

Jewish Counterculture Oral History Project

ARTHUR WASKOW

Interviewed by Jayne K. Guberman

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

Arthur Waskow (AW): Shalom Aleichem. [*laughs*]

Jayne Guberman (JG): Aleichem Shalom. So I'm going to start with this little introduction. My name is Jayne Guberman. Today is Wednesday, August 31, 2016, and I'm here with Arthur Waskow at his home in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. We're going to record an interview for the Jewish Counterculture Oral History Project. Arthur, do I have your permission to record this interview?

AW: You do indeed.

JG: As you know, today we're going to explore your experiences, mainly during the late sixties and early seventies, particularly your involvement in Fabrangen and how that came about, and the impact that Fabrangen and the *havurah* movement has had on your own life and on the Jewish world beyond. So, I want to start by talking about your personal and family background, and flesh out a bit who you were, what brought you to that moment when things shifted very dramatically in your life. So, can you start by telling me briefly about your family?

AW: Sure. I grew up in Baltimore.

JG: You were born in nineteen —

AW: Thirty-three.

JG: In Baltimore.

AW: Right. I grew up in a ninety-five percent Jewish neighborhood, mostly lower middle class. My father was a high school teacher.

JG: What did he teach?

AW: U.S. history — well, U.S. and world history. One of my early connections — not pleasant — with the official Jewish community was that after I was maybe ten or eleven years old, what we then called the Talmudical Academy — I think it's now Ner Israel — built a huge school about a block away from us and enclosed what had been an open lot where we could play baseball and football and just have fun. They enclosed it with a huge fence, and it was no longer available. And my father took an additional job late afternoons teaching history, world history, at the Talmudical Academy. My mother had gotten sick with tuberculosis, and in those days there was hardly any — there was hospital insurance, but no regular medical insurance. So my father took the job partly

because we needed the additional income. What I remember most from that time was that, in teaching world history, he taught about the beginnings of Christianity, and the kids — We don't want to learn any of that! — and they complained to the head of the school. So, (00:03:00) the head of the school called my father in and asked if it was possible to do the course without including the history of Christianity. My father said, "Of course. I resign." The head of the school went, "No, no, no, no!" He then went to the kids and said, "This is real history, and we need to understand it, so stop making a fuss." So, I mean, I remember that.

JG: Tell me about your mother.

AW: She — in this generation, she would be incredible. She was incredible, but in a narrow sphere — very bright, a natural teacher, but not an official teacher. She had been the buyer for one of the big department stores in Baltimore.

JG: Which one?

AW: Schleisner's. She traveled all over to look at possible stuff for them to carry until, I guess, I was born, or she was pregnant with me. Then she became, for the rest of her life, a housewife and a mother to me and my younger brother, three years younger than I. She was a voracious reader. I remember [*laughs*] she knew I had a habit — I was a voracious reader, too, probably partly because of her. She knew that I often would begin reading a book at the end, and she, somewhere along the way, handed me a book, and she said, "You can't do that with this book. You have to begin at the beginning." I said, "No, you can't tell me that. I won't do that." She said, "Well, then you can't read the book." So I surrendered. But the book was a totally abridged and bowdlerized version of *The Arabian Nights*, so the story of Scheherazade. It's crucial [*laughs*] to start at the beginning. So I learned the lesson.

JG: So, you said your mother got sick when you were how old?

AW: Twelve. Her father had died of TB after the flu, and the Great Flu Epidemic of 1920. She refused to go off to a sanitarium, basically to be isolated and die. She figured, the doctors — there was nothing for TB at that time. Streptomycin came along, and (00:06:00) she turned out to be maybe the first known case of Streptomycin creating platelet anemia, and she got written up in the [medical journals] — she almost died from that, until they figured out what the problem was. But she survived. They collapsed one lung, and she survived. She lived until she was seventy something.

JG: That must have been sort of unheard of.

AW: It was in those days, [*laughs*] absolutely unheard of. So, she stayed in the house, but in a room where we couldn't — for our own health's sake — we couldn't come to hold her, touch her, kiss her, whatever. So, I got turned on to history because of my father. He knew about and had schooled at least one of his high school students — the Hearst newspapers every year ran a U.S. history quiz, with prizes if you did very well — like a thousand-dollar prize, which in those days was a lot. So, he trained me to take it, and I actually won, and I think came in second nationally actually, and it paid for my first year of graduate school.

JG: That's amazing.

AW: So that's, you know — and he was one of the founders of the Baltimore Teachers Union, in days when the notion that teachers would be in a union was thought disgusting by the official hoo-has, including the *Baltimore Sun*, which was a really good newspaper in those days, but editorially very hostile to the idea of a teacher's union. Both my parents were very involved in the Baltimore chapter of ADA, Americans for Democratic Action. So, they were much more serious about liberal politics than they were about Judaism, and they sent me to — they had been married by the hazan of the nearest shul, which was three blocks away and was an Orthodox shul. We didn't have a car for a very long time, and the notion of going somewhere else would have been, I mean, it was just unheard of, right? So I went for several years to Sunday school (00:09:00) and youth service, at Shaarei — this is the way they pronounced it — Shaarei Zion Synagogue, and then became bar mitzvah there in a totally boilerplate way. *Shabbos Bereshis*, but nobody talked to me about that incredible Torah portion, and instead just made sure I could chant it. I'm going to have a second bar mitzvah this fall, because I'll be turning eighty-three, and there's a whole Eastern European tradition of — you're entitled to live to seventy, so you start over. At seventy plus thirteen, you can have a second bar mitzvah. So, yeah, this one will be real. But that one? [*throws up hands*]

JG: That was very interesting. I wanted to ask you, though, to bring your brother into this story. The other thing I wanted to ask you about, sort of in this general context, is just about the general Jewish environment in your home.

AW: Right. So, my brother enters the story right after he's born, in a way that was really, from my perspective, invasive. So, I think we went with a neighbor, my father — women then would stay in the hospital for, you know, like a week after childbirth. So, we went down to visit my mother in the hospital, and driving through Baltimore, I was just looking at — I don't think I'd seen most of downtown Baltimore before. So I was asking about streets, and they told me that we were on a major street. I asked what the name

was, and it was Howard Street, and I knew that my brother was going to be named Howard. So I said, "Oh, where is Arthur Street?" And they all laughed at me. They said, "There isn't any Arthur Street in Baltimore." So that was my introduction to my brother. [laughs] His memory of it, of growing up with me, was that I ignored him. My memory of it is that he was a constant annoyance. When I tried to teach him, as I tried to do — like, somewhat older — he wasn't interested in what I was trying to teach him. So that was annoying as hell.

JG: He's three years younger?

AW: Three years younger. He died five years ago — amazingly, because he had been the healthy one our whole lives. I had rheumatic fever when I was eight, several broken arms when I was a kid. He never went through any of that. Cancer — really incredibly swiftly — killed him. So. (00:12:00)

JG: The Jewish environment in your home.

AW: Right. Hanukkah lights. Pesach Seder in English, led by my father, taken seriously. It didn't happen until I was five or six years old, because my grandmother's husband — who I am named after — Litvak, died at Pesach time, and she took revenge on God by refusing to have a Seder. [laughs] When I was five or six, my parents said, "Come on. Have a seder for the kid." So, my memory is that she would sit grimly and close-mouthed at the seder. There was some kind of power there. It was a little weird. But, the seder was about freedom. My parents were liberal activists, so that was a good thing, a serious thing.

JG: Did you have guests at your seder, your family seder?

AW: Family. My aunt — two aunts, a couple of cousins. I don't remember anybody from that side of the family. My older cousin would say the *Ma Nishtana* as *Di Fir Kashes*, in Yiddish. *Tate ich vil bei di fir kashes fregen* — I won't ask the Four Questions. I mean, then the *Ma Nishtana* in Hebrew, but it was — he had learned a Yiddish piece of how to begin it.

JG: Did your mother keep a kosher home?

AW: No. We bought meat at the kosher butcher, because it was three blocks away, and that was where you got meat. There were no supermarkets for ages. I mean, I remember when the first supermarket came. I think I was eleven or twelve years old. So, there was a creamery, where there was milk and cheese and lox, and I remember the guy. It was an

amazing artistry to watch him slice the lox. There was a grocery store with canned goods and a barrel of sauerkraut, which I remember because I used to — I was totally into the sauerkraut. I used to take some of the sauerkraut from the (00:15:00) vat. And there was the butcher. So, we didn't keep kosher, but that was where we got the meat. There was a farmer from Reisterstown, which is now a very built-up suburb, but was then farmland. A farmer's wife, Mrs. Rigler, who came with her station wagon and a bunch of chickens in the back, live chickens. There was a *shochet* about a block and a half away, and you could hear the chickens squawking as they were *schechted*. So, the atmosphere of the neighborhood was totally culturally Jewish. Most of the people in the neighborhood were not observant, even though maybe many of them — or maybe all of them — would go on major occasions to the Orthodox shul. There was one observant family up the block, Mr. Shapiro. He would yell at my brother and me when we went to the public library on Shabbos, "*Du bist a goy!*" He never talked about what might be delightful about Shabbos, but only about how we were violating the rules.

JG: You said your parents had a special anniversary celebration every year.

AW: [*laughs*] Yes, that's right, in which my brother and I — that obviously didn't begin until we were old enough to somehow be involved in doing the buying. Anyway, we would buy a couple of dozen steamed crabs, a totally Baltimore thing, and spread newspapers all over the breakfast table, and we would have this celebration. Until, after I'd been at Fabrangen for at least a year, I must have mentioned this to somebody, who said, "Come on! How do you do that?" I said, "Well, you know. It's honoring father and mother." And he said, "I get it, I guess, but does that mean you have to eat them?" That was a horrifying, accurate question. So I stopped, but really, I still yearn. I haven't had steamed crabs in God knows what — sixty years maybe? Maybe not quite sixty. Fifty-five or thereabouts. But I still wistfully remember what it was like. They were really delicious. So, what was Jewish about that household? First of all, my grandfather lived with us for years, my father's father. He lived with us for some years. He spoke Yiddish. (00:18:00) He dictated stories about his childhood in Yiddish to my mother, who then translated them into English. She had learned Yiddish, I guess, from her mother, who then later also lived with us. My grandfather and my grandmother read the *Forvertz* in Yiddish. He told stories about how narrow and constricting Jewish life was in the little town of Rokytne [Rakitna], in what's now Ukraine, and, you know, viewed himself as having broken lose from a very domineering *heder*, and so on. He was a *schneider*. He was apparently a good *schneider*. He became the *schneider* on the Lusitania, the ocean liner.

JG: Meaning he would do repairs, or he would actually create —

AW: Both. And my grandmother was a seamstress who in the old country would create whole dresses, and then in Baltimore was sort of put on an assembly line and sort of pushed hard and started having headaches. The doctor finally told her she had to stop doing that, so she opened up a notions store in the Black neighborhood of Baltimore. My pediatrician was afraid I would catch some terrible disease [*rolls eyes*] from the Black customers, so he said they shouldn't let me in the store. One of my — I'm not sure this is a memory, or they were telling this story — but I would stand at the screen door and cry and cry and cry and cry. Finally the pediatrician said, [*laughs*] "It's worse for him to do that than to let him in the store. Let him in the store already." But I think it gave a kind of flavor to my life of being the outsider — just barely the outsider. In the family, I became the angry one. My brother was the sweet one. I was the angry one. So that reinforced the outsider sense. After I became bar mitzvah, very soon after, I stopped going to — oh, one more thing. High Holy Days. My father wouldn't go to shul because he'd have to buy tickets, and it wasn't as though they couldn't afford it — although, it wouldn't have been easy — but he thought it was really objectionable. Me, before bar mitzvah anyway, I could go free (00:21:00) and sit wherever there wasn't somebody sitting. That would mean that I would probably have to move around. Then in the year before my bar mitzvah, or maybe in that year, I had to go every Shabbos morning. I'd have to go to Shaarei Zion. And I — there was something about the chanting, etcetera, that actually felt attractive, but intellectually I was totally bored, and I thought it was a totally boring place. And I quit, maybe during the year after becoming bar mitzvah. I don't remember at what point, but by the time I came to live in Washington, the only piece of traditional Jewish practice that I kept was the seder. Nothing else. I don't think even Hanukkah.

JG: Was your family still — was your immediate family still engaged in their own level of —

AW: Yeah, and the level was very low.

JG: Right, but you didn't follow it.

AW: A story from what was in the future. I had an aunt, Tanta Freda, who for various reasons was kind of nuts. When my grandmother died, which was really — she was ninety-six — Tanta Frieda insisted on opening the coffin to see if she was really dead, because — she died at ninety-six! — because she had been traumatized by Edgar Allen Poe's story, "The Fall of the House of Usher," in which somebody is, I guess, accidentally buried alive. Freda wanted to make absolutely sure. Crazy. When my mother died, about two years after my grandmother, she insisted again. And my mother died in a hospital, and, I mean, it was totally clear she was dead. So, when Phyllis and I got married, we started making up the guest list, of course. I said, well, Tanta Freda, and Phyllis said,

"God knows what she'd do, Arthur! She's nuts!" I said, "I can't not invite her." So we invited her. Three weeks later my father calls up. He says, "Freda called me. She says she got the invitation, and she wants to know, "How did he get to be so Jewish? We didn't raise him that way!" (00:24:00) And she wouldn't come to the wedding. So, [*laughs*] I mean, she was right. She was right. They didn't raise me that way.

JG: That's true, but one influence that you haven't mentioned yet in our conversation was going to camp. You and your brother went —

AW: Ah, that's true. That's true. We went to a day camp that was held in Druid Hill Park, which was sponsored by what was then called the YM/YWHA, and now, I suppose, the Jewish Community Center. So, it was certainly Jewish, but in a very laid-back way. Like, I don't remember — certainly they they had lots of arts and crafts stuff — we made whistle lanyards, I remember — but I don't remember any of the arts and crafts being Jewish. The most Jewish thing I remember about the camp was that, for the nine days before Tisha B'Av, we couldn't go swimming. We used to have the morning at what was called the Mansion House at Druid Hill Park, the fancy building, and then busses would take us down to the Y building, where there was a swimming pool, and we would swim in the afternoon. Then the buses would bring us back to Northwest Baltimore. My memory is that was the most Jewish thing about the camp. We had baseball games between the campers and the counselors. I remember actually having the starring role in a camp production of — what was the cantata that Paul Robeson was the — it was about America. It was a kind of left wing — oh, the name will come back to me, or I could google Paul Robeson and what he sang in it. But I was — the star role was being America, was being Uncle Sam, singing about all of the different races and nation, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. That was sort of — what would you say? — left wing Jewish? Maybe.

JG: There was also, you said, mimeographed weekly newspapers.

AW: Which I was the editor of for a long time. But the stuff I mostly remember in that paper was (00:27:00) [*laughs*] totally silly, right? Play by play accounts of the ball games, which I wrote. I would play right field. It was very seldom that any ball got hit to right field, and I would sit there [*mimes writing*]. Once somebody did, and I was writing notes, and it broke my pencil. I'm not sure whether I caught the ball or not. But aside from the — well, I guess I didn't think it was boring in those days — looking back on it, it was pretty boring. In 1946, Tisha B'Av and the first anniversary of Hiroshima were the same day, and I wrote an editorial. I don't think I even referred to Tisha B'Av, but I did talk about Hiroshima, and how it made clear that war needed to be abolished — totally clear, totally correct. [*laughs*] Lots of — thanks a lot!

JG: So, this was right after the end of the Second World War. Do you have memories of becoming aware of what was going on with Eastern European Jews.

AW: I remember during the war — several things I remember. First of all, all four of my uncles went into one version of the service — the Navy or the Coast Guard. Teaching, being a schoolteacher, was an exempted profession. They thought it was a crucial occupation, like being a doctor. So my father didn't go in, but they did, and they would write us mostly censored letters. One of them had two different ships — I guess he was the one in the Coast Guard, I think — torpedoed under him, but escaped. Another uncle — those were the four uncles who were all from Florida, my father's brothers. My mother's brother, Uncle Dave, went into the Air Force. He was at an Air Force Base in Wyoming, I think. I don't think he ever went overseas. I remember asking my mother about — well, one thing I remember is asking her — this must have been, like, '42 or thereabouts — (00:30:00) if there wasn't any war, then what would be on the front pages of the newspapers? And she was like, [*snorts*]. I mean, I didn't know a newspaper where the headlines, all of them, were not — I remember that the town my grandfather, Pop, grew up in, Rokytno, was on the front page of the *Baltimore Sun* one day because that's where the Russian-German Front was for that day. And he came, "Rokytno! [*laughs*] In the newspaper!" Then at some point, I asked my mother about, you know, "So it's a war. One side wins, one side loses. What happens if we lose?" She said, "We can't lose." I said, "Why?" She said, "Because all the Jews would get killed." So I said, "Oh." I mean, not only there, I guess, but here. So there was some awareness, but it was certainly not the main focus, even at the synagogue. It was not the main focus of anybody's attention — and not at the camp.

JG: Do you remember when the State of Israel was founded? You were —

AW: Fifteen.

JG: Fifteen, yeah.

AW: Not quite fifteen. I remember, but I don't remember my family or other people I knew making a big deal about it. By that time, I was no longer involved in the shul. The shul, unusually at that time for an Orthodox shul, was pro-Zionist. The rabbi was pro-Zionist. On Sunday mornings, after Sunday school, we would go out with blue and white cans to collect money. You know, it said, United Palestine Appeal. [*laughs*] On December 7, 1941, I came home from that to find my parents clustered around the radio as the news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor came. So, right.

JG: So Zionism wasn't a —

AW: It was not at all. It was not at all. I mean, American liberal activism, the Teacher's Union, the ADA, they were the central political focus for my family.

JG: So, when you graduated from high school, you went to Johns Hopkins for your undergraduate —

AW: Still living at home.

JG: Still living at home.

AW: I joined a Jewish fraternity, because Hopkins was all male, and the only way to get to meet women — and, of course, girls, actually at that point, “Goucher girls” — the only way to get to meet them — and God forbid you should date (00:33:00) a woman who wasn't Jewish — so the only way to do that was to join a Jewish fraternity. I was kind of — Hopkins, the undergraduate school, admitted one African-American each year. And there was a Jewish quota too of somewhere between eight and ten percent. The president of Hopkins was known to be anti-Semitic then. There were only one or two Jews on the faculty at that point. But there were three Jewish fraternities, and AEPi at Hopkins was the scruffiest, least moneyed, least prestiged. And our chapter admitted non-Jews, which the national was furious about, really furious. But we said, Screw them. We admitted people we liked, and some of them weren't Jewish. Actually, the ones we admitted were Poles and Italians, which is kind of interesting, looking back on it — no Anglo-Saxon Hopkins students. *[laughs]* So, it was a Jewish fraternity, but I — I have no idea what the people who lived in the house — I was living at home. We couldn't afford for me to live in a dorm. My parents said that either I could go to the University of Maryland and live there, or go to Hopkins and live at home, in terms of costs. So, I was much more interested in going to a really fine university. Maryland, at that time, was — its president had been the football coach. *[laughs]* So, AEPi at Hopkins, except that most of us were Jewish, I don't remember any serious Jewish involvement. There was no Hillel at Hopkins. There was a Christian minister who was a really good guy, and a Y building, I guess the YMCA had a building at Hopkins, Levering Hall — or maybe it was Hopkins' building, but he was the minister. He was a really good guy, but there was no Hillel.

JG: I wanted to ask you, I wanted to see if we can focus in the next little bit on sort of an overview of the fifties and sixties so we can get to where we want to get to.

AW: Right.

JG: Clearly, this was a very momentous time. In your own life, (00:36:00) you went to college. You went then to do a Ph.D. in American history at Wisconsin and began your work as a writer, a thinker, an activist, a political —

AW: Right. Okay, so —

JG: So, what are the — what do you consider to be the main touchstones and formative experiences?

AW: Well, for sure going to Wisconsin for grad school, deciding — I mean, I think for most of my years at Hopkins, the assumption was that I would be a high school teacher like my father. In the last year or so, I realized that I could become a — I could get a doctorate, I could teach reasonably in college, etcetera. I asked the historian with whom I took a course in my last year, C.Vann Woodward, who was then at Hopkins and was a major historian, what about U.S. history departments? He said, “Well, there’s two really good ones in the country. Columbia, but they’ll never pay any attention to you — they’re always out speaking, writing — and Wisconsin, where you would really get a professor.” So, that’s what I wanted. There was a Hillel at the University of Wisconsin, but I was totally not interested. I met Max Ticktin there only once, because my roommate — I had two Jewish roommates, which is kind of interesting.

JG: Out of chance, or somebody —

AW: Certainly not by deliberate, but maybe by un-deliberate, who I felt comfortable with. Might have been. Anyway, he got married, so the wedding was done at Hillel. What I remember is Max doing in English of some of the *Sheva Brachot*. He said something about the song of — what did he say? I have to look it up. But the song of the bride and the song of the turtle, he said, from *Song of Songs*, and he just went into some space outside. So, I was one of the *chuppah* holders, and then the *chuppah* — all four of us — began laughing. And he looked up startled and said, “What did I say?! What did I say?!” And that’s the only memory I have of Hillel at the University of Wisconsin. A lot of my fellow grad students in the seminar I was with, with Howard Beale, *olev hasholem*, a great teacher (00:39:00) and a great historian, a lot of them were Eastern Jews from New York, probably mostly from New York. That was a whole new thing. Beale was a serious, radical Christian pacifist, and he realized at some point that his grad students of that generation — this is now from ‘54 to ‘59, when I was on campus — were not the grad students of his whole previous career socially and culturally, and decided that we needed to learn not only what it meant to be a historian, but what it would mean to be a professor of history in a college where he assumed the culture was going to be more or

less like what he knew. He would invite us to dinner at his house and have his two sons act as butlers. He taught us that when we were married — we were all men — our wives would take a visiting card and bend the corner when we were settled enough in the city where we were teaching to have visitors and visit the chair of the department of history and leave the card with the corner bent. He taught us all that stuff. Looking back on it, I think it was amazing. Amazing! He wanted to be sure that we could make a life as history teachers, professors. Astounding. I remember there was one Jewish professor in the department of history, in European history. No Jew in the entire U.S. history department. It was the most radical — in the fifties — the most radical history department in the country. When they brought an American Jew to teach, Beale told me that there was a fight about whether he would fit in there. They brought him, but there was a fight. So that, I think, was my last year on the campus, which was '59. So, even at the most radical history department in the United States, it was not assumed that, of course, it didn't matter whether you were a Jew or not. So —

JG: What, briefly, were you studying? What was your own field?

AW: I wrote my dissertation on a series of race riots in 1919, which then became the (00:42:00) first half of a book of mine, called *From Race Riots to Sit Ins*.

JG: Where were the riots?

AW: Chicago, Washington, Arkansas. There was a whole — it was a long, hot summer — really, truly a long, hot summer. 1919. They were mostly — all but Arkansas, which was more like a pogrom — against the black sharecroppers who tried to form a union. [*scoffs*] Forget it. But, except for that, they were real riots in the sense that blacks fought back, and some of them were returned from being in the U.S. Army. In Washington, there were actually plans by the Howard University R.O.T.C. to go out with rifles onto the streets if the riot had not ended when it did. So, that was what I wrote the dissertation on. I was very much influenced not only by Beale, who was really clear about the history of American racism — he was a serious radical person — but also by Hans Gerth, a German, not-Jewish refugee from Nazism, a left-wing refugee from Nazism, who taught sociology and was just extraordinary. He was the teacher of C. Wright Mills, if you know that name at all. He and Mills wrote a book together, and he was really Mills' mentor. So, between the two of them, I came up with this topic. It's funny, I wrote my Master's on "Negroes and the American Labor Movement: 1880-1900." The Wisconsin State Historical Society, which is a separate library from the University library, had just gotten a massive microfilm collection of Negro newspapers, and Beale told me to come, that nobody had done any research on it yet. The state historical society also had a really strong labor and radical collection, so the notion of doing a thing on Negroes and the

American Labor Movement, and what the tensions were and the connections — mostly tensions — in the 1880's and nineties was a great subject. Partly because of Gerth I decided to do the riot thing.

JG: So, at the point you were completing your dissertation, did you consider teaching as a career? Because you moved into working for the congressman.

AW: Right, Kastenmeier. (00:45:00) So, that was one of the most fortunate accidents arising from a fortunate defeat in my life. I knew I had to go to Washington. As of '59, I knew I had to go to Washington to do research in the National Archives on the riots. The FBI was involved, the army was involved, etcetera.

JG: For your dissertation or this is post?

AW: No, no. I didn't finish the dissertation until '63, and there's a whole story about why it took that long, which you're about to hear. So, '59, I know I have to go to work in Washington. I apply for a grant through the Social Science Research Council. I got turned down. Meanwhile, I had, during the election campaign in 1958, written speeches for this young guy — really young, really outsider. Nobody ever expected him to win the congressional seat. There hadn't been a Democrat in that seat since the mid-thirties. And he won. He came back in, I guess, Spring of '59, to check out the neighborhood, the district, meet people. He invited me to lunch and asked me what I was planning to do the next year. So I said, "Well, I've got to go to Washington, to do the research on the dissertation. I tried to get this grant, and I didn't get it, but I've got to go anyway." He said, "Huh, why don't you come work for me one quarter of the time? I'll pay you what the grant would have been. You'll still be able to work on the dissertation, and I would love to have you in the office writing speeches, letters, doing research, whatever." So that was amazing. Until that year — that year and a half — that I spent working for him, I assumed I was going to end up teaching history at a place like Oberlin or something like that.

JG: So this was Kastenmeier.

AW: That's right — who then spent the next thirty-two years in Congress, and that year and a half working for him became crucial. I met Marc Raskin, who then became one of the crucial people in creating the Institute for Policy Studies. I wrote a book — co-wrote with Marcus — a book called *The Limits of Defense* on nuclear stupidity, [laughs] and wrote *From Race Riot to Sit-In*, using my dissertation and writing history and analysis of the early part of the Civil Rights Movement, especially with the sit-in movement. I wrote a bunch of stuff about the Kennedy campaign for civil defense (00:48:00) shelters. So, I

mean, all of that from 1959 until the institute opened in '63. And it opened out of the cluster of people who came together, working for Kastenmeier or other people on the Hill. So that was a real turning point in my life. It turned me away from academia and toward a much more — and it wasn't like that was a totally new notion. At the University of Wisconsin, people used to say the boundaries of the campus are the borders of the state. The whole La Follette era, the university was deeply involved in political issues, in Wisconsin politics, when the La Follettes were vigorous progressives. So, the whole notion that intellect and politics were not separate was there for me, out of that. Howard Beale's seminar was half and half liberals and Marxists, and he would encourage — I mean, I think all the Jews but me were Marxists — [laughs] he would encourage us to argue with each other, and he would sit back joyfully watching us argue as we began writing pieces of what became dissertations. So, the notion of a politicized intellect was totally there, and it made sense what we were doing on the Hill. Raskin, who was sort of my mentor on Capitol Hill, discovered or created what he called the Marilyn Monroe-Joe DiMaggio Complex. He said, "Marilyn Monroe thought, I can marry the most famous baseball player in America? And Joe DiMaggio thought, I can marry the most gorgeous sexy movie star in America? So both of them were — he turned that into — nobody had done this before — bringing together star academics like David Riesman at Harvard with congressmen, where on the one side the congressmen are like, Oh my God, the author of *The Lonely Crowd*, I can talk with him? And Riesman was like, Oh my God, I can talk with people who are really members of Congress. So, Marc created what was called The Liberal Project, which was bringing these people together (00:51:00) and creating very independent-minded — "liberal" was a euphemism. You couldn't say "radical" or whatever at that point. But it was really much more radical on notions of American politics, both foreign policy and — Kastenmeier was a sort of post-Cold War liberal, even though the Cold War still existed. He entered politics — because — as a very young Second Lieutenant in 1945, he got sent to Japan and he saw Hiroshima, like, six weeks after the bomb, and he said, "I went into politics to make sure that wouldn't happen." So, [laughs] he was not like hardly any politician hardly anybody knew, right?

JG: So, in the remainder of this period following all of this —

AW: So, in '63, we created the Institute for Policy Studies. Most of us were Jewish — Raskin, Barnet, sort of — I think his father had converted to Christianity, but — and Milton Kolter, and almost all the fellows. And they were all men, for years they were all men. They were all Jewish, but all secular, not interested in Jewish life, including me.

JG: Did you have a sense of yourselves and yourself as a Jew participating in this?

AW: No, we knew — we noticed [laughs] that we were all Jewish, but —

JG: But that was that, you're saying.

AW: Yeah. I got invited, in the first year I was — I had married a Milwaukee woman who had her Ph.D. in psychology, who was very Jewish, but in a very specific way. She went to the Y.L. Peretz Labor Zionist School in Milwaukee, where they learned Yiddish and Hebrew both. It was a Zionist school. Her sister went and became one of the founders of a kibbutz in the Negev. But most of her Jewishness was Zionist rather than religious. She was pretty baffled by what happened to me. *[laughs]*

JG: So what did happen to you? What are the highlights?

AW: Okay. So, on March 31st, which was a Sunday, 1968, (00:54:00) Lyndon Johnson went on television, and there was a group of us peaceniks, peace activists, who had gotten together to watch. We fully expected he was going to send another 100,000 troops to Vietnam.

JG: And you had been involved in the anti-war movement?

AW: Totally involved, yeah. And instead, he said he was sending Averell Harriman to Paris to negotiate with the people who, up to that moment, had not existed. *[laughs]* Right? He wasn't going to run for re-election, and they were going to make peace. Whoosh. So, at that moment, who was I? I was an activist, Civil Rights somewhat, anti-war a lot. I was totally casually Jewish. I mean, if somebody asked me, I would have said sure, but you know, no big deal. I had just been nominated by a neighborhood caucus to become a member of what was, when we started, an insurgent anti-war delegation to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. So, that was March 31st. There was the shortest era of good feelings in American history — four days long. April the 4th, King is murdered.

JG: Where were you when you heard?

AW: I was at home with Irene and David, my son, who — let's see, 1968, was almost four years old when we heard he'd been shot. I had meetings scheduled a couple blocks away with a multi-racial organizing group that had emerged in that neighborhood in Washington, the Adams-Morgan neighborhood. We had been working with black folks in the neighborhood for community control of the two local schools, one of which was in "Adams," and the other one "Morgan."

JG: Was in what?

AW: Adams, and the other one Morgan. So, the neighborhood was Adams-Morgan neighborhood. The whole D.C. school system was maybe the least democratic — small “d” democratic — political government in the United States. It was run by a commission that was appointed by judges — federal judges — who had been appointed for life. So, it was totally divorced from any — so, we were fighting for community control of the schools, and we actually won in that neighborhood. So there was a lot of black-white interaction — (00:57:00:00) black progressive, white radical interaction — in the neighborhood. I, after hearing King had been shot, went off to a meeting I had. At the meeting, there were only a few of us there. Almost nobody came. And we got, on the radio, the news that he had died, and I went back home. What I remember from that was Irene and I both crying over the news of him being shot, and David, then four years old, asking, and we explained. And he said, “He should have had a gun and shot first.” Then we really cried, and said the whole point was that King wouldn’t have done that. All right, so, April 5th, first thing is, I had been scheduled—this is so weird and ironic. The film, the Swedish film, *I Am Curious Yellow* was being brought into the United States, and the Customs Bureau said it was obscene — you still had all those laws — and was prepared to oppose. Now, I had been invited by a lawyer who had taken on the case as a Civil Liberties case to come, because King’s presence is an important part of that film.

JG: Say what the film is about.

AW: I don’t remember a lot, except that King’s presence is an important part of the film. That I remember, but I don’t remember much else about the film. So, the lawyer had asked me to come be an expert witness about the importance of King and how this was politics and religion and it wasn’t obscene. I mean, there was some “obscene” stuff in the film, too, but he asked me, and I was scheduled on the morning of April 5th to appear to give testimony on a hearing on whether to let the film into the United States. So instead, the hearing got cancelled, and I got an invitation to come speak at a memorial service for King at American University, which is on the far edge of the District of Columbia, and I said yes. And I went and I spoke, and one of the things I said was that King would not be just sitting here giving a speech. He would be undertaking some act of challenge. Johnson, the night before, had asked the black community to be non-violent, but he hadn’t ended the war — not yet — and he was carrying on the biggest violence on the planet. So, I said, who would want to go (01:00:00) demonstrate at the White House, saying stop the war? About fifty people said yes, so we walked from American University into Dupont Circle, which is the sort of — was then the heart of the progressive piece of D.C., and stopped there to get some water and rest, and then we were going to go on to the White House. Somebody who wasn’t part of our fifty folks asked me, “What are you guys doing?” So I said, “We’re on our way to the White House to say

end the war, in King's memory." The guy said, "Don't you know what's going on?!" I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Look!" And he points up at the sky. There's this incredible pall of thick smoke turned out, rising from the burning of 14th Street as the black rebellion began. *[laughs]* So we caucused — do we want to keep doing this or not? Yes, we wanted to keep doing it. So we went. We walked the rest of the way to the White House. Lafayette Park, which was then totally open — nowadays it's really, you've got to go through incredible stuff to get any type of permit to do any sort of stuff around the White House. But then, it was — actually, we had been there after Johnson announced he wasn't — peaceniks from all over Washington converged at Lafayette Park and began dancing and singing. I remember the cops arrested one guy, and they came back twenty minutes later and de-arrested him, saying they couldn't figure out what the charge was. *[laughs]* It was like the government had fallen, which it sort of — a piece of it had. So, we're in Lafayette Park marching up and down, handmade signs, you know — Stop the War. Then we decided it was too easy staying on that side of Pennsylvania Avenue. We crossed over, right outside of the White House fence, and there were cops. After about ten minutes, the cops, with no warning, charged us — some of us, somewhat, and arrested us. I have no idea. *[laughs]* I mean, the charges were probably disorderly conduct, whatever that meant, right? And I remember going off to the police station, under arrest. In those days, you could either post bond of fifteen bucks, and then either show up for trial or not. If you didn't show up for trial, the fifteen bucks was forfeited, and that was it. So, I thought to myself, what do I want to do here? And I thought, three weeks from now — I asked when the case would come up — three weeks from now, we were going to appear before (01:03:00) some judge, and he's going to say, "When were you doing this? You were keeping police busy at the White House while the city was burning down?" *[laughs]* You go to jail for six months!" Forget it. So, I turn over the fifteen bucks and finish. Meanwhile, it had been clear to a bunch of us at IPS — at the institute — and other folks, that there was going to be a black uprising in the city in July or August. I mean, I had written a book about this stuff. I knew what the signs were. You could taste it on the streets, the rage building up in the black community. It was incredible. And it always happened in July or August, so this time, we had actually created a network to be ready. We called it the Center for Emergency Support. We had arranged with Dick Gregory to come speak in white Georgetown, with the title of the speech being, "Is Washington Burning?" And we had originally asked him to come — this was weeks or months before — we had originally asked him to come on April — Thursday was April fourth, so fifth, sixth, it was April seventh, the Sunday — and he couldn't do it. He said, "It has to be a week later." Thank God! If we had had a gathering called *[laughs]* "Is Washington Burning?" on April seventh when Washington was still all but burning — it had burned. I think we would probably have all gone to prison for conspiracy and God knows what. So, we did have that, but it was a week later, and things had at least somewhat calmed down. But, anyway, so Lyndon Johnson sent the army into

the city on April fifth. It took much longer to get into the city than they had expected, because there were no plans for the bridges to Virginia being filled with whites leaving the city. [laughs] I discovered something that really puzzled me. When I was doing the research on the race riots, the army turned over all their documents, except for the Washington riot. I could not figure out why they wouldn't let me see the stuff from the Washington riot. What I realized was, the operational plans for dealing with the riot [laughs] in the city of Washington were the same in 1968 that they had been in 1919, and they weren't going to turn over to anybody their operational plans, which were still the operational plans for dealing with it. They did not expect the bridges to be impassable, but — (01:06:00) So, I finally found out why I had not been able to get access to that record. So the army came into the city. They took over schools. They took over one of the schools in our neighborhood. They took over the traffic circles and put machine guns in the traffic circles so you could aim in six directions at once. So we put the Center for Emergency Support into operation, which meant getting — oh, and the president imposed a curfew, which in theory applied to everybody, but the cops didn't care if whites were on the streets. So, there were thousands of blacks arrested, with the only charge being that they were violating the curfew. They didn't arrest whites. We actually had prepared. IPS officially closed and turned over the building to us, to the Center for Emergency Support. We mimeographed passes that said: "The following [blank] is permitted to be on the streets for humanitarian purposes." [laughs] We made them up, signed them, and didn't even have to use them. Nobody ever stopped us. So, we were getting medicine and lawyers and doctors and food into the black community, because of the curfew. So, that's what I was doing for a week.

JG: And am I correct that Passover was coming right —?

AW: Right, just one week later. I was just getting to that. So, it was the first night — the first night came one week after King was killed, and so that I did, right? So, I took a break from the Center for Emergency Support work and walked home to get ready for the seder. But that meant walking past the army.

JG: Past what?

AW: The army. The United States Army, with a machine gun pointed at the block I lived on. And my *kishkes* — not my brain — began saying, "This is Pharaoh's army. I'm going home to do the seder, and this is Pharaoh's army." The seder, of course, traditionally, always has a line saying "In every generation" — it doesn't even say every Jew, *kol adam*, every human being — "is obligated to look upon him or herself as if we go forth from slavery." Not just our great-great-great ancestors. So, I had read that line. It had never meant anything. But it was like a volcano, right? So that was the second and

biggest turning point in my life. The first one was working for Kastenmeier, but the second one was the power of a seder that came in the moment of this uprising, (01:09:00) and the moment of squashing the uprising. So, I was so stunned — meaning, STUNNED! — I was so stunned that, What's going on with you, Waskow? You didn't care anything about this stuff. I mean, you cared about the seder, but —? So that sort of stuck and lived inside me.

JG: Did you do anything else —

AW: No, not yet.

JG: — at the seder that year?

AW: Oh, yeah. I think we talked about the streets. You couldn't not. And that line. We talked about that line, but that was it. We did talk about it, but that was it. So, my delegation slate won in D.C., and I became a delegate to the famous — infamous — Chicago Convention. Everything that happened there felt to me like it stripped away the identities that I had thought were mine — as a liberal Democrat, or a left-liberal Democrat, total failure. We made trouble at the convention, but ultimately the convention rolled over us. People from the institute had this notion in their heads that there would be hundreds of delegates who would quit the convention when Humphrey was nominated and would cross over, literally coming to the Stockyards Inn, if they were invited — would come to the Stockyards Inn, which is just about across the street from the Convention Center.

JG: Were you pledged to —?

AW: Ah, good story.

JG: I don't remember hearing that part of the story.

AW: No, absolutely not. Right. So. [*takes deep breath*] I was involved in anti-draft stuff, and Dr. Spock — America's Grandpa — and Marc Raskin, my good friend and colleague, and Bill Coffin, a Protestant Minister, and a couple of other people, were indicted under the charge of Conspiracy to Aid and Abet Resistance to the Draft. Marcus actually was charged. The facts that were alleged about him were actually things that I'd done — he hadn't done. [*laughs*] And the defense decided I should be instantly available (01:12:00) to testify, in case it didn't look like the jury had gotten it, that Marcus had not done those things, and I would testify that it was me. So they wanted me there, but they didn't want me in court. And in fact, if I were going to be — they didn't want me

testifying unless it was absolutely necessary, because I had a beard down to here [*gestures to mid-chest*] and I looked, God knows. So they thought, put me on the stand, and I say, “They’re clearly all guilty! I mean, God, look at him! He’s clearly the nightmare that we—” So they didn’t want me to testify if they could avoid it, but they needed me there in case they did need me. And I wasn’t allowed to sit in the courtroom, if I were going to be a witness. Possible witnesses are not supposed to hear other witnesses. So I spent days in the law library in the court house reading the records of the Constitutional Convention. [*laughs*] Mostly, that’s what I was doing, and I’m waiting to be possibly called as a witness. Then, Bobby Kennedy gets killed. We had committed the delegation to support Bobby. That’s why we won, I think.

JG: This is June?

AW: Yeah, that’s right. June fourteenth, I think it was. So, Bobby is killed, which means we don’t have a candidate, and I’m clearly nuts. I mean, I’m committed to Marcus and these other people, and on the other hand I am also committed to my fellow delegates. What am I supposed to do? So I decide I can’t bear to stand sitting in the law library anymore. If they need me, they’ll call me, but I’ve got to go back to Washington and see my — I wouldn’t have used the word *hevrah*, but that’s what it was. So, on the plane back, I’m thinking, so what do we do? And my U.S. history head came into play. I remembered what delegations used to do when they didn’t know who to support and they were trying to play the angles. They would nominate a favorite son — never a daughter, of course — but a favorite son. So, who should be our favorite son? Well, I figured the chair of our delegation was like a minister — Martin Luther King, he was a minister. He was not only anti-racist but anti-war. He was a totally decent human being. Our favorite son! So, came back and I proposed that we nominate Channing Phillips, Reverend.

JG: Channing Phillips?

AW: Yeah, Reverend Channing Phillips. And we nominated him for president. So, the delegation said, Good idea. Okay. Then, some of the white liberals on the delegation said, Well, can we at (01:15:00) least listen to Gene McCarthy? You know — maybe — we would want to — so the delegation agreed to invite Gene McCarthy to come speak to us and see whether we would be prepared to support his nomination. So Gene McCarthy came, and the first question, after he talks a little bit — first question comes from a welfare mother, who is a delegate, right? I mean, we had an incredible delegation, stretching from a millionaire of the Sears-Roebuck fortune, Phillip Stern, to this welfare mother, with every conceivable kind of person in between, with politics. So, this welfare mother lived in the neighborhood of Washington called Anacostia, which is the poorest, furthest, you know. And she’s living in a public housing project. She says, “Senator, I

live in Barry Farms, in Anacostia, and we would really like you to come visit, to get a sense of what it's like." He says, "I went to the ghetto in some city or other, and each ghetto is like every other ghetto. I don't need to come." Incredible! So the temperature in the room dropped thirty degrees, and it was totally clear that we were not going to support [laughs] Eugene McCarthy for president. I spent months trying to figure out what the fuck was going on in his head! And I think I finally figured it out, though this is totally my invention, right? He hated the Kennedys. He, once upon a time, said, "People say Jack Kennedy is a Catholic, a liberal, and very smart. Well, I'm twice as Catholic, twice as liberal, and twice as smart as Jack Kennedy." And it was true! I mean, it was true. So, I think he felt so insulted at having to beg the D.C. delegation, which had been committed to Kennedy, to support him, that he was just — so, forget him. We nominated — and we did! — we nominated Channing Phillips for president. He was the first black person ever nominated for president in a major party. Can you imagine? And he was — he's also dead — he was a totally, totally decent human being. So, we're in Chicago. Mayor Daley. I actually spoke two nights in a row at Grant Park, with a few other delegates. I was invited to by Tom Hayden, who, with a few other delegates — Tom thought that if we were there speaking, they would probably not want the National Guard and the Chicago Police to attack us, if we were between (01:18:00) them and the crowd of demonstrators. So, I spoke there, and then the third night was the night of the Presidential Nomination, so I didn't go. But that was the night they tried to march to the South Side, and they were attacked, right? So, [laughs] first of all, Daley controlled the streets and used the cops to smash a totally legitimate demonstration. Inside the convention, his Sergeants at Arms tolerated two nights of our forcing the convention to adjourn by chanting as anti-war folks. But the third night — I mean, there's a whole little story about that, but I'm not sure you're —

JG: It's relevant to this? No.

AW: Yeah. But I ended up feeling like, as a street radical, I wasn't prepared to risk my life, which it looked like would happen if I went back to Grant Park again, after the cops had attacked it. As a left-liberal Democrat, we had been totally defeated. And — ah! — as I started to say, the Institute thought they could start a third party by having dinner at the Stockyards Inn, and hundreds of delegates would come. None of that happened. So, by that time, IPS was feeling like [gestures exasperatedly] — I mean, I stayed there for another eight or nine years, but, you know, it seemed crazy, and their expectations. So, everything was gone. I came back to Washington after the convention and felt from my *kishkes* the one thing that wasn't gone was the thing that had happened at the seder, that being a Jew, it turned out, felt like an identity that wasn't so easily dismissed as these others had turned out to be. I'm not sure looking back on it like that was right, but it was what I felt. So, I found myself driven — I don't even remember making, like, a conscious

decision — but I felt myself driven to sit down with what had happened at the seder in '68 and to turn it into something that could be used in '69, and who knows. So, I found myself sitting with the Haggadah I was given when I was thirteen years old — Saul Raskin illustrations, very powerful stuff — in one hand, and King, (01:21:00) Gandhi, Nat Turner, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, in the other hand, and taking that stuff and weaving it into the Haggadah, and there were two major things I did. One of them was there was a whole long essay by A.J. Muste, an American Christian — serious Christian, radical — about Moses, in which he talked about Moses as the organizer of Brickmakers Union No. 1. So I took parts of that and moved it into the Haggadah that fit in both ways, sort of. It universalized the Egypt story, the Exodus story. The other thing was, I took this other stuff — I dumped the entire debate about whether there were ten plagues or twenty or fifty or two hundred. That was stupid. So I created the debate between violence and nonviolence as a form of liberation, as an avenue for liberation. That seemed to me like a really serious debate, to discuss on it, Pesach night. So, I wrote that, and I was so driven that, although I'd written three books by this time, that one was totally different. I would write a paragraph and I'd call up one of my friends and I'd read them the paragraph. What happened was, half of them said, That's amazing! That's wonderful! And the other half said, You can't do that. There is a Haggadah. Nobody can write a Haggadah. So I finished, and I thought, I don't know whether this is just crazy or not. Maybe I should ask some Jew who would know something. So, I asked around. I got the name of a young rabbi, Harold White, *olev hashalom*.

JG: Harold White?

AW: Yeah, in Washington, who had been involved in Civil Rights and anti-war stuff, because there was no point in asking anybody who would think that was just absurd. So, I called him up. I explained what I was doing, and I asked if he would read it and give me an honest, frank answer whether it was just crazy or useful. So he said, "Well, it sounds interesting anyway," and to send it to him, so I did. A week later, he calls me up and he says, "Waskow, I love it! It's such an activist midrash on the Haggadah, I wondered if you know the ancient rabbinic activist midrash that said that God wouldn't split the sea until one activist walked up in up to his nose, ready to drown. Not till then would God split the sea! That's a really activist midrash. I wondered whether you knew that one and maybe you would want to evolve on it." And I said, "What's a midrash?" And instead of saying, "So, who needs to talk to you?" he said, "Oh, well, let me share the midrash with you." And he sent me (01:24:00) a book edited by Nahum Glatzer called *Hammer on the Rock*, with selections from the midrash, really good ones of course. And that was the final step, right? So, I mean, I absorbed the final politics of the seder and had gotten to a sense of how to universalize it without dumping the Jewish piece of it, and now there was this totally weird and wonderful intellectual notion that you could take a three-thousand-year-

old text and give it a twirl, and it would come out somewhere new. And what's more, I could do it! It wasn't just rabbis two thousand years ago who could do it. What Harold White was saying was that I could do it too, and hey! So that was it. Those two things came together, the political and the intellectual, and my sense of — the whole notion of midrash was really funny and serious at the same time. So, okay, I took that early version of the *Freedom Seder* and actually paid to publish it in literally a pocket book about this size, [indicates size about six inches] with illustrations by a wonderful black artist, Lloyd McNeill, and used the institute's network — there wasn't any internet of course — but somehow used some kind of network to get the word out, and people began ordering copies. Then what happened was that Warren Hinckle — who I saw in the *Times* a few days ago just died, and Bob Scheer — Robert Scheer, who was also at *Ramparts* — came to visit Marcus, Marc Raskin, to ask for help in raising money for *Ramparts*. So Marc gave them some ideas, and then Marc told me, just as they were about to leave, they said, "Oh hey! Is anybody here writing any stuff that might be good for *Ramparts*?" And Marc said, "Yeah, well Waskow's doing this really crazy thing. He's writing a radical version of the Passover Haggadah." And they said, "Ah, gorgeous!" So they talked to me, and I said sure. Then they went — and this is one of the missed opportunities of my life — they went to visit with Ben Shahn to ask if he would illustrate, and he said he would and then he died. [laughs]

JG: Ah well!

AW: The *Freedom Seder* would have been, like a million!

JG: [laughs] Oh, dear.

AW: But, you know. So they published it in, I think, February of 1969, and *Ramparts* had this audience among, especially, young people. (01:27:00) I don't know especially among young Jews, but there were certainly a lot of Jews. So, it reached a lot of people, and at some point, Michael Tabor came to me and said, "There's this thing in Washington called Jews for Urban Justice." It was new to me. And then he says, "Very nice for you to write a Haggadah, but what about actually having a Seder?" I said, "Terrific, great." So we thought about where, and decided on Channing Phillips' church. He was already in touch with me and had the right politics, and it was a church, and so on. So we went to Channing, and Channing said sure. So we decided to have the Freedom Seder in the basement or the social hall or wherever it was of Channing Phillips' church, like in Congregational something or other.

JG: In D.C.

AW: Yeah, in D.C., in the heart of D.C. So, meanwhile there's this thing called Jews for Urban Justice, right? And I meet Mike and I meet Fran Schreiber and some of the other activists from Jews for Urban Justice, and learned what they were doing, which seemed great.

JG: They were a couple of years old, at that point.

AW: That's right, that's right.

JG: They had been founded in '66, something like that.

AW: That's right. So, I was not among the founders, but I got excited about it, and especially excited because they wanted to put on this Seder. I guess it must have been after the Seder — I don't remember exactly when the Columbia Student Uprising was, which I'm trying to remember because it had some impact. At some point in my involvement with Jews for Urban Justice, with JUJ, the Washington — it was in effect the federation, but I can't —

JG: UJA?

AW: UJA. So they decided to have — maybe they had to have — but they decided they needed an Urban Affairs Committee. The leading “urban affair” had been the uprising and the relationship with the black community. A lot of the stores that got burnt were Jewish stores, so my reaction was, “This is Pharaoh's Army,” but other people had a very different political — (01:30:00) I understand. Especially looking back, I understand, but — so they invited a couple of us, several of us from JUJ, to become members of this Urban Affairs Committee. It must have been '69. One of the powerful moments for me, really powerful moments — King had been planning this Poor People's' Campaign, and a march at what ended up being called Resurrection City in Washington. Hundreds and hundreds of people — poor whites and blacks and browns — all came and set up tents on the Mall, called Resurrection City. One noontime, when the Urban Affairs Committee was meeting — it wasn't the UJA, it was the JCC, the Jewish Community Council. That's what it was, but it functioned like the UJA as well. So, the JCC Urban Affairs Committee is meeting. I'm there, and several other people were there from JUJ, mostly *machers* in the Jewish community who we didn't know at all. A call comes to the JCC from the Poor People's Campaign. They said they just had a whole bunch of new people come in. They had gotten an agreement from a church, I think, to sleep there, but they were just off the road. They were dusty and exhausted. They wanted to take showers, and the church didn't have any showers, so they called the Jewish Community Center — the other JCC — to ask if they could come have showers, and the JCC said no. So they were calling the

Jewish Community Council to ask what they could do. Everybody is authentically upset. I remember hearing for the first time the notion that Abraham and Sarah welcomed guests and travelers from everywhere, and that it was really shameful that they should say no. They're talking about what to do, and three or four of us from JUJ sat in a little circle of our own on the floor trying to talk about what to do, and we're joined by a guy named Arnold Sternberg, who is a radical. He fought for the Palmach during the War of Independence, but it was for the Palmach, the left-wing piece, and saw himself as a Mapamnik in the days when Mapam was really on the left. He was known to the community, but he came and sat with us. We decided — and this is why Columbia, it must have been in '69, (01:33:00) students at Columbia had taken over the administration building, right? So we decided we're going to spend the next several hours calling our friends, and we were going to go and take over the JCC, and say, Come, take showers. A guy named Isaac something, whose last name I can't remember right now, who was the exec of the Jewish Community Council, is listening to us, and *plotzing*. I mean, the headlines the next morning are going to be — if we do that, it will call attention. The press is going to run the story that the JCC refused, and then this bunch of radical Jews came and took the place over, and he can't — so he says to Sternberg, who is the only person he really knows, he says, "I understand what you're trying to do, but I think we're trying to reach out already to the trustees of the JCC. We won't be able to reach them probably till this evening. Why don't you wait till tomorrow morning? I think we'll have it settled. Why don't you wait till tomorrow morning, not five o'clock this afternoon?" Sternberg says — now he's a Mapamnik, a radical Zionist, I suspect not religious at all — and he says, [*screaming*] "Because *Maariv* is at five o'clock, and I intend to *daven Maariv* in the Jewish Community Center. That's why!" And I felt like a stroke of lightning had hit me. That was a totally crazy answer, and it was a totally correct answer at the same time! Just, whoo! What is this I'm doing? I am really doing something! I'm being drawn into doing something! So. [*exhales, hands on chest*] That was another big, big, big step for me into — this may seem crazy, Waskow, they want you to go totally crazy, but here's where you are. Whew. They called. They said, "There are people threatening to take over the building. You better let them." And they did, so we didn't have to do it, but they — [*laughs*] we were ready to make the phone calls and get people there. Whew. So then, I got more deeply attached to JUJ.

JG: Is this a good place for us to break, and then we'll sort of pick it up in how it took form?

AW: Yes. So, at some point, I guess afterward, because we should do some about JUJ before JUJ sort of morphs into the Fabbrangen.

JG: Okay.

AW: Or melts into the Fabbrangon, or something.

JG: Okay.

Noam Osband (NO): Do you want to — just because you have the hat right next to you — I would say, talk about it, and then I'll go in later and zoom in on some of the individual buttons. But go ahead right now (01:36:00) and just talk about —

JG: Just say what it is, yeah.

AW: [*Puts on hat with many buttons.*] All right. So, I begin to get involved in Jews for Urban Justice, and I begin to get drawn to the idea that Jews should wear a yarmulke, a *kippah* — we didn't call it that; I didn't, anyway — a yarmulke, some kind of hat. So what kind of a hat? So far — although the religious piece, the seder, the notion of *Maariv* being an occasion to do a sit-in or a takeover, okay — but the religious stuff was still — JJJ was more or less a secular, radical Jewish organization in a long tradition of such organizations, right? So, the notion of Tevye, the Tevye cap, appealed to me as a way of a Jewish connection that was Eastern European, seriously Jewish, secular. Yeah, it was a yarmulke, but certainly not any kind of conventional yarmulke. So I got this, and began putting buttons on it.

JG: What's the this?

AW: Ah, [*touches hat*] this hat. This cap. So, I thought of it as a Tevye cap. Some people think it's a sea captain type of cap, but I thought it was the cap that Tevye wears in the stories, and then I guess in the musical and movie *Fiddler*. So for a couple of years, this became what I wore, and as I said, or maybe didn't say, my beard was like, down at least to here. [*points to mid chest*] So, I was very odd looking, but for me it felt totally authentic and totally good. So.

JG: So what were the kinds — what were you putting on the cap?

AW: All sorts of radical — [*takes off cap*] So what are they? One is in Japanese, and it was about — it translated to, "Smash the State." One was Breira, which came later, but was the first American Jewish organization to take seriously the notion of a two-state peace between Palestine and Israel, and we can get to that too. Summer of '69, after the Freedom Seder was my first visit to Israel, mostly insisted on by my Zionist wife. But it also became, because of the Institute, the way for me to meet left wing Israelis, and then to visit people in the West Bank and Gaza and East Jerusalem. There is one that says

"*Shalom BaOlam*," with a dove. Another one that says, (01:39:00) "Jews for Urban Justice," with a Magen David. Another one that was from [laughs] 1970, the second year of the Freedom Seder, which we did — this was the weirdest button. We did a Freedom Seder at the edge of Manhattan, down at the edge of the island, focused on the Pharaohs of Wall Street. So this [laughs] button has a fist, and a pyramid, and [laughs] a whole thing about freedom. "Freedom Seder," and "*m'avdut l'cherut*," "from slavery to freedom." Right, that was aimed at the Wall Street Pharaohs, and Shlomo Carlebach came. In fact, I remember, Carlebach would jump up and down when he was singing, chanting, etcetera etcetera, and we were trying to keep a microphone in front of his face while he jumped up and down. I had the microphone, so I remember I had to jump up and down in rhythm with Shlomo, [laughs] in order to keep the microphone in front of his mouth. There's one that says "Sukkat Shalom." Some of these came later, but Sukkat Shalom, "Spread over us the shelter of your peace," uh —

JG: What's the one hanging from the top? What is that?

AW: [points to large, blue pin] What, this one?

JG: Yeah.

AW: That's the Japanese one, "Smash the State." [laughs] So a lot of them are Jewish, but not all of them. "Resist War Taxes." "Shut Them Down," the nuclear energy stuff that almost went critical at Pennsylvania. "Fulbright for President. [laughs] That was about the Vietnam War. "Free D.C." What I don't have here — I think I still have it somewhere — but I actually paid to make a "Channing Phillips for President" button, and it said, "End the War, Stop Racism, Free D.C.," with "Channing Phillips for President" in the middle. So, the Freedom Seder happened. About eight hundred people came, half of them Jews, the other half black and white Christians. It was covered live by WBAI of New York City, and the Sunday after it happened (01:42:00) it was broadcast in a condensed version, about an hour, by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. So it got all over the place, as well as *Ramparts* Magazine, and it became clear there was a real audience, a real constituency. It wasn't just an audience. So —

JG: And what had you done in the actual Haggadah that was so revolutionary and different?

AW: Bringing all the Black Liberation and, for that matter, Gandhi, etcetera etcetera — bringing all that into the story. So, the story was Jewishly rooted, universally flowering, you might say. Okay. Indeed, the weekend after the Freedom Seder, a bunch of us from JUU met with people from other new Jewish movements around the country, politically

radical movements. We created a thing called the New Jewish Organizing Project. We debated whether to call it radical but decided not to. Or, no, the National Jewish Organizing Project — that's what it was. There was this very loose, continent-wide connection, with people from California to Washington, Philadelphia, Boston, etcetera. The summer after the Freedom Seder, my then-wife's Zionist connection, a sister at a kibbutz, really wanted us to go visit. I was willing, and also got, through the Institute for Policy Studies network, the names of left wing Israelis. In 1969, the Occupation was only two years old. Nobody imagined it was going to last, so the question was what would happen with those people? One of the people I met in Israel, a guy named Dan Leon, was both a kibbutznik and a kibbutz theorist. He wrote books about the kibbutzim. He took me to the West Bank, to East Jerusalem, and the Gaza, and I met with Palestinian nationalists, who were totally part of the — they weren't radicals in their society — and who said, all of them said to me, We're not interested in being governed again by Jordan. In fact, we used to demonstrate against the Jordanian Occupation. And we're not interested in being occupied by Israel, and we don't have any problem with Israel's existence. We want a Palestinian State. So, as an historian, I knew that even though by '69, the Occupation was still (01:45:00:00) mild, I knew no Occupation lasts forever mild. People don't like being occupied, and when they make trouble, the occupiers don't like the fact that they're making trouble, and it becomes a, whoosh. [*claps hands together*] So, I came back and talked with both Jews and people like Benjamin Spock and so on, and we were able to get enough money to put an ad, not in the *New York Times*, but in the *Village Voice* [see addendum], calling for a two-state thing. I think it was the first American public statement by anybody encouraging a two-state thing. The Israeli government's position was that, on condition of this and that and the other, the West Bank at least — not East Jerusalem, but the West Bank and Gaza — would — well, I don't know what they would do with Gaza, but the West Bank would go back to Jordanian rule. So that was the official position for quite a while. There were no settlements yet in '69.

JG: Was this your first trip to Israel?

AW: Yes. So, we began weaving together the Two State Solution with the political stuff we were doing in the States. JUJ did a number of interesting things. One was, Mike Tabor, who was its founder/leader, bought a farm in Pennsylvania, on the border with Maryland and West Virginia. He actually — the down payment for the farm actually came from the advance for royalties of the second edition of *The Freedom Seder*. I said okay. The *Freedom Seder* was a collective process. Certainly making it into a seder instead of a haggadah was a collective process. The idea was to make a kibbutz in North America. In fact, by that time, we were hoping to try to make it a kind of religious kibbutz. So that was 1971, '72 that JUJ basically took responsibility for doing that. People came from all over the place. We knew very little about how to create a viable

community. We thought we knew more than we knew, partly because we had had a kind of planning exploratory session of people over Washington's birthday weekend in 1972.

JG: '72, or '70?

AW: No. (01:48:00) It was the summer of '72 that we actually created it, but what happened in February '72 was, we had maybe twenty-five people. We expected to be there for just the weekend, and there was an incredible blizzard and snowstorm, and we couldn't get out. The roads were totally closed, etcetera. So we were forced into community, and I think we over-learned that we could do it under those circumstances, but without the crisis. We finally got out when one of the people there, whose father was rich, came with a something or other that could drive through the snow, and was about to take her and just her, and she said, "Nothing doing!" She said, "These are my people!" [laughs] So, we got out, but we thought, "Wow, that was terrific. We were great at it," so we could do it right away. We started in May, and it collapsed by September. The final stroke was, somebody came from the place called The Farm, which was a working and very effective commune, and she had lice, but she didn't tell anybody. So, [laughs] we all ended up with lice. I brought David and Shoshana, who spent most of the summer out there. I brought them back home to Adams-Morgan, and de-loused them, to the shock of some of our neighbors, who — anyway. So, Kibbutz Micah — that's what we called it.

JG: Kibbutz Micah.

AW: That's right. It collapsed. Michael still owns the farm, and still farms the farm.

JG: To this day?

AW: Yeah. Right. [laughs] It was an organic farm. We had a Rodale organic farm thing that was essentially the Torah of the kibbutz. We had a kindergarten from the beginning. The kids had their own little piece, and farmed their own little piece of it, etcetera. It was partly shattered by Hurricane — I think Agnes — that summer, which — there was a stream at the end of the farm. It flooded. We had cornfields, and it flooded them. All right. And, one thing was especially interesting. We didn't want Kibbutz Micah to be a withdrawal community. We wanted it to be the center of activism. So what we did was, the only Jewish moment during the summer is Tisha B'Av. We organized using a telephone. (01:51:00) That's all we had to organize with. We used the telephone and organized maybe seventy people, something like that, from up and down the East Coast, to go to Washington on Tisha B'Av and focus our observance of Tisha B'Av on the American War against Vietnam. Just as the Romans had sewed ancient Palestine with salt to ensure nothing could grow there, so Agent Orange was. We did a whole thing. We met

with McGovern, who was about to be nominated for President. He was excited about what we were doing. We tried to meet with Jacob Javits, the Jewish senator, right? And when we went to meet with him at noontime on Tisha B'av, his staff said he was at lunch. We said, "At lunch? It's Tisha B'Av!" Well, but that was a really successful joining of the sense of really independent Jewish community trying to be an independent forum, trying to be a kibbutz, living like a kibbutz, and political action. So, after the summer of '72, Fabrangen already existed. It had started in '71, but Fabrangen did not take responsibility for the farm. JUJ sort of still existed. What had happened in '70 — I guess that's where you were thinking back to, to '70 — what had happened was a kind of rebellion inside Jews for Urban Justice from people who were more interested in religious expression, and less interested in political expression. So, Rob Agus, who was the son of a rabbi and a very Conservative rabbi — capital C Conservative rabbi — and very knowledgeable and thought of himself as a Conservative Jew in a new framework. I mean, I think the way he outdid his father the rabbi was by creating the Fabrangen, which didn't have a rabbi. In fact, it was a joke how come we had spelled it. It was supposed to be Farbrenge. Rob said, "Well, there are two reasons. The earthly reason is, I called my mother and asked her how to spell it, and I misheard her over the phone. But the heavenly reason is, that "r" is for rebbe, and we don't have a rebbe, so we'll drop it. So, *farbrenge* was of course a Lubavitch term, especially. So, okay. Early '71, the Fabrangen opens, (01:54:00:00) and just about the same time, *Commentary* magazine has an entire issue devoted to attacking "the Jewish revolution," in which Robert Alter wrote a direct, explicit attack on the Freedom Seder, and Podhoretz wrote an attack on the whole thing, and made a whole big thing out of the leaders of SDS, etcetera he claimed that weren't Jewish, like Tom Hayden and so on. And God forbid, Jews should be the leaders of this uprising in American society. I remember reading, and, well, *Commentary* magazine, it was clear to me by then it had become a right-wing place. It wasn't always. I actually had an essay or two published, and Paul Goodman was on its board. Goodman tried to make some kind of conversation between this editor after this issue came out. It didn't get anywhere at all. I mean, it happened, but everybody was locked into their own place. We certainly were. They certainly were. At that point, I was — maybe they're right, and I'm the one who's just crazy and doesn't really belong in the Jewish community altogether. Then the Fabrangen began, and Shlomo Carlebach came down. Agus, I think, got him to come down to inaugurate it, and we actually had been able to get money from the UJA equivalent in Washington, the Jewish Community Council, on the theory that we were going to be able to do outreach to young Jews in the Dupont Circle area who were on dope and whatever else, which we in fact were able to do. We rented a whole building, and we did reach out. There was a sculpture class at night, and there were workshops on all sorts of ideas. I taught one on Judaism, Socialism, and Anarchism, which included Erich Fromm and Heschel and Marcuse, all those Jewish troublemakers who made trouble in different — Erich Fromm had both studied with a neo-Marxist outfit in

Frankfurt and at Buber's Yiddishe Lehrhaus in Frankfurt. Okay, so we were doing all sorts of that kind of stuff, and people were, in fact, coming.

JG: And you had a six-month grant.

AW: That's right. And, [*laughs*] so —

JG: You started to have Carlebach come in.

AW: Yeah. So Carlebach came, and he danced and chanted and went up and down, and put mezuzahs on every door of the place, (01:57:00) and treated us like we were wonderful. Not just of course you're good Jews, but you're wonderful Jews. You're creating a whole new thing, which of course he had begun doing with the House of Love and Prayer in the Bay Area. So I thought, well, what do you know? I mean, here is this guy, Hasid-trained. I'm a newbie, but he thinks it's legitimate. So I felt much more ready to settle in, even at that point. However, I still remember, I would sit on Friday nights at the doorway. I mean, I still felt marginal to what was going on.

JG: What was going on?

AW: What was going on was David Shneyer leading Friday night Psalms, I mean, leading *Kabbalat Shabbat* — I'm not even sure if there was any *Maariv* — but he was bringing his own melodies to the Psalms for Kabbalat Shabbat. They were moving. [*sings*] "*Chesed u'mishpat ashira, L'cha Adoni azamaira.*" That's one that I absolutely remembered. "Of love and justice I will sing." That was, you know. So, on Shabbat morning, at the beginning I don't think there was any *davening* at all. We would read the Torah portion in English and stop whenever anybody had a question or a comment. Since most of us were not rabbinically trained, the questions and the comments came out of our lives. So, all the brother stuff in Genesis, I came to it, "Wow! Me and my brother!" And the Isaac/Ishmael stuff became, at some point, Israel and the Palestinians. So, we were doing new midrash, simply in conversation. And the conversations would go on, two or three hours long, of reading the passages of the parashah.

JG: Can you paint the scene? Where were you sitting? What did the room look like? What was the environment like, the atmosphere?

AW: Well, a lot of people — maybe almost everybody, maybe even everybody — sat on the floor on cushions. On Friday night, David would sit with a guitar, sitting on a cushion, and he would play these songs, and people would sing, people would get up and dance. I remember my kids and I, my two kids — let's see, '71, David was seven, and

Shoshanna was four — we created a dance to (02:00:00) — oy — [*tries to remember*]
“The heavens, the earth, and everything that’s in them.” I can’t even remember now what
the Hebrew was, but it had the ocean in it, and we would dance, the three of us, in a kind
of surge of waves, [*mimes, waves with hands*] and then coming back, and that. It was
total experimentation, right? But Shabbat morning, it was really about the Torah portion.
It was about our own responses to the Torah portion.

JG: Also sitting around in the field.

AW: Oh yeah, that’s right. The Torah —

JG: Was there a Torah?

AW: Not then. So, then we went through this fight with the JCC — or not with them,
really. It didn’t start with them. It was a small group of people. Actually, I discovered
much later, they were sort of right wing Reconstructionists, who first of all thought that
all of this was just *narishkeit*, foolishness, right? Secondly, we were raising questions that
were critical of the Israeli government. By ‘71, we certainly were. They sent a letter to
the grantor saying, “This is anti-Israel, anti-Zionist.” So the grantors at the Jewish
Community Council decided to have a Beit Din, but not rabbis, of course. Three lawyers
were going to meet and weigh the evidence. They had the critics’ report— whatever they
thought was the evidence that we were anti-Israel, and they invited us. We, for a late
sixties, early seventies quasi-kibbutznik notion — rather than having one of us, which
would have been the normal thing to do, officially, like Rob Agus would respond. But we
said, no, no. Each one of us will have one minute to respond. So I remember, I said —
and people said all kinds of things. Somebody said it was the only place they could have
their five-year-old kid and people not shush and throw them out, and I said it was the
only place that would let me give a course on Judaism, Anarchism, and Socialism. They
— [*shakes hands*] mm-mm. A dozen of us, at least, spoke, and then Agus spoke last. He
said — [*laughs*] I have never forgotten — he said, I’m Robert Agus. My family is
descended from Rashi, and therefore from King David, and I think you ought to fund the
Fabrangen,” (02:03:00) and he sat down. In any generation before that one, that would, in
fact, have been enough. [*laughs*] So, they consulted, and they told us that they were ready
to say the accusations were all silly and stupid and re-fund us. Then, in the Washington
Jewish newspaper, there appeared this front-page article, with the headline “Al-Fatah
Goes to Shul.” And they said to us, We know it’s a lie, but we can’t do it. I was angrier
than if they had said we believe it. This felt so disgusting. They knew that it was a lie,
and they still felt that the political pressure was too great for them to — so, we had to
reconstruct the Fabrangen, and we reconstructed it as we would have to put up the
money. We couldn’t rent the full building. I guess it was at that point we were able to

make a deal with the Religious Action Center, the Reform center, right? And it turned out, they had a Sefer Torah, and they had it because the Reform Movement had given President Kennedy — like Jews in Europe used to give the king a Sefer Torah to make nice, they gave John Kennedy a Sefer Torah, and he didn't know what to do with it. [laughs] So he said, well, I'll lend it back to you. So they put up this thing on the wall with the Sefer Torah in it, and David Saperstein was just beginning his forty years — actually forty years — at the Religious Action Center, and he said, “If you guys want to read the Sefer Torah on Shabbat morning, go right ahead.” So, we did. That was the Torah we used. We would take it out. Somebody, one of our members, built an ark that we could move around.

JG: Yeah, so you moved into their building. Is that right?

AW: Yeah, but only Shabbos morning. That was all — we couldn't afford all the rest of the stuff, the sculpture class, all that stuff went by the wayside. We did create the Jewish Study Center, which did a whole bunch of courses, including some I taught and all sorts of other people taught, but that didn't meet there. I don't know where it met. But the Shabbat stuff was there. [laughs]

JG: I wanted to ask you —

AW: I just, I thought of something.

JG: Okay.

AW: So we would meet on Shabbat morning, and we could hear where we were David Saperstein typing away on his typewriter, even on Shabbat morning. He was the leader of Reform Judaism social action stuff, but it seemed funny. (02:06:00) So, then the fall of '72 is when Max and Esther Ticktin came to Washington. They had been most recently — he had been the Hillel Director at the University of Chicago. He was hired by National Hillel to be Assistant or Associate National Director. He had been responsible for recruiting rabbis to be Hillel directors, and he found incredible, wonderful, together, knowledgeable, committed, and creative people, so they brought him to Washington to do that. And where every other person brought to any other official Jewish thing in Washington would have joined either the big Conservative shul, Adas Israel, or the big Reform shul, he joined the Fabrangen. They joined the Fabrangen. And what was amazing was they were able to bring their wisdom without dominating, without becoming “the rabbi” or “the rebbetzin.” They were able to teach and affirm the collective process.

JG: How did they affirm it?

AW: Well, we continued with a collective *dvar torah* reading on site. That is, we continued reading the parashah and commenting, and Max would toss something in, and Esther would toss something in, but they were among us, commenting as they were struck by everything that was going on. One of the few things — well, there were some things over the next years that Max and Esther brought out of their special knowledge, but it was always low key. Some of them were funny. Max, for example, on the Shabbat before Rosh Hodesh, when we would announce Rosh Hodesh, Max consulted an almanac, and he would announce the hour, the minute, and the second at which the new moon would become visible. And everybody laughed and enjoyed it. And there were several things Max did over those years that sort of brought his passion and his joy in conveying Torah to this interesting bunch of people. One was, I remember he came back from a trip to Israel, and walked into Shabbat morning with a CD and a CD player, right? And we had, by that time — I could tell those stories too — we had by that time made a collective neo-halachic decision that although we were prepared to use electricity for turning (02:09:00) on lights and such like that, we wouldn't record what happened on Shabbat. So, he walked in with his — it looked like he was ready to record. He looked at us, and he said, “No, no, no. I'm not recording it. I'm bringing it to play something into Shabbat, not trying to freeze anything from Shabbat.” He said, “Over in Israel, I bumped into this amazing hasidic melody, *niggun*, for the Psalm 150, for “*Kol ha'Neshama Te'halel Yah*” He said, “I love it, but my voice is terrible and I can't sing it. So I brought this so we can learn it.” And he did, and we did, and it was — what I remember was the joy he had in just making it available. There was a Shavuot that we did as a retreat, and the tradition is that King David's *yahrzeit* is Shavuot. And Max dug up five one-act plays, each one focused on one of David's wives, and he brought the plays with several mimeographed — maybe photocopied by that time, but anyway — and he invited us to choose a part in each of the one act plays, and we did the plays. And it was amazing. It was totally amazing. One of our members, who seemed really [*moves hand left to right*] pretty wafty and out of it, took the part of one of David's wives, I don't remember which one, and she was incredible. She was sexy and powerful and blew us all away. I mean, her?! I mean, wow! Amazing! And again, it was because he did that. At some point, maybe not until '74 or '75, something like that, he invited us to come to his apartment to do Talmud study. We began with the beginning of the Talmud, *Berachot*, and began. But we treated it like Torah, which meant we stopped, we did midrash. I remember Max laughing and saying, “You guys, or we guys, are studying Talmud like nobody in Jewish history has ever studied Talmud. Nobody ever made midrash out of Talmud. I remember Rob Agus saying, “The Talmud is really weird. It gets obsessed with an issue and goes on and on and on, and then it totally floats off into something totally different.” He said, “I think it's like a dream. (02:12:00) The Talmud must have been God talking at night time

in a dream, and the Torah is God talking in the daytime, in a much more organized way.” So, that was the kind of — Max invited us all over during Pesach one year — I don’t remember what year — to read *Shir Hashirim* together in English, and somebody had gotten him a copy — I don’t think it was Marcia Falk’s translation yet — but it did what she did, which is to use different typefaces for the male and female voices, so we were able to read it that way. It was amazing. Amazing. It turned me on to *Shir Hashirim*. I have always been totally fascinated and excited by it. So, it’s the pinnacle of the Tanach, actually *Gan Eden* for grownups, I think. Somebody said, “Nothing else in the Tanach was written by a woman, but this was written by a woman.” We talked about its spirituality, which was so different from the Talmud. The Talmud begins with, “Till when can you do the morning —” and the text of *Shir Hashirim*, “Don’t rouse the lovers till they’re ready.” It was not about the clock. So that was amazing, and again, he enabled it, but didn’t dominate it. The discussion came from all of us, and for that, came more from women than from the men. In ‘73, early in ‘73, a guy named Alan something, from the New York Havurah — I can’t remember his last name right now — wrote me, saying, there’s going to be a get together at Rutgers Hillel of the *havurah* people from Boston, New York, and of you guys in the Fabrangen. You are invited to come. [*laughs*] I, a.) didn’t want, and b.) didn’t dare to accept the invitation that way. I wrote something back, saying, nothing doing. You come down here and explain to the Fabrangen, the community, and we will choose who goes. So they did, and we ended up sending five people: Max and Esther, and Rob Agus, and Chava, and me. (02:15:00) He said we could have five. We went to that first gathering. It was before Weiss’s Farm.

JG: This is before Weiss’s Farm.

AW: Yeah. It led to Weiss’s Farm, but it was before. It was the Spring of ‘73. The first Weiss’s Farm was the Sukkot of ‘73. So, it was amazing. I mean, it sort of made clear that this was not just an idiosyncratic thing that we were doing in Washington, that there were other people. They were different. Liz Koltun, one of the New York people, told me, “Oh, it’s clear. The Boston people are the mystical *havurah*. The New York people are the academic *havurah*. And you at Fabrangen are the political *havurah*” — which fit who we were and where we were. In the Spring of ‘73, there also had been — was — the first Jewish Feminist Conference, which turned out to be much bigger than anybody had imagined. It was organized by the women of the New York Havurah.

JG: Who had by that time formed Ezrat Nashim.

AW: That’s right. So I knew Liz, and I got to know Dina Rosenberg, I think, and Judith Plaskow, and those people. So I got to know them.

JG: So you went to that conference.

AW: No. Only women went to that conference. I went to the one at Rutgers Hillel, but the first Jewish Feminist Conference was only women.

JG: Was women.

AW: Yeah. The second one, they invited men. It didn't work too well, actually. I did go to the second one. I remember that Arlene Agus, Rob's cousin, who was Orthodox, and yet was at this women's thing, said she was feeling like she had walked to the edge of a precipice in her Jewish life. She had walked to the edge of a precipice, and she couldn't quite figure out what was on the other side, and that she was terribly frightened that if she tried to jump, she would just fall. Whew.

JG: Can you talk a little bit about the relationship between men and women within the Fabrangen, both in terms of community life, but also in terms of worship and study issues?

AW: So, we were clear about formal equality from the beginning.

JG: From the beginning.

AW: From the beginning. But there were (02:18:00) I think only two women who were knowledgeable — Chava Weissler, and Esther Ticktin. At some point, Esther realized that this formal equality was not going to be real unless people learned, and she created a class aimed mostly at the women, who were not — and I said I wanted to do it too, so she said okay. So, that trained a whole bunch of women — and to some extent, me too — how to lead *davening*.

JG: This is in like '73? Because they came into Fabrangen, I think, in '73.

AW: Yeah, '72-3 I think is when the Ticktins came. So, it might have been '74. Maybe something like that. It was a while after. I think they were finding their footing. The nexus between that meeting at Rutgers Hillel, which ended up making a very intriguing decision, a kind of neo-Anarchist communitarian decision. Instead of trying to set up a staff, it was clear we wanted to keep doing this, and somebody knew about Weiss's Farm and felt that would be a good place, which it turned out it was for five years.

JG: What was Weiss's Farm?

AW: It was a retreat center. It wasn't really a farm. It was a retreat center in New Jersey, halfway up the Jersey Turnpike.

JG: Privately owned?

AW: Yeah, privately owned by a family named Weiss. Maybe once upon a time it had been a farm, but I never saw any either crops or animals. So, at the end of the Rutgers retreat, we decided we did want to meet again. I think we decided we wanted to do three meetings a year, *Shalosh Regalim*. They would have to be long American weekends for us to be able to do it, so it would be partly defined not only according to the Jewish calendar, but the American calendar. And we agreed that the way it would work was that each of the three *havurot* would take responsibility for the next one, and it was agreed that Fabringen would take responsibility for the gathering which would be the first real inter-*havurah* retreat at Weiss's Farm.

So we agreed, and then nothing happened. The idea had been that each of the *havurot* internally would be able — because it was already together — to make creating that thing a project of its community. Therefore you wouldn't need a staff and stuff like that. So, at some point (02:21:00) in '73, I remember going to Esther Ticktin and saying, "Well, we said we'd do it," so she said, "Let's do it." So she and I — and then we invited other people in Fabringen to get together to plan the agenda and what teaching would happen and who would lead the *davening* and stuff like that. So that worked. We met that fall. Sukkot was just after the beginning of the Yom Kippur War, and everybody's heart was in their mouths.

Two really amazing things happened that retreat. One was, most of the New Yorkers, led by John Ruskay, who was then the national secretary of the Jewish Peace Fellowship — a totally marginal organization, really marginal — pulled together a sub-group that they named "Israel Is the Name of a People Also." This was aimed at those among us who were getting more and more nervous about the Occupation by '73 and felt it was damaging Israel as well as — nobody really knew anything about the Palestinians. I knew a little bit more than most. I had at least been there and talked about it. But they were nervous about it, so they held that. Rob Agus had, for other people for whom that wasn't the major issue, wanted to convene a workshop called "Toward a New Halachah." [see addendum]

JG: Say that again?

AW: "Toward a New Halachah." That's where I went. I was more interested than — I continue to be. Although certainly I was very interested in the Israel/Palestine stuff, I

continue to be much more interested in what it meant to create a new form of Judaism than I was in Israel questions. So out of both of them came amazing things. Breira grew out of that workshop.

JG: And this is a workshop at Weiss's Farm?

AW: That's right.

JG: Retreat.

AW: That's right. John still remembers. He spoke down here. He was honored by the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College at their graduation, and he and I stayed in touch. Phyllis was very close friends with his wife, who died about twenty years ago. She and Shira Ruskay were very close friends, so she was in close touch with John, and he and I stayed in touch. So I reminded him, and he laughed. He remembered the meeting, and that he was then national secretary of the Jewish Peace (02:24:00) Fellowship, and ended up, like, at the center of the center of Jewish life, still carrying his values and making the New York Federation really support the values that he supports. So, then we agreed on the next time we'd meet, and which *havurah* would be responsible for the next time, and that went on until the Weiss family sold Weiss's Farm. Then we had to figure out what to do, and out of that came the National Havurah Committee, originally the National Havurah Coordinating Committee, until some people said, "We don't want to be coordinated." [laughs]

JG: So that was '78?

AW: Yes, that's right. By '78 — ah. Early Fabrangen, not as early as the Shlomo time, but several months later, probably also Rob Agus arranged to invite Zalman Schachter to lead a Shabbaton, and I was intrigued. Only intrigued. Then about three months later, I saw a notice that he was going to be leading a Shabbaton at the George Washington University Hillel. So I'd been intrigued enough. I decided to go. So, Friday night there are forty of us in a room — some function room at the Hillel, I guess — and Zalman looks around the room, and says, "With your permission, I'd like to separate the men and the women." This was in 1971. We were absolutely feminist or pro-feminist. I said, "No!" He looks up totally startled, and says, "What?!" I said, "You said 'with our permission.' Not with my permission." He says, "Oh, well, let me explain what I have in mind. I don't have in mind a traditional *mechitzah*, and women should keep their mouths shut and all that, at all. What I'm interested in is whether there is some kind of spiritual polarity — like electrons, right? — between men and women. So how about we separate the voices so that it would be a kind of contra-chorus. Not the bodies. Not geographically.

Only in sound.” I said, “Okay.” What I took out of that was not — I really don’t remember what I thought, whether there was or wasn’t spiritual polarity — but what I did get was, this guy paid attention. It was somebody who really totally knew. He knew about the Freedom Seder, and he told me years later that the Freedom Seder said to him, “Wow, something’s happening not even where I have to sow the seeds! Something is happening, this new paradigm of Judaism!” So, he knew, sort of, who I was. But nevertheless, here I was, really, really, really new, and here he was, (02:27:00) and when I said no, he paid attention. That’s when I said, “Now that’s a teacher I really want to get to know.” So that began the process of my really learning from him.

JG: How did that continue for you — I mean, in those early years?

AW: He started having retreats at what was actually a farm here, the Fellowship Farm that was outside Philadelphia, and did have at least some sheep and chickens and such. It was set up by a group of sort of early Civil Rights activists in Philadelphia. Fellowship was the name of it for a reason. So we would have retreats there, and he would lead on Simchat Torah, Tisha B’Av, various — the High Holidays — he would lead retreats. So I started going to those and was really moved by them. And by the time he was doing that — what happened in ‘78 was, he and Art Green and Richie Siegel and Everett Gendler — there were so few women rabbis. I don’t think there were any women involved — but what they did, I think it was Zalman and Richie, probably, who had the spark, they gathered people for ten days to experiment with whether it was possible to create essentially a yeshiva without walls. The ten days were totally amazing. Totally amazing.

JG: You were there.

AW: I was there. By that time, I was feeling sort of drawn.

JG: What was so amazing?

AW: The teaching, the learning, the openness. I mean, Richie Siegel telling us to *daven*, and for each of us to find a tree to *daven* with. He said, “Don’t *daven* to the tree. *Daven* with the tree. The tree is your partner in this *davening*. What is that like?” So, at the end of the ten days, the whole group gathered, and the question was, should we keep going? Should we go on with this? It was clear it would work, and it was so clear it would work that everybody except Zalman was scared to do it. Green said, “Well, for me not to be ashamed of it, and my friends from JTS say it’s a diploma mill for the rabbinate, it’s got to have do, do, do, do, do for — I mean, we would have to spend the next twenty years (02:30:00) to get there.” So he was scared by the fear that it would be put down. Zalman was the only one who said, “It will work, and I’m willing.” And he began then inviting

people to begin to study with him. And I met one of the people there, a guy named Micha Taubman, (Micha, or Mickey, Milton), I think, who was rich, and I persuaded him to give. What did we use it for? I suppose by that time, 1978, a bunch of us had left IPS in '77 together and set up a new place called the Public Resource Center, and I began, with the money that Mickey Talman put up — he had put up some of the money to create the Shalom Center back in '83. Well, that hadn't happened yet, sorry [see addendum].

JG: Right.

AW: But he did. He gave me enough money — gave the Institute, or the Public Resource Center — enough money for me to use to create *Menorah* magazine, which I was the publisher, the editor, and the guy who dragged the mailbags down to the post office of, [laughs] in Washington. It started as a monthly and became a quarterly. But that was the first — it was called *Menorah: Sparks of Jewish Renewal*. It was the first time “Jewish Renewal” sort of became a tag word. We got something like four thousand subscribers, and it was the connection point for *havurah* people, and then what became the Jewish Renewal movement as Zalman brought much more radical transformation in the *havurah* world.

JG: So, I wanted to ask you, Fabrangen didn't — doesn't — choose to include the word “*havurah*” in its name. Is that deliberate or not? Do you know?

AW: You would have to ask Rob Agus. I don't think it was —

JG: Did they see themselves — did you see yourselves — as different in some essential way from the other *havurot* — New York Havurah and Havurat Shalom?

AW: Well, we certainly never intended — which the Boston folks did — to become a place where you could learn for the rabbinate. They did. The sign outside the Havurat Shalom still says something with “seminary.”

JG: In the beginning. That lasted about (02:33:00) a year to two years.

AW: Yeah, but they still — the sign was still there. [laughs] Richie Siegel came the closest, I think, to getting — no. We never imagined doing that.

JG: They also saw themselves as small, intentional, sort of closed communities in the sense that you had to apply.

AW: Right. Well, we certainly never had that. We were trying to get people off the streets from Dupont Circle. [*laughs*] Even after they refused to re-fund us, still. I don't remember any discussion of whether we were going to call ourselves a *havurah*. It became clear that the connection, that was what — Alan what —

JG: Alan Mintz?

AW: Yes, Alan Mintz. It was Alan Mintz. It was clear he thought we were sort of enough similar that we should be involved, or at least he thought I should be, until he got it that we were more than — ah! [*places hand on chest and laughs*] It would have killed me!

JG: I wanted to ask you, you came into this venture as sort of a newcomer. You were going through — this was a gateway to something new for you.

AW: Absolutely. Right.

JG: You weren't a *davener* when you started.

AW: No.

JG: And you weren't —

AW: And I certainly didn't know Torah.

JG: And you didn't know midrash, at the time.

AW: Right. I created midrash, but I didn't know it was midrash until I was told.

JG: How did you become a *davener*, and when did that come in? It wasn't even part of what was going on originally.

AW: Right, right. Well —

JG: And what importance did it have for you as you became more fluent in it?

AW: Well, I remember, there was a moment when Chava and Esther, at a community meeting — which is where we made all the major decisions — said they couldn't stand this three-hour discussion of the Torah. They got hungry, and there wasn't any time to *daven*. And I said, "I love it, and I'm not very interested in the *davening* anyway." And Chava looked at me with something between pity and contempt, and said, "I'm really

sorry for you.” [laughs] The first time I think I ever led a service at Fabrangen, it wasn't exactly *davening*. Maybe some of it was. I was invited to lead the first night Erev Rosh Hashanah *davening*. What year (02:36:00) would that have been? Maybe either '73 or '74. What happened was — and this felt, like, totally sensible, right? — I thought, okay, what's it really about? And what came to me — I knew enough by that time to know that there were wellsprings in the Rosh Hashanah *davening*. First Avraham's and then Hagar's — or actually, maybe Hagar's and then Avraham's — and secondly that by Sukkot we were praying for rain, and after Shemini Atzeret. So I decided it was really about water that the whole month was really about water. Then I asked myself — and this was pure Fabrangen — what is the American Torah of water? And what came to me was the first chapter of *Moby Dick*, where Melville talks about how New Yorkers had such a yearning to be at the edge of the island, right at the edge of the sea, and how they would come flocking to the edge, to what's now the Bowery and Lower Manhattan, all that, right? So I decided that's it, and I took some passages from the first chapters of *Moby Dick* and wove them into the service as an introduction to the wellsprings and — fine. The first line of *Moby Dick* is "Call me Ishmael." The next morning, Rosh Hashanah morning, we're about to read the expulsion of Ishmael, right? — all about that. And the gabbai asks if I want an aliyah. I said, "Thank you, yeah." He says, "So what's your name?" The name I was given after my grandfather at my bris was Avraham Yitzchak. So I looked at him, and it goes whirling through my mind. Last night, not casually, not as literature, but as religion, I said "Call me Ishmael." So I said, "Avraham Yitzchak Ishmael." He looks at me and he says, "Come on, that's not your name." So I'm sitting there just, like, my head is in a whirl, and he said, "I'll come back in five minutes when it's time to actually call you up. You decide." So, he goes away, and I sit there. Whew. Okay! Call me Ishmael. Okay, God. Call me Ishmael. So he comes back, and I tell him, "Avraham Yitzchak Ishmael ben Chanoch v'Chana." (02:39:00) He calls it out, and Jeff Marker, who is now a Conservative rabbi and was then a member of Fabrangen, guffaws. He just roars with laughter. Nobody listens when they call out your name, but he heard it, and he laughed. And for an instant, I was furious. I just went through this incredible spiritual struggle, and he's laughing. Then I remembered. So, the whole story is, Sarah laughs when God says, "You're going to have a kid." Come on, ridiculous. They name the kid "the laughing one," right? And when she says, "You've got to get Ishmael out of the family," it's about *mitzachek*. It's about laughter. It's the same root as Yitzchak. It's never translated, except for Everett Fox, not translated in any way you would know — mocking or something — but it's the same root. So I realize, wait a minute, that's the seal of approval. That's God's seal of approval. It's right for me to add it and it's right for him to laugh. That was it. So, that was — I'm not sure I would call what I did that Erev Rosh Hashanah, I'm not sure I would call it *davening* or not. I did learn. I would — I remember when I did the *Amidah*, especially the *Kedushah*, the whole business about, you know, we look for — when?! When?! *Matai*?! I would shout the *matai*. It would be real. When?! When already are we

going to get the world that you promised?! When?! The *davening* was never, for me, rote, and it still isn't rote. I don't get to do it very much anymore — lead it, that is. At P'nai Or here, Marcia leads it. Phyllis —

JG: Phyllis, your wife.

AW: Yeah. At Mishkan Shalom, for a number of years — more recently not — but for a number of years she led once a month a chanting *davening*, but that was chanting in the Shefa Gold mode.

JG: Can you say what that is? And how did that first start?

AW: Shefa is where it first started.

JG: She brought it into —

AW: She created it. (02:42:00) She created the chants, and she created the service built around chants. Phyllis studied with her. Phyllis does it in something of a different way from Shefa but uses mostly Shefa's chants. Not altogether, but mostly. She has introduced her own stuff as well, but the whole idea is that instead of a service built on tens of thousands of words, that you can have a service using very few words, with much more intensity. So the chant goes on and on. You get deeper and deeper and deeper into the chant. The chant the way Shefa shaped it, and the way Phyllis does it, uses what Zalman called the *Matbeyah HaTefillah*, the basic structure of the service, but only some of the stuff in each of the pieces of the structure.

JG: What's the effect? Or, what's the effect for you?

AW: Well, the effect for me is a very much deeper God experience than with the conventional Siddur. Phyllis always chooses the chants — and I think Shefa does this, too — in some way to relate with the Torah portion of the Shabbat. The regular *davening* doesn't do that at all. So, it means that the distance between the Torah and the *davening* greatly diminishes. What I do do now, usually, almost every Shabbos — I actually learned to do an *Elat Chayyim*, which is, I invite — *Elat Chayyim*, for almost the twelve summers that we were there in Accord, New York, before it became part of Isabella Freedman. Zalman was there most of the summers, and there were two functions I played. One was, Zalman asked me to do, in English, the Haftorahs. He decided I had a prophetic voice, so, okay. The other thing was, I would lead a Torah study before the *davening*, and the way I would lead it would be not exactly to lead it. What I would do would be to choose a portion from the portion, a small portion, and invite people to read

it going around the room, using Everett Fox's translation. I explained to people why. Then, I would say, "Nu?" And people would begin responding (02:45:00) the way we had done at Fabrangen. I mean, the way that I learned it. Well, this is what it means in my life. And there would emerge — I thought of myself as a weaver. I would pick up threads when people hadn't picked up something that it seemed to me absolutely would fit where the discussion had gone. I would bring it in. But I didn't do a conventional *dvar torah* at the beginning, and then everybody else has to bounce off that. So that — I still do that almost every Shabbat, at P'nai Or here, before the service begins. What I also learned to do was to begin it by — and this is a kind of very unconventional form of *dvar torah*, I guess — I would pick what I thought was a crucial theme emerging from the portion that I had chosen, and I asked people, before we began, to look at their own lives and tried to focus on it. I mean, last week, the portion I chose was when Moshe says, "So you're going to go into the land, and it's going to be wonderful and it's going to be abundant. It's going to be so wonderful and so abundant that you're going to start thinking you invented the whole thing, and you're gonna forget about the inter-breathing of all life and think you're in charge. And when you do that, you're gonna get thrown out of the land." So, I asked people, before we began reading, to focus on some time in their own life when they felt triumphantly that they had pulled something off really terrific. How did it feel? Did they think they had done it alone? Did they think it came from community, "it takes a village to raise a child?" Did they discover, at some point, that they weren't in charge, and was that result a disaster, or what? I asked people to think about that in their own lives. Then I would do the *bracha* for Torah study, and then we would read the piece, and then people would say, "Well," and they would bring together what they had thought of in their own lives with what was in the Torah. When Phyllis does the Torah service, what she does — Zalman invented this, but Phyllis refined it a lot — she would choose three different passages, and she would call people up with a theme, with a *kavanah*, toward the passage. So, if we're at the edge of the Red Sea, she would invite people to come up who were facing a really major decision in their lives and weren't sure which way it was going to go. (02:48:00) She would ask people like that to come up as a group Aliyah, and at the end she would do a Misheberach which would address that directly. It wouldn't just be from the prayer book, but it would be about what it meant to be in that position in their lives. What we were both — are both — trying to do is to get the community inside the Torah, and get the Torah inside the community, so that it's not an odd ancient artifact, and it's not [*loud voice*] The Word of God. It's us learning to it, learning from it, etcetera.

JG: Much of what you've been describing, I think, is developed during this sort of period of renewal, as you were getting into Renewal Judaism.

AW: That's right.

JG: I wanted to ask you to —

AW: Go back to Fabrangen?

JG: Go back a little. I mean, I want to know, what are the roots of all of this within Fabrangen as it was getting itself off in those early years, when you were — and also you, where you were. You were just entering this world, learning to *daven*, learning also about Mishnah, which I want to come back to also. So, but even this piece that you've just been talking about now —

AW: Yeah.

JG: What were its roots, would you say, within the *havurah*?

AW: Well for me, I guess the crucial thing for me in Fabrangen, more than the *davening* — we used the Bokser Siddur, totally conventional. We used it more or less conventionally. There was a long argument about whether to add the Matriarchs, and the long argument finally settled by our agreeing that whoever was leading the service could use it or not. Rob Agus became the only person who wouldn't. [*laughs*] He finally agreed that he would pause after the names of the *Avot* so that the rest of us could add the *Imahot*, [*laughs*] but he wouldn't do it. I don't know where he's at about that now. But except for that, I can't remember any effort at really changing —

JG: *Davening*.

AW: That's right.

JG: What about efforts on focusing on the breath or those kinds of things. Did that happen early-ish on?

AW: Um, one place.

JG: Or focusing on a particular word, those kinds of things.

AW: In the early part of the Shabbos service — [*breath emphasized chanting*] *Elohai neshama shenatata bi t'horah hi* (02:51:00) — they've got the *dagesh* in them. It may have been Max who told us that Levi Kelman, who for now at least twenty-five years has been the rabbi of a Reform synagogue in Jerusalem, that he had spent time in India and that what he had realized was that that passage — especially with a *dagesh*, so you

stretch the [*exhales*] ahhh — was an outbreath in the "*neshama*," and it was a breathing exercise.

JG: Did you practice it as a breathing exercise, or experiment with it as a breathing exercise to go along with the meaning of the actual words?

AW: I think I and maybe some other people did on Shabbos morning. I know I never sort of took it home and did breathing exercises using that or anything else actually at home. I'd gotten much more interested in the breath stuff when I had, in Fall of 1982, a [*touches head*] revelation of the *Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh* (YHWH) as a breath, which happened in the middle of a class I was teaching on Buber at Swarthmore College.

JG: What happened?

AW: Well, I'd just come to Philadelphia, in the Fall of '82. I had just begun teaching at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College.

JG: You had come here for that purpose?

AW: Yeah, that's right. It was clear to me that as Washington D.C. was in those days, my Jewish stuff was a dead end in terms of being able to make a living. There was no — I mean, there was conventional Jewish life, but I wasn't, you know — Then I got invited by Ira Silverman, *olev hashalom*, to teach at the Reconstructionist College.

JG: Art was still at Penn at that point, right?

AW: Yes, he was at Penn, right. And Zalman was at Temple. So I came in '82, and a friend of mine here had heard that there was an opening for one course a semester in the religion department at Swarthmore and suggested me. For whatever reason, they decided to hire me. Luckily I had a Ph.D., but a Ph.D. in American history — totally irrelevant to Buber. Nevertheless, [*laughs*] it made it possible. I mean, if I hadn't had a Ph.D., Swarthmore wouldn't have — so, I thought it would be really a *shanda* to make Buber, of all people, into an "it" by studying Buber as an object. So I thought, (02:54:00) and convinced the class, that what we should do would be to have a conversation with Buber. We read his stuff out loud with each other in class like it was Talmud, and we would stop and argue with him and with each other. So, one of the things I wanted the class to read was his book called *Moses*, which is a kind of a theological biography of Moses. Buber, when asked why he had done that, he said, "Well, I want to have a conversation with God, and I'd like it to be a strong, good conversation, so I thought I would try to overhear Moses' conversation with God so I could have a better one myself." The book is a very

interesting book, and one chapter in it is called "The Words on the Tablets." That's not it, of course. But he skips "*Anochi*." By that time, I had my own direct experience of *Anochi* — very powerful, with Zalman, and with me — not Zalman — on acid, and Zalman guiding the event, the trip. So, *Anochi* — I already knew how I felt about *Anochi*. The second word is *Yod-Heh-Vav-Heh* (YHWH), and Buber skipped that word too. So I stopped reading it out loud in the class. I stopped and said, "Professor Buber, I was taught you're not allowed to pronounce the YHWH, all the way to my grandmother. When she was teaching me Hebrew, she said that I wasn't allowed to, and to say Adonai instead." I remember saying to her, "It doesn't make sense. You just told me a *daled* and a *nun*. They aren't there, so how could I say it?" And she goes, "I know. Just do it." So that was as I prepared to become bar mitzvah, right? So I just did it. I said, "So, Buber, you were a rebel. I'm a rebel. I wonder what would happen if I tried pronouncing it?" So, I tried pronouncing it. I knew it didn't have any vowels. It wasn't "yahweh." It wasn't "yahovah." It was just YHWH with no vowels. So I tried pronouncing it, and what came out was [*deeply exhales*] — just breathing. Now that's a name for God I would really dig, much better than King or Judge or Lord, any of that stuff. Just breathing. What's more, it figures that at least one of the real names of the real God shouldn't be just in Hebrew or in Latin or in Greek or in Arabic or in English, but all of them. And the only word — not-word — that's in every human language is breathing. This was all happening in one rush, all at the same time. Then the next thing (02:57:00) that came to me was, it's not just human languages. Every life form on the planet breathes, and not just in a little bubble, like, that's me breathing. I only get to breathe what the trees breathe out, and what I breathe out is what they breathe in. So, wow, that makes sense to me as the name, the description, the metaphor for God that really works. Since then, in the last several years, I've been connecting it with the climate crisis, which is a crisis of the breathing of the planet. It's a crisis in the Oxygen-CO2 interwovenness of the planet. We've figured out how to put more CO2 into the air than the trees can breathe in. So, often now when I speak about this whole business, I say, "What we call the climate crisis is a crisis in the name of God. Now think about what that means. Some people really respond, like, whoa, whoof. So that's when and how and why that happened. Gradually, more and more — so that was in '82 — P'nai, or Bnei Or, as it still was, created a siddur in which we wrestled with how to deal with the name of God, and we agreed to use [*exhales*] "*Yah*," as in "*halleluyah*," because that's a classic name of God, right? So it dances between the YHWH as a breath and itself as a breath, but it's an ancient — you can't say, "Hey, it's not Jewish to say *Yah*." So that's what we ended up with there. At some point, I began using "*Ruach HaOlam*" instead of "*Melech HaOlam*," the "breath of the world," the breathing spirit of the world, instead of "King of the world." But that's all — I mean, the Fabrangen never played with that. I actually, out of my experience at some of those retreats at Fellowship Farm — it must have been '81 — proposed that we do two different High Holy Day services, one that would be much more of what I was beginning to learn from

Zalman, and the Fabrangen said, We don't want to split up the community that way. I said, "Well, maybe don't do it by selecting people who want that, but do it by lottery, which one will be." [laughs] No. But by that time I was more and more tugged — I mean, I guess one element in my life is that I've really tugged always to transcend wherever I am and go some additional step. So now, as a matter of fact, (03:00:00) I'm really trying to explore what it means to think about and act on not just Jewish Renewal but Transformative Judaism, whose point is to transform the world. Tikkun Olam is the point, including *davening*. Not just what people do, to do sit downs or vote or whatever they do, but how does the *davening* contribute to Tikkun Olam, including the YHWH, for example? So, as I look back on my life, it's clear when I changed from being a historian to being a political activist, and when I changed from being a political activist to being a Jewish political activist and so on, and then into Renewal, each time — whatever's going on in me, I don't know — but each time reaching for something else.

JG: Earlier you said, I believe, something about yourself as sort of a creator of midrash, in a sense.

AW: Well, Harold White told me that's what the *Freedom Seder* was. [laughs] It was a midrash.

JG: How did that evolve? Can you talk about that, because that's so critical to your whole sense of process.

AW: Well, the Fabrangen Torah discussions — I don't know, did you end up looking at *Godwrestling*?

JG: I loved, loved it.

AW: So, it's there, right? So, we read about Ishmael and Isaac, and lo and behold, it's about the Palestinians. We read about Jacob and Esau, and lo and behold, it's about me and my brother, and therefore about the whole sibling question.

JG: Why don't you talk about that here —

AW: Okay.

JG: — in a sense, as an example of this midrashic process, and meaning-making through midrash.

AW: Right. So it really does begin at Fabrangen. It was not just me. It was not just me, but the whole community was really open to build around — much more creative about that than about the *davening*. [laughs] Like, I don't remember how the Ishmael/Isaac thing rose up for us as, oh, well, expulsion, or subjugation, or occupation of Palestinians. What is that text? What does it mean that Ishmael gets to have his own well — he and Hagar get to have their own well — and he gets to have twelve kids a generation before (03:03:00) Jacob gets to have twelve kids? What does that affirmation of the other Abrahamic line, what does it mean? The thing about me and my brother literally becomes the thing between him and me. Basically, I'm interested in Judaism. He continued to grow up the way we were raised. [laughs] So it was a little odd. It was interesting, but a little odd. We had, not long before he died, a long argument/discussion about the *Book of Job*. He saw it as a surrender, and I thought a wrestle, not a surrender. He didn't like surrendering to God. But the whole question of the relationship of older brothers to younger brothers, and even the one older-younger sister story — it arose in the community. I guess the book that I did lifted out of that stew some of the specifics that moved me most, that spoke to me most. Huh, I remember, I think '71, I was invited by the then-rabbi of the Germantown Jewish Centre, a guy named Charry — Elias Charry — who had both saved and transformed the center. This neighborhood was all white and strongly Jewish into the fifties, and then some blacks began to move in, and the real estate agents started to pull the classic blockbusting game, scaring people into selling. The rabbi of that congregation — there were three or four other synagogues in the neighborhood — he and some Christian clergy decided they wanted an integrated neighborhood, not a white flight neighborhood, and they went door-to-door calming people down. As a result, the other congregations did leave, but this one attracted people. It was “capital C” Conservative, but he and what he had done attracted people who were serious liberals, and creative. So, 1971, (03:06:00) I'm still an enfant terrible who created this totally weird thing, the Freedom Seder, he invited me. Just to give you a sense of who he was, a month after me — not before I came, but a month after I came — he had invited Jane Fonda, who was not just an enfant terrible, she was a traitor! She had gone to Hanoi! He invited her to speak on Friday night at this place. So he invited me to come speak on a Friday night. I was supposed to talk about radical Judaism. I had no idea what I was going to say. He invites me and a bunch of the congregation to Shabbos dinner before the service, so I come. One of the members who was supposed to be there, and who in fact, evidently, had been maybe the bridge to invite me, wasn't there. Everybody was surprised, but all right. So we went along with dinner, and this guy comes, like, forty-five minutes late, and he's clearly totally exhausted, totally bedraggled. So I said, "What happened?" He was an environmental oriented lawyer for the City of Philadelphia. He said what had happened was, some factory upstream of the Schuylkill turned a plug the wrong way, and thousands of gallons of lead-impregnated water were coursing into what would have been the drinking water of the City of Philadelphia. So he said, "We

had to spend all day getting the legal arrangements and the physical arrangements to flush it past the intake valves for the drinking water, and we did it. We pulled it off," he said, "but that's why I'm late. That's why I'm exhausted." Okay, so we go out to shul. I still don't know what I'm going to say about radical Judaism. We get to the *Shema*, and the second paragraph of the *Shema* — this is a Conservative shul — they do the second paragraph which says, you know, if you do Torah then the rains will fall and the rivers will run, and if you don't do Torah, you're [*mouths "done"*]. So when I got up to talk about radical Judaism, I read the paragraph again, and then I told the story of what almost happened, and I said, "That paragraph is radical Judaism. It says that what we do matters to the earth, the rain, the rivers, the sky." That was my first notion of Eco-Judaism. I mean, that was not part of the [*moves hands in circles*]. So that was midrash, I guess. (03:09:00) So at some point along the way — and I think it was in the Fabrangen Torah discussions — I learned you could do that.

JG: Yeah. And did it often involve, or usually involve, bringing some contemporary issue or personal issue to bear on a classic text? Is that a part of it?

AW: I think so. I think so, because what that meant to me, and to us, was that the Torah was alive. So what does it mean to say it's alive? I had an argument recently. I sent out one of our weekly blogs that focused on the passage *Numbers*, Chapter Thirty, which talks about Moses' leadership of the genocide of the Midianites. And it's really genocide — everybody, right, except the women too young to have slept with a guy. They become, in effect slaves. Everybody else, all the women, men, children, all killed. Our reading came the same week that the now famous Black Lives thing said Israel was committing genocide. So, I wrote a piece which said, what can we learn from this chapter? First of all, it's disgusting. That's the first thing, and everyone in the P'nai Or group — I mean, I chose that chapter deliberately, to force us to face this, for me, disgusting chapter in the Torah. I said that the only thing that arose for me as learning from it is, this is to teach us that even we could become genocidal. Even we. Then I talked about the whole Black Lives Matter thing, and I said I think it was incorrect. I don't think that what Israel is doing is genocide. It tiptoes on the edge. It's oppression, clearly, but I don't think it's genocide. I think the use of the line — the use of the word — was a bad ethical as well as practical mistake. But I want to hear the Torah saying that no people is immune to committing genocide. So, that's a kind of weird midrash, right?

JG: Mhm.

AW: That says, exactly my distance from the text makes my learning from the text. If I couldn't take that distance, I couldn't bear to learn anything from it. But it's my taking that

distance. I don't know why I thought of that as a response to whatever question you asked.

JG: Because it was contemporary.

AW: Oh right.

JG: It is very present. This is a Black Lives Matter platform that just a few weeks ago —

AW: Right.

JG: — was put out (03:12:00) and accuses Israel of being an apartheid state and of committing genocide against the Palestinian people.

AW: Right.

JG: That's a very apt example.

AW: Right. So, I want to be able to remind people that we're not immune. We may not be — I don't think we are committing genocide, but we're not immune to doing it, and I think it's important for us to remember that. In order to make sure that we don't, it's important to remember that the Torah is teaching that we could. So, several people responded to me: Waskow, you're sort of making it all up. The point is, in that day, doing genocide was the way in which you dealt with people, a people, you didn't like. It's just historical. So, for me, that reduces the Torah to a kind of more or less interesting artifact — archeological, or even anthropological — artifact. Who cares? And, of course, there's been a lot of reductionist scholarship which does treat it like that. That's not the way — that's not at all interesting. It was interesting to notice that was one of the responses people had. They didn't want to hear even that maybe the point of the teaching was to say, Well, don't think you're immune.

JG: This was an example of the use of midrash and midrash-making for a contemporary issue and being able to create a continued sense of relevance to this ancient text.

AW: Right.

JG: But in your personal life, you've also used classic stories of relationships to —

AW: Right. Well, especially my brother and me.

JG: How did that work for you?

AW: [laughs]

JG: Because I assume those texts are so classic that many of us can see our own relationships within them —

AW: Right, right.

JG: — one way or another. How did that work in your life, and how did it affect you and your brother's relationship?

AW: Well, it helped open up the possibility of, as we ended up calling the book we wrote together, becoming brothers. If brotherhood means anything other than a shared genetic accident, then we weren't brothers for a long time, and we did become brothers. There were several stages to that process. I think one of them is at the beginning of *Godwrestling*, and also somewhere in the book we wrote, when he and I went together, away together, just the two of us, and (03:15:00) found someplace to live for several days on the banks of a dry canal — interesting to both of us, that it was a dry canal — and we talked then, and I think I talked some about the Jacob/Esau stuff. Then I remember going out to Portland, and I had just written — or maybe wrote even in Portland, that's where he lived — there's sort of two halves of a poem at the beginning. The first one, "wrestling is a lot like making love," which came to me partly out of seeing the film of D.H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*, I guess it is, where there's a wrestle by the fireplace, and it's clear they're right at the edge, the two men, of making love. So I sort of said that to Howard, and he said, "Yeah, sometimes, and sometimes it's a lot like making war." So I put that as the second voice, Esau's voice on the other side of the river. Jacob's having his wrestle with God, and Esau's having his own wrestle, and it doesn't come out the same way. Howard was into literature, so he could get, at some level, that in a way I was dealing with Torah as really serious literature, like Shakespeare or whatever. So he could get it. And he even — he wrote his doctoral dissertation, which was published as a book, on reader engagement with Whitman, and he wrote at the very beginning — I think he may have been the first American lit scholar to talk about reader engagement changing the literature. So that's midrash, really. I'm not sure, to tell you the truth, that I ever said that to him. I'm not sure I ever thought about it until right this moment. That's pretty amazing. I wish I had said it to him, but I don't think I ever did.

JG: Say it to me. [laughs]

AW: [*nods*] So I think he sort of got what I was doing. He was very suspicious of all the God stuff. One of the last things he said to me, as he knew he was dying, (03:18:00) was he did not want a religious funeral. He said, “I don’t want people to think I got scared when I was dying and decided to have the God stuff after all.” He said, “You want to sit shiva? Go ahead. But no sitting shiva at my house.” [*laughs*] What else can I say about it? There were moments when — ah, some of this happened later. *Godwrestling Round Two* sort of took what I had originally, and the book deliberately uses spirals as a motif, literally graphically as well as intellectually. So, I went back to my kids, twenty years later, and asked them what their thoughts were about it. So my son said something that really shook me a lot. He said, “Well —” [*pauses emotionally*] he said, “I think you did the *Akeda* with me. You had this vision, this incredibly powerful vision, and you left us. You didn’t kill me, but —” Whew. So, that’s another piece of it.

JG: Where did you come to the term “Godwrestling”?

AW: [*laughs*]

JG: And wrestling. Talking about a wrestle.

AW: Well, certainly that’s out of Fabbrangon. We read the story. I mean, how could you not? This is the key moment, right? It gives us our name.

JG: In *Genesis*, right?

AW: Yeah, that’s right. I mean, I would be interested to do some kind of study, like the Oxford Dictionary does, of — did I invent using “Godwrestling” as one word? I mean, it seems to me totally obvious that that was the way to understand, to translate even, and to understand.

JG: Is that a word for midrash-making?

AW: No, it’s more than that.

JG: It’s more than that.

AW: That’s Torahwrestling. That’s one level, how I see it, of Godwrestling. What I wrote about (03:21:00) and I still believe what did happen that night — first of all, Jacob’s a heel. I mean, that’s his name, is “the heel.” He grabs what’s his name’s heel, trying to get out first — fails, but sure. And he’s a sneak. Actually, Fox translates Yaakov as “heel-sneak.” [*laughs*] And he’s a heel in the other American sense, right? He’s really a terrible

human being, and he's been wrestling with his brother from that moment in the womb. He cheats him out of the birthright, all that stuff, right? Until the moment he's facing — now he's got a family, two families, four families, and his brother's coming with four hundred armed men, and he freaks out, right? He sends them across the river, and he stays. I don't think it's an accident that the river is named Yavok, which is Yaakov inside out. [*laughs*] And it says — the text says he stayed alone, and then a man wrestled with him. So, who is the man who wrestled with him? Philip Roth has a novel in which he uses that passage — “And Jacob stayed alone, and a man wrestled with him” — he uses that as the epigraph of the book, and the book is about — the main character of the book is a guy called Philip Roth, who goes to Israel and meets another Philip Roth in Israel who is an anti-Zionist. He's a Diasporianist. He says, “The Jews, if we really want to be safe, we should pack up and go back to Europe.” I mean, this is — so, but, that's the epigraph of the book, so who's he wrestling? He's wrestling with himself. Maybe he's also wrestling with Esau across the river. At the end, the figure says, “You wrestle with God.” Not an angel. That angel stuff is all later. So I asked myself, what does it mean to wrestle with God, and what was different from all the wrestling he'd been doing with Esau? So my midrash is, finally he says to himself, why did it have to be this way? Why was the world set up so that the only way I could get to be who I knew and my mother knew I was supposed to be was only by cheating and lying and robbing? Why is it set up like this? That is wrestling with God. That is saying, Why is the world — does it really have to be that way? Why? Out of that, finally, he escapes it. He's not caught in it anymore. The world doesn't have to be like that. He can embrace his brother the next morning. They can, at least, kiss and embrace. (03:24:00) They won't live together, but there's peace between them. But the only way he got there was by challenging the whole structure. So, that for me is when Godwrestling came to me. That is, challenging the whole structure. It's not just doing midrash on Torah but doing midrash on the world.

JG: So far, we've been talking about Fabrangen and your early years. I want to sort of move to this more reflective piece now, where we can try and bring some of this together. Certainly, what you were saying just now is bringing it there as well. So, mainly we've been trying to keep going back to the early years of Fabrangen, to start to see where it's led. I want to focus in this last segment on the impact of your intensive involvement on your life. We've been talking about some of it, but you know, sort of in a more summative sense, and also on Jewry and the experience of Jewry.

AW: Okay, but before we do that, there's one more story of Fabrangen I want to tell.

JG: Sure.

AW: Because it's about Esther. I think it's one of the great Esther stories.

JG: Please. Esther Ticktin?

AW: Esther Ticktin. So, in 1973 — January of '73, Nixon is about to be re-inaugurated president. He's just bombed Hanoi and Haiphong, and the anti-war movement decides to call a counter-inaugural march in Washington on the day of the inauguration. January twentieth turns out to be Saturday. The Fabragen is one hundred percent — one hundred and ten percent! — against the war. There was no internal division about that whatsoever. So we're in agony. I mean, what do we do? Do we join this march? Do we not? It's Shabbat. What is Shabbat for? Shabbat is reflective. Shabbat is peace, shalom. Long, long discussion. Agony, really. Finally, one person says, Well, you know, *pikuach nefesh* says that to save a life, you can violate the normal rules for Shabbat, so maybe that's what. We're trying to stop the war, *pikuach nefesh*." Esther Ticktin says, "In the tradition, *pikuach nefesh* meant that it was a real human being in front of you, and he could die, and you could actually save the life by acting and by breaking the Shabbat rules. We don't know if going on that march would save a single life or would end the war one minute earlier. (03:27:00) We have no idea." She says, "What it feels like to me is this: *Ribono shel olam*, if we go on that march, it means we're violating Shabbat. We need to do it. Sorry." And the whole community applauded! That was the truth. That was the real truth, and that's what Esther was like. She was earthy. When she and Max were our *mesadrim*, Phyllis and ours, under the chuppah, we had made a whole big thing — we got married on a day that was both a full moon and a summer solstice — and we made a whole thing about the fullness of the moon and the fullness of the sun, and what that meant about women and men, and a midrash on that, an ancient midrash on that. We brought ocean water from the Pacific and the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. We named ourselves middle name "Ocean" and we poured the ocean waters together, and Esther Ticktin, when we were under the chuppah, said, "That's all very nice — really, very nice. And I want you to remember, the people who are getting married here are Arthur and Phyllis, not the moon and the sun, not the Atlantic and the Pacific. Arthur and Phyllis are getting married." She was absolutely like that. So that story about the Fabragen is one of my favorite stories, about her and about the Fabragen as a whole. And we did take part, and we understood that it wasn't *shabbosdik*, and we needed to do it.

JG: Right. So, it's worth mentioning that Max Ticktin passed away just about two months or so ago —

AW: That's right.

JG: — and is sorely, sorely missed in this community.

AW: Very, very.

JG: Do you want to say —?

AW: We haven't talked at all about Breira, and all that stuff.

JG: This is true, but Breira happened sort of right on the edge of our period. So let's talk about it in that context, because it sort of came out, right, seventy — when did Breira start?

AW: Well, it was begun by the people at that Weiss's Farm retreat, who went back to New York and made it. At first it was just a New York organization, and then they decided to make it national. We had created — a guy named Ken Giles and I — really had created a thing in Washington called Tzedek Tzedek, which dealt with issues of food justice, Israel/Palestine, and maybe race. I can't remember.

JG: And maybe what?

AW: Race. I can't remember what the third one was. Racial justice. But, so, Tzedek Tzedek became part of Breira. There was a Los Angeles group called (03:30:00) Otzma. There had sprung up these — now people would say Progressive Zionist, two-state-solution groups. Then the New York folks realized that that was happening and wove it together into a national Breira. So, Max was on the Steering Committee. I was. Judy Bartnoff, who was a lawyer in Washington, was. There was a moment when — *[laughs]* I mentioned Max in the Talmud study group — there was a moment when Marc Raskin, my good friend and colleague at the Institute for Policy Study, a Jew but not very interested in Judaism, asked me to go to some meeting of an evening, a political meeting, and I said I couldn't do it because there was a Talmud study. You could see Marcus like, "Come on, a Talmud study? All right, I knew, Waskow, you were into the Torah, but after all, the Bible, the Hebrew Bible is a great document of Western civilization. The Talmud? Everybody knows that's obscurantist." So I said to him I could see. I said to him, "Well you should know, in that Talmud study group, just right here, there are three members of the Breira executive committee." He still couldn't get it. But, I mean, the disconnect was really interesting. Ultimately, it's why — not exactly voluntarily, but sort of, semi — I left the IPS, because the tension grew to be too much. I mean, they, like my brother and my aunt, especially like my aunt — "We didn't raise him to be like that!" And that's what it felt like to the institute, which was accurate. I mean, that's not the way I joined the institute. That's not who I was at the beginning. So, anyway.

JG: So, Breira started —

AW: Breira started I think after — that was Sukkot '73 — I think by '74, and by late '74 for sure, it had become a national thing — or maybe early '75.

JG: With leadership in New York?

AW: Mostly in New York. They hired this guy from Chicago named Bob Loeb to be the executive director, but Ruskay was very much involved. Arnie Jacob Wolf, the rabbi from Chicago — not from Chicago, but then at Yale — was the president. (03:33:00) So.

JG: What happened with Breira?

AW: What happened with Breira — whew. So, two things happened. One, there were some internal disagreements which got sharper and sharper. I think the reason they got sharper and sharper was because of the external pressure. The external pressure, a right-wing Jewish organization called Americans for a Safe Israel, wrote this totally slanderous thing about us, which would have meant nothing if it had just been them. But the mainstream official Jewish community bought into it and wanted to get rid of us. They didn't want a two-state-solution group. We were even arguing only peacemaking with the PLO if the PLO recognized Israel as a legitimate state, but that didn't matter. Critique of the Israel government at such a basic level? Not acceptable. They were totally willing to use this attack as their own, so the pressure grew. A lot of the rabbis who were involved in Breira were Hillel rabbis, many of them people who had been recruited to Hillel because they were creative and so on and so on, by Max. Max and I actually met with two representatives of the PLO in Washington. I think that became public. I know I didn't make it public. I doubt very much that Max did. Maybe they did. That could have been, that they wanted it known that they'd met with two hoo-hahs in the American Jewish community. So, the folks who attacked us had even more. We knew that Philip Klutznick, who was very rich and lived in Chicago, and had actually paid for the B'nai Brith building in Washington, had also met with them, and Klutznick — I think with Max saying, psst, our people are really in trouble — Klutznick publicly defended the Hillel rabbis.

JG: So, at this point, just to clarify, Max was in Washington, working for —

AW: He was still working for Hillel, yeah.

JG: And that was in the Klutznick building.

AW: That's right. Exactly, exactly.

JG: Okay, I just wanted to bring those together.

AW: That's right.

JG: Okay.

AW: I asked Klutznick whether he would be willing to have it be publicly known that he also had met with these same guys from the PLO, and he said, "I would prefer not. I think I can accomplish more without." I accepted that though I wasn't sure it was true. It would have made a (03:36:00) major — who knows? It might have made a major difference and it might not. I don't know. Anyway, I accepted. I could have told people, and he probably wouldn't have lied about it, but I didn't. But the result was, under the external pressure and the internal disagreements, partly about whether Breira should be focused only on Israel/Palestine or on multi-Jewish-issue questions like, who runs the American Jewish Community anyway? And a whole series of questions like that. That internal disagreement finally — I think we might not have ended the organization, if it had not been also for the external pressure, but the combination did. So, the sentiment didn't go away.

JG: When did Breira actually disband?

AW: I think '77, but I'm not absolutely sure.

JG: Yeah. So, it was short-lived.

AW: Yeah, basically.

JG: So you started to say that the sentiment, however, did not go away.

AW: Yeah, and it re-emerged in the New Jewish Agenda. It re-emerged after New Jewish Agenda in Brit Tzedek V'Shalom, which then melted into J Street. J Street was the first time that, I think — partly because of the money from, what's his name, the billionaire who gave a big hunk of money — was able actually to establish itself as a solid-going organization, not able to be destroyed by the official community's hostility. But I'm happy that in 1969 already I was involved in publishing a call for a two-state thing. I remember coming back in '93.

JG: Ninety-three?

AW: Yeah. A couple weeks before Rosh Hashanah, or a week before, was the handshake on the White House lawn.

JG: Between Arafat and Rabin

AW: [*nods*] And I got invited — I had been, by that time, for ten years a member of a Jewish men's group that met every other week (03:39:00) for ten years, and each one of us, independently, was invited to be on the White House lawn because of the work we were doing. We came back, and the local neighborhood newspaper here in Chestnut Hill, the neighborhood next over, interviewed us, and I remember the interviewer said, "So do you think this is a done deal now?" And the others who had been there said, "Yes," and I said, "Not unless the Labor Party wins the next election," and it didn't. So, there's been that constant thread, right? The Shalom Center came into being focused around the nuclear arms race. That's why we were created in the first place, because there was no Jewish voice about the nuclear arms race.

JG: And the Shalom Center was —

AW: It began as a project of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. After Ira Silverman left the presidency, and Art Green, who was totally uninterested, became president of the college, I remember — what's his name, Walter Wurzburger, I think? Orthodox rabbi, very big Orthodox rabbi, editor of *Tradition* magazine, said — the Shalom Center had its own board, but legally the board was the RRC board, but we had our own fact/policy-making board — he was on it. The Shalom Center at that point cut across all of the boundaries. So he was an Orthodox guy who cared about the nuclear arms race. He cared about ending it. Then he said at some meeting, "My friends are saying to me, 'What's with you, Walter? You've become a Reconstructionist!'" So, both because I didn't trust that Green would care about what we were doing, and because for him especially it was not good to become part of RRC, we became an Independent 501c3. That was '83. What did I say?

JG: Ninety-three.

AW: What did I say? Eighty-three?

JG: Ninety-three.

AW: Ninety-three, Zalman and I had a long conversation, and both of us said, "The spiritual *davening* stuff and the political stuff, they're all part of the same thing." And by that time, *Menorah* had become *New Menorah*, the journal of B'nei, then —

JG: P'nai.

AW: — P'nai Or. So, we agreed that it was crazy, and the two of us went to our boards, and we did.

JG: And then you had ALEPH

AW: And that's when ALEPH came about, right.

JG: So you've moved into this —

AW: Yup.

JG: — into this transition.

AW: And then, (03:42:00) when was it? What year are we? 2016? I think 2007, the ALEPH board said politely but firmly, the stuff you're doing around Israel — the same stuff I had been doing — is making a minority of our board very anxious. The Second Intifada. And they said, We think you should take the Shalom Center off into independence again. We'll give you some grants to work on, for oil and environment issues, and then we can say we gave you grants to work on that, and we don't have anything to do with whatever you do about Israel and Palestine." And the more I got into the climate process, the more I felt that this was even more important — even to Jews — more important than Israel/Palestine things. So The Shalom Center never abandoned the Israel/Palestine question, but it's been on the back burner.

JG: Are you personally involved in the Israel/Palestine question in any —?

AW: Every once in a while, I write something through the Shalom Center's thing. I did on that whole business about genocide and black and white. So, I talk about not only Black Lives Matter, but I write about Israel and Palestine, too. I've written some other stuff, but I'm not involved really. I'm on the Rabbinic Cabinet of J Street, but I don't do anything really. I haven't been to the national conferences of J Street, and part of my feeling has been that if The Shalom Center is valuable about anything, it's about being on the frontier, and now there is J Street, and there is Jewish Voice for Peace, which I don't agree with, but it's there. So, it doesn't feel necessary for us to be, like, pioneering there.

JG: When you feel like there are other places —

AW: Yeah, exactly.

JG: — that you can have an impact at this point and make a difference.

AW: Yeah, that's right. I mean, the Jewish community is still not really committed to the climate crisis stuff.

JG: It's happening in pockets.

AW: Yeah, that's right, but only in pockets.

JG: Yeah.

AW: The Reform Movement has it on the agenda, but it's like seven or eight on the RAC's agenda.

JG: Yeah.

AW: All right. So now if you want to turn to —

JG: Yeah, well we sort of keep going back and forth.

AW: Yeah, that's right.

JG: As it is, as it is. But just to try and be a little bit more formal here, what are the ways, looking back, do you think that your experiences at Fabbrangon informed the directions (03:45:00) you took later in significant ways?

AW: Well, as I said, for sure the way we learned Torah affected my whole attitude toward Torah, my whole practice about what it meant to learn Torah, the whole midrashic method, which both philosophically I think is totally brilliant. The only way to keep any community going and alive for thousands of years is to be able to do that, but to elevate it as this is what it's all about is fairly unusual. Christians dig it when they get exposed to it, and if you say to them, "Well, you know, that's how it began. Christianity is a macro-midrash on the Torah," they say, "Hmm." [*makes skeptical face.*] But the idea that you could keep on doing it is not really — I mean, it kicks up every once in a while, but I still find that people are intrigued, and they're intrigued because they're not used to the idea that you can do that.

JG: Where did the term "macro-midrash" come from?

AW: That's mine.

JG: That's yours.

AW: That's mine, I think.

JG: What do you mean when you say macro-midrash?

AW: Well, the Talmud is a macro-midrash on the Torah. What Zalman would call — did call — a new paradigm. So, a macro-midrash is a new paradigm. You're still drawing on the text, but you're totally transforming what you think about the text, what you do about the text, etcetera. So the whole notion that you could use words to get in touch with God, instead of either killing an animal or waving a sheaf of wheat? That's a macro-midrash. That becomes a macro-midrash because the offering system was the heart of the system, and if you were going to do something different, then it requires re-thinking the whole business. I agree with Zalman that that's where we're at now, that the Jewish people, and Christianity, and Buddhism, and Islam, are all under the pressure of modernity, and under modernity, doing what we did under the pressure of the Roman Empire, and what Christianity did coming out of that same pressure —

JG: Do you see Jewish Renewal as a somewhat direct outgrowth of *havurah* Judaism, or is that too strong?

AW: I would say *havurah* Judaism is one of the parents, but not the only one. Zalman brought Hasidism, which certainly was not in the — I mean, he helped shape Havurat Shalom —

JG: — which many people describe as neo-hasidic.

AW: Yeah, well, Green (03:48:00) — when it began, it wasn't. Green got deeper and deeper into hasidic thought, and he wrote the Chernobyler *Rebbe* book and then the others, so he certainly brought neo-Hasidism. [*laughs*] Zalman did a macro-midrash on Hasidism. I mean, sometimes when people say, "Jewish Renewal" — all right, but what does it mean?" I say, "Well, can you get your head around feminist Hasidism?" And people are like, "No!" [*laughs*] And I say, "I don't mean just the equality of women and men. I don't mean just that. The whole notion of getting in touch with God not through the *rebbe* — not even Zalman, though people began acting like that in his very old age, in his eighties. It wasn't like that before. It was a much more communal sense of drawing on Hasidism in a more feminist philosophical way. The whole community is what is in

touch, rather than being only the recipients of a channeling through. What Zalman used to do, which I still think is totally brilliant — growing up in a *farbrengen*, in a Lubavitch *farbrengen*, what the Rebbe used to do on *Erev Shabbat* and *Erev Yontif*, he would gather the men, only the men, at the *tisch*, and he would sit in a big special chair, and he would teach Torah all night, and the men would drink *l'chaim*. So Zalman got that and went way beyond it. What he would do with us, *Erev Yontif* or *Erev Shabbat*, he would gather the women and the men. He would sit in a big special chair. We would gather around the *tisch*. He would teach for about twenty minutes. Then he would stand up, and he'd say, "Everybody stand up," so everybody stood up. Then he would say, "Everybody move one chair to the left." And he would move one chair to the left, and now there's somebody new in the big special chair, and he would say, "You look inside and find the rebbe spark in you, and you teach." And every twenty minutes it would shift, until practically everybody had been in the rebbe chair. And it worked! It really worked. People would go deep inside, and I think it mattered. The chair mattered. [*laughs*] I think it transformed, among us, what it meant to be a rebbe. So that's, in a sense, the (03:51:00) feminist. It's not just that there were women and men, but the deeper feminist sense of community as the holder of sacredness, rather than hierarchy as the holder of sacredness. So the *havurah* movement was one of the parents of doing this, but Hasidism, I would say — the Freedom Seder. Zalman thought the Freedom Seder was one of the progenitors of Jewish Renewal. And Zalman had a much more political head, though he didn't act on it nearly as much as I did, for sure, but he had a really political head that most of the Jewish Renewal movement really didn't know. One of his kids graduated from Antioch, and they invited Zalman to give the address, and he gave the most scorching — this was in the middle of the Bush administration and the Iraq War — he gave the most scorching speech about the president and the war. One of my problems with Jewish Renewal is that it had shunted all this stuff to the edge, and it's much more purely individual *davening*, meditation, etcetera, than Zalman ever was.

JG: Did that happen also within Fabranken and within the *havurah*, essentially that the political sort of got shunted?

AW: Well, I haven't been in Fabranken since '82.

JG: But even by then.

AW: I'm trying to think whether in '82 Fabranken would have been as unanimously against some version of the Vietnam War as it was in '73. Certainly not as burning about it as it was in '73.

JG: There's also the issue of having an opinion, or strong feelings about something, and acting on it. Being an activist on behalf of a cause.

AW: That's right.

JG: My impression is that it had moved, particularly after the funding disappeared, that it had shifted more —

AW: Rob Agus was certainly not anything like as political — Dave Shneyer somewhat. No, certainly the shift from JUJ to Fabrangen was a somewhat de-politicizing shift. It was still around the war by '73. It was still clear where we were at, and we did go as a body to that march, but by '82 I kind of doubt that that would have happened. (03:54:00)

JG: As you look back, it's been nearly half a century —

AW: [laughs]

JG: Since the *havurah* movement — it's hard to believe, but since the first *havurah* was founded in '68. What would you say —?

AW: Actually, the Upstairs Minyan at the University of Chicago was maybe a year or so before that.

JG: Danny —

AW: Danny, and Max.

JG: And Max?

AW: And Esther.

JG: And Esther. That was before then.

AW: Yeah, 1967 maybe.

JG: 1967, but in that same era.

AW: That's right.

JG: We're still approaching half a century.

AW: That's right, no doubt.

JG: What do you think the main impact of the *havurah*, the *havurah* movement, has been, and continues to be through the Summer Institutes?

AW: Well, the notion of taking Torah as serious and alive I think is much broader in the Jewish community now than it was at the beginning, and I think Fabrangen and the other *havurot* and the Havurah Institute — the Havurah Committee. When the group first met after Weiss's Farm was lost and began talking about what it would be to create the National Havurah Coordinating Committee and the whole summer stuff, there was actually a debate about whether the heart of the institutes should be how to make a *havurah*, or the heart should be Torah. I think Michael and I argued for Torah. We won, and I think that was right. The result has been this constant regeneration of Torah in many places, some political, some not, but all much more alive. I think that's fed into a lot of people. It would be interesting — I have no idea — it would be interesting to try and find out how many sort of veterans of the Summer Institutes have become rabbis. But I think that's one of the big differences. It's not that there wouldn't anywhere be the kind of bar mitzvah I had in — thirteen plus thirty-three — 1946, but it's much less likely. Two of my grandkids are members of a “capital C” Conservative shul in Washington. They gave brilliant *divrei torah*. They were serious, real *divrei torah*. That (03:57:00) is normal in that shul. It wouldn't have been fifty years ago. So for them and their father, who grew up in Fabrangen, it is — that's what you do, of course.

JG: What do you see, if any, as the relationship between independent *havurot* in this early period, later synagogue-based *havurot*, and later still, independent minyanim?

AW: [*laughs*] Well, it's been so funny to me. What people tell me is that people in the independent minyanim think they invented the whole idea. Okay. A.) It may be true in their own life experience, and b.) okay, doesn't matter. The wave is the wave. The wave responded to the crisis of American society in the sixties, and I think it has been — in much less sharp ways, because the crisis has been less sharp, but I think the crisis is already now very sharp in some ways. We didn't have to cope with a fascist candidate for president in the 1960s. I think there's a deep — I mean, it's not just his candidacy. There's something going on in the society that's really [*indicates ball of pressure with hands*].

JG: That brings Trump, a Trump to the fore.

AW: Right, yeah. And that also brings Bernie Sanders to the fore. I mean, that would have also been — I mean, a whole movement? Thirteen million votes inside the Democratic party calling itself socialist? Come on. *[laughs]* So, I think most of the people in the *havurah* and the Jewish Renewal movements tend to think of themselves as emerging from the internal processes of Judaism. I don't think that's — that's certainly a piece, but I don't think it's the big piece. I think the big piece is the internal processes of Judaism being acted on by the crises of American and world society, in that generation and this one. It's clear that the *havurot* would not have happened if it hadn't been for the Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam War.

JG: And the counterculture generally.

AW: Yeah, right, and in Havurat Shalom (04:00:00) explicitly. One of the reasons that they wanted to be a seminary is that they wanted to be able to say people were rabbinical students so they couldn't get drafted. So that was absolutely. And we certainly — Fabrangen certainly emerged from that whole sense. Even the fact that Agus was less political than, say, Mike Tabor, still that sense of crisis in American society was really what spurred him. Drawing on his father, drawing on Conservative Judaism. For Chavah, drawing on Ramah. One of the things that led to the *havurot* was the Ramah camps and the dead end of the Ramah camps. In Conservative Judaism at that point, there was nowhere to go. After you had learned to be a really serious and creative Conservative Jew, what did you do then? But the sense of communal decision-making, the sense of skepticism about the official denominations, a lot of that came out of the counterculture and the political ethos of the counterculture. The war in Vietnam was a lie on the government's part. The Civil Right Movement was a response to the lie of racial contempt. So.

JG: One thing we haven't really mentioned —

AW: Just as, I mean, to use Zalman's analogy, just as Judaism and Christianity both were responses to the hammer of the Roman Empire shattering biblical Judaism and leaving a whole bunch of different answers to "what now?" A whole bunch. But out of them, both Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity emerged.

JG: We haven't really touched on the experience of Jews, on a certain level, within the Civil Rights movement, and in the New Left in general, the experiences of anti-Semitism and some anti-Zionism has spurred Jews moving to form their own organizations. Can you address that a little bit?

AW: Huh.

JG: Thinking of it as part of this crisis that you were just discussing. (04:03:00)

AW: That's right. So, for Jews to respond that way — I think you're right about a number of people — for Jews to respond that way, however, out of the angst of this anti-Semitism, they had to care about being Jewish in the first place. For me, it was kind of peculiar. It was the experience of the seder which I did care about. So, at one level that was true, but it was like this tiny little piece. But it was that piece — the *pintele yid*, the hasidim might have called it — for me was the seder, then smashed by King's death, and the uprising, and the army. So, it certainly wasn't anti-Semitism that drove me into this, and I don't think for the Fabrangen it was. I don't think — I mean, I wasn't there in the New York Havurah and Havurat Shalom — but my sense from the inter-*havurah* retreat was that it wasn't that either.

JG: What about women, who certainly were having experiences both within the Civil Rights Movement, but also within second wave feminism, that was pushing toward the creation of Jewish feminism as a sort of separate expression.

AW: That's right, but it wasn't, I don't think — if you ask Judith Plaskow — I don't think it was out of feeling anti-Semitism in the women's movement or the left. It might have been there, but that wasn't — I mean, there was some piece of her that was seriously Jewish enough to want to be in the New York Havurah, and then to discover that even there, she was going to be a second-class citizen. Certainly the feminist movement informed, like, "Forget it, I'm not going to," but I don't think left anti-Semitism or black anti-Semitism or whatever — I don't think that's what drove people into this. I think there were several things. One was wanting to be Jewish and feeling that the standard ways were somewhere between boring and disgusting. The second thing was the search for spiritual depth (04:06:00) that at first seemed to be met only in Buddhist or Hindu or whatever stuff, Eastern stuff. For sure both Shalom and Zalman had a lot to do with this.

JG: I was intrigued by the image of the Torah as a spiral that you talk about in *Godwrestling* I and II, in which you have to go back in order to go forward.

AW: Right.

JG: So, I was left wondering what you would say are the lessons of the past half century or so that have worked with building this new Jewish path, that can help and sustain us as we move into the twenty-first century, given this very complicated moment in time.

AW: Right. Well, one is the passage in *Devarim*, that we made — that the rabbis made — into the second paragraph of the *Shema* — that how we act, whether we act in accord with the divine flow of energy, however you want to metaphorize it, or we take false, narrow, partial gods and worship them, it makes a difference — even to whether the rain falls and the rivers run and the skies protect us or damage us. I've been writing a whole slew of stuff about seeing the whole Tanach, with at least one of its major threads being what we would now call eco-Judaism, that this was the spiritual experience of what we would now call an indigenous people. Their spiritual experience was with the land, and with the food from the land. That's how you got in touch with the divine. Rabbinic Judaism, which got severed not only from the Land of Israel but got thrown out of land after land after land, I think couldn't make a deep emotional or political relationship with the land, with the earth — with any land. And now, partly because American Judaism is not afraid of being thrown out of the country, we now have got this whole proliferation of Jewish organic farmers, who do have an emotional relationship with the land, and increasingly, a political take on the land as well. So for me, that's one of the really central issues of Tanach which, I think, got pushed to one side by Rabbinic Judaism. I understand why Rabbinic Judaism did it, and it had other major advantages, but that was a loss. And I think now we're in a moment when relationship with the earth, (04:09:00) *adam* and *adamah*, is really crucial, and that I think we can learn really deeply from the Tanach, more than any other piece of our tradition. I certainly have been doing that. David — what's his name? — Seidenberg, has gone to the Kabbalah for that. First of all, it's much more arcane even now — though it's less arcane than it used to be — than the Bible is. It doesn't really speak to the Christians at all, whereas the Hebrew Bible does, as well as the Jews, and even the Muslims on some level. So for me, that's one of the absolutely crucial, central things. So it's the *Shmita*, the Sabbatical year, it's the second paragraph of the *Shema*. It's even the sacrifices. Leaving aside animal killing, there's also wheat and barley, fruit, wine, flowers, as getting in touch with God. So that's, for me, one absolutely central thing. You've certainly got to do a macro-midrash on it. I mean, that was about one little sliver of land on the Eastern Mediterranean. Now it's about the planet. So that requires — I mean, you can't, I don't think — I wouldn't know how to do the *Shmita* year for the whole planet, but the teaching and the meaning, and figuring out how you do a midrash on the *Shmita*, that I think is absolutely crucial. And, one of the other major threads is certainly the Exodus and the Prophets — the very strong sense of social justice, the very strong suspicion of kings, even if you've got to have them, even if you think you've got to have them. That's one thing Buber's books knew about. About his Bible books as well as about his critique of — he and Ben Gurion used to have public debates. I mean not face-to-face, but de facto, virtual debates, about the centralization of Israeli power, and what Ben Gurion called *mamlechtiut*, kingliness. Buber wanted decentralization, close to being communitarian-anarchist. So, I get the debate in the Bible, including Samuel's argument with the people, and so on. But the energy that's critical of

centralized power, it seems to me, (04:12:00) is very important. I realize I'm going on a thread, an aspect, of Torah, and especially maybe the Prophets, when I talk about what I call "Transformative Judaism," of what Everett Gendler has done a whole book now talking about Universalist Judaism, a Judaism that looks beyond the Jewish people, with Jewish lessons applied to the world as a whole. So, that's there. It's certainly not the only voice, but it is there. So I think learning from that and figuring out what it means in our generation is an important thread. And all of that requires midrash. We live in a very, very different society, so it requires midrash. I think that my understanding of the YHWH is not midrash. I think it's *pshat*, that that's what they thought in the first place, but then it got covered over and covered over and covered over. But what happened in the burning bush doesn't seem to me to be Adonai talking. It seems to me it's someone else [laughs] talking. And when Moses confronts Pharaoh, I love when Pharaoh says, exactly as Moshe said Pharaoh would say, "Says who?" And he says, he breathes. And Pharaoh says, "What kind of a God is that? Never heard of him." So, I think you know the end of the story right away. [laughs] The breath of life, and this king who thinks he's a god, "The breath of life? What's that?" So that seems to me much more — and I understand that the story can be read another way, as super Pharaoh in the sky doing magic, but I think both ways are legitimate ways to read it. I don't know. I guess for me anyway, those are certainly what I take from it. I'm happy that Seidenberg sees and wrote this amazing book with fifty thousand footnotes [laughs] about the Kabbalah and ecology. I'm happy that David and Shoshana Cooper and Jeff Roth have developed a whole Jewish meditation process, drawing somewhat (04:15:00) on Jewish tradition — much more on Buddhist wisdom, but there's enough there to be able to do midrash on it. But I guess my answer is, what is there I think is truly there, and really, really important. I mean, I think we have an incredible privilege of still having this powerful teaching of an indigenous people for what has become a very odd world religion, right? You would think, we don't stack up in numbers for sure, [laughs] against Christianity or Islam or Buddhism or Hinduism, but here we are. People treated us like we're important, and we're carrying this indigenous thing, which most of the world religions got rid of in order to be world religions. So, I think that's an amazing gift.

JG: Arthur, this has been an amazing conversation. I really thank you.

AW: Thank you! I'm glad you're doing this. Really glad you're doing this.

JG: So are we, and we hope and trust that this will be a real treasure for generations of Jews and others to listen to in the decades to come,

AW: Amen, selah.

JG: Amen selah.

[Various buttons on the hat mentioned above are shown up close:]

[1. Japanese button that reads “Smash the State” in Japanese]

[2. Breira button with “Breira” in English and Hebrew]

[3. Sukkat Shalom button with “Sukkat Shalom” in English and Hebrew, and the phrase, “Spread over us the Shelter of Your peace.”]

[4. Anti-nuclear button that reads, “SHUT THEM DOWN: MOBILIZATION FOR SURVIVAL”]

[5. Pro-peace button that reads “Shalom B’Olam” in Hebrew (“peace in the world”)]

[6. Anti-Vietnam War button from Memorial Day, 1969 that reads, “35,000 GIs DEAD IN VAIN. NO MORE!”]

Addendum

Pg. 27: *New York Review of Books*

Pg. 36: I misremembered when those two workshops were. They were at Rutgers, spring '73, not at Weiss' Farm, fall of 1973. The following passages have been reoriented from their layout in the initial interview.

AW: Yeah, privately owned by a family named Weiss. Maybe once upon a time it had been a farm, but I never saw any crops or animals. So, at the end of the Rutgers retreat, we decided we did want to meet again. I think we decided we wanted to do three meetings a year, Shalosh Regalim. They would have to be long American weekends for us to be able to do it, so it would be partly defined not only according to the Jewish calendar, but the American calendar. And we agreed that the way it would work was that each of the three *havurot* would take responsibility for the next one, and it was agreed that Fabrangen would take responsibility for the gathering which would be the first real inter-havurah retreat at Weiss's Farm.

[Following passage in red moved as explained below:] Two really amazing things happened that retreat. One was, most of the New Yorkers, led by John Ruskay, who was then the national secretary of the Jewish Peace Fellowship — a totally marginal organization, really marginal — pulled together a sub-group that they named "Israel Is The Name of a People Also." This was aimed at those among us who were getting more and more nervous about the Occupation by '73 and felt it was damaging Israel as well as — nobody really knew anything about the Palestinians. I knew a little bit more than most. I had at least been there and talked about it. But they were nervous about it, so they held that. Rob Agus had, for other people for whom that wasn't the major issue, wanted to convene a workshop called "Toward a New Halachah."

JG: Say that again?

AW: "Toward a New Halachah." That's where I went. I was more interested than — I continue to be. Although certainly I was very interested in the Israel/Palestine stuff, I continue to be much more interested in what it meant to create a new form of Judaism than I was in Israel questions. So out of both of them came amazing things. Breira grew out of that workshop.

So we agreed on how to do the next retreat, and then nothing happened. The idea had been that each of the *havurot* internally would be able — because it was already together — to make creating that thing a project of its community. Therefore you wouldn't need a

staff and stuff like that. So, at some point (02:21:00) in '73, I remember going to Esther Ticktin and saying, "Well, we said we'd do it," so she said, "Let's do it." So she and I — and then we invited other people in Fabrangen to get together to plan the agenda and what teaching would happen and who would lead the *davening* and stuff like that. So that worked. We met that fall. Sukkot was just after the beginning of the Yom Kippur War, and everybody's heart was in their mouths.

Pg. 39: The following passage has been reoriented to read more clearly.

AW: And I met one of the people there, a guy named Micha Taubman, who was rich, and I persuaded him to give the money to start publishing a tiny monthly magazine. I suppose by that time, 1978, a bunch of us had left IPS in '77 together and set up a new place called the Public Resource Center, and I began, with the money that Micha Taubman put up — to publish and mail that magazine to about 4,000 people who subscribed. Later, in 1983, he put up some of the money to create The Shalom Center.