Well, in the Orthodox world — I didn't have the concept "feminism" in my mind, but I already was beginning to feel the problems of being a girl in Orthodox society.

JG: In terms of what?

BS: In terms of the leadership in the synagogue. You know, girls couldn't (00:48:00) do anything public.

JG: Your ability to participate in public worship.

BS: Yeah.

JG: And public positions.

BS: Yeah. Girls couldn't do anything, and women couldn't do anything, and I was just beginning to get a sense — although I had very good teachers in my girls separate education, when I would go to synagogue, or any place where there was like mixed things, men were always leading everything. And also, I wasn't really that one hundred percent Orthodox. My mother and her family were not that Orthodox. So, like, we would

turn lights on on Shabbat, and, you know, I mean, we were Orthodox, but with a flexibility. And I always had to hide that part of me in Yeshiva. So when I went to Camp Ramah, all of a sudden, everybody was equal. Girls and boys were equal. Halachah was not such a big deal. I mean, you know, it was Shabbat and Kashrut, but it wasn't so strict. So, for me, it was extremely liberating, both in terms of Halachah and in terms of being a girl.

JG: Can you talk a little bit more specifically about what kinds of — how was it liberal in terms of Halachah at camp, for instance?

BS: I think it was just the message, almost more than the practice. There wasn't a sin and punishment doctrine. I never agreed with the sin and punishment. That's pretty central, actually. It's a good question. I never agreed with the sin and punishment doctrine of like, *Vehaya Im Shamo'a*. I always thought, my grandparents were killed. They were not bad people. Therefore, there's something wrong with the sin and punishment doctrine. It can't be true. Bad things happen to good people, and I thought, this I don't agree with. So from a very young age, I think without — more on an emotional level than as a fully-formed conceptual level, I rejected that principle, which is a very important principle in Orthodoxy, and Halachah in yeshiva was taught as something; if you don't do this, you're going to get punished by God. I never bought that. So, I think on an almost unconscious level, I was an outsider in that world much more than I realized. Later, reading back into my own history, I came to understand. Also, we would do things on Shabbat. We would go to the movies, and, you know, we would do whatever we — well, not everything. We didn't ride, we didn't write, or cut, or cook, but we would do things. We were more relaxed about Shabbat. We would pick up the phone, we would turn on the lights.

JG: So this was a place where —

BS: And all of a sudden in Ramah, everybody did that. Nobody at Ramah cared, and there was no sin and punishment (00:51:00) doctrine. It was presented in a more joyous way, not as something you have to do, and I think there's part of me that was always quite rebellious against authority, especially as I became older, as a teenager. So I liked the freedom of Conservative Judaism. It was, like, amazing for me, because I — you know, when you're Orthodox, Orthodox, Orthodox, and all of a sudden you go to something that's Conservative, and it's like, wow, there's so much freedom. Yet they were Jewishly knowledgeable, not like my high school, where nobody cared about being Jewish or knew anything about being Jewish. They still did text study, and davening, praying. You know, they did the Tisha B'Av as if it was Yom HaShoah, so that was very meaningful. Camp Ramah was the first time for me also, even though I had a very strong Jewish education, it was the first time that anybody talked about the Shoah or commemorated or

cried about the Shoah in a public setting, as opposed to just in my house. That's obviously changed a lot in the Jewish world, but in the fifties —

JG: And sixties, you're talking about.

BS: — and sixties, no one ever talk about it, as if we were the only people, only the survivors knew about the Shoah and nobody else cared about it, which was very upsetting. So, Camp Ramah was great. I also made a few very close friends there. We had similar backgrounds, like a lot of Jewish education, but more freedom. Then I went to Israel for my junior year, which was amazing.

JG: Talk about that. What kind of impact did it have? Was this your first time in Israel?

BS: No, I had been actually just before my mother died, on a tour, which was amazing for me to be in Israel, actually.

JG: A teen tour?

BS: Yeah. Yeshiva University [*laughs*] teen tour to Israel. It was a very wonderful tour. Then I went to Hebrew University, and I just loved being in a Jewish country, and Hebrew, I loved Hebrew. I already spoke Hebrew, because I had learned it in yeshiva —

JG: They taught spoken Hebrew?

BS: Yeah. I had a wonderful teacher I mentioned in my write-up, Elisheva Teitz. She was a fantastic teacher. She was a Tsabarit, born in Israel, and she taught us to speak Israeli Hebrew in seventh and eighth grade. She really gave me a gift, because by the time I came to Israel for my junior year abroad, I was like in the top level of Ulpan briefly, and then I — I mean, I still wasn't fantastic in Hebrew. That took a long time to get better, but I (00:54:00) was at a level where I could take courses in Hebrew, and it was really exciting for me. I took a lot of art history, because that was easy, because I was looking at slides and listening to lectures. But I also took a lot of Tanach, from a modern perspective, from a bible criticism perspective. I had a course with Moshe Greenberg on Kaufmann. I had a course with Malamat on Yehoshua, *Shoftim*, and I learned with Nechama Leibowitz. I just — it was like swallowing the Jewish experience in a very positive way.

JG: In a very different way, for you.

BS: Yeah, it was wonderful. I loved it. So of course, I fell in love with a guy who was interested in the Tanach. [*laughs*] I also had my Ramah friends in Israel, so we would spend Shabbatot together, and we started having those communal Shabbatot that George speaks about, that we had learned in Camp Ramah. I didn't learn it in Havurat Shalom. We already learned it in Camp Ramah, because we were counselors together in Camp Ramah, and I think we just did it with the kids. Then in Israel, we would do it together. We would do Shabbat together. Also I was dating a rabbinical student at the time, so he also did Shabbat. You know, just communal meals, where everybody would bring —

JG: Singing?

BS: And singing. Oh, I forgot to mention something very important about my home growing up, which I put on the questionnaire, about the singing. My father was a fantastic singer, and he loved singing. In fact, I have a video that I would love to show you of my father and my step-mother and all their friends getting together and singing. It's a beautiful video. They would start with all sorts of things. They'd sing the Zionist songs and religious songs, and everything, and that's how I grew up. Every Friday night we sang.

JG: You said eventually you brought in camp songs.

BS: Yeah, we brought in camp songs. Even before Ramah, my sister and I went to Orthodox summer camps — also a lot of communal singing — from age ten. My father was happy to sing. He was happy to learn the songs from us, and we would learn from him. A lot of it was learning from us. Then from Ramah, we had these *shironim*, these booklets of songs, and we would go through the whole book. We would just sing for hours, but always the evening would end, when my mother was alive, with her singing these two mournful Zionist songs, of the children moving to Israel from Poland before the war, and the mothers begging them to come back to the Diaspora, to Poland —

JG: Is this in Hebrew?

BS: Yeah. Two songs in Hebrew. You want me to sing? [*laughs*]

JG: Sure.

BS: For posterity? [*laughs*] (00:57:00)

JG: Yeah, yeah!

BS: I'll sing a small amount.

JG: Sure.

BS: Okay, one — but I really can't do it very well. I can send you the reference with the words.

JG: Yeah, whatever you want to do.

BS: One is called "Aliya Lavan." [*sings*] "*Aliya lavan, lavan ka'sheleg, halakh michtav min hagolah, kotevet ain bedim'at ayin, livna hagar biyerushalayim.*" She's telling him, "Please come home, please come home. It's dangerous there." And then he writes back, [*sings*] "*Lo ashuv, lo ashuv, lo ashuv, lo, lo hashuv, lo hashuv, lo hashuv, lo.*" And then there's a similar one of a mother and a daughter where she's singing, [*sings*] "*Na hagidi yaldati, na hagidi chemdati? Eich tis'i, eich tisee, l'erezt Yisrael? Oniyot tovot bamayim, na na na na na na na na, eich tisee, eich tisee, l'erezt Yisrael?*" And then the girl writes back, [*sings*] "*Lo imi libi, ba yam hu, na na na na na na na, rak l'erezt, rak l'erezt, rak l'erezt Yisrael.*" So, that's how I grew up.

GS: [*laughs*]

BS: And my mother crying, because her sisters were there. And, of course, I wanted to live there. I didn't think about the fact that my family would be in America, and how hard that would be for me. Later in life — [*laughs*]

JG: That those parents were actually right about —

BS: [*laughs*] I didn't identify with the parents. I only identified with the kids.

JG: Right.

BS: Until now. Now, I mean, after my parents got older, I, you know, I realized —

JG: What it was about.

BS: Yeah, but, thank God, today we have Skype and it's easier. So that's my story. Then in Camp Ramah, the second Camp Ramah, Palmer, I met George, and I met all these guys from Havurat Shalom.

JG: So this was '68?

GS: '69.

BS: '69, yeah. Then I met George and several other of the people who were already in Havurat Shalom, who were either just beginning —

JG: Was Joe there that summer?

GS: Like Joe, yeah.

BS: Joe, and Gail came, and Larry Fine, and Richard Siegel, and maybe some others as well.

GS: Michael Brooks.

BS: Michael Brooks was in camp as well. I really felt that what they were doing was very interesting, creative, and that they were taking the Camp Ramah experience to a new dimension of creativity and depth. It reminded me much more of my home than Camp Ramah. It was because the singing was so deep. It was so spiritual. That was maybe more in the *havurah* itself rather than in Ramah.

GS: Yeah, definitely.

BS: I'm already switching to the next subject. But that was (01:00:00) kind of my experience.

JG: So, did you guys connect that summer?

BS: Yeah.

GS: Yeah.

JG: And you became a couple at that point?

BS: Yeah.

GS: Yeah.

JG: Okay. So, Bella, let's just continue for a minute with how you got involved with Havurat Shalom.

BS: Only through George.

JG: So, when did you first start coming?

BS: I was in college.

JG: Were you his girlfriend at that point?

BS: Yeah, yeah. When I graduated college — first I came to visit him.

JG: In '69.

GS: Pretty regularly, she came to visit.

BS: Seventy, and then when I graduated, I changed my plans. I was going to go right to Israel after college, but I decided I wanted to be with him, so I went to graduate school in Boston.

JG: At B.U.?

BS: Yeah. And then we got married a year later.

JG: So what year were you married?

BS: 1971.

JG: So right when you were at the *havurah*, involved in the *havurah*.

GS: Yeah.

BS: Yeah. After one year of graduate school.

JG: So at the time that you first started coming, you weren't officially a member. Is that right?

BS: [*shakes head*] No.

JG: Did you ever officially become a member?

BS: I don't think so.

JG: So, what are your earliest memories? Can you talk a little bit about what your earliest memories are of visiting the *havurah* that first year?

BS: Yeah. I would say it was mostly — I would say for me, probably three things. I wasn't so involved in study there, because I was in my own study program.

JG: You were studying social work at Boston University.

BS: Yeah, and I was extremely involved in my social work education, which was very challenging for me at that age — to have all the responsibility of being a social worker that young. So it was the *davening*. The services were very powerful, and what I was saying before, the singing. I loved the hasidic — well, now, afterwards I learned neo-hasidic — style of the singing — a lot of *niggunim* and all that. The social part was really great for me. I had never had so many male friends, and also couple-friends. It was also the first time I really — you know, I felt — we blossomed as a couple, and among a group of couples, and I felt very fortunate about that. Actually, those have remained — as couple-friends go — those have remained our primary friends for the rest of our life, some of them. Yeah, very powerful. And the Shabbat meal was part of that. That was the structure.

JG: Okay, so we're going to come to that in the next section, so let's actually turn to that. Now I want to open this up so that both of you can participate. I'd like to open up the conversation for both of you to be participating, and we're going to delve into some of the key components of the *havurah*, both in terms of the expressed ideals, but also in terms of the lived (01:03:00) experiences for members of the community. Many people obviously pointed to, as you were starting to say, community as being the heart of the *havurah* endeavor. So Havurat Shalom was in its second year when you became a member, George. How would you describe the *havurah's* notion of community?

GS: It was developing. It was a work in progress, and I would say the work in progress had to do with certain kinds of circles which coalesced among themselves and graduated —

JG: For the members, you mean?

GS: Yes. For instance, I was in a very good living situation with Richie Siegel and Joe Reimer. The three of us lived together, and we had a wonderful bond as roommates, but it was also then sort of expanded upon or enriched by being part of this larger community

as well. In other words, it wasn't simply a good roommate experience, but it was, we as a kind of small grouping shared this larger grouping. There were a number of houses or centers, I would say, that shared that kind of experience. There was a center around the *havurah* building itself, and Art was part of that too, because Art lived just down the street from there. There was another group of people who lived in a house slightly further away, which Dovid Roskies dubbed "Dorton," meaning "over there," okay? Then there were various kinds of married couples who had also sort of individual centers by themselves. So one was, say, Buzzy and Mona, Buzzy Fishbane and Mona Fishbane. There were various other groups like that, and when we all came together it was a tremendously enriching experience. It was a kind of combination of *haverut* in the sense of friendship developing, and a larger experience that we were kind of looking at, I felt, in a kind of aspect of discovery. So, *tefilah*, prayer, was part of the discovery. What did it mean to pray together? It meant in part to be able to share some of that closeness that we felt with each other with other people as well.

JG: What other people?

GS: First of all, with other people in the community, and then —

JG: You're saying, you mean on Shabbos morning.

GS: Well, also first Friday night. In other words, there used to not be *tefilot* on Friday night during the first year. Part of the contribution of the people in the second year was to have steady *tefilot* on Friday night. Then it tended to be just the members of the community, or certain members of the community, whereas Shabbat morning it became known as a kind of neighborhood shul. So there were these, (01:06:00) again, various kinds of concentric circles, and the experience of being at the center of that was amazingly powerful for me. It was added to by the sense that a number of us then became *shelichei tzibor* — a number of us led the services, led the *tefilot*, or led group singing in various different kinds of things. One felt — that's how I felt myself at certain points — absolutely the dead center of the community. Other times not. There were certain moments there where it was a brand-new experience. It was very different from the experience of Ramah or Tel Yehudah, where somebody else was in charge, and you could participate, or sometimes maybe you'd be in the tenth row or the eighth row or something like that, but you weren't right up there up front, and you weren't leading things. This was a new experience for me. So the sense of intimacy, and the sense that that kind of intimacy among friends could enhance the spiritual experience, was brand new for me, and it was tremendously powerful.

JG: Can you describe the community at the point you first became involved? How many members were there, for instance, just to start.

GS: The first year, there were something like fifteen or twenty members. The second year, it jumped to something like thirty-eight members. It virtually doubled in size.

JG: In '69.

GS: Yes, in 1969, it virtually doubled in size, and it took in a different kind of a group of people. That made a big change too, and it forced a kind of tension in the group between those who had some Jewish knowledge and those who were headed for some kind of career probably in the Jewish world, and those people who came in without any knowledge at all. There was a split, and during that second year we had a serious crisis, a serious identity crisis about who are we and what do we want to be, and people were asked to write position papers. What do you want the community to be? I was kind of like scratching my head, and saying, Well, I want the community to be just what it is. It's just very nice. You know, I didn't feel a need to write a paper. But my friends did. Joey did and Richie did and Art did and all sorts of other people, and we had these endless debates about what we should be. They, of course, didn't lead to anything clear. Some people left the community as a result of that. Some people felt that we should be more political. There were people who were deeply involved in political things, in opposition to the draft and things like that. Other people felt we should be a completely communal community. That is to say, all our energies and all our monies should be given to the communal structure, and that if we go out to teach Hebrew school, that's all we do. Whereas, there were other people who were involved in doctoral programs, and at least half or more of their intellectual energy and their time was spent doing doctoral programs. (01:09:00) That year, the first year I was there, I was only involved in the *havurah*. But again, I was sort of looking ahead, perhaps, to something else. So, there was a real tension in the group about that, and it wasn't a tension that damaged the group, I would say. Ultimately it made it stronger, but it made it clearer to some people that this was the place for them, and for other people that this was not the place for them.

JG: What was the relationship between the people who were there full time, as you were in that first year, and very committed to the seminary aspect of it, and those who were there part time, because they were involved in other graduate work and so on?

GS: Yeah. It really went person-by-person. So, if I take an example like Joe Reimer, who was very involved in his doctoral program, but he was very much present. He was very much present. Other people — Steven Mitchell was very involved in his translation work, but he was in a certain sense, and preferred to be in a certain sense, more peripheral to the

community. So it really went person-by-person, and it wasn't necessarily determined by whether or not the person's involved in a doctoral program or not. That was part of it. It had to do more — and I think this was brought out in these kind of position papers — with one's feeling about what the place of community was to be in one's life. I think it may have had to do with the fact that many of us were still single at the time. There were girlfriends, but our involvement as individuals remained at the center of things. That changed gradually over time, as many of us got married, and had to deal with the tension between having the home as the absolute center and having the *havurah* as the center. But in that second year, it was clear to me that the *havurah* was the center for me, and I suspect for you, coming up and visiting, you felt that too, to some extent. Is that fair to say?

BS: That the *havurah* was the center?

GS: The center, yeah.

BS: I guess, yeah.

JG: So, as you started to mention earlier, in the first year the *havurah* had met at a house on Franklin Street, in Cambridge.

GS: Right, Cambridge.

JG: By the time you joined, they had gotten the Danforth Grant and had purchased a house in Somerville.

GS: Right.

JG: What impact do you think the move had on the sense of community, and on the ability to create community?

GS: At the time, Somerville was not connected to the MTA [Massachusetts Transit Authority], and so Davis Square was far-out alien country. So rents were cheap, and it was easier to find places to live. It wasn't quite like being in Cambridge. In Cambridge, it was much harder. There were people who lived close, and people who lived farther away. It also became clearer that the *havurah* wanted to say that people would make a strong recommendation — this was something — (01:12:00) a strong recommendation that people live within half a mile of the *havurah*.

JG: So, within walking distance.

GS: Within walking distance, yeah. There were still people who drove on Shabbat, and people who didn't drive on Shabbat, but that was becoming a norm. That was becoming a norm.

JG: Why was that important?

GS: Because it could enhance the sense of community. It would enhance the sense that people would be part of things.

BS: I think it was a lifestyle issue as well, not to ride on Shabbat.

GS: Do you think so? That's interesting.

BS: Yeah.

JG: So it was part of the lifestyle, that issue.

BS: Well, to experience Shabbat more fully, more like in camp. [*laughs*]

GS: Mmhmm.

BS: Not in your car, because the minute you get in your car, you take yourself away. It's like leaving camp. It was more to recreate camp, which is not — I'm not saying that in a pejorative way. Like in a kibbutz, it was to recreate a neighborhood, where you could walk. The old style. To recreate the Upper West Side, if you would like to talk in American, in New York terms, where people can walk to each other. It's a different kind of feeling than when you get on the subway and leave the Upper West Side to go downtown on Shabbat.

JG: So, it also presumably meant that people who didn't drive on Shabbat could easily —

BS: Could walk to each other's house, right — and everyone had Shabbat meals together — to the synagogue, to the Friday night dinner, to Shabbat lunch, and to *Shalashudes*. *Shalashudes* was a great thing there, too.

JG: Can you talk about that? I want to ask about some of the ways in which, the regular ways in which the community gathered, outside of services.

GS: Yeah. Here we learned a great deal from Zalman Schachter. Zalman was present in the first year of the *havurah*, because he was working as a rabbi at the Columbia Street Shul, I think, and various other things. Maybe he was doing a degree at Brandeis as well. Anyway, Zalman contributed enormously to the community, and one of the ways he contributed, apart from his presence, was in regard to singing. Zalman was an absolute treasure house of *niggunim*.

BS: His hasidic background.

GS: Well, both because of his background and because of his special voice. He had this kind of deep, resonant voice, and because he always had a marvelous *niggun*. These were the days when Shlomo Carlebach was around, but it wasn't like Carlebach *niggunim* was the center, you know? That's changed a lot.

BS: Let me just interrupt. One other thing about Zalman — he did amazing translation into English that seemed like he was looking at the text and just saying it in poetic English, in a really cool way. He made the texts of the prayers accessible to us in a really poetic way. He had a gift with language. (01:15:00)

JG: Are you saying he looked at specific prayers and essentially chanted them?

BS: He'd chant them first in Hebrew, and then he would chant them in English with the same chant, poetically. I mean, it's a gift. I don't think that many people can do that.

GS: I don't know if he originated that, but we felt that he originated that. He'd say, you know, "Blessed is the Lord who does these things," you know? If it's said, if it's in English, then it has to be spoken. You can sing in Hebrew. Can you sing in English like that?

BS: And he'd also do it poetically. He would change it. He didn't stick to it literally. Art Green also does it.

GS: Art learned from Zalman.

BS: Art did it also. Yeah, I think Art learned from Zalman.

GS: Anyway, the reason I bring up Reb Zalman is with regard to *Seudah Shlishit*, with regard to the third meal on Shabbat. That became a very central meeting point for the group, less around the issue of Torah, less around the issue of teaching and studying, but much more around singing. We would sit and sing for an hour or two.

JG: Can you describe it? Just, how would it start, how would it —

GS: We would be sitting around the table. We would have a little bit of food around like that, and somebody would start a *niggun*, and we would sing.

BS: For a long time.

GS: It felt very spontaneous in the sense of the starting process and the evolvement of it. It was for me a totally new experience. It wasn't like singing at camp. Singing at camp was, like, associated with the dining room, you know? It was nice — or maybe associated with shul a little bit.

JG: With a song leader?

GS: Yeah, and a song leader. You know, maybe an accordion player, maybe a piano player.

BS: It's more organic.

GS: But this was something that kind of came from somewhere else.

BS: It was very spiritual, also, I would say.

GS: Deeply, deeply spiritual.

BS: It was really — you got into a kind of spiritual state during that *Shalosh Seudos* spirit. It was intimately spiritual. I think its origin originally, not that we had that experience, but in the hasidic *tisch*, which is not a shul, it's a *tisch*. This was a *tisch*. This was also a table and singing together with the people that you feel close to. It was great. [laughs]

GS: Yeah, it was a really important thing. And so the wealth of *niggunim*, partly we owe them to Zalman, partly we owe them to Shlomo Carlebach, and partly we owe them to other kinds of things.

BS: [points at GS and mouths, "George"] [laughs]

GS: I mean, I became actually fascinated with hasidic songs, so I learned a lot from records. There were all these Vel Pasternak records of Chabad *niggunim* and stuff like that.

JG: So were you bringing new *niggunim* for people?

GS: They were new to me. They were new to a lot of other people. To other people they weren't new. They were Chabad *niggunim* from, you know, two hundred years ago or something.

BS: But not just Chabad — Bobover, different hasidic groups. He would listen to the records at home, and then he would bring them to the *havurah*.

GS: But it wasn't (01:18:00) as if I came from a hasidic background, and so I sort of learned this at my zeide's *tisch* or something like this.

BS: No, from the records.

GS: This was very much neo-hasidic in this way. But it was a very, very important experience, and a very different experience than anything I'd ever had.

JG: — than most people, I assume, had ever had. Had most people had this kind of experience?

GS: I don't think so. I don't think so.

BS: Only Zalman.

GS: Only Zalman. Art maybe had it in different places, and some people had spent time going to Chabad, or other places like that, I think. But not so much. Chabad wasn't anywhere near as developed as it became. So yes, that was a very, very important experience.

BS: Because it wasn't people from the yeshiva world.

GS: Yeah, yeah. There were a couple.

BS: They were more from the Conservative Movement.

GS: But also to add to that, Joe, for instance, Joe Reimer, was from the yeshiva world, but he didn't have that experience from the yeshiva world. So the *havurah* provided a kind of richness for him that he didn't have from his home in Jackson Heights, or from his shul experience. I mean he had more in terms of the background, but Zalman gave us something there that was truly remarkable. One of my great regrets is that one of the times when Zalman visited us, when we were living in Indiana, he made a tape. It was a lovely tape of all sorts of *niggunim*, and over the years —

BS: We lost it.

GS: We lost it. But I remember still some of the *niggunim*. [*laughs*]

JG: Want to share one?

GS: One for Elul. This is one — this is perhaps the first *niggun* that I ever remember learning from Zalman. It was at the first *havurah* retreat, and it was from Psalm Twenty-seven. It goes like this. [*sings*] "*Lecha amar libi baksho fanai et panecha bakshu avakesh. Lecha amar libi bakshu fanai et panecha oto avakesh. Al-taster panecha mimeni al-tat b'af avdecha. Al-taster panecha mimeni al-tat b'af avadecha. Ki ezrati (01:21:00) hayita, ki ezrati hayita, al-ta'azveni v'al titsheni elohei yishi.*"

JG: Beautiful.

GS: We owe that to Zalman.

JG: Thank you. Thank you for sharing that. What about other communal meals? Were there regular meals that were not connected to ritual occasions, like for meetings, those kinds of meals?

BS: Yeah.

GS: Yeah. We had regular once-a-week communal meals.

JG: In the *havurah*.

GS: In the *havurah*. We experimented with having them as sort of social experiences, and then we tried having silent meals sometimes.

JG: What were those?

GS: Well, you know, I mean, part of the model. What was the model for religious life? The model for religious life, it either came from Hasidut, or it came from the Christian world. And some people, who let's say had experience in visiting monasteries and there would be silent meals, would say, "Let's try it at the *havurah*." It didn't work too well for us. We were a very talky group. We liked to schmooze with one another. We liked to joke around a lot with one another. So, it wasn't quite the same kind of model that you might find in a Trappist monastery, let's say where one of the elder friars would be reading a text, and everybody else would be [*folds hands as if in prayer*] piously involved in their meal. So we tried it. It didn't work. But the communal meal was an important event for us in Boston, because we all came together, and often it was before a meeting — a meeting later on. The meeting might have an aspect which was dealing with some sort of business, and it might have some sort of intellectual content afterwards, that someone would come to speak. But getting together on a day that wasn't Shabbat was a very important thing for us. So, it wasn't intellectual, necessarily. It wasn't spiritual, and it wasn't around devotion. Yet, it was about some kind of communal feeling.

JG: Was there a policy around Kashrut, for instance, at these meals?

GS: They tended to be vegetarian.

BS: Yeah.

GS: They were vegetarian entirely, I think. Vegetarianism was like the new Kashrut for a lot of us, you know? Because well, Kashrut is one thing, but the spirit of the times was vegetarian.

BS: No, but I think everybody had a kosher home, as far as I know. They all kept kosher.

GS: As far as I know, too. But —

BS: We didn't know everything.

GS: We didn't know everything —

BS: — about everybody. [*laughs*]

GS: Nobody asked questions like that. People brought things, and nobody asked questions like that.

JG: So these were *milchig* — I mean, they were dairy.

BS: Yeah.

GS: Yeah. All dairy. I mean, it was very different from, say — I'm sure you talked to people from the New York Havurah, where the communal meal was a whole different kind of experience.

JG: We haven't done that yet.

GS: It was an aesthetic experience. It was a catered — one person would prepare the meal a week in advance and stuff like that. With us it was much more hand-to-mouth.

BS: Potluck. [*laughs*]

GS: Yeah.

JG: So, can you describe the aesthetic of these (01:24:00) meals, and the feel of them, the atmosphere of them?

GS: Were you saying something?

BS: [*shakes head*]

JG: First of all, where would they take place?

GS: They would take place in the *havurah* building. In other words, we would move the tables together in one room, and we would have whatever we would have. Sometimes it would be something very limited in terms of — not quite rice and beans, but a fairly limited meal. Other times people would prepare more elaborate vegetarian dishes. We might sing a song, but generally not. There would be *a bracha*, I remember, and there would be *Birkat Hamazon*. Then at some point, Barry Holtz would say, "Why don't we adjourn into the other room?" [*laughs*] And we would move into the next room in order to have our second part of the evening. Something like that.

JG: Would you say there was a spiritual or even ideological component of practicing Kashrut within the *havurah*?

GS: It's hard to say. Like I said, I think vegetarian —

BS: It's more vegetarian.

GS: It took over for a while. You know, for people who grew up with, let's say keeping kosher, intended to keep kosher, but somehow it didn't express the *ruach ha-z'man*, it didn't express the feeling of the times. The feeling of the times was that you have to do something other, and you had to care about the world in a different way.

BS: Yeah, like my cookbook at the time.

JG: What?

BS: I had a cookbook [*laughs*] in those years called *Victory Through Vegetables*.

GS: [*laughs*]

BS: It was like the hippie vegetarian thing, before *Moosewood*.

JG: Before *Moosewood*, and before the *Epicurean* — what was it called? [see addendum]

BS: Before all that, yeah.

JG: I wanted to talk for a minute about the *havurah* as a Shabbat inviting community, because that's something that a number of people have mentioned — so meals that took place on Friday night typically, and Shabbat lunch, outside of the *havurah* house and in people's homes. Can you talk a little bit about what your memories are of those, what their importance were in the community, and also whether some people tended to be inviters and some people were more invitees, and how did that fall out?

BS: I'll be happy to start with that. My memory of it — my memory isn't so great in general — but my memory is a lot about the couples, the married couples. They were a little older than the other people — that generation of Art and Kathy, and Michael and Ruth Brooks.

GS: And Buzzy and Mona.

BS: And Buzzy and Mona. They were all like a year or two older than us, so they were like, "older" —

GS: [*laughs*]

BS: And they had, like, nice homes already. They were the inviters, and the younger generation (01:27:00) was more the invitees. Then eventually we learned from them and we became inviters wherever we live, as we became older. For me it was wonderful. It was very strong. I mean, I grew up in a family that did do Shabbat together, but only our nuclear family. We didn't invite people over from other families, or just invite friends, or single people. I think for me it was completely new and very warm and welcoming, and it broke the model of the nuclear family just sticks with itself. For us, it very much became the way of the rest of our life. It set the model for the rest of our life, in which we became inviters most of the time. Sometimes invitees to our friends who are themselves inviters. It's a great lifestyle.

JG: Were these meals different from each other — the styles in which people tended to host?

GS: Yeah.

JG: Can you talk about that a little bit?

GS: Well, sometimes it was the menu. Sometimes it was who was making Kiddush. Sometimes it was how much singing there would be. Sometimes, would there be a teaching, a *dvar torah* — something like that. I mean, Art was the master of that.

JG: What does that mean? How would he do that?

GS: He would pull out a text and say, "Oh, da da da da da," you know, Art's particular inimical style. He would start to teach, and then a number of us sort of tried to copy that or develop our own styles with it.

JG: At what point in the meal would he do that?

GS: Towards the end. I mean, after we had finished eating, largely. It was not at the beginning. Often it would be hasidic texts that he would pull out, and he would have copies of sometimes. He taught us that the meal could be something more than just an occasion for eating and talking. It could be an occasion for some type of group experience beyond that, in terms of studying. Sometimes there would be a Kabbalat Shabbat in somebody's home, although as Kabbalat Shabbat became sort of established for the group, we did that less and less. But in the first year that I was there, before Kabbalat Shabbat became kind of established that way as a group experience, sometimes it was in people's houses. I want to add one thing to this, and that is, the second year that I was in the *havurah*, I lived in the house. Bella was there a fair amount with me, and

there it was different in terms of meals. I mean, we had the same sort of thing of having meals essentially amongst ourselves, I think, but on Shabbat lunch, we would invite people, different people who would come to *tefilot* and things like that. (01:30:00) There it was a kind of broader experience, to some extent and extension of the kind of wider experience of *tefilot* Shabbat morning, where various people would come from outside, and sometimes people would stay for lunch. So, we knew all sorts of other people, and that was very nice. That was very nice, I would say. I would agree with Bella that that set very much — those kinds of things set the model for how we saw Shabbat meals for the rest of our lives, that there was something to be done with the family, and something to be done with something larger than the family.

JG: Yeah. So, in the context of this intense and intentional community, many people have commented on the constant need to engage in group processing. We've sort of begun to touch on that a little bit as a very salient memory of your experience. I wanted to ask you what memory you have of this, and what role community meetings played. Also, if there were particular types of issues or topics that tended to come up or that were needing the attention of the group as a group. What got discussed in these meetings?

GS: I would say two essential fora. One forum was the business meeting, where we talked about whatever practical things had to be done. Who was going to be responsible for this? There was a category called "the coordinator," okay? And the coordinator is the one who is ostensibly in charge — for a month or two months, I can't remember — for sort of pulling everything together. For deciding about times and deciding about who is responsible for the communal meal, and various things like that. It wasn't a terribly onerous job, but I saw it personally as, this is something for the people at the center of the community, whereas I am peripheral. I don't think I ever was the coordinator. I think I was always cowed by that situation. But the business meetings dealt with various things like that. That was one thing. The second thing was admissions meetings, and in admissions meetings, serious issues came up. More so, I would say, the issues of who do we want to be part of this community, and who don't we want to be part of this community? There were always clear models of people who we would like, and clear models of people who we would not like. That inevitably brought up the question, well, what are we? Are we simply a fraternity? And the language of fraternity was very much the case during the first year or two that I was in the *havurah*, where women were very secondary.

JG: Women were not formal members.

GS: There were some. There was, the first year, one woman who was a formal member and left. I forgot her name. In the second year, Mona Fishbane was a formal member, and

Janet Wolfe, Barry's first wife, was a formal member. But most of the other women were secondary.

JG: Had Mona (01:33:00) and Janet applied separately from their status as —

GS: No. They sort of came into it.

JG: As the member of a couple.

GS: Yeah.

BS: No, but they were involved in study.

GS: They were involved in study and in *tefilah*, in various ways. Janet was the first woman to *daven* in the *havurah*. That was a big change. So when Bella first came to the *havurah*, in the first year or two, women did not *daven*.

JG: Can we actually wait on that for a second, because I want to really get to the question of *tefilah*. Okay?

GS: Okay.

JG: So you were just saying, this question of who would be involved.

GS: Yeah, who we want and who we don't want. It was difficult, because sometimes we would like somebody and sometimes we wouldn't like somebody, and sometimes we'd say, Well, is it just based upon our personal feelings, or should there be some more objective criteria? This person sounds very good on paper. Do we like this person? Do we want this person to be a *haver*? There were people who applied a number of times and were rejected, and that was painful. That was painful. I can think of one particular case in which someone in fact lived with some of the *haverim* but was not accepted as a member of Havurat Shalom because people had difficulty with that person. That was very hard. It made us uncomfortable. It didn't make us so uncomfortable necessarily that people left the community because of it. There were some people who left, and as I mentioned before, it was often around political issues and the issue of communal involvement — how much the community had a right to demand of its members with regard to time, with regard to finances, and other kinds of things like that. So, those were some of the issues that came up around that. It was difficult, because we wanted to believe that we were an open community, and we wanted to believe that everybody was welcome, and we wanted to believe that this was the way of the counterculture, and we discovered that that wasn't

quite true. That we had pretty clear ideas about who we wanted to be friends with and who we didn't want to be friends with.

JG: How would you describe who you were looking for?

GS: I was looking for people who were interested in the things that I was interested in. I was not tremendously political, so I wasn't looking toward political people. Some of the people who stayed in the community were quite political, but I didn't necessarily become their close friends. The people who became my closest friends were people who were like myself. I think when you think you're creating the ideal community, that's very hard to admit. What's the ideal community? Oh, the ideal community is the people who are like me. You don't want to say that. You want to say the ideal community is well-rounded and it's pluralistic. No, that wasn't (01:36:00) necessarily what we did then.

JG: This was in the context of a community that had a very strong egalitarian, democratic ideal. Were there people who played real leadership roles within these meetings in general, and how did that go over?

GS: Yeah, sure. Barry liked to say that Art was more important than he gave himself credit for, but less important than we gave him credit for. At a certain point, Barry said that. I think there was a fair amount of that. It was very clear to everybody that Art stood at the center of the community. At the same time, Art's leadership style was quiet and restrained. Art was not — I mean, he certainly was a public figure in many ways, but he would not assert himself and say, I want this and therefore we're going to do it. That was never Art's way. It was much more a conversation and discussion and persuasion, and a willingness to be persuaded this way or that. So Art was certainly central. Other people who were? Barry certainly was, I would say. Barry Holtz certainly was, and Joe Reimer certainly was. They were very clear spokespeople for their particular ideas, and they represented a kind of model of a combination of the spiritual and the intellectual, and an ability to teach, which was very important. I learned a lot about being a teacher from being around those people and talking with those people, and it was something that was brand new for me. I mean, I had taught a little bit before, taught Hebrew school and stuff, but never gave real serious thought to the business of education until my contact with those people. Seeing, or having them model, what teaching could be all about was a very powerful experience for me.

JG: As an intentional community, the *havurah* strived for this ideal of openness and the ability to share. It was a sharing community in that sense. I think it was Joe, Joe Reimer, who wrote at the end of the first year in an article in *Response* a piece that described the *havurah* as "wracked in the conflict between individuality and communality." Did you

find that tension to really be there in your own experience of the *havurah* in the early years?

GS: I didn't.

JG: You did or didn't?

GS: I did not. It came out, as I say, with regard to certain issues, and with regard to meetings. It came out — I was perfectly willing to follow what the community decided as a whole. I did not have strongly formed positions about many of these issues. (01:39:00) So, when the community decided, for instance, that we should do a social action project, I said, "Okay, we'll do a social action project." I was never enthusiastic about it. I went and participated. We did something called The Brookline Project, which was sort of like a drop-in center, which wasn't ultimately very successful. But, you know, I did it. When we made a decision to go to a March on Washington in 1969, I might not have gone by myself, but together with the other *haverim*, yeah, I went and did it. So I didn't feel that conflict so much around those types of issues. I was pretty flexible and pretty open to doing those things. It did come up later. Two things happened. First of all, a lot of the people who were central to the community left. This was around 1972 or '73. I don't remember the exact year, but a number of people moved to Philadelphia, or moved to other places. I realized for the first time the *havurah* was for me to some extent the building and the people who were in the building at any given moment, and to another extent it was very much Joey and Barry and Art and and Alan Lehman and Michael Paley and that particular group of friends. That's when it came up for me more, a couple of years later, and my own involvement became less and less. That coincided with another thing, and that was pursuing a doctoral program, and putting a great deal of my energy into that, and less energy into studying in the *havurah* and things like that. So between those two, I would say eventually that kind of emerged as my own plans for the future matured and developed.

BS: I think you should talk a little bit about the *Jewish Catalog*.

JG: Yeah.

BS: We'll get to it?

JG: We'll get to it. I wanted to just ask you for a minute though, because you've mentioned the important friendships that you developed. This was largely a male community, where male bonding was at the center of it for many people. So, how would

you say this male context of the early years affected relationships within the community, and for you personally?

GS: It was assumed. It was assumed that men constituted the center of the community, and once Jewish feminism started to assert itself, and once women started *davening*, and once women started entering the community as individuals in and of themselves — I tend to think of Sharon Strassfeld as someone who was in a sense the most dominant and most forceful person.

MS: She was a very good *shaliach tzibur*.

GS: She was a very good *shlichat tzibur*, but it was more than being a *shlichat tzibur*. It was also her particular forceful personality. I mean, both she and Michael were, and are, in their own ways. Being a guy — I mean, you should talk about it, how you experienced it as a woman — (01:42:00) being a guy, I felt like, hey, this is good. I like this. It's other guys like me. But, you know.

JG: Bella, what was it like for you?

BS: Well, I'm not a *shaliach tzibur*, so it was never something that I wanted to participate in, in the leadership role. So for me it was really about the friendships with the other people.

JG: You had been educated a lot in an intensely female environment when you were young.

BS: Yeah, so it was really fun to get to know men who I really liked and appreciated. I don't know. I somehow — although I do say that I didn't like the fact that women weren't active in leadership roles, I don't remember it bothering me in Havurat Shalom, because the level of the *davening* was so high, and I felt in other ways, we were respected, in terms of group discussions and things like that. I didn't feel —

JG: Did you ever participate in the group discussions?

BS: Yeah, definitely.

JG: You would come to these meetings.

BS: Yeah, I would come to those meetings. I didn't go to the study, but I would go to the meetings that were deciding on policy decisions, I think.

JG: So women, even these non-member girlfriends —

BS: We were welcome. Yeah, I think so.

GS: More than welcome.

BS: I don't remember so much the admissions thing that you talk about, but I remember feeling part of a group, and enjoying the people, men and women. Many of the women became — or, some of the women became close friends. I also remember very much the *davening* leading of Janet, because it was extremely gentle, and spiritual, and female. I remember the *davening* leading of Sharon, because it was really strong and energetic and dynamic. Michael's also, Michael Strassfeld. That was like the next generation. I think they came a year after you.

GS: A couple of years.

BS: Or a couple of years, and it was like, really refreshing to have that kind of powerful, free woman leading. But I don't think that before that it was necessarily missing for me personally. I just appreciated the quality of what was being done there. I don't know. I felt a little bit out of it, of course, because I couldn't be in the leadership circle, but I was kind of busy with other things.

JG: Could it be because —

BS: — because I'm not a *davening* leader, and I'm not a teacher. It just wasn't my primary interest at the time. I was busy becoming, working on my own professional (01:45:00) skills.

JG: Yeah. So, I want to ask you and talk more specifically about *tefilah* and worship services in the context of Havurat Shalom. So you've been starting to talk about some of the people who made a really strong impression as *daveners*, leading the *davening*. Did you lead *davening* also, George?

GS: Yeah.

JG: What was that like for you, in terms of other experiences you'd had?

GS: It was much less performance and more group involvement. It was a feeling that — and first of all, there was the physical situation. We were against chairs, so to speak. We

were all sitting on cushions on the floor. The reason we were sitting on cushions on the floor was because cushions had been collected by Zalman and other people in 1968, when there's one day in Cambridge when everybody puts out their old furniture. So Zalman and some other people went around and collected cushions. Okay?

JG: These largely were students, right?

GS: Yeah, exactly. So, sitting on the floor then on cushions became a holy thing. *[laughs]*

JG: Did you experience it as holy?

GS: It was special. I mean, what can be more different than sitting in a pew in a synagogue?

BS: It was like a counterculture thing.

GS: It was a counterculture thing.

BS: Like the way meditators sit on cushions.

JG: It's also not looking at peoples backs or their heads, but potentially looking at peoples faces.

GS: We were looking at peoples faces. We were sitting around —

BS: — in the circle, men and women mixed.

GS: And the prayer leader was not necessarily sitting in one particular place. Sometimes yes, sometimes no. The *Aron Kodesh*, the arc, was made from a wicker basket, which was I think — I'm not sure what the original purpose of the wicker basket was, but then it had a macramé *parochet*, a cover, which had been embroidered or had been made macramé by Richie Siegel's mother. All of these things became various kinds of sacred objects, so to speak. Not quite objects of veneration, but —

BS: Because they were different. It was different than in a traditional synagogue. The whole thing was to be different, and to be young. To do it in a youthful —

GS: — and to be intense. And to be intense. The intensity of the *davening* was considered to be a very important thing.

BS: That's right.

GS: To that extent, we —

BS: And leading people. Leading, not performing, as you said.

GS: Yeah.

BS: Leading people with you —

JG: What's the difference? What does that mean?

GS: That means there was the assumption that whatever you sing could be joined in by everybody else. I wasn't going to sing an aria, and I wasn't going to use a very complicated *niggun* to daven. One of my experiences that I remember over and over again was of Art leading services. Art, for all his talents, does not (01:48:00) have the best voice in the world. So, when Art would start a *niggun*, he would go, [*singing*] "Yum bum bum, yum bum bum." I would look at Barry, and Barry would look at Richie, and we would go, "Ah, we got it." Then we would pick it up, and then gradually it would spread.

JG: [*laughs*]

GS: That was a very important thing. The communal aspect was expressed in a bunch of things. We didn't do a straight beginning to end *davening*. There was always a choice — let's say with regard to *Pesukei Dezimra* — with regard to the first part, the Psalms that were said. Some of the psalms were said, but some of the psalms were not said. That, to some extent, followed or continued some things that resembled Camp Ramah. Basically, what's called the *matbeah shel tefilah*, the basic form of the service starting with the two blessings before the *Shema*, and one blessing afterward, and the *Shemona Esrei* would then follow. We tended not to *daven Musaf*.

JG: Who decided these things?

GS: These things partly happened by chance, and partly happened by modeling. That is to say, somebody was the *shaliach tzibur*, and they did this, and we said, Oh, that's good.

JG: The *shaliach tzibur* made the decision about how —

GS: Basically yes.

BS: We didn't have a group decision?

GS: Then sometimes we had *Musaf* and sometimes we didn't.

BS: We probably had a group decision.

GS: There are things that developed by habit. So, for instance, there wasn't a *bimah* for reading the Torah. Instead, there was kind of a low coffee table kind of thing. Then some people objected and said, This isn't respectful of the Torah, you know? The Torah should be lifted up. But still, what dominated was the sense of this group participation. We were all on the same level as the Torah. We were seated, the Torah was seated, and we all sort of shared the experience. Likewise, there tended — sometimes there were individual *divrei torah*. Joel Rosenberg was a master of this. But very often, there were Torah discussions. This was also a brand-new thing for us. I had never seen a Torah discussion. I know there were models for this in various different synagogues, both Conservative and Reform, but I had never seen that. That was another way in which the communal aspect was made. Yet another way was —

JG: What happened in these Torah discussions?

GS: Sometimes there were real, good discussions. Sometimes one person or another person dominated, and the same sort of things became brought up over and over again. The good parts about them were that they enabled people who were coming from the outside to participate. The bad part was that sometimes, the same issue over and over again was brought up on Shabbat, and it would be kind of tedious.

JG: Who decided the focus?

GS: The person who was in charge of *tefilot*.

JG: On a particular Shabbat.

GS: On a particular Shabbat, okay? Who was *davening*. They would do that. It was pretty free-form, as I recall. I don't remember that somebody made an absolute decision. If somebody wanted to give a *dvar torah*, if Joel Rosenberg, for instance, had prepared something, if Barry had prepared something, then they might do something — or Art. Or, Art might decide that, I want the *tefilah* (01:51:00) this Shabbat to be focused around — whatever. Let's say if it was *Shabbat Shira* or something like that. It wouldn't be about song, but it would be about, let's say, everything is focused around one particular theme.

He would try to do that by emphasizing certain things in the *davening*, or by reading certain parts of hasidic texts. So, there was an interesting dynamic that took place. Part of the dynamic was, let's say, when Art would lead, he would use these texts to do a kind of — sometimes a Zalman-esque translation, like you describe, where he would perhaps read some of it in Hebrew, and then translate it in such a way that it would be accessible to people, in order to bring out a particular idea, which would then be the central point of the *tefilah*. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't work. Likewise the use of musical instruments. I play the guitar, and there were times where I used the guitar in *davening*, and I was never crazy about it. I liked it in some ways, but in other ways I wanted the guitar to be yet another egalitarian voice, and not to be part of the leader. So I would try to do various kinds of things musically that tried to do that, sometimes, I felt, successfully, and sometimes not so much successful. But that was another way of trying to break down the model of somebody standing up in front and performing, and then people sort of participating or not participating in it. So, all of those things, I would say, were really very important to the whole business. We didn't have a rabbi. We didn't have a leader in the same sense, and if we did have a leader, like I said, the leader sat on a cushion like everybody else. This was radical stuff for all of us coming out of conventional synagogues, whether Reform or even Orthodox synagogues. I mean, who did this stuff? Yeah, I know that there was a congregation Solel in Chicago, and there was this congregation here, and Larry Kushner was doing various kinds of things with his congregation, but we felt that we were cutting edge. To some extent we were, and to some extent that was our feeling about it, but that was very important to us.

JG: In terms of the approach people were taking to interpretation of the Torah portion, to what extent would you say people focused on the parashah and sort of traditional interpretations, and to what extent were they trying to bring in contemporary issues and concerns?

GS: Very much contemporary issues. Very much contemporary issues.

JG: About making it meaningful, bringing it —

BS: Psychological.

GS: Yeah.

JG: Can you —

GS: It's hard for me to recall somebody giving a *dvar torah* and talking about Rashi. This just may be my faulty memory, I don't know, but my tendency is to think of things — the

Torah portion was a springboard. Sometimes it was a springboard for discussion, sometimes a springboard for association. (01:54:00) I remember — I can't remember quite what the occasion was, but I do remember Kathy Green at one point reading this beautiful section from the book of Aldous Huxley about dying. I don't remember what the parashah was, but it was a parashah that had something to do with death and dying, and she took it somewhere else. That was lovely, and that was a certain kind of model.

JG: Did that work?

GS: Yes, I felt it worked. Likewise, I felt Joel Rosenberg's very creative and very imaginative *drashot* on things. The most famous one, which other people may have mentioned, was on *Parshat Mishpatim*.

JG: No, please.

GS: Parshat Mishpatim comes in the middle of the *Book of Exodus*, and it's essentially a point where the story of the Torah ends. In other words, you've had all the stories of the patriarchs in *Genesis*. You have the story of the Exodus and the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Then, in Chapter Twenty-one of *Exodus*, all of the sudden it starts, "*V'eileh hamishpatim*," these are the laws. Joel gave this *drasha*, and he says, "This is a story about a slave, and a slave who wants to go free, but his family can't become free. And this is a story of a woman slave." He took a number of the laws, and he said — and he gave a kind of very contemporary narrative approach to them. And we're all there going, this is amazing. We never thought of something like that. So, if there was a tie to the text, it was to the biblical text itself and less to the *meforshim*, less to the commentators.

BS: Yeah.

GS: There were exceptions to that. I think Burt Jacobson gave an exception. Sometimes Art would do exceptional things with regard to hasidic texts. But what mostly sticks out —

BS: They were trained rabbis.

GS: Yeah, they were people who had gone through JTS, and had much more knowledge.

JG: What about dealing with really contemporary issues — things that were happening with the war, politics, events that were happening in American society?

BS: I think much less.

GS: Less, less.

BS: It was not a particularly political — I would say it was more psychological. Psychological and literary.

GS: And spiritual.

BS: And spiritual, but —

GS: — but less involved in the world.

BS: Not so political. I think that the one in Washington was much more political. Art Waskow's *havurah* was very political. It was a different tone.

JG: Yeah. It was coming from a different place.

BS: Right.

GS: Very much so.

JG: Jews for Urban Justice.

BS: Right. And I myself was also more involved in political things, and less in the *havurah*. My Jewish expression, I would say, was that I was working in a kind of lefty student newspaper called *Genesis 2*, with Steve Cohen, Steven P. Cohen. That was like, my expression, (01:57:00) Liberal Zionist.

JG: Right, another —

BS: It had nothing to do with the *havurah*.

JG: It was the Jewish counterculture.

BS: It was the Jewish counterculture. It had nothing to do with religion or spirituality. It had to do more with politics.

JG: So you didn't try to bring that, it sounds like, into the *havurah*.

BS: No. It wasn't relevant to them.

JG: So, they felt like separate realms to you, pretty much?

BS: Yeah.

JG: I want to focus on women's roles specifically for a few minutes here. So, when each of you became involved, 1969 to 1970, what public roles, if any, did women have in the service?

GS: In the service, virtually none. There was one, in 1969 —

BS: And Janet.

GS: And Janet. Janet Wolfe, Janet Holtz at the time, *davened Kabbalat Shabbat*. That was the first time that I remember.

JG: *Kabbalat Shabbat* in 1969?

GS: 1969. I remember that because Bella's father came to visit, and he came with us to *tefilot*, and he was blown away. He said, "That's the most spiritual *davening* I have ever heard."

JG: Seriously?

GS: Really, yeah.

BS: It was a very moving — very moving —

JG: What did he find so spiritual about it?

GS: Her voice, her style.

JG: Which was what? Can you describe it?

GS: Quiet, as much as I remember.

BS: Gentle, spiritual. Really from the heart, and almost hasidic, I would say.

GS: Perhaps, yeah.

BS: Not a hazan. Not a big hazan standing in front of other people.

JG: Yeah. Interesting that your father responded to it.

GS: Yes. [*laughs*]

BS: Well, he came from a hasidic background, so he had that inside him. Also, in Hasidut, you have a more internal, meditative aspect, especially if you look at some of the slow *niggunim*. So, I would say it connected for him. Probably, I'm assuming. I never really asked him. I'm not such a good interviewer. Like, I didn't ask him, "Why did you love it?" [*laughs*] But I'm assuming that it connected to that part of what he loved in Hasidut. Like, he loved a certain Carlebach song that was very slow and meditative, that we would sing together, from the heart.

JG: So, Janet's *davening*.

GS: So Janet's *davening*. Other than that, again, in terms of the business of being the community leader —

BS: Mona was teaching.

GS: Mona was teaching a course. Kathy Green was certainly very present in courses, but I don't remember her taking an active role.

BS: Well, you just said, she read —

GS: She read that *dvar torah*.

BS: About death.

GS: Yeah, she would do a *dvar torah*, but in terms of leading *tefilot* in the first year, no.

BS: No, but *divrei torah* she would. (02:00:00)

GS: Yeah. But *divrei torah* she would do. Mona probably did too, but I don't remember any specific ones.

BS: I'm sure she did.

GS: Yeah. But in terms of leadership roles —

BS: I imagine that other people — like, I imagine that people like Merle [see addendum] and Gail did, too. I don't know.

GS: The year before. Yeah, I don't know.

BS: People who were in that mode, of giving *divrei torah*.

JG: What about women wearing tallit or *kippah*? Do you have memories of that?

BS: I think Sharon might have been the first to do it.

GS: No, women — tallitot, I think, lots of women wore tallitot.

JG: Really.

GS: Yeah. Not regularly. *Kippot* I don't remember. I don't remember women wearing *kippot* at all. But tallitot? To be sure. It was easier to adopt a tallit.

BS: I don't remember anyone before Sharon doing it.

GS: Having a tallit?

BS: I don't know, but my memory is —

GS: I'm pretty sure that people did.

JG: Why was it easier?

GS: Because it's also a very feminine image of a shawl. The tallit itself doesn't necessarily have those kinds of masculine overtones that a *kippah* does, okay? Or at least at the time.

JG: A regular tallit?

GS: Sometimes a colored tallit, or sometimes — yeah, I don't really remember the details.

JG: How about counting women in the minyan?

GS: A given.

BS: Oh, of course.

JG: From the beginning?

GS: Yeah.

BS: Of course.

JG: Sixty-nine, it was already happening.

BS: Yeah.

GS: It was a given that women were counted. But I can't recall that we really cared about a minyan.

BS: It wasn't that halachic. It was like, knowledgeable about Halachah, but it wasn't tough about Halachah.

GS: I may be wrong, but —

JG: So, even like a mourner's minyan, people didn't care about a minyan?

GS: We were young, and we didn't have too many mourner's minyans. There were very few older people who came, and thank God, our parents, most of our parents, were alive and in good health. So, it's hard to remember anyone. I'm sure people did, but it's hard to remember Mourner's Kaddish at the *havurah*. Do you?

BS: No, I don't remember, but I imagine that if they were starting, if there were women and men, it didn't matter. As long as there was a critical mass. It wasn't so like, it has to be ten.

GS: Yeah.

JG: Right. In the early years, would you say there was any sensitivity around issues regarding gendered language of either liturgy or classic texts?

BS: Do you remember that?

JG: It's a little early for that.

GS: It's a little early for that. Before the Jewish feminist stuff in 1972 and 1973, I can't think of any.

BS: I can imagine, even though I can't remember — it's not really a historical statement — knowing Zalman and knowing Art, and their deep knowledge of the Hebrew language, I can imagine that they did play with it.

GS: Maybe.

BS: I just don't remember, but I think that they probably would have, [*laughs*] even back then.

JG: Bella, in 1973 you joined a feminist Jewish women's group, right? (02:03:00)

BS: Yeah.

JG: That became very important to you. How did you come to join this group? Where was it? How did you find this group?

BS: I found it through my involvement with *Genesis 2*, because my editor there was Steven Cohen, Steven P. Cohen, and he told me about it. It was the Yom Kippur War, 1973, and he said, "Oh, my wife is involved with a group of women, and they're working on a newsletter, a liberal Zionist newsletter." It was all in the context of the Yom Kippur War.

JG: So this newsletter became *Genesis 2*?

BS: No, no, no. I was already in *Genesis 2*. No, this was like a special newsletter. I don't remember the details, but it was like focused on liberal Zionism. I started to go and volunteer in that newsletter, and then I met the women who were — several of them were working on that newsletter, and they invited me to join their women's group. They had already met each other at a big Jewish feminist conference in New York. I think it took place in 1972, if I'm not mistaken.

JG: So, Ezrat Nashim had already come together.

BS: Yeah. It was the time of that.

JG: Right, in 1971, '72. There was a big conference.

BS: Right. So they had met there, exactly. I didn't know about it. They had met each other at this conference, and they formed a group in Boston. Then I joined the group.

JG: What was that experience like for you?

BS: It was very interesting, and very supportive, and meaningful. We became a very close group. We started by discussing Jewish issues, like women in Judaism, and then we eventually —

JG: What do you mean by women in Judaism?

BS: You know, like, what's the role of women in Judaism. Mainly that. The participation. That was when I became more aware, I think, of that women aren't included as much. Then it wound up being very personal, and we just stayed in touch. It wound up being very influential on all of us in terms of the way we kind of formatted our marital relationships, and what we expected of our spouses. The kind of subtle and not-so-subtle changes that we wanted to happen in the relationships we were forming, in contrast to what we had all grown up with.

JG: Yeah.

BS: We helped each other. My role models were Elaine — Steve and Elaine Cohen. They were a little bit older than us. They were already having children, (02:06:00) so the meetings were all in their house. They were like our role models of how to be a married couple and how to be parents in a different style. So, they were a very important couple for me.

JG: Did it have any impact on the way you were experiencing life within the *havurah*?

BS: I think it probably made me more aware of some of the — I wouldn't call it hierarchical, but some of the ways that women were feeling more left out. I personally also just saw it as the women — I and most of my friends didn't really want to do those particular roles. I never wanted to lead *tefilot*. Eventually, George got a job in a synagogue in some suburb of Boston, and he needed help. He needed my help to read the Torah and blow the shofar, so somebody — Danny Matt — taught me Torah reading, and I learned how to blow the shofar, and then I did it in Indiana. But in Indiana, it was a much less high-powered synagogue, so I could do it there, even if I made a couple of mistakes. I couldn't do it in Havurat Shalom. What do you call it? The level — there's an expression, the "*raf*" was too high.

GS: Yeah, the level.

BS: The bar. The bar was too high for me to do what they were doing.

GS: I would just add to what you said that this women's group, very few people in that women's group were members of Havurat Shalom.

JG: Some were?

BS: Yourself and Naomi.

JG: Naomi Katz. And Sharon Shumack.

GS: Yeah, and later on Sharon. A few were, but it didn't have a direct effect on the *havurah*, per se. I think it was already the time when we were both of us, for different reasons, feeling a greater distance from the *havurah* itself. Not distancing, we still remained members, and still were active to some extent, but for both of us, involvement was much less intense.

JG: Some of your key friends —

GS: Yes.

BS: They moved. To New York, and Philadelphia.

JG: Yeah. Exactly. To what extent do you think men in the community were really thinking about these issues of women's roles, gendered language?

GS: Not very much. Not very much. At a later point, maybe in '74, '75, there was a men's group that formed. I was never part of it. Perhaps they talked about it. That was when men's groups started to be formed, generally speaking. Again, I don't know exactly the years, but my sense was, in talking to friends, (02:09:00) that no, it wasn't terribly important to us. I mean, it came up, let's say, in all of our relationships with our spouses, in terms of issues of career and things like that, and I would say for myself, I for the first time thought, well, what does it mean for my wife to have a career — which I had never really thought about before. I guess, you know, I just sort of passively accepted that, well, the model of my parents is that the guy works and the woman doesn't.

BS: And the sharing of household responsibilities.

GS: You know, those types of things developed, but I don't think that among members of the *havurah*, per se, we spent time talking about those issues. I may be wrong.

BS: No, I think there was more almost unconscious stuff on the level of the voice of authority. You know, the way women often don't have confidence in their authority, and men do. When I was in my women's group, I think that more raised my awareness of what a pedestal I had all these guys on, because they were such *davening* jocks.

JG: [*laughs*]

BS: I mean, they were like, so good at it. *Davening* and teaching. I think that it did start to make me question, you know, can I also speak with authority in that community, even though I don't do what they do, and what they do is the central subject of importance in that community? Yeah, I definitely think on a communal level it was personally hard for me to find my voice there. I was like the official Zionist, I would say, and at a certain point, maybe feminist.

GS: There were lots of other feminists.

BS: Yeah, more of a Zionist.

JG: Okay. Let's stop for a minute. (02:11:03)

JG: In addition to the creation of a spiritual community, we've talked about the fact that an intrinsic part of the *havurah* concept of community was the role of study and learning. I wanted to ask if you wanted to comment on the pedagogic approach and the role of teaching and learning, and teachers and learners, in the context of the *havurah*.

GS: For me, in the first year, there were three courses that were very important to me, each in a different way. One was a course that Art taught on Hasidut. It was my first exposure to hasidic texts, and my first exposure to that specific style of teaching, the style of teaching whereby he would read from a text and then explain it. The text that he would first read from, it was different from, let's say, looking at (02:12:00) kind of coded text, like a Kabbalistic text, because he would read from the text, and you would sort of understand it, but you wouldn't understand where it was going exactly, and then he would kind of decipher it, and you would say, "Oh, this is really about a very deep issue that I didn't realize was being talked about in Jewish life." Whether it was about prayer or about consciousness or about speech or various kinds of things like that. It was, I think for all of us who participated in that class, a very important experience. In many ways, it

was the model experience for the *havurah* in terms of the centrality of hasidic texts. This reflected a great deal upon the centrality of Art, and the agenda that Art had for the community. That agenda was really, I can't say, dictated by those texts, but it was certainly formed and shaped by those texts and by those concerns. A very important byproduct of that first, or perhaps the second year, was a book that Art did together with Barry Holtz called *Your Word is Fire*, which was translations of a number of hasidic texts about prayer, and also about the intensity of prayer — a very, very beautiful book. It's gone through a couple of different printings, and I think different publishers perhaps. If one reads those texts, you can get a sense of how central the whole business, or the idea of prayer was. I say the “idea of prayer” because we weren't very successful about implementing practical daily prayer. There was a daily prayer meditation group, but only three or four people went on a regular basis — Richie Siegel and Janet and Art, and maybe one or two other people. I never got out of bed in time to go to it, nor was I necessarily focused in that particular way. But it was a model. It was very much a model of what the community should be concerned with with regard to prayer. So, that was one course. That was Art's course. A second course which for me became more important because of the career path that I took was a course with Buzzy Fishbane on the *Book of Psalms*. That was, for me, completely eye-opening. I had studied a little bit of biblical texts in my junior year in Hebrew, and in my senior year I had a reading course with somebody, and we read some biblical texts. They were very nice, and they were very interesting, but in no way did I think of the Bible, or those particular texts, as deeply spiritual texts that could affect me. Buzzy's teaching of those texts completely turned me around. I later went to study with him and did a degree (02:15:00) partially under his guidance, and certainly a great deal of the teaching that I do today tries to pick up on some of those ideas, too. The model of teaching was not necessarily different from anything else. I mean, sometimes it was straightforward, and sometimes Buzzy would just sort of knock us over with the power of his interpretation and the breadth of his knowledge, which was really exceptional, but it was the ability to kind of unfold and reveal what was going on in these texts on a spiritual level that was, for me, absolutely revolutionary. I just had never thought that some of these texts, which I had read over and over again in synagogue, could have the kind of depth to them that he revealed.

JG: Can you give an example of a text?

GS: Let's say, take Psalm Nineteen. "*Hashamayim mesaperim kevod El.*" The teaching — what goes on in that text, in the first section where it talks about a kind of mythical interpretation of the heavens speaking of the glory of God, and presenting an almost mythical image of the sun going out, you know? "*Yarutz kagibor, larutz orach.*" Then followed by this almost staid interpretation of *Torat Adonai Temimah*, a sort of statement of what Torah is. This is an explanation of Torah and *aidut* and all these different terms

for the law, saying how, well, the sun goes out, and it's powerful, and it's mythological, and we appreciate its power, but it's not steady. What you have with Torah is something steady, and it looks like a kind of advancement. Then you go to the third stage, and the third stage says, well, but it's not enough. "*Gam avdicha nizhar bahem*," you know? The word "*nitzar*" means enlightened, and also informed, and warned by them. Then the psalmist talks about what it means to be a person who needs help, and for whom the business of the sun and the business of the Torah isn't enough. There's something more that's necessary, and there it talks about the relationship between the psalmist and God, as something that's absolutely essential. The revealing of that process going on in the text was amazing. It was saying that there are all these different levels to the text, and it's moving toward a particular vision of what it wants the religious life to be. That was amazing to me. I never had anything else like that, and it stayed with me to this day. The third class was a seminar on New Testament, which Joe Reimer and Everett Gendler led. It was my first exposure to a New Testament text. I mean, in college you read some things from the Gospel (02:18:00) or from the Letters of Paul, but here was something taking very seriously reading a spiritual text from another tradition, which I had never done. It was amazing. The sense of exposure, the breadth, the fact that we had somebody from Harvard Divinity helping us out. I forgot who. Still, the fact that here are these Jewish guys sitting around and talking about a Christian text. What's that about? That was also part of the vision of things, that spiritual life was not simply about Kabbalah or Hasidut or Tanach. It was about an entire range of experiences, and that was also part of the counterculture. To be able to say that the range of spiritual experiences is not contained or limited to Jewish texts, however rich they may be. But there's a whole spiritual world out there. This, of course, we also owe to Zalman, to a great extent. So the teaching was for me absolutely eye opening. It opened up a whole world, and then when I went on to do a graduate degree afterward at Brandeis, I could appreciate the limitations of the academic study. I know how to do it, and I teach it sometimes, but I'm well aware of the fact that there's a lot more going on there, and I really owe that to my teachers from the *havurah*.

JG: Yeah. Bella, you didn't take any classes there?

BS: No. I'm very moved. [*laughs*]

GS: [*laughs*]

JG: Yeah, me too. So, it sounds from what you're saying that there was real respect for the authority and the expertise of those who were teachers.

GS: Yeah.

BS: Yeah, people who knew more.

JS: Despite the egalitarian, non-hierarchical —

BS: Yeah.

GS: There was a tension between those two, but yes, yeah. I mean, there was a striving, I would say — not among everybody equally, but there was a striving to become learned on some level.

BS: But there wasn't a social distance necessarily.

JG: That's an important point.

BS: Like when you have your professors in university, you respect them, but there is more of a social distance.

JG: How did the faculty, people who were there primarily as faculty, who had been invited into the community as faculty, participate in the life of the community outside of their role in the classroom?

GS: Depended on the person. For Art, it was complete. For Buzzy, it was emotionally complete, although he was there less time. For some other people, they would come in and teach a course. They appreciated the community — Everett, for instance. He didn't live nearby us, and we would see him largely on retreats (02:21:00) or when we would go out to visit him, or he would come in to teach a course. But he wasn't part of the day-to-day or week-to-week life of the community in the same way. So, it really depended on the person. The response of people really also depended on the person. There were people who held themselves more aloof, and then there were people who embraced you from the first moment, like Everett, from whom that embrace was felt very deeply. There were people from outside the community, too, who came in and taught. I had a very wonderful experience studying Talmud with a rabbi named Baruch Goldstein, who you taught for. He was a rabbi in Malden. He came in to teach a class on Talmud, and it was a wonderful experience. He didn't include himself in anything else related to the *havurah*, but because of a personal friendship with Art, he came and did this. And we all — those of us in the class — developed a close relationship with him. So it really — there wasn't a kind of clear student/faculty thing.

JG: You've also mentioned several people who were members, i.e. students — tell me if I'm getting this wrong — in the community, but who also taught, who were teachers. Like Joe.

GS: Like Joe.

JG: So, that happened as well, people were not clearly in one status or another.

GS: That's true.

JG: Or one — status may be the wrong word there, given —

GS: Yeah, I think that's true. There were, that was part of the egalitarian ideal. How much it actually worked out in practice, I'm not sure.

BS: He had a yeshiva background.

JG: What?

BS: He had a yeshiva background.

JG: Joe did.

GS: Yeah.

BS: Yeah, all the way through.

JG: So he had some —

GS: Some fluency with texts.

JG: Okay. I want to just touch on the issue of Zionism and the role of Zionism in the community. You, Bella, were saying that you were in some sense “the Zionist” in the community.

BS: Well, Gail was, also.

GS: [*laughs*]

JG: Gail also?

BS: [*laughs*] Yeah, but I was more vocal about it.

JG: What was — how would you describe the attitude toward Zionism and the role of Zionism and the relationship to Israel in the *havurah* community?

BS: It wasn't political. It was kind of a —

GS: Achad Ha'am Zionism sort of?

BS: No. I don't think they were so interested in Israel at the time. I just don't think it — it wasn't so important to them. That's what George said in the beginning in the interview. It was more what they were going through at the time that was important. It was more about religion and spirituality and learning, not about Jewish peoplehood. They weren't active in the Soviet Jewry Movement or —

GS: Hmm — I disagree with you.

BS: Okay, maybe I read it wrong. But that was my sense of it was that it was much more on learning, religion, spirituality, and community, (02:24:00) and not so much on all of the Jewish people.

GS: There I would disagree with you. I think with regard to Soviet Jewry, there were a number of people from Havurat Shalom who went or were sent by the Sochnut or whoever.

BS: That's true.

GS: And made specific trips, and for whom Jewish peoplehood was really important.

BS: That's true.

GS: Dovid Roskies, you know? I'd say Dovid, both in terms of his trips and also —

BS: And also Art went.

GS: Art went. Gershon and Ruth went. A number of other people went. Hillel Levine —

BS: But they weren't movement people —

GS: He was a central person. But, yeah, that was very important. Jewish peoplehood was very important, but not necessarily Jewish peoplehood which led to political Zionism.

BS: Israel wasn't very important at that time. Things have changed, but —

GS: Again, I would differ. I would say, political Zionism was not at all important. Political life that was important to the people in the *havurah* was the political life that was going on in America: the counterculture, stuff about racism, stuff about the war in Vietnam, and things like that. That was the political aspect. But with regard to peoplehood and with regard to Jewish identity, yes, Israel was important. The notion of having a non-Orthodox religious life in Israel was not really an option. There simply wasn't much of an option at all. That was my particular position. It wasn't taken that seriously. But people spent time in Israel — different amounts of time and different ways of spending time in Israel, but almost everyone who I can think of who was in the *havurah* had spent significant time in Israel — significant may have been a semester, may have been a year, may have been a summer.

JG: By the time they became involved with the *havurah*.

GS: During the time they were involved. with the *havurah*. Some before. Some people had been on junior year abroad. Some people had been on the Hiatt Program, which is a six-month program from Brandeis.

BS: No, that's true.

GS: Art had spent a year teaching in a development town or something like that in the early sixties.

BS: And Joe did a lot of research.

GS: Joe certainly did. So I would certainly say that Israel was important, but not in the political sense, and not as a place that held a kind of potential for non-Orthodox religiosity. That, for me especially, and for other people too, made it very difficult. That made it very difficult.

JG: Were there others besides you who were planning on making aliyah?

GS: Joe and Gail were, to some extent. It didn't work out for them. Gershon and Ruth Hundert, to some extent. Epi, Seymour Epstein —

BS: Tried.

GS: He tried. He lived in Israel for at least ten years. So yes, there were people, but Bella was certainly the most vocal, I think, and the most clear about saying that, I intend to go there no matter what.

JG: What about the group that left Havurat Shalom (02:27:00) to go to become among the founders of Kibbutz Gezer?

GS: Very curious.

BS: A couple of people did that.

GS: A very curious group. From among them, only Michael Swirsky, I would say, was the most serious about Zionism, and he was the only one who stayed in Israel from that group. For the rest of them, we felt — I felt when we visited there, I can't speak for you — the feeling was that they like it because it's a kind of hippie farm, and it's cool, but it was an extension of kind of the Weiss's Farm experience, but with real farming. It fell apart ultimately, and not that many people stayed. I mean, the people who stayed, I forgot the name of the fellow, Twersky, David Twersky stayed, and David was a very important person there. But he wasn't coming from the Boston group. He was coming from Washington. So, there were some people for whom political Zionism was important and staying in Israel was important, but for the people from Boston who went there, apart from Mike Swirsky, no. It didn't really carry. So, I would really then emphasize that distinction between what people thought Israel held as a future for their particular vision of the Jewish people, and the importance that they saw for Israel for the Jewish people as a whole. I think they saw that, but they didn't necessarily want to move there.

BS: But things have changed. Obviously some of the people, who then became great leaders in the Jewish community and scholars, and teachers, now have projects that they're starting or involved with in Israel.

GS: Yeah.

BS: And they're trying to develop alternatives to the establishment in Israel. So things changed, you know? You're talking about a few years in the beginning of the seventies. They teach at Hartman, and so much has changed. You're really talking about a very short period of time.

JG: I wanted to just circle back around also and give you an opportunity to talk about the retreats within Havurat Shalom — how those functioned, how frequently, what they were like.

GS: Want me to tell it?

BS: I don't remember the details.

GS: Well, when we went on a retreat, we tried to go two or three times a year. A Jewish retreat was a brand-new idea. This was something that we got from the Christian world, from the Catholic world largely. The notion of Jewish retreat? Jews don't go on retreat. Maybe they go to visit the rebbe, (02:30:00) okay? There might have been a Jewish retreat back in Poland, but Jews go on retreat? *Ain davar ka'zeh*, that's unheard of. And here, the experience that some people had had going to monasteries, or going to Christian retreat houses, Packard Manse, was very important. We tried to do this a number of times. Each year we'd definitely go for Sukkot, and sometimes one or two times a year in addition. What it meant for us was different kinds of things. First, it meant the community getting together for Shabbat just by itself, and there there was a sort of curious conflict. On one hand, we said, Oh, now we can just *daven* by ourselves, and it'll be really great. Well, it wasn't so great. One of the things we discovered was that, in fact, we were very dependent upon all those outside people coming and appreciating us. So people would sort of schlep into services late, or they wouldn't get into *davening* so much, or they would skip services. So what's going on here? On the other hand, the social aspect of those things were very important.

JG: Where would they take place?

GS: They would take place — we tried different places. Packard Manse we did once or twice. We had a retreat —

JG: What was Packard Manse?

GS: Packard Manse was a Protestant retreat house in Canton, near Sharon. I think Everett had done some work there, so we knew about the place. That was one place that was available. Another place — there was a Catholic retreat center up in Methuen, in Northern Massachusetts, that we went to sometimes. Other times we went to Camp Ramah in Palmer, which wasn't a bad location, but wasn't great. It had bunk beds. It was in the old infirmary there, and it was less than comfortable. Other places were less than comfortable because they had a cross in every single room, so sometimes we'd go and take down the crosses when we were there. [*laughs*] But the experience of going on

retreat by ourselves was a marvelous experience. I mean, even if it sort of brought out this sense of, well, we're not as independently spiritual as we'd like to think we are, the sense of having communal meals, a number of them together on Shabbat, the sense of being able to have this kind of intense singing experience, study experience, and sometimes a little bit of nature walk, but not too much. Being able, if we went to Camp Ramah, to use the lake as a kind of mikvah. I remember one Shavuot retreat where in fact we did that. It was freezing cold, but, you know, Shavuot morning some of us jumped in. That was very powerful. There was a sense in which we could have a (02:33:00) new kind of experience, a different kind of experience, by going on retreat.

JG: Would you say it worked to intensify or otherwise have an impact on the sense of community?

GS: I think for the time of the retreat it did. I'm not sure what the lasting effects of those retreats were. They were very good for the inclusion of people, someone like Everett, who we didn't see that much. But Everett and Mary would come for the retreat, and their presence was very important. Sometimes there were other guests who would come.

JG: Did Zalman ever come?

GS: I can't recall. I wasn't there the first year, when Zalman was there. But other than that, no. Zalman would come for Shabbatot sometimes, and he would come for Rosh Hashanah, because he would do Rosh Hashanah services at the Columbia Street Shul. But I don't remember a retreat with Zalman.

JG: Did you ever participate in the retreats at Weiss's Farm?

GS: I never did, no. Neither did she.

JG: It started, I think, in '73 —

GS: Something like that, yeah.

JG: So by that time, you were sort of becoming less involved.

GS: Yeah.

JG: Okay. So, let's turn now to trying to reflect on some of the meaning and impact of the *havurah* on yourselves personally and in the larger Jewish sphere. So, just to recap,

George, you started from 1969; Bella, you in 1970. You were basically pretty intensely involved through 1973.

GS: Yeah.

JG: What kind of involvement of an ongoing nature did you have with *havurot* in the years that followed, if any?

GS: Very little. In other words, I still had a connection with Havurat Shalom in terms of going to *tefilot*. I might have taught a course. I don't remember. I had friends who were still there, but my involvement in it, in the sense of seeing that as kind of the centerpiece of my life and my religious life, was much less clear.

JG: Did you ever go to any of the *havurah* summer institutes?

GS: Only one. No, I went to two. Before we moved — when we were in Bloomington, when we were in Indiana, I went to one, 1981. Then when we were in Israel, I came back and taught at another one, I think in 1984. Those were the only two times I went, but otherwise, no, I didn't. Again, once we were in Indiana, we were kind of distant from the whole experience.

JG: So would you say that the *havurah*, or what you took from your experiences there, continued to shape your Jewish life? (02:36:00)

GS: Absolutely. Do you want to talk about this?

BS: [*shakes head*]

GS: I would say in a couple of ways. My expectations from prayer started with the *havurah*. What I expect to get out of prayer, what I hope to get out of prayer, and what I hope to put into prayer, come from those experiences. Those were the most intensive prayer experiences of my life. Sometimes personally, but in terms of community, I've never had any experiences that come anywhere near those. A lot of it had to do with being a kind of neophyte when it comes to prayer. A lot of it had to do with my age of being in my early twenties. And a lot of it had to do with the group of people, with the newness of a lot of the music, a lot of the songs, the *niggunim*, that were there at the time. Mostly with the sense that this can be an uplifting experience in a way totally different from anything else I expected. It's informed my experiences. I've had a lot of experiences with different *tefilot* groups, and they've always been disappointing. I've never found another community that *davened* like the *havurah davened*. I've had nice *tefilot*, and

sometimes intense *tefilot*, particularly, let's say, Ebn Leader — the Leader Minyan. Now it's kind of, like, straight, but it used to be, when Ebn was living in Jerusalem and he would lead the *davening*, sometimes it was incredibly intense, certain moments of it. But the communal thing wasn't there. It was me connecting to what Ebn is doing, and other people connecting to that, and without Ebn, it wasn't there in the same way. The *havurah davening* experience was about the group. There might be a very good *shaliach tzibur*. It might have been Michael Strassfeld. It might have been Barry Holtz, it might have been somebody else, but it was ultimately the way the group came together around that person leading that made the experience such a tremendous high.

JG: Why do you think that didn't work in other contexts as well?

GS: All the things I've said. Partly age, partly the newness of the experience. Partly the fact that, you know, I've been saying these *tefilot* for a long time. *[laughs]* And a lot of the songs I've been singing for a long time. Like in many cases, the expectations that we have something that we can recreate or relive something that we had when we were young, it's very hard to do it. We have something else which enriches our lives, but those kinds of spiritual highs that I felt at those times? No.

JG: Do you think it had to do also with the intentionality, the *kavanah* of the community —

GS: All of that. (02:39:00)

JG: — as a community?

GS: Absolutely. Absolutely.

BS: I think also, just to add one thing that isn't necessarily about *havurah*. I think when you're involved in a new project and you're a founder of it, when you're in a founding group, for the first couple of years in a founding group there is an intensity, even in things that have nothing to do with spirituality and religion. I've been lucky to be involved in a few things like that in my life, more in my professional sphere, and there's an intensity when you're in the founder's group that is — it's fun. It's very unique. Then after, these projects often continue, but it's not the same as the beginning when you discover something. It's like when you're creating something new. You know, putting it into a larger anthropological context, perhaps.

JG: What about in other spheres than *tefilah*? For instance, you mentioned that you've been involved in a number of peer *hevrutah* situations.

GS: I would say the desire to study came out of that. The notion that studying with another person, or two or three other people, could be a valuable experience, as opposed to having a teacher, sitting in a class, or studying by myself — which are all good things, but there is something about the business of a bunch of friends getting together to sit around a text and study a text? That certainly came from the *havurah*.

BS: Yeah. I think it existed in the yeshiva world, among the Orthodox, but in the non-Orthodox world — and again, just as in the non-religious world, something that I think is a remnant of the sixties and seventies, which were rebelling against hierarchy in a lot of fields, is that we can do it ourselves. There you had teachers, but still the *hevrutah* aspect got much more — I think it got a push by the rebellion against authority that was part of the sixties and seventies. It's part of the Women's Movement, also. We can run our own groups. We don't need a group leader. We'll do it ourselves.

GS: In that spirit, I want to add a couple of things about the *Jewish Catalog*.

BS: Yeah, it fits.

GS: The *Jewish Catalog* started through a conversation that Richie Siegel and I had. Neither of us remembers it quite the same way, but it basically was this. We were building a *sukkah*, and we were using a method that Zalman had taught us — Zalman Schachter had taught us — which was using cinder blocks and two-by-fours. It was pretty simple. You took a bunch of cinder blocks and you stuck a two-by-four in, and you made four corners, and then you hung some blankets and stuff like that, and you made a *sukkah*. (02:42:00) Very nice. Either I said to Richie, or Richie said to me, "Wouldn't it be great if there was some kind of vehicle by which we could share this with other people?" We both count that, I think, as the beginning of the *Jewish Catalog*. What happened then was that Richie and I wrote a Master's thesis, and we both started working on it together. I eventually dropped off because I was working on a doctoral program, and then Michael Strassfeld and Sharon Strassfeld came in, and they created that thing. As Bella just said to me, this was very much a sense of Do-It-Yourself Judaism. You don't need a rabbi. You don't need a professional. You can build a *sukkah* yourself. You can learn how to use a lulav and etrog without having to go to Hebrew school. You can do all sorts of things, and the pleasure that you get from them and the sense of involvement in Jewish life, is so much greater than if you have somebody performing a particular thing for you. That very much stood behind what the *Jewish Catalog* was all about.

JG: That was a central critique of the whole Jewish counterculture.

GS: Exactly. So what Richie Siegel and Michael Strassfeld and Sharon Strassfeld developed through that — and they did it beautifully, through all three volumes of the *Catalog* — was something that could take a lot of the ideas in the *havurah* and bring them out to a larger audience. In other words, it couldn't do that with regard to the intensity of prayer. It couldn't do that with regard to the learning of specific Jewish texts. But with regard to all sorts of other values, and all sorts of other behaviors, it could do that. So, the *Jewish Catalog*, then, is definitely a direct outgrowth of Havurat Shalom and the *havurah* experience, and the *havurah* idea, as you say, with regard to the counterculture.

BS: And not just to do it yourself, but to do it yourself in a creative way,

GS: That, too.

JG: What do you mean “in a creative way”?

BS: And with humor.

GS: [*laughs*]

BS: Well, if you look at the *Jewish Catalog*, they give you, like, models. You can do it in your own way — something that speaks to some artistic thing in you or some humorous thing in you. There's a lot of things to do things in life. There's not one way.

JG: An important message, for sure. The *Jewish Catalog* clearly was something — touched a nerve. It was, I think, one of the best sellers —

GS: I think it was JPS's bestseller of all time.

JG: Yeah.

BS: It's a great resource. It became a great resource, and it inspired people. Like here are some ways — and it was based on the *Whole Earth Catalog*, which was a similar resource —

GS: Access to tools.

BS: — in a non-Jewish way. That was very much a voice of the sixties, I think, or the (02:45:00) seventies.

JG: So, I want to just go back for one minute. You just mentioned that you and Richie Siegel were in a Master's program. So I want to talk for a minute about what you were doing at the time. Outside of the *havurah*, you were both pursuing graduate degrees. Bella, you in social work at Boston University, and George, you first in Jewish education through Contemporary Jewish Studies at Brandeis, and later in a doctoral program in Biblical studies in the NEJS Department, also at Brandeis. Would you say — either one of you, both of you — that your experiences in the *havurah* in any way informed your career interest and the directions at the time and subsequently, as your life's work has evolved?

BS: I'll answer that, because I think precisely the way they did the *Jewish Catalog*, I think, for me, it encouraged me to be an individual very much and to do things in my own way also in my professional work.

JG: And what was your professional work?

BS: I was a clinical social worker. I didn't quite fit into any of the existing schools. I studied here. I studied a lot of different things. But I think that what was most important to me was to do things in my own way. At a certain point, two things that I did stand out for me. One was together with a friend from that same Jewish women's group named Eva Fogelman. We were both children of Holocaust survivors, and we saw that nobody was dealing with the more normative issues of children of Holocaust survivors. It was only being dealt with on a psychiatric level. So we started running groups for children of Holocaust survivors to explore what are the issues and what are people doing, and it really was really powerful. Again, we didn't have any — well, we had some supervisors. I shouldn't say — we had, again, Steven Cohen, and another psychiatrist who sort of helped us on group process things, because we were very young. But in terms of exploring the whole project, it was just kind of the two of us who figured it out. I think it was a very powerful thing that helped a lot of people, and then a lot of other people replicated the model in their own way. It got into the Jewish Family & Children's Services, and all sorts of therapists around the world.

JG: Just the concept of the second generation.

BS: The concept, exactly, and lots and lots of groups and writing, (02:48:00) and Eva stayed in the field and expanded it in many different ways. The other thing was, I worked in regular clinics for years.

JG: In Israel, you're talking about?

BS: First in America, and then in Israel. My feminism, which started in that group, was a very, very strong thing in me, and at a certain point in Israel I was fortunate enough to meet other women who were therapists and feminists. It was just at a time in the history of feminist psychology when feminist therapy was developing in America and England. I started reading the literature, and other people were reading the literature, and we got together, and we created the Counseling Center for Women in Israel, which is a feminist therapy center that still exists and thrives in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

JG: What's the work of the feminist?

BS: It's bringing the feminist perspective, both in terms of the issues that we deal with with our clients, like seeing that the places the women's needs need to get greater understanding or greater support within the therapy, and it's also about the therapy relationship, trying to make it less hierarchical. I mean, there's a built-in hierarchy always, but it's an attempt to be more real, and more equal. Then it's also specializing, learning specialties in women's life cycle, all the different aspects of the life cycle of a woman — seeing a lot of people who are at a particular stage and learning about that life cycle, and then giving people a broader perspective on their own issues. But what I wanted to say is, we did it ourselves. We certainly had teachers from the literature, and people who came and taught us over the years, but basically it was in the eighties, the late eighties, and I think it was still — the same people who had gone through the sixties and the seventies, who had this sense that if something needs to get done in the world, just do it. Don't wait for someone to teach you how to do it. Just do it. For me, that's connected with the *havurah*. The same ethos of, you just do it. Of course you find your teachers, but you aren't afraid to go and do your own thing. Not to over-idealize your teachers.

JG: Right. And now, the feminist — what's it called?

BS: It's called Counseling Center for Women. It's almost thirty years old.

JG: It's almost thirty years old. Quite amazing.

GS: So, remind me of the question?

BS: The impacts, that you can do it yourself.

GS: I would say (02:51:00) in two ways. First of all, Jewish education. I did a Master's in Jewish Education and was thinking about that as a general direction, but ultimately the pull toward studying texts was stronger for me. Partly that came just from something inside me that loves studying old texts, and partly it came from, let's say, the model that I

described before with regard to study in the *havurah*, studying with Buzzy Fishbane and other people, and seeing those texts as really deep expressions of spirituality and experience that I could somehow perhaps try to transmit to other people. So, I would say, living in Israel obviously has enabled me to bring those two things together. The different attractions that I have to ancient texts, to Hebrew language, and to teaching Jews about what we have in our grab bag of texts, is really central. So, it's not a direct line, you know? But I think perhaps somewhat like what Bella says, that certain things set me in a particular direction and moved me in a particular direction, and I continued that way.

JG: So, where do you teach now?

GS: I teach now primarily at Machon Schechter, the Schechter Institute of Jewish Studies, and a little bit at Hebrew University. Yeah, teaching biblical texts. That's what I do.

JG: Is there anything about your teaching style that sort of —

GS: I'm sure there is, but I couldn't specify what it is. That is to say, I was taught by certain people who have passion, and I try to teach with passion myself. I was taught by people who care about the entire shape of a text and the message that it gives across, and I try to get that across as well. But beyond that, I wouldn't know how to define it.

BS: It's not dry. It's juicy. [*laughs*]

GS: [*laughs*]

JG: So, you've lived much of your adult lives in Israel at this point. Bella, one of your primary critiques of the *havurah* was that it wasn't Zionist, that it was not involved in Israel in the larger Jewish world. Does that still feel like a critique to you now? Do you see any impact of the *havurah* movement on Jewish religious life outside of America?

BS: I do. I think it has a much — and it could be just because it was ours, and some people who were not involved in it would disagree — but I think it had a big impact on the huge proliferation in both the United States and other places, Europe, (02:54:00) Israel, on do-it-yourself minyanim. People got empowered by that model and trying to make it with intensity and with community. Again, it's not a direct impact, but in an indirect way, a lot of those people had impact on people who had impact on things that also happened in Israel, on rabbinical students everywhere in the non-Orthodox world. Yeah. I think it did.

GS: I'm less saying. I'm less —

BS: [*laughs*]

GS: I don't think I would agree with you. I think you're right with regard to Europe and the United States, with regard to a sense of pluralistic Jewish expression that's become almost standard in much of the Jewish community, and to some extent in certain Orthodox communities as well, but primarily in the non-Orthodox community. But I don't see that necessarily in Israel. That is to say, there certainly is a growing sense of pluralism, but I don't see that as something that has necessarily come out of the counterculture or the *havurah* movement.

BS: I wasn't talking about pluralism. I was talking about that you can create your own minyan in your own way. That you can just do it. That a group of people can get together and create their community.

GS: Again, I don't see that as something that came out of the *havurah* movement. That's always been the case in Orthodox Judaism. I mean, I don't go to this one, I go to this other one across the street, because I reject them. It seems to me that the great majority of non-Orthodox synagogues and minyanim are run by professionals. That is to say, they tend to have rabbis, or they tend to have leaders. I think there are a couple of exceptions.

BS: In Israel?

GS: Yes, that's my sense of it. Certainly that's true in the Reform Movement, and that's true to a great extent in the Conservative Movement as well. There are exceptions, but they are exceptions. Whereas, in the Orthodox Movement, I think it's been following the same path that Orthodoxy, that Jewish minyanim, have been following for a hundred years.

BS: No, but not ones that have incorporated a lot more feminist aspects. There are some. There are definitely in Jerusalem several that have incorporated feminist aspects that didn't come from the Orthodox world. I don't know, maybe it didn't come from the liberal *havurah* movement, but —

GS: I agree with you about the feminism.

BS: But I think it probably did. I'm talking about the feminism.

GS: Yeah.

BS: I'm talking about, like, the Shira Hadasha, the — I don't know, different minyanim.

GS: Again, I don't agree with you.

BS: [*laughs*] Okay.

GS: I think Orthodox feminism has developed on its own track.

BS: Okay.

GS: And movements like Kollech and —

JG: JOFA.

GS: JOFA, have not developed to where they have developed because (02:57:00) of the *havurah*. I think feminism has had a tremendous effect there, and that's very important, but I don't think it's necessarily a byproduct of the *havurah* movement in the same way.

JG: Do you think the *havurah* had any impact on the development of Jewish feminist consciousness and Jewish feminism? This question is actually for both of you.

GS: Yes.

BS: I do.

GS: Yes, I would agree with what Bella said.

BS: I think even the Orthodox — I don't agree with him, because I think the Orthodox were so far behind and disempowered that I think that, at least in an indirect way, they saw all these women rabbis all of a sudden. I think it did have an impact. I don't even know if they — they certainly wouldn't agree with me and they wouldn't admit it, but I do think that all these women in the non-Orthodox world being in leadership positions influenced. I don't know, it's just my own impression. It's not based on research.

JG: So, is there anything else you'd like to add about the overall — what you see as the impact of the *havurah* movement on American Jewish life in particular, or Jewish life in general?

GS: I can't speak to American Jewish life, since we don't live here. My experience is, we come to visit, we go to a minyan here, we go there, we see what's going on, and it's very nice. So, I don't really know.

BS: The *havurah* movement? The question was about the movement?

JG: Well, the *havurah* not just during this early period but it's impact collectively.

BS: I think it did have — I mean, we're not going to agree on this, but I think it influenced the way the non-Orthodox rabbinical schools are much more enlivened. I mean, we just went to, like, the big Renewal synagogue in New York, and I was very touched by how lively it was. I don't know the two women who were leading it, but I have a feeling that they were influenced by the *havurah* movement. I don't know. One was from the Reform and one was from the Reconstructionist, and it was really wonderful.

JG: A far cry, you're saying, from the critiques of American Judaism and Jewish synagogue life as sterile. Not at B'nai Jeshurun.

BS: B'nai Jeshurun, right. It was wonderful, and there were a lot of people there who otherwise I think would be alienated.

JG: Yeah.

BS: So, I think the Jewish Renewal was one way that it went, and different synagogues where they have rabbis. I think it's through the rabbis, probably (03:00:00) that it got, also. It entered, it influenced the rabbinical schools.

GS: There I would say, yeah. Here, the debt to first Zalman —

BS: And Carlebach.

GS: And then to Art.

BS: And to Carlebach — and Shlomo Carlebach.

GS: Eh, Carlebach was different. He was a minstrel. He was a very talented minstrel, but he was a minstrel. [see addendum]

BS: No, he was also a teacher.

GS: He wasn't a founder of institutions. What Zalman did and what Art has done has been to found institutions, and in terms of change and the effect on the American Jewish community, it's institutions that matter.

JG: So, which institutions are you talking about?

GS: Zalman is with regard to Jewish Renewal. He's really the father of Jewish Renewal in America, and perhaps in the world. With Art, it's in regard first to his connection with the Reconstructionist Movement, and in many ways re-shaping the Reconstructionist Movement. In the ten years or whatever that he was there, perhaps less, he really did re-shape the Reconstructionist Movement, and move them away from Mordechai Kaplan toward a neo-hasidic vision, which is much more the way the Reconstructionist Movement is now.

BS: And the Hebrew College.

GS: And the tremendous success of the Hebrew College —

JG: The rabbinical school.

GS: The rabbinical school is, I think, a further indication of his tremendous talents, and the talents are not just in teaching texts and not just in inspiring individuals, but in working with institutions. So, Art, the person who is anti-institutional by his nature, has done something wonderful for the institutions of American Judaism. In that sense, I would say, yes. The *havurah* has, from what I know of the American Jewish community, influenced it. *Halevai*, you know? I wish that that would influence Judaism in Israel in the same way. Wait and see. [*laughs*]

JG: We shall see.

BS: They're trying. [*laughs*] Even the Reform, I think, might have been. I don't know that much, but I think even the Reform rabbinical students were influenced also to a livelier mode.

JG: Yeah, I think that's right.

BS: Thank you.

JG: Well, thank you so much for participating in this interview.

GS: Thank you for guiding us.

BS: Thank you very much

Addendum

Pg. 37: The Vegetarian Epicure

Pg. 53: Merle Feld

Pg. 77: I misspoke here — Shlomo was much more than a singer of songs. He raised up many disciples in both the Orthodox and non-Orthodox worlds as well as enlivening *tefilot* through his music.