Jewish Counterculture Oral History Project

BARRY HOLTZ

Interviewed by Jayne K. Guberman

December 21, 2016

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

Jayne Guberman (JG): My name is Jayne Guberman and today is Wednesday, December 21, 2016. I'm here with Barry Holtz at his home in New York City and we're going to record an interview for the Jewish Counterculture Oral History Project. Barry, do I have your permission to record this interview?

Barry Holtz (BH): Yes, you do.

Jayne Guberman: As you know, today we're going to explore your experiences during the late sixties and early seventies and particularly your involvement in Havurat Shalom and the impact that the *havurah* has had on your own life, and beyond into the larger Jewish world. I'd like to start by talking about your personal and family background a little bit, and to flesh out who you were at the time you first got involved with this experimental Jewish community being started in Boston. So let's begin with your family growing up. You were born in 1947 in Boston.

BH: That's right.

JG: Can you tell me a little bit about your family when you were growing up with your mother and father, grandparents?

BH: Sure. So most of my early years, I grew up in Brookline, Massachusetts. My family background, just from the Jewish side in particular — my mother, who was a very big influence on me, grew up in an, I would say, typically Orthodox family of the immigrant generation. She was born in America. She was the youngest of six children but either two or three of her older siblings were actually born in the old country. The old country on that side of the family was Bialystok. Her father died when she was quite young. I never knew that grandfather, but I did know my grandmother very well. In fact, my grandmother died in the summer after the second or third year of the *havurah*, so I was, you know, in my early twenties. My grandmother — so they came to America in the early part of the 20th century, to the West End of Boston, and eventually they moved to Brookline. My mother grew up in Brookline. My mother went to Brookline High School, as did I. I think they moved about when she was about to be in high school. She went to grade school in Boston. So my grandmother was a *frum* lady. She only spoke Yiddish. She looked about twenty years older than she really was. When I look at pictures, I'm kind of amazed, that I do the math and I figure out how old she was in those pictures. They all looked old back in those days, you know. But she was a *frum* lady. (00:03:00) My mother grew up in a house that kept kosher. I don't know what the religious practices of my mother and her siblings were growing up in the family, but I do know that my grandmother herself, you know, she wouldn't use electricity on Shabbos. She wouldn't ride on Shabbos. In fact, sadly, toward the end of her life, she couldn't get to shul without

driving, so she didn't go to shul. She wouldn't make that exception. So that was my grandmother and my mother's family. It was a very close-knit family, and they joined a very, I would say, traditionalist, right-wing Conservative synagogue, Kehilath Israel — K.I. — in Brookline Massachusetts, which was comfortable enough for my grandmother. I didn't realize this until I learned it much later but — I grew up in that synagogue too — but I didn't realize that in the main sanctuary back in the forties and fifties and certainly before then in the main sanctuary — the middle section of the main sanctuary was mixed seating, but the two side sections were one for just men and one for just women. I think that was comfortable for my grandmother, although eventually she sat with everybody else. Anyway, that was my mother. This is an important factor in terms of my life because I had this kind of Jewish model sitting there in my grandmother, but my mother herself, when she married my father, she gave up whatever observance that she had, I would say of the more traditionalist sort, though she retained some aspects of ritual. Namely, she always lit Shabbos candles, though not always before Shabbos, but she always lit Shabbos candles. And my parents went to synagogue, I would say, pretty much every Shabbos morning. They didn't go much at night, Friday night, but Shabbos morning they went. It was really the 1950s, "The family that prays together, stays together" kind of model. This must have been a little strange for my father, who grew up rather assimilated, though ethnically very identified as Jews, but religiously very assimilated. (00:06:00) He did not grow up with any — I mean, the family belonged to a synagogue, and they probably went a few times here, and he had a bar mitzvah on a Thursday morning. He didn't really read Hebrew very well, if at all. I can't ever remember my father making Kiddush, but often — I should add, my father grew up in Haverhill, Massachusetts. His father was an immigrant from Poland, a very successful businessman. They were fairly wealthy by the standards of that time, and they were very Jewish in a kind of ethnic way, but not at all in a religious way. So I grew up in a in a home that was mostly leaned toward, I would say, my father's level of observance. My mother lit the Shabbos candles and all that, and they did go to synagogue fairly often, but I did not grow up in a kosher home. My grandmother's house [that is, my mother's mother] was kosher, and my aunt and uncle, who lived downstairs from us in a two-family house, they similarly belonged to the synagogue and went to the synagogue, and they had a kosher home. I think that's because my mother's sister was the blood relative, and her husband grew up in a more traditional family, unlike my father. So I would say in some ways — and I think this is probably related to the *havurah* — I think that the fact that I grew up in a kind of extended family world was kind of preparation for community. Now like many people I think that I knew, my parents never — my parents had friends, but they would go out with their friends. I never remember any friends of my parents ever coming for a meal in our house. People would come over. They would have drinks or something. They would have a party every once in a rare while, but they didn't invite their friends for a Shabbos meal, because this was spent with family. Sometimes we

would eat downstairs with my aunt and uncle. Sometimes they would eat upstairs with us. Sometimes, probably once a month — I would have to ask my sister this, (00:09:00) because I don't remember well — but we would go to my grandmother's.

JG: Did your grandmother eat in your house?

BH: My grandmother would eat in our — hah, I don't know! I don't know. She certainly would eat at my aunt and uncle's house. That's a really interesting question. I don't remember. I don't remember if she would [see addendum]. I mean my mom is very funny in this regard, which was, she only bought meat from the kosher butcher, and — can I tell a story that's a little off? But this is an indication of the family, and also sort of the world of Jewish observance. I've often thought that people write about Jewish observance that these kind of quirks don't fit. So here's a quirk. Some years ago, my parents were both alive — they were still living in Brookline; they eventually moved to Florida, and they're no longer alive — we went out for some event, and Bethamie and I were in town, and we went to this Italian restaurant. A lot of people came. My grandmother was no longer alive, of course. So we went out to this restaurant, and I'm sitting with my mother on one side of me and my Aunt Honey on the other side, all of my aunts and uncle — my mother had one brother and four sisters, all older than she. Her oldest sister was almost twenty years older. All of them are alive at this point. So we go out to this meal, this restaurant. My Aunt Honey was a very picky, picky eater, so she's looking at the menu and she can't decide what to eat. It's too spicy, the tomato sauce or whatever. So I say to my mother, "She can't decide what to eat. Why doesn't she just order the chicken?" I keep kosher and I also am a vegetarian, but at that point I said, "Why doesn't she just order the chicken?" And my mother says, without any sense that she's saying something extremely funny, she says to me, "Huh! She's not going to eat goyishe chicken!" So what did my aunt order? She ordered the scallops. So what do you make of this, right? That aunt and another aunt never married. They lived together, first with my grandmother, and then after my grandmother died they continued to live together. They were people who would go shopping, you know, they would go out on Shabbos shopping, but *chas v'chalila* that they would iron or do the laundry on Shabbos. They would not. You don't use an iron on Shabbos. But they would go to the mall! (00:12:00) I don't know how you put all that together. Anyway, this is a crazy thing, the world that I grew up in. And I was very encouraged to be active in the synagogue. I went to the Hebrew school.

JG: What was your Jewish education like when you were a child?

BH: Well, I went to the K.I. Hebrew school. It was a very intensive program. When I tell my students today — my education students at JTS [Jewish Theological Seminary] — about what my Hebrew school was like in terms of hours, they cannot believe it. We went

five days a week, four weekdays two hours, and Sunday for three hours. So we were getting eleven hours of Jewish study, which is comparable to what many rather good day schools will give kids. But the education was pretty bad. It was all the bad things that — I have to say, I had mostly European teachers. They were a sad lot, but they were very knowledgeable. They knew nothing about us kids.

JG: Men or women?

BH: Both. Both. We had almost no respect for them. I learned very little in Hebrew school, but I cared a lot about, as I recall, my bar mitzvah, and I remember that — see, this so much for my mother, because my father was, it's not like he was hostile, he just wasn't, you know. It was very important to her that — two things, that are quite interesting. One is, she said to me on the day before my bar mitzvah, she said, "After you're done, you're going to be sitting up on the *bimah*, and I want you to be *davening*. I want you not to be just sitting there like, you know, a lump on the log. She wouldn't have used the word "*davening*," although there was an enormous amount of Yiddish phraseology used by my mother. My father understood Yiddish but wouldn't use it so often. My mother used it and her sisters used it a lot. Of course, they used it to keep secrets from us a little bit, but also they just used Yiddish phrases that are still in my vocabulary. But "*daven*" isn't one of those words. She would have said, "I want you to be praying. I don't want you to be just (00:15:00) looking out at the congregation. I hate when that happens." So I had a bar mitzvah of the sort at that time, you know? I only learned how to read the haftarah for my particular parashah. We didn't *leyn* from the Torah. We had a prepackaged *dvar torah* that they handed us that you read out loud.

JG: You didn't have anything to do with writing it?

BH: No, no. You look astonished, but this is exactly what it was like. There were, I believe, eight generic bar mitzvah — there was no bat mitzvah in those days at K.I. — eight generic bar mitzvah talks that were something like this. [*clears throat*] "On this day of my bar mitzvah, where I assume the responsibilities of being an adult, I pledge that in the future I will..." You know, like that. And it was very funny because I had, let's say, speech number one. The next week the kid would have speech number two, three, four. So that year of the bar mitzvah, we would begin to hear the same speeches as the cycle went to the — you know, the ninth kid was starting with speech number one. So it was none of the — this is something my students find astonishing, right? Nobody wrote a bar mitzvah talk. Why? Because the rabbi had to give the talk. The rabbi gave the *dvar torah*. The rabbi at K.I. at that time was a guy named Manny Saltzman, Manuel Salzman. No longer alive. He was a phenomenal preacher of the old school. We, as teenagers, used to kind of make fun of him in a way because of his rhetorical style, which was so, you know

— I don't even know what the word is — so sort of elaborate and there was something very mannered about it. It's the exact opposite, the exact opposite, of the kind of sermons, let's say, that I see when I've done scholar-in-residence things at synagogues, where it tends to be kind of chummy and informal, which is somewhat the legacy of the *havurah* movement, I think. The way people were being taught — I mean, I know JTS. I don't know other places — but the way people were being taught at JTS to give a sermon, they, back in the fifties and sixties, around the time that the people somewhat older than I am graduated rabbinical school from JTS — (00:18:00) the way they were being taught, Manny Saltzman would have been an ideal, because he was a great rhetorician and he had a side to him that I didn't realize as a teenager, even as a teenager. He was very learned. Joe Lukinsky, who will come into this story in a minute, who was the assistant rabbi at K.I. and later on my colleague at JTS, once said to me that in the three years that he was Saltzman's assistant, he marveled at Saltzman's sermons, because Saltzman really, really prepared. He really studied. And Lukinsky said he was never satisfied with just, like, picking some Rashi. Lukinsky, who was a very learned guy, he said to me, "I never heard a sermon from Saltzman in which I didn't learn something." That was why the bar mitzvah kids weren't going to give the sermon. So let me pick up the story as a teenager, because that's where the main thing happens. Joe Lukinsky comes to K.I. as the assistant rabbi, around the time of my bar mitzvah, 1960, and we — the kids, my cohort — are fascinated by him. He has a kind of charisma that is totally not phony and totally not, kind of, yechy. It feels very deep. He became a sort of a mentor to this whole generation that came out of K.I. in the fifties and sixties. Many people, twenty-plus people, went on to become either rabbis, Jewish studies scholars, or Jewish educators, and all of that is Lukinsky. I give Saltzman a tremendous amount of credit for recognizing what a gem he had in Lukinsky and finding ways to keep him on longer than the three years. He made him the head of the Hebrew school, so Lukinsky was there for a long time. Lukinsky did two really life-changing things for me. One, he created something called the Junior Congregation. Now K.I. had had a Children's Congregation. The Children's Congregation (00:21:00) was pre-bar mitzvah kids who would have their own service. It was quite successful, and I really liked going to it, and mostly I would go with my friends and we would run around the shul, and we would go to the services. On the holidays, the services were run by Mr. Kraft. Mr. Kraft is Robert Kraft's father, Harry Kraft, who was one of the greatest *b'aalei tefilah* I've ever heard in my life. Unbelievable. But Lukinsky created this high school program. He told me that the first president of the Junior Congregation was Robert Kraft, so I attended that. See, that was so interesting. My parents said, "We expect you to continue your Jewish education after your bar mitzvah," even though I really disliked my Jewish education. I didn't do well in Hebrew school because I didn't like it, and I didn't go on to the Boston Hebrew College, because I wasn't in that track in the Hebrew school, because I was, like, one of the "bad kids." You know, many years — I mean, ten years ago, so many years after this period — Bethamie and I were on

sabbatical in Israel. We went to a concert, and we bumped into the guy who had been one of the Hebrew school principals in my time. Not the original. The original was Al Spack, Eliot Spack's father. But, it was a guy named Joe Colodner. I eventually worked for Colodner as a USY [United Synagogue Youth] advisor, but he was the Hebrew school principal at the time of my bar mitzvah, I think, around that. He was a very interesting character. I introduced him to my wife, and the first thing he said to Bethamie was, "You know, he was in the dumb class." [*laughs*] So I was in the dumb class, which was great good fortune for me, because aside from creating this Junior Congregation — and once again, my parents said, "We want you to continue going to synagogue after your bar mitzvah," and it was fantastic. Because what Lukinsky did in the Junior Congregation was that he basically didn't run it. The teenagers ran everything. So one thing I learned in the children's congregation with Mr. Kraft, and then even more so in the Junior Congregation with Lukinsky, was I learned a lot of synagogue skills, so that (00:24:00) I knew — by the time I graduated high school, I was able to lead a Shabbos service. I could do the *Shacharit*. I started with the *Musaf*. I could do that. I knew a little bit of the High Holiday *nusach*. There were other kids that mostly did that, but I knew a little bit of that, and I really was very familiar with the way a traditional service worked. The other great thing that Lukinskiy did is that he created a high school, a Hebrew high school, at the synagogue. Maybe it was there before but he certainly enlivened it, and he brought really great teachers, and he himself taught. It was in that sense really fortunate that I wasn't in the smart class and didn't go onto the Boston Hebrew College Prozdor, where my friends who went basically learned — they did learn a lot of Hebrew. That I give them credit for. But they mostly thought it was like Hebrew school continued and was pretty uninteresting. With Lukinsky, we really — he did teach one class in Hebrew, you know, modern Hebrew, which I took with him. But he and other people, they taught content. So for example, he taught a course on Genesis, which unbeknownst to me, he was using the early, early curriculum materials of the Melton Research Center at JTS. Twenty years later I became head of the Melton Research Center and I realize, oh, that's what Lukinsky was doing. He brought in other terrific teachers. Some were homegrown like Bob Abramson and Danny Margolis, and some were people that were Jewish study scholars. Baruch Levine, who became a major league Bible scholar, taught a Genesis course that I took with him. You know, people like that. So I had a very intellectual Hebrew high school experience, unlike what all of my friends were getting at the Prozdor. At the same time — and I think this is a crucial element of my life or my Jewish connection — at the same time that this was going on at the K.I. Hebrew high school, I was at Brookline High School, and I found Brookline High School to be — with perhaps only three exceptions in all the classes that I took — the least intellectual place. It was considered to be a great high school. It was top rated. Educationally it was extremely conventional, and it was a lot of memorization. I had to take history courses. I didn't take a single history course that was anything but memorizing names and dates. I had two,

yeah, two very very fine English teachers — very funny — and that had a big influence on me. I had one excellent teacher who taught chemistry, but the rest of the classes were pretty boring. (00:27:00) And there at K.I., we were discussing issues, politics, social issues. We were reading texts. And Lukinsky — I got very involved in the USY [United Synagogue Youth] group and became the president of the USY group at K.I. Lukinsky also ran — the seminary also had a program, long dead unfortunately, called LTF. Did you ever hear of that?

JG: Leadership —

BH: Training Fellowship. It was mostly for Ramah graduates, or people that were a little too old for Ramah, who were high school students. It was kind of an elitist thing, to compete with USY, which was considered kind of just, *amcha*, for the people, which was run by United Synagogue. It is an old political conflict of JTS versus United Synagogue.

JG: So LTF was run by JTS, you're saying?

BH: Run by JTS. However, at K.I. — unlike many USY groups — at K.I., because of Lukinsky, the USY group was very content-oriented. Social action and Jewish content — that was its thing. And it wasn't just, you know, dances and bowling events, which it had somewhat. But Lukinsky created an LTF group, and the LTF group was for kind of like the elites within our USY group. There were five or six of us, seven or eight, something like that, that were in the LTF group. My recollection of the only activity of the LTF group was that probably every other Friday night — maybe it was less frequent, but to me, in my memory, was every other Friday night — we would assemble after dinner (00:30:00) at the Lukinsky home, and we would study with him. What would we study? I remember him teaching midrash, and I remember him teaching a Talmud *shiur*. And we would do that, and then Betty, his wife, would serve us cake and tea. This was — I didn't have anything like this in my public high school. It was just boring. My sister, who was four years younger, and five years younger in school — she attended Brookline High School after me, and by then the whole thing had changed. It had had a pedagogic revolution. But in my time, it was extremely boring. The one thing that I can say — my friend Sam Heilman, who grew up Orthodox in Brookline — but actually Heilman — Sam used to come to Lukinsky's house for the Talmud *shiur* and became quite close to Lukinsky. Sam's written probably twice as many books as I have written. Sam did say, has said to me — and I think there is something to that — that they did teach us how to write.

JG: At Brookline High.

BH: That they did, in a very conventional way. You know, the three-paragraph essay, or that kind of thing. But they did teach us sort of an attention to syntax and grammar issues that you don't see so much nowadays in teaching. So I think that did have an influence on me. So there I was, very Jewishly involved in these high school years.

JG: Had you been to camp — to Camp Ramah, for instance?

BH: Well, first thing, historically important datum is that there was no Camp Ramah for the Boston area, because the Boston area had Camp Yavneh. Yavneh was the summer camp of the Boston Hebrew College, and Ramah — maybe there was a political sort of agreement — Ramah didn't recruit from Boston. So I knew nobody that went to Ramah and I knew tons of kids that went to Yavneh, but I didn't go to Yavneh. Yavneh was really aimed at the Hebrew College kids. I was in the dumb class, so I didn't go to the Hebrew College, so I wouldn't have even thought of going to an all Hebrew speaking camp. So I went to a very (00:33:00) conventional summer camp for Jews — a summer camp that mostly had Jews. It was fun and it didn't have a big influence on — certainly he didn't have any influence on my Jewish life.

JG: So then you went on to Tufts, right?

BH: Right.

JG: Nineteen sixty-four?

BH: Yup.

JG: What were you interested in studying at that point?

BH: By the time I graduated high school, I had pretty much decided that, unlike what I would have said to you in the eighth grade, that I wasn't going to be a doctor. The reason was because of this great high school chemistry teacher — I reconnected with her only seven or eight years ago; I just googled. She had an unusual last name, and I found her at the University of Michigan, I think. Either Michigan or Wisconsin, one of those two universities. She was working in their ed school as a kind of mentor-teacher type — I wrote to her, and one thing I said to her is that even though I got an A in honors chemistry, I realized I wasn't going to go into the sciences because I never quite felt I understood science. Like, even in that great class that she taught, I remember thinking, these electrons — like, are they real, or is this just, like, some pretend? Can you really see them? And how do the molecules stick together? They stick? What is that? I mean, I honestly felt, I know how to get an A in this class, but I really don't understand science. I

just don't understand it. I was very drawn — partially because of these two really funny English teachers — I realized I had a knack for it and I liked it. And I think that the K.I. Hebrew high school had something to do with this because it was very text oriented and having literary inclination or literary skills fit well with the kind of Jewish study we were doing. If I look back on the stream of my life professionally, I can kind (00:36:00) of trace it back to that. I once gave a talk — I think I published this as an article someplace — where I mentioned the kind of transformative moment in my life in regard to this had to do with my eighth-grade English teacher, who was Mrs. Ellis. She was great, at the Edward Devotion School. We read with her Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening." She said, "What do you think this poem is about?" Everybody answered something like, well, it's about a guy who stops in the woods on a snowy evening and has to make a decision. I mean, really? It's not that hard a poem. I will never forget what she said. She said, "Well, I think maybe this poem is about death." And this, this was like [*raises hands and mimes enlightenment*] — the music and the lights. It's kind of like that scene — *lehavdil* — but that scene in *Angels in America.* You know, [*raises hands and mimes enlightenment*] it's kind of like a poem can be about something like that? Then studying with Lukinsky, that kind of consciousness of the literary aspect of these Jewish sources, and then studying with these two teachers, Mrs. Schattinger and Dr. Campbell. I want to secure their names for history.

JG: *[laughs]*

BH: They had a big influence in me. So I was also writing poetry at that time. I thought I wanted to be a poet. But I graduated high school — I know this sounds a little weird — but I graduated high school thinking, I want to be an English professor. I thought that upon graduation. Now there's a question that you might ask me, but I'll ask it. That is, didn't you think maybe of being a rabbi with all this Jewish stuff? And the answer to that is, it was a thought that I did have, but I didn't want to be a rabbi. It was pretty clear to me I didn't want to be a rabbi. Now Rabbi Saltzman took a big liking to me, and mostly because they had this tradition at K.I. that on the Shabbat of Thanksgiving — it was the college homecoming Shabbat (00:39:00) and the service was a Friday night service, but for the sermon they had college students speak. I was asked to be one of the three speakers after my sophomore year or something like that, junior year. He loved the talk that I gave. I was pretty good as a public speaker. I don't know where that came from, but I was pretty good at it. He really wanted me to go to rabbinical school. But, in a way, I didn't want to be a rabbi because my model of being a rabbi was kind of like him, and as much as I could see that he was, you know, a really very successful guy, I think the main thing was — it felt to me a little nerdy, even though that word didn't exist. But it was a little nerdy to be a rabbi.

JG: How about Lukinsky?

BH: Yeah, I know. I don't know why. Well, maybe because my only idea of being a rabbi was — like Lukinsky, he was kind of — he was the assistant rabbi and he worked with the kids, the teenagers. But the real rabbi was Manny Saltzman, and all these other rabbis that I got to see through USY going to these various conventions and things in different synagogues, all of the rabbis — I didn't want to be them, because firstly it seemed a little too — you had to be a little too pious. I don't mean observant, but like it felt like kind of defanged in a way. The other reason that I think was very powerful was, I didn't want to be a defender of the faith. I felt that as a rabbi, that's what you had to be, and this feeling that I didn't want to be a rabbi grew over the years through college and stuff. Because, I said, to be a rabbi it means every time there's some Jewish thing in the news, you've got — like Israel does something. You've got to defend it, or you've got to advocate for it. I didn't want to be a salesperson for Judaism. Now eventually what happened — so this jumps way, way ahead and I'll fill in the parts — eventually what happened was, I was comfortable being a teacher of Judaism so that in college, (00:42:00) I first was the USY advisor at K.I., and I kind of got tired of that. I didn't like being a programmer. And so I stopped that and I got a job as a Hebrew high school teacher at Temple Israel in Sharon, Massachusetts. What I was saying is, later on — like my junior year of college, I got a job teaching Hebrew high school in Temple Israel in Sharon, because I knew the rabbi, Shamai Kanter. He wanted a course for their Hebrew high school on American Jewish literature, and I was an English major. I did that for that year, my junior year. Then the next year, I don't remember if I continued there. Actually I don't remember if I continued. I might have taught there for two years. But what I found was, I kind of liked being a teacher of Judaism and not a defender of the faith. I felt if I was a rabbi — I would have to try to convince people to keep Shabbos and put on *tefillin*, and I didn't want to do that. But I was happy to teach about Shabbos, and to make it not academic-y — you know, to try to make it meaningful, but not have to worry about people's observance and people's commitment to Israel, all that stuff. I didn't like that part. But what I really wanted to be was an English professor. I was an English major in college, and I went on to do a doctorate in English at Brandeis. So that's kind of the quick part of that story. But now the Jewish part. I should say something important about what happened to me in college, and then we'll transition into the *havurah* period, or however you want to go next.

JG: Yeah.

BH: In college — in high school, I took on Jewish observance that I hadn't been brought up with. So I became *shomer shabbes* by the standards of Conservative Judaism. I used electricity. I would ride to synagogue — I didn't have to because K.I. was within walking distance, but I would have ridden.

JG: What do you mean? Where were you living during college? (00:45:00)

BH: No, I'm sorry. This is in high school. In high school I took on Jewish observances. I think I said that — in high school. Okay, and even though my family's house wasn't kosher, I started keeping kosher outside the home. Kind of the opposite. But, you know, Conservative Judaism. I would have only *milchegs* or fish. I didn't eat meat. I wasn't a vegetarian — I became one somewhat later. I would eat meat, but I wouldn't eat meat out, except at Ruben's deli. At home, my parents — my mother bought only kosher meat — so what my compromise was, I would eat meat at home. I didn't want to alienate my parents. I would eat meat at home, but I would not eat meat and milk stuff together, which I had done, of course, growing up. I had a glass of milk after a hamburger, you know? — that kind of thing, or a milkshake and a hamburger. I wouldn't do that anymore, and even though they didn't have separate dishes, and they didn't have meat and milk *keilim* for cooking and all that stuff, I kind of kept that kind of pseudo-kosher. When I got to college, I lived at home my first year and a half. That was mostly for financial reasons. Then second semester of my sophomore year I moved into Tufts, and after a while I stopped with the Jewish observance. Why? I can't tell you why. I just felt I wanted to try a different lifestyle than I had had in high school. I continued to visit my parents in Brookline regularly, and I would sometimes stay over there, over a Shabbat, and whenever I did I would go to K.I., but I never went to the main service, which I never liked. It was too formal. It was too focused on the sermon. It was very, very decorum-oriented. Instead, I went to the Junior Congregation, even though I was no longer a teenager. The Junior Congregation at K.I. was in a certain sense a precursor of Havurat Shalom. Not in it's community side, but in terms of its prayer (00:48:00) experience. Now — and we want to be careful about this because it wasn't what you'd call a *havurah* service. There wasn't a lot of singing. It didn't have that Hasidic influence that Havurat Shalom had. What I mean is, it didn't have a rabbi. Rabbi Lukinsky was the rabbi, and then the guy that came after him was the rabbi who was responsible, but it was led by — let's call it — the "lay-kids" led the service, and even gave the *drash* and did all the *leyning*, full Torah reading. So that was a little bit, you know, Havurat Shalom. I mean, the dress was still — the boys wore ties and stuff, because that's what you did. It was in a small, very nice room. It was a small service. It didn't have any of the *sturm und drang* of the main service and the honors and all that kind of stuff. It was a kind of preparation for that [the *havurah*].

JG: At the same time, this was your college years. They were in the sixties.

BH: Right

JG: It was a time of tremendous social foment, especially for American youth.

BH: Yeah.

JG: To what extent were you feeling influenced by the development of the counterculture — the Civil Rights Movement and anti-war activism, all the things that we think of as so formative in the sixties?

BH: Well, I think I was very much influenced by that, and some of that, maybe even a large portion of that, came from Lukinsky's approach to our youth group. We were a very social action conscious youth group. We were very supportive — he was very supportive — of the Civil Rights Movement, and we did whatever we did for that. We studied about it. We would go to things. We would raise money. We were very, very — the Civil Rights Movement was very important to my Jewish consciousness [see addendum]. Very much. Probably more than the study of Jewish texts in the Hebrew high school was the sense that Judaism had something to say about contemporary social issues. So it was kind of my window into that world of political consciousness, even political action, came from that.

JG: And seeing it through a Jewish lens.

BH: That's right. Lukinsky, for example, taught (00:51:00) a course at the Hebrew high school on Jewish attitudes toward capital punishment, and at the end of the course, we were encouraged to write a letter, each of us, to the governor of the state of Massachusetts, urging the governor to stop instituting capital punishment. So this was like — I once wrote a letter to Henry Louis Gates, after reading something he had written. He actually sent me a note back. I don't know where it was. I said to him, you know, "One thing—" — I don't remember what the reason that led me to write —

JG: When are we talking about?

BH: Oh, this was way after the sixties. Yeah, he was already a professor at Harvard, and he had written something that was striking to me. And I wrote to him, and I said, "One thing I want you to know is, it was my Jewish involvement that led me to be a white kid who was so supportive of the Civil Rights Movement in the sixties. It came out of a kind of religious calling. Of course, you know there was Martin Luther King and Heschel. You know, that thing we're aware of, right?" And Gates wrote a piece, an op-ed piece, in the *New York Times*, in which he quoted my letter, although he didn't mention my name. He was talking about the way that, you know, building bridges across communities and that kind of thing. So this was really important. And then, of course, the Vietnam War

kicked into full — I would say by the time of my senior year of high school. Sixty-three, ’64, there were already significant anti-war rumblings. I remember this was a matter of conversation with my parents, who were having trouble with this because they were part of the so-called Greatest Generation. My father had served in the Second World War. Not in combat, but he had volunteered for the army and not been drafted. He famously had been offered the option of a 4F from the medical examiner because of his terrible, terrible eyesight, and he said, "No, I want to serve." So he was patriotic, you know, in that sense, and my mother — they were patriotic (00:54:00) in World War II. But they began to get soured on the War in Vietnam. So I didn't have roaring fights with my family about the War in Vietnam, particularly once more and more people were being drafted, and they were getting nervous about me being drafted. So I felt very much part of the sixties, partially through my Jewish consciousness but partially independent of that, I was a member for a while of SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] at Tufts. And I always say SDS at Tufts was kind of like, compared to SDS at Wesleyan or Columbia — was very mild.

JG: SDS-lite.

BH: Yes. But I was a member of SDS. I actually quit, really. Coming back to school for my senior year, I quit SDS after attending a meeting. This was after the Six Day War — that fall. Hearing this kind of anti-Israel sentiment, where my generation of friends was pretty much at the height of our Israel pride. This was before we had to worry about the Occupation and later political things. But we were on a high from June of 1967. I come back and I go to the SDS meeting and I hear this stuff, and I quit. So I quit SDS over that, even at Tufts. But I would go to protests, war protest things. I was very, in that sense, active in that.

JG: So here you are graduating college. How would you sum up your sense of yourself over all, and particularly your Jewish identity at that point?

BH: Well, I would say this. Fortunately, in the second semester of my junior year I bumped into — I took a course with, but it wasn't quite by accident because I had heard how great this teacher was — an English professor who just died, not so long ago, named Jesper Rosenmeier. Jesper Rosenmeier was not Jewish.

JG: Say his name again?

BH: Jesper was his first name. His last name was Rosenmeier. He was Danish. He was one of the most popular professors at Tufts. He was (00:57:00) a really brilliant guy, one of these brilliant people that didn't write very much, unfortunately. But he was a brilliant

scholar of American literature. And I took the second half of his year-long survey of American literature, and I really fell for him. We hit it off extremely well. One of the things that happened to me through him was, oddly, he kind of brought me back to Judaism, which I had put on hold except for my Hebrew high school teaching which I continued to do in college. His approach to American literature was very much grounded, even in the second semester, which was nineteenth and twentieth century, in his real expertise, which was American Puritanism. He had a religious perspective on the writers of the so-called American Renaissance — Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville — that group. It kind of brought me back to sort of a Jewish consciousness. So the next year I took his American Puritanism, the first half of the survey course, and I took another course with him and I had a readings course with him. I did a readings course with another student. She and I did this class with him, just the three of us together, on — oh yeah, we did a course on Faulkner and Fitzgerald. We read kind of all of Faulkner and all of Fitzgerald. So Rosenmeier really was a big influence on my thinking because his take on figures like Hawthorne and Melville were very much rooted in sort of the Perry Miller School of American Puritanism scholarship. So I had entered college wanting to be an English professor. I knew from my interview that I wanted to be an English major. And so I wanted to go on to graduate school in English literature, particularly under the influence of this mentor figure. I had come back to a certain perspective on Judaism that was significant, but I didn't have an expression for it really. I didn't quite know whether — you have to remember (1:00:00) a really important thing. It took me years to sort of realize this, but when I say it, it'll be very obvious. For a person like me, in the mid-sixties, with my kind of Jewish interest, the only professional option was to become a rabbi. The last thing in the world you wanted to do was to be a Hebrew school teacher. That was, like, depressing, and I didn't want to be the defender of the faith. I didn't want to be a rabbi. There were hardly any Jewish Studies scholars, and I never met one, because Tufts at that time had no professor of Jewish Studies.

JG: No Jewish Studies department?

BH: No Jewish Studies Department.

JG: Or program?

BH: No Jewish Studies program. No Jewish Studies class. Not a single class. The only Bible class was in the religion department, taught from a Christian Bible guy. It wasn't until Joel Rosenberg came — Havurat Shalom Joel Rosenberg — came to Tufts that there was a Jewish Studies professor, and that was millions of years afterward. So it's not like — if you don't know that, a person might say, So why didn't you want to go into Jewish scholarship? I didn't because there wasn't such a thing. Had I gone to Brandeis I would

have seen that, and maybe my life would have turned out pretty much the same, but my life would have had a different path. But, you know, I didn't apply to Brandeis. I didn't want to go to Brandeis.

JG: Because?

BH: The reason was because I thought going to Brandeis would be more USY. It would be like being in USY. So. I applied to graduate school in English literature. Now we come to my part of my vision, or my version, let's say, of the founding of Havurat Shalom.

JG: Yes.

BH: So I want to begin by saying what I said to you before we started filming, which was, institutions and cultures have their foundational myths, and it's not by accident that in Genesis we have two different versions of the creation story, because they must have been arguing. *[laughs]* Whoever the writers of the Bible were they must have been arguing, and when the redactor came along, he said, "Ah, to hell with those two guys. I'm going to put both in, and we'll let the scholars in the twentieth century figure it out." (01:03:00) So my version — I know Art Green's version, and his version — I don't dispute his version. He has pride of place as the actual founder of the *havurah* — and that is the Heschel seminar and the Berrigan visit, etcetera, etcetera. But my version was, I think, equally true in its own way. You could say that Art's version enabled the *havurah* to exist as it came into being, and my version enabled a number of people to want to sign up for the *havurah*. So here was my dilemma. 1967 there was no longer a draft deferment for graduate school. There had been a draft deferment, like the draft deferment for undergraduates. There had been a draft deferment for medical school, law school, and graduate school, but they eliminated the draft deferment for graduate school. I've never bothered to look this up, but I'm sure you could google and find that what year it was, but I think it was my senior year of college that we realized that if we went on to graduate school, we would not get — we, friends of mine — we'd not get a draft deferment. We would be drafted. Now I think law and medicine still had it. Certainly medicine did, and I think even law did. But I don't know. And I didn't want — I certainly didn't have an interest in science so I wasn't going to be a doctor, and I thought being a lawyer was a drag, so I didn't want to do it.

JG: So this was just before the institution of the lottery?

BH: Yes.

JG: Which — the first lottery was in December of '69.

BH: Yeah, that's right. Yeah, so December of '69, is that right?

JG: Yeah.

BH: Okay, so that was the year after I graduated, okay. But here it was like, you could just be drafted, you know. I was very anxious about this. Everybody I knew was very anxious about this. I had friends that honestly and truly wanted to be rabbis, and they went on to rabbinical school. Then I knew a few people that were thinking of (01:06:00) going to Canada if they got drafted. I knew some people that were thinking of going to some fly-by-night yeshiva.

JG: Because there was a deferment associated with being in a seminary.

BH: Yes, exactly. 4D — deferment for Divinity School. I actually, the summer after my senior year of college, the summer of 1968, I worked at Camp Ramah in Canada. I had, during college, worked at Ramah at three different times, three different Ramahs — one after graduating high school, one after my sophomore or junior year of college, and then after my senior year. I had a girlfriend at the time who had a friend who was a guy in Canada, later on became a member of Havurat Shalom, the friend. A guy called Epi — Seymour Epstein, a very well-known Jewish educator. So Epi knew this girlfriend of mine and said, "I'm working at Ramah in Canada. Why don't you come? And I hear you have this boyfriend. Why don't you bring him along? We're looking for people to work on the waterfront." So she and I both had waterfront things. I knew how to sail, and they wanted someone. The Ramah Canada has a beautiful sailing program, and they wanted a sailing instructor. To be a sailing instructor you had to get a thing from the Red Cross, and you had to already have a water safety, which I had, and I went and I said, "Yeah, I know how to sail, but I don't have a sailing thing." So he said, "Great, we'll pay. Ramah will pay for you to get your sailing license." I carry that card in my wallet still, "Sailing Instructor." So that was my first gig from JTS, my first paid thing, and I went off to Camp Something-or-other, and I got my sailing thing, and I went up to Camp Ramah. I mention this not as a side thing. The fact that it was in Canada was an attraction to me because I thought, very seriously — I said, If I get drafted, I'm not going to go to jail, and I'm not going to go to Vietnam. I'm going to go to Canada. I applied and was accepted actually to a doctoral program at McGill, and a doctoral program at U of Toronto, (01:09:00) and I said to myself, This will be good for me to work at Ramah in Canada, because if I end up running away and going to graduate school in Toronto, I want to know people in Toronto, and I want to get connected to the Jewish community. I would have done it anyway probably, but it was very, very much in my mind that I could get

drafted. So here's what happened. This girlfriend was living in New York. I was living in Boston. And I'll mention one other thing about her because it comes into play here. She and I eventually got married and eventually got divorced. But she was very much part of Havurat Shalom — Janet.

JG: Janet.

BH: Yeah. So Janet was living in New York and I was living in Boston. During the winter break around this time of year, '67, '68, you know, the Christmas holiday, sometime at the end of '67 or the beginning of '68, I went to New York to see her, and I went out for a drink with Alan Mintz. So I like to say that Havurat Shalom was founded at the West End Bar - which no longer exists, or has a different name — when Mintz and I went out.

JG: How did you know Alan Mintz?

BH: I knew Alan Mintz from USY. He grew up in Worcester, and I got to know him when I was in the tenth grade and he was in the ninth grade. He would sometimes stay over at my house when he wanted to come into Brookline, when I was in high school. We stayed friends till this very day. So Alan was always very good at giving you advice. He still is. So we go out, and I say, "Alan, I'm really upset. I mean, I could get drafted." And he said to me, immortally, he said to me, "What you should do is you should go back to Boston and tell Art Green to start a rabbinical school so that all of us can get out of the draft." And I went back and I called Art. Art had graduated JTS at that point and was already living in Boston and was at Brandeis as a doctoral student. I can say a word about how I knew Art.

JG: Yes, please. (01:12:00)

BH: But I'll finish this part of the story. I called up Art and I said, "Mintz says that you should start a rabbinical school so we can get out of the draft, and I agree." That was that. I left it like that. And about two weeks later, three weeks later, I call him, having nothing to do with this, because what were the odds that that was going to happen? I mean, I'm still freaking out and I'm thinking, Oh my God, I've got to be up in Canada. I called him, and at that time he shared an apartment with Muni Berenbaum, Michael Berenbaum. So Muni answers the phone, and I say, "Hi, it's Barry," and he said, "So are you going to join the rabbinical school?" I said, "What?!" He said, "Well, you know, Art's going to start that rabbinical school." I said, "Well, I'm certainly going to go because it was my idea." *[laughs]* That, in my mind, was the beginning of Havurat Shalom. Now, I think, maybe what happened was — I don't know. I've, you know, read Art being interviewed about

this in other contexts, but maybe what happened was, this was an idea that was percolating in his head. That's for sure — an alternative rabbinical seminary. I think I only thought of it as a seminary. Art, I know, was influenced by Zalman and the B'nai Or kind of monastery or whatever, and so community was already in Art's mind. But I think for most of us that joined, it was the seminary part that was most — I mean, joined in the first year. Now not everybody joined for a deferment, but many people did.

JG: So still a year before the lottery, so people couldn't know that they had a number that would get them out of it.

BH: Right. That's right. And as it turned out, the number — I don't remember. You would think I'd remember my lottery number, but my recollection is my lottery — the reason I don't remember it is it was neither very high nor very low. You wanted to get a high number. It was somewhere in the middle, in the hundreds, and I don't know what number they got to, you know? But it was irrelevant because it worked. I mean, it worked. We got the deferment. (01:15:00) So as the months proceeded, it became clearer and clearer that this thing was actually going to happen. Because at first I said, Well this is going to — you know, who starts a rabbinical seminary?

JG: What was going on? What was happening that —?

BH: What was happening was that they were recruiting people.

JG: Who's the "they"?

BH: Art in particular and remember that he got Al Axelrad involved.

JG: Who was the Hillel director at the time at Brandeis.

BH: At Brandeis. He got Al involved. He got Lukinsky.

JG: Lukinsky was a professor at Brandeis at that point?

BH: I think he was at Brandeis at that point. He was one of the signatories. He and Al and Art were the three rabbi signatories to the founding document. Then they started putting out feelers to people, because they were very well connected. So I know like, Max Ticktin — Max Ticktin was in Chicago, so he was suggesting people. People began — I don't know, for example, how did Joe Reimer get connected? I mean, Joe is one of my closest friends, and since those days I still don't know. I actually never asked.

JG: You should listen to his interview.

BH: Yeah, I mean — so you have people, Jim Kugel. Where did he come from? Well, obviously he wasn't in our network, our close inner network, but there were people that brought him and suggested him in. And Stef Krieger I know came from Ticktin.

JG: Interesting.

BH: And I know, like, Michael Brooks. That was through Al, because I remember — it really became real to me because one winter night I remember was kind of cold — Art said, "We're going to take a little ride." I said, "Okay, where are we going?" He said, "We're going to the North End." I'm thinking, "Oh, we're going out for Italian food." I said, "Why is that?" He said, "Because I want you to meet this guy named Michael Brooks who's living in the North End, and he's going to be one of the Havurat Shalom people.

JG: And you're talking about the cohort of — the first cohort?

BH: Yes.

JG: Which ultimately was twelve guys. Basically twelve men, right?

BH: Was it only twelve? I think I thought it was more.

JG: Yeah, I think it was something like twelve. It was a small number anyway.

BH: Ah, I thought it was more than that.

JG: What did you think it was?

BH: I would have said fifteen or sixteen.

JG: Maybe.

BH: Yeah. So I'm thinking, wow, they're, you know — and I remember (01:18:00), I just — Joe Reimer just turned seventy, or he's about to turn seventy, so he's having a little party which I can't go to. He asked people to write memories of their connection to him, and I wrote about being asked to come over to Art's apartment because this guy, Joe Reimer, is coming with his parents to meet Art, and he's going to be part of the *havurah*. I don't remember any — all I remember is being introduced to him and his parents. I only

remember his mother. I don't remember his father. Then we all, a few of us, met him, and then sat in the other room schmoozing while Art was talking to the parents — successfully, as it turns out. So that was that winter and the spring of '68. I graduated college in '68. I had been accepted to some graduate schools, and Brandeis was where I ended up going. I went to Brandeis for, I would say, three reasons. One, they offered me a lot of money, more than other places had. Two, because there were two professors there that I thought it would be interesting to study with, that I had heard about. One of them, Sacvan Bercovitch, ended up leaving Brandeis exactly when I came, but the other one, Allen Grossman, was my doctoral adviser. And three, because I wanted to get out of the draft, and I wanted to be part of Havurat Shalom in order to get out of the draft. I didn't join Havurat Shalom because I really was looking for a Jewish community. I wanted to get out of the draft. Now one thing became very clear, that Art was very clear about, which was, it was going to be a real school. It wasn't the fake thing to get out of the draft. You had to be prepared for the fact that there were going to be real classes, that you were required to attend those classes. They were going to be taught by serious people and you had to take twelve credits a semester just like a real, quote, (01:21:00) "institution."

JG: Meaning, four courses?

BH: Four courses. The courses only met once a week, as I recall, but you had to do that. So I expected that, and he said, rightfully, "Look" — I mean, he presented it to me kind of as self-preservation, my self-preservation; I'm sure he had a deeper agenda, but he said to me — “I don't want to be in a situation that we get investigated about whether we were a real draft-deferment eligible institution. I want to be able to say, Look, here's our catalog. Everybody's going to take the four courses in our catalog.”

JG: Even though they had been chartered as a seminary.

BH: Yeah.

JG: So beyond the legalities.

BH: Right. What if we got investigated by the draft board or something? There were required courses and then there were a lot of electives.

JG: What did you know about the faculty at that point and where were they coming from in this first year?

BH: Well, I knew Art was going to teach, and I didn't really know much about who the faculty would be. I knew Zalman. I had met Zalman because I worked at Camp Ramah in

Connecticut the summer after I graduated from high school. I became rather friendly with Zalman. In fact, I worked at Ramah partially because Art said to me, "You should go meet Zalman." So maybe I should now tell how did I know Art.

JG: Yes.

BH: Yes, so I met Art when I was really quite young. He was a student at Brandeis, and I was a high school student, early on in high school. Our USY adviser was Bob Abramson. Bob and Art became friendly at Brandeis, and Bob, for our USY group, he did a retreat. It might have been over Shabbos. I don't think it was. It might have been during February vacation, during the week when we had nothing to do. I know that we did one during the week, and one at one point over Shabbos. I'm not sure which one Art came to. I think was one — yeah, it was the one over
Shabbos. Art came. So I met this guy Art Green. Fine. That was probably 1960.

JG: You were thirteen.

BH: Yeah. Then a year later — (01:24:00) I think it was a year later, but it was the summer, I think, after my sophomore year of high school — USY in New England had a fantastic week-long USY camp that was held at one of the Jewish camps, like Camp Tevye, kosher facility, at the end of their camp season. That program by tradition had been run by the folks at K.I. — I don't know, maybe Lukinsky started it. So at one point, Abramson was the director of the camp. Some years later Arnie Cover, who was in the original group of Havurat Shalom, became the director of the camp. The year after he did it, I became the director of the camp. So there's a long period of connection of K.I. there. So Art worked at that camp as a counselor, and I was in his bunk. He and I became very friendly then, and he — so that was 1962, maybe ’63 — so I knew him from then, and when he went off — I think that was the year he came back from having been a year in Israel in which he lost an enormous amount of weight and I almost didn't recognize him. He had become like a skinny person. So he and I became friendly that summer. He then was starting rabbinical school. When he would come to Boston, which he would on occasion to see people, he and I would often go have something to eat together. It was always really exciting and stimulating for me, these kinds of heavy conversations with Art. He said to me, in my senior year of high school, he said, "What are you doing in the summer?" and I said, "Well, some of my friends are going to go to Camp Ramah in Connecticut," and I had hardly ever heard of Camp Ramah. It wasn't on our radar screen. And he said, "Well, you should definitely go." I said, "Really? Why?" He said, "Well, you really should meet Zalman." So he told me a bit about Zalman, and I went and I became friendly with Zalman. So I knew Zalman was going to be involved, and I had met Everett Gendler when I was in high school because Lukinsky and Gendler had been

rabbinical students together, and friends, and they set up this kind of exchange where our USY group went to the Princeton Jewish Center where Everett was the rabbi — the Conservative synagogue in Princeton, New Jersey — and we spent a Shabbat (01:27:00) there, and their youth group came and spent a Shabbat with us. Everett became an absolutely fascinating figure. I began a correspondence with Everett. So you think about how fortunate I was. The people in my Jewish life were Joe Lukinsky. Bob Abramson. Danny Margolis became the adviser of the Junior Congregation when he was in college. So I was talking about how fortunate I was to have this, through these various linkages, a lot of them through Lukinsky, and then they kind of fanned out. Everett Gendler was one of those people, and we — my friends who were, like, kind of the Hasidim of Lukinsky — we kind of viewed Lukinsky and Gendler as kind of twin poles of a sort of Jewishness. In one sense we viewed — actually I've never put this quite in these words but this is kind of the language we even used then — that Lukinsky represented kind of the Mussar tradition. He was kind of the repository of the ethical. Now we might have said even of observant, but it didn't occur to us that people were more or less observant — rabbis, rabbis, I mean — but he was the repository of the ethical tradition, which included Civil Rights and all that stuff. Now of course Everett Gendler was a *fabrenta* — a Civil Rights person. He was the guy that brought Martin Luther King to the Rabbinical Assembly meeting. But Everett, in our eyes, was the aesthetic. When Cynthia Ozick wrote this story years afterward called "The Pagan Rabbi," we said, clearly, that's Everett Gendler, the pagan rabbi. He had that kind of highly refined aesthetic sensibility about ritual and the beauty of ritual and tied in with his nature worship and that kind of thing. They seemed to us kind of the twin poles. I would say that Art had a role, for us, slightly different — I mean when I was a teenager — because we saw him as younger. He was like Bob Abramson. They were very different people. Extremely different. In the lingo that I now know, I would say, clearly, Art was the Hasid, and Abbie — Bob Abramson [see addendum] — was the Litvak. (01:30:00) He was really a Misnaged. So we had these figures, those four people, and then Zalman came into the picture for some of us, a little bit later. I admired Zalman. I found him fascinating. But I always felt I was not really a Hasid of Zalman's, the way some people became. Part of it was, in some ways, I didn't always understand what he was saying. In other words, he used the language that was somewhat confusing to me. Perhaps it was he relied on a Jewish language I didn't fully understand at that time, but I think it was also just — it was a kind of spirituality that was hard for me to grasp. I found it easier to understand Art's spirituality. Now, of course, as you know, Zalman was an extraordinary influence on Art in many, many different ways, but I think Art filtered Zalman better for me, you might say. There was a fabulous moment in the first year of the *havurah*. I may have mentioned this to you at one of those meetings. Elie Wiesel came to Boston to give a talk, and we all went. The whole *havurah* went. Elie Wiesel, at that time, had not yet quite become Elie Wiesel. He had written *Night* and it had taken off, but he had not become the kind of legendary, iconic, mythic

figure of the American Jewish community. But we knew about the book. We read the book, some of us, and we went to see Wiesel, which was very powerful. Then he — because Wiesel knew Art and Zalman — he was staying at some little hotel, the Ramada or something, nothing fancy. But we were all invited back to Wiesel's hotel room to meet with him privately, and thence ensued something both extremely fabulous and extremely frustrating, which was a trialogue of Art, Zalman and Wiesel about Hasidut. And we sat there, not participating, (01:33:00) but sort of saying, "Oh my God, look at this." Here was the problem. I may be exaggerating, but this is the way it felt to me. All the punch lines were in Yiddish. They were either in Yiddish or in a Hebrew that I wasn't at that point able to understand. It was like, What did they say? — you know. But it was an experience to be there, even though — At any rate, I feel — I've often said, if the title hadn't been stolen by that Italian writer whose name I'm blanking on [see addendum] — he wrote a book called *Memoirs of a Fortunate Jew* or something like that, *The Fortunate Jew* — I really feel so much of Jewish identity has to do with who you get to meet and at what time in your life you meet them. That's true of many things, interests in art or music or whatever. Great teachers have a powerful impact. And that's my business, but I also believe it. I was fortunate to have this group of people that brought me into Judaism. So to circle back to where we were, which was right before the *havurah* started, what did I expect? Well, I went off to Camp Ramah to teach sailing, and a bunch of people back in the city — in the days before email, so you weren't much in communication. You're at camp. People didn't make long-distance phone calls as easily as they do now. And, you know, you didn't have much time for writing. I get back at the end of the summer, and I discover that while I was away, this whole thing had been created, this booklet that was created. I don't know if you've seen it.

JG: I have not seen it. It was the concept, the prospectus.

BH: The prospectus, yeah.

JG: Tell us about that.

BH: My reaction was this was "Oh my God." Like, what am I getting into? The main thing that was a surprise to me was not that there would be classes that I would take — that seemed fine and even interesting — but (01:36:00) that there was this expectation of community. I really didn't expect that.

JG: You were thinking of a seminary.

BH: Yeah. It's a school. I didn't know where it would take place or where it would go. I'd take these classes, and I would be a graduate student at the same time. In the end I was a

graduate student at the time, I did take the classes. What happened with the classes over time was that those people, like me and Joey and Brooks, and many of us who were at the same time doing a doctoral program, those courses — I mean, I know that I continued to take the required number of classes through the entire time. That I know, and I liked it. I loved them, in fact.

JG: We'll come back to that later.

BH: But what did happen was, for those of us that had graduate school lives, we didn't do preparation for these classes really. I remember taking a Talmud class, and I think Art taught it. Second year, I took a Talmud class. I'm quite sure he taught it, and he was really mad at us that we hadn't prepared. But I didn't have time for that. It was more — you know Sam Heilman's book, *The People of the Book*? It was more like that, like a Gemara *shiur* where nobody prepared. One of the parts of that book that I always have used with my students is the part where Sam writes about the fact that — what do they really learn? Like one day, the rabbi can't come. In his book, the rabbi can't come, and they all come to the *shiur* and it turns out the rabbi can't come, and it turns out none of them can lead the class. If you give them a test, they wouldn't remember a damn thing. But it was the doing it. So that was like most of our text courses. You didn't really prepare, unless you were one of the people who were not doing something else. Like, for example, I don't think Joel Rosenberg was doing something else. I think he probably took the classes kind of more seriously than I did.

JG: I want to ask you, were you seriously considering in any way becoming a rabbi?

BH: No.

JG: No. Were other people who were (01:39:00) also involved in serious graduate programs, also in the same position as you, pretty much?

BH: Yes

JG: The reason for being in the seminary was because of the draft at that point.

BH: Yes, yes. I would say that.

JG: So I want to just circle back, because we're going to come to the classes shortly, but to the prospectus.

BH: Yeah.

JG: Can you recall what was in that prospectus and how you responded to it?

BH: Well, it was a vision of community that in my recollection was very idealistic — I mean, in a nice way — an idealistic representation of what we mean by an ideal community of people being deeply connected and committed to study and prayer. It didn't occur to me—I mean, this sounds extremely stupid — it didn't occur to me that there would be a Shabbos thing. It didn't occur to me. Now, of course, I didn't really know JTS very well. I'd visited it a couple of times. Yeah, of course. Real seminaries have prayer services. It didn't occur to me that it would be expected. I think there were expectations in the prospectus. That it would be expected that you would —

JG: And those were surprises to you?

BH: Yeah. That you would be coming to the *davening.*

JG: Was it appealing to you as you thought about it at that point?

BH: I don't think that's the right word. I think I was worried. I wasn't disinclined to come to a *davening*, but I was worried about my time. Like, how am I going to do all this? — That kind of thing.

JG: Over the course of this planning period, you were finishing your senior year, right?

BH: Yes.

JG: So you weren't involved.

BH: No, I wasn't. I really wasn't.

JG: Were you aware of any tensions that these things brought up?

BH: No.

JG: So by the time you saw it, all of that had been sort of ironed out.

BH: Exactly. I think my friend Arnie Cover, who was in the Boston area that summer, I think he was involved in some of these conversations about the prospectus.

JG: So you were the first cohort. Was there an actual admissions process you went through? You knew Art Green.

BH: Right. That was it. *[laughs]* (01:42:00)

JG: That was it. You didn't have to do anything, write anything.

BH: You know, it's funny. I've been thinking about this. No, I didn't have to write anything. I think, now that I think of it really, I think this is true. I think that Art told me I had to go meet Al Axelrad. I had never met Al. And then, of course, I became a graduate student at Brandeis and I saw him all the time. But I had never met him, and I think I had to go meet him. That's all that I remember. And of course, I knew Lukinsky. Yeah, that's all that I remember.

JG: Okay.

BH: You know something, I have a feeling now that we're talking about it that there was a conversation about something along the lines of, we'll let you know about being —

JG: Admitted or not?

BH: Yeah, I remember. I just remembered that now. I'm quite sure that such a thing happened. And I'm thinking to myself, I started this thing. Now I really do remember that. I might not be accepted. Eh? Eh!

JG: Do you remember the conversation with Al?

BH: No, nothing

JG: Nothing at all.

BH: Yeah.

JG: Is there a moment in time that you consider Havurat Shalom as having been launched?

BH: Well, two things. In the spring —

JG: — of '68.

BH: — of '68, there was a meeting at Brandeis. It was a meeting that was attended certainly by all the locals that were going to be part of the *havurah*. I don't remember if other people flew in or trained in.

JG: Including faculty?

BH: Yeah, it's where I met Buzzy Fishbane. He was going to be one of the faculty members. He was a graduate student at that time. I took a class with him the first year. I met him and I don't know if I met Mona — no, I met him at this all-day thing. And I think at the all-day thing there were really formative discussions about the *havurah*, what it could be. So maybe I was less surprised by the prospectus than I'm saying, because there was all this high falutin talk going on, and I remember it was very stimulating. My recollection is that it was an all-day long thing. Maybe it was an hour. *[laughs]* My recollection was that it was all day long. (01:45:00) I remember that Glatzer came.

JG: Nahum Glatzer.

BH: And he gave us the best *hechsher*. I hope Art remembers this because he knew Glatzer well. I didn't know Glatzer. I knew who he was. I had seen his books and stuff. He was a real presence. He gave us — my recollection is, he gave us the *hechsher* of great generosity that was something like, it reminded him of the Lehrhaus — which was like, oh my God! — you know? This was, like, really something. Art and Kathy got married around the same time. I think Art and Kathy got married after this all-day-long thing. They got married on Lag BaOmer in 1968 at the chapel at Brandeis. That's where I met Mona, who became Mona Fishbane eventually, who came to it, and Janet and I came to that wedding. I know that I already had met Buzzy at the all-day preparatory meeting. So that was a launch. The other thing that I remember very well is, we began in the fall of '68. We had a few days of orientation that, in my recollection, did not take place at the house on Franklin Street. It took place at one of the synagogues, like Tremont Street Shul, and I think there was another shul then, called Cambridge Street Shul. I'm not sure about that — Tremont Street Shul. That was an intense few days of study and conversation. It was our orientation. I had been thinking about this in relationship to Joe Reimer's birthday, because what I wrote to Joe was — my recollection was, at the end of that day or two of those meetings, I remember saying to Art, "Of these people, I think Joe Reimer will be my closest friend." I actually said Joe Reimer and also Danny Pekarsky, but Pekarsky dropped out after two months. Then later on in life, I became quite friendly, and still am, with Danny Pekarsky. But that was kind of weird. I met him many years later at a conference in Israel, and I said, "You dropped out of Havurat Shalom." But I could tell Joe Reimer (01:48:00) would be my closest friend of that group, and that is true. Later on, other people came in who I became very, very close to as well — Richie

Siegel, Michael Paley, Larry Fine, those people. George and Bella, you know. There's a kind of, like, the little group within the group. There were people that I admired and thought very highly of. The main person I think of like that is Michael Brooks, who is a fantastic person and did tremendous work at Hillel. Really inventive mind. Every time I hear Michael speak, I learn something from him. But he and I never became really close, even though I think of him as a true *havurah* friend, and I could call him up in need and all that kind of thing — sort of the bonds of the brotherhood. But he and I never really became close, and some of the other people from the first year, I just didn't become really close to. But Joe and I really did.

JG: And you knew that from the beginning.

BH: And I knew that from the beginning. I knew that from the beginning.

JG: I'd like to now delve into some of the key components of the *havurah*, both in terms of the expressed ideals of the community and also the lived experience for its members. So let's look at the notion of community first, which many people point to as the very heart of the *havurah* endeavor. At the point that you got involved, in the second year —

BH: First year.

JG: First year, sorry. First year. How would you describe what that ideal notion of community was — how people would relate to each other, what it meant to be a small intentional community?

BH: Well, I think one of the key historical points in the evolution of the *havurah* was what I would consider the move from seminary to community. Because of the draft business, when we started out, it was really — the core was — it was called Havurat Shalom Community Seminary. I remember my mother saying that she didn't like that name because she said it sounded like I was going to a community college. Havurat Shalom Community Seminary. (01:51:00) For me, I was mostly thinking about it as seminary. Somewhere along the line, we decided we were no longer a seminary, in the sense that we were not aiming really at creating a certain kind of professional. Because remember, there was this idea that this was a training institution for Jewish professionals. Maybe some people would become rabbis and get ordained, but there was this notion, and it may be in the prospectus — I may even have a copy of that — that really the main thing is that we were a seminary, and a seminary needs to have kind of a community dimension to it. In that sense, in a way, I think the *havurah* came out of dissatisfaction with the synagogue as an institution. That was often spoken about and even written about at the time. Synagogues that we were familiar with were synagogues like K.I., though not

necessarily as grand, which were essentially very formal institutions that met on certain occasions like Shabbat and holidays, but were not real communities, because the ones that many of us were familiar with were just too big or too impersonal. Those synagogues weren't really serving the needs for friendship, community, support, stuff like that, but rather they were essentially places of worship and gathering, but not real communities. So the *havurah* was, in a sense, an alternative synagogue. Now, as I said, I more or less thought of it like a seminary, but I think it became clear to me fairly early on that we were this other kind of institution. The reason I mention the prospectus is, my recollection is there was talk there of a new kind of Jewish professional called a *haver*, so that (01:54:00) a person would either graduate as *haver* — or, as we used to joke, comrade — or you enter and immediately become a *haver*. That was never spelled out, pretty much. I think there may have been an idea that there was a professional track called *haver*, and there maybe would be a different one called rabbi. There were some people that entered thinking that they would become rabbis. I think Richie Siegel was one of those people. At a certain point, third year, fourth year, something like that, it became clear to us that we weren't a seminary, that the real thing that the *havurah* was, we were a community. Maybe even in the third year. Some of it might have evolved out of the big crisis that happened in the second year over, you know, what are we now that we've admitted a bunch of people that are — there was a real schism in the group. Some of the people admitted were more radical either politically or socially — socially in the sense in that they saw this as kind of like a commune.

JG: Can we back up one sec? You went from a relatively small number of people in the first year.

BH: Yes.

JG: My understanding, correct me if I'm wrong here, is that at the end of that first year, there was some kind of crisis about community. Who are we, how insular, how much are we looking for people who are like us?

BH: Right.

JG: There was a decision made communally to admit a more diverse group and a larger group.

BH: Yes, that's absolutely true.

JG: So that's what you're talking about. So it went from whatever number that was — twelve, fifteen — to about forty or so.

BH: I'm not sure it was that big, but you're right. A lot of people came in at that point. Some of the people that came in were people who were very much like us. By like us, I mean people that came from conventional Jewish backgrounds, like mine or like Joe Reimer's — his was Orthodox — that had been involved in the Jewish enterprise in some fashion as kids or as teenagers, went to day school or youth group or something like that. There were a bunch of those people.

JG: And people who had strong Ramah backgrounds.

BH: Yes, yes. And, another group, smaller, (01:57:00) that didn't have any kind of Jewish background like that, didn't have much Jewish knowledge, some of whom were more politically radical maybe, and certainly saw the *havurah* as a sort of social experiment, like a commune. There was a kind of schism in the group. I would say the larger number, the majority of people in the *havurah*, were more — I think this is true — were more people like me, the "conventional" types. I think that's true.

JG: When you're talking about the more radical members, is this the group that became known as Dorton?

BH: They became known as Dorton. They became known as Dorton because they lived in a house together, and it was Dovid Roskies that gave them that name, because they lived "*dorton*," over there. And it's an interesting name, because in a way you could say that that's who they were. They were outside the more conventional norm.

JG: What was their vision? What was that competing vision and how was this resolved within the community?

BH: I think that they really saw the *havurah* as a much more dramatic social experiment — for example, things like income sharing, that kind of thing. I think that's where they were pushing. Now, despite what some people said, even that group was not so radical in terms of communal sexual sharing. We used to have this joke in the *havurah* that you would meet somebody from outside, the more conventional rabbis and stuff, and they would say, "You're the people that do wife-swapping," which was the kind of sexist lingo of the time. I don't think there was anybody that was ever (02:00:00) proposing that. I think they saw us more as a commune. They would have wanted more meals together. We had one communal meal a week. I think they would have wanted more of that. They would have wanted something like income sharing. They just had a radical social vision.

JG: Sounds almost like a kibbutz in some ways.

BH: Yes, in some ways. Sort of like an urban kibbutz, which was — in a way, the *havurah* was kind of what you might call an urban moshav. It wasn't as radical as an urban kibbutz. There were no children in the *havurah*, not until later, and they would probably have seen communal child raising, kind of kibbutz-like, they might have seen that. They wanted us to do, for sure, more political social action. You'll hear when you interview Stef Krieger. So we started this action project in Brookline called —

JG: Was Stef Krieger part of this Dorton?

BH: Yes and no. He was in the original Havurat Shalom group, and he very much identified with them and was very much a part of it. I don't know if they all lived in the same house. I can't remember that anymore. But he was very much part of that group. There were essentially, I think, three married couples that came in.

JG: At that time?

BH: From the Dorton group, yeah. Plus other people. George Savran came in that year. He was more of an "us" type. Seymour Epstein, Epi, was very much more an "us" type. He was going to be a professional Jewish educator. That was his path for sure. So I don't remember if the Fines and the Hunderts came in that year or the third year. I think they came in the third year.

JG: And the Strassfelds?

BH: Later. Fourth, I think. So what happened was, there was this real schism. In the end, that Dorton group pretty much left. I think Stef stayed, I can't remember, but the other ones left. When we admitted people for the third year, that group, which was a great group, they were much more — we decided that the *havurah* membership has to be people like us to that extent. There's a range of us. I can't remember if Jim Sleeper came in in the second or third year, but I know that Larry Fine and Debbie Fine — they were already married then. (02:03:00) Gersh and Ruthie Hundert came in that year. They were really — both Gersh and Larry were on the road toward being Jewish academics, and even Jim Sleeper, who nowadays is a pretty radical guy and maybe even was then — but Jim Sleeper was a Ramah person. That was the big crisis of the second year.

JG: How was it resolved which way you were going to go?

BH: That was the year we wrote position papers.

JG: Also was this the year — I believe this was the year that Art Green ended up writing and proposing the *havurah* covenant? Was that his position paper, essentially?

BH: That was his position paper.

JG: Can you describe this? What was this process of writing, and why did it happen?

BH: Because we were in turmoil over who we were. One of the things that's important here, I think, is that toward the middle or end of the first year, a kind of life-changing event happened for the *havurah*, and that was the Danforth Foundation grant. So Danforth Foundation was giving money for experiments in theological education, and we applied. That occasioned many, many hours of communal meetings to hammer that out. I think the actual proposal that was submitted — I don't have a copy of that. I would love to see it — that was pretty amazing. That was a grand scheme vision that included starting a summer camp and a school. It was really something. I think Kugel and Art were the actual writers of the proposal. And lo and behold, we got ten thousand dollars. I was the treasurer of the *havurah* for the first two years, which is a riot given how bad I am with keeping up with paying bills. So I had the checkbook. I remember Arnie Cover and I walking to that bank in the middle of Harvard. Square — I don't know if it's still there —

JG: It is — there is a bank there anyway.

BH: — to deposit this check. We were amazed that the teller was not taken aback by someone handing them a check for ten thousand dollars. We thought this would be a big event at the bank. (02:06:00) What's interesting about that historically is, it's kind of like, many years later, having been involved in many grant proposals, it's pretty easy to find yourself coming to conclusions about who you are when there's a lot of money at stake. So we said, Experiments in theological education? Yeah, we are a seminary! Yup, we're a seminary, and we want three hundred thousand dollars, or something like that. And we got ten. That allowed us to buy the house. It was the down payment on the house that stands to this very day. The house, I think, sold for twenty-eight thousand dollars or something, and we had ten thousand and put it into the house. It was Art's idea to put it into the house and probably was one of the most significant decisions. It absolutely changed everything. We had our own house and it could be the center of the community. So what happened, we admitted all these people. On the one hand, we decided we were a seminary, and on the other hand, we admitted all these people who weren't there for a seminary. They were there for something else. I think they knew it was going to be Jewish study and all that. Most of them had very little Jewish background — so much so that we created a kind of little program, the Beit Midrash Program, within the *havurah*, which were classes just for that group.

JG: Like a separate track.

BH: Like a separate track. I think Michael Swirsky was the main person in doing that. I haven't really mentioned all the teachers, because when you said twelve people, the fact is that there were more once you started counting the teachers.

JG: We're going to come back and talk about learning and study shortly.

BH: But for example, in the first year, among the teachers, aside from Art and Zalman, were Eddie Feld, and Lukinsky taught. Eddie and Merle had just gotten married. No, they were about to get married. They were early members. They were a couple as members. Buzzy Fishbane taught that year. Also, (02:09:00) David Goodblatt, a name that you probably don't know. David Goodblatt went on to a rather serious career as a Jewish studies scholar, a Talmudist of great note. I don't remember where he teaches, but Goodblatt and the woman he married were part of Havurat Shalom in the beginning. I think Swirsky graduated the Seminary [JTS] at the end of our first year at Havurat Shalom, so he joined the *havurah* the next year as a faculty member. Then, Everett Gendler had been in Mexico, and he moved to the Boston area to be at the Packard Manse —

JG: Retreat Center

BH: Retreat Center interfaith thing, and he joined the faculty.

JG: When did Nehemia Polen join?

BH: Later, later. Nehemia essentially ran away from Ner Yisrael and joined the *havurah*, but that was fourth or fifth year. So we're a seminary. We won our ten thousand dollars with that. Then, the next year, these people come in. They don't want a seminary. They want a commune. So I pulled out of my file, in honor of Joe Reimer's birthday — I read the proposal from that period of proposal-writing that Joe and Janet and I wrote together.

JG: The proposal that Art had requested everybody write?

BH: We had already read Art's proposal, because we accept portions of it and reject portions of it in our piece. I remember Stef saying to me — as I recall, our proposal was accepted.

JG: Was it a joint proposal? You and Joe and Janet?

BH: Yeah, and Stef said to me — because it took many elements of Art's, but also didn't go as far as Art's.

JG: Do you want to talk a little bit about where Art's went?

BH: I haven't done that analysis, so I can't do it. I just glanced at it briefly in writing the speech for Joe. But I think Art was somewhat more dramatic in terms of the obligations of *havurah* people to one another.

JG: I think the last point, if I remember correctly, had to do with essentially a lifelong commitment to each other and to the *havurah*.

BH: That's interesting.

JG: And that (02:12:00) if someone felt they needed to leave at some point, they could essentially petition the group to be released.

BH: I see. So I don't think we went that far. I remember Stef saying to me, "Oh, I knew your proposal would get accepted, because you're kind of like the mainstream, bourgeois types."

JG: So what was your proposal?

BH: I mean, I think it was saying, we're a community in which people care about one another and are committed to certain values, etcetera, etcetera, but I don't think we were talking about signing anything on the dotted line. At any rate, we, in a sense, in that second year, through this crisis, two things happened. One was the next group of people that were accepted were people that were much more of the standard Jewish background, Jewish knowledge types, which became the model for most of the future membership of the *havurah*, with the occasional exception. This guy Natan Schafer came in later on. He was more of a kind of throwback hippie type. And Mark Sender, who was also more of a Jewish seeker and who eventually got ordained as an Orthodox rabbi. He is still an Orthodox rabbi in Sharon, Massachusetts, and he did a doctorate in Jewish Studies, but he came in with very little Jewish anything. But by and large, the Epi/Gershon Hundert/Larry Fine types were much more — and later on, Jeff Dekro. We admitted — in the fourth year or something, we officially admitted three people who had kind of been fellow travelers of the *havurah*, who were all undergraduates. That was the radical thing. In terms of who they were, it was kind of obvious where we were headed, and that was Michael Paley, Jeff Dekro, and Danny Matt. It was in the second year that we forged a

certain kind of identity, which on the one hand, kind of ironically, moved us more toward, “We're a community, not a seminary," and on the other hand said, "We're a community, but of a certain sort," or that does best (02:15:00) with certain norms of how far we'll go in the community side, and how far we don't want to go.

JG: To sort of define the limits.

BH: That’s right. All of this was done against the backdrop of a lot of radical social experiments that were going on in America. Some of us knew people who were going off to communes, and we all knew about these communes. They were pretty well known.

JG: The whole back to the land movement.

BH: That’s right. I remember having conversations with Art that seemed pretty — that I bought into in saying, Look, we’ll have a community. It may not be in Somerville. We may end up in the country someplace, but we’ll have jobs as professors in institutions. That will be our jobs, and then we’ll have this community like we have the *havurah* now. So we viewed it as a lifelong thing. I remember, it took me a number of years to realize that that wasn't going to happen. I kind of was expecting that to just happen. In a way, it did happen for me, but in a much less radical way.

JG: Later.

BH: Later, in Minyan M’at. Before that in Philadelphia — that minyan that we created.

JG: The Library Minyan.

BH: The Library Minyan. And when we created the Library Minyan, one of the things we said was, we’re not a *havurah*. Because for us — Art, and Michael Paley, and Jeff Dekro, who was Art's doctoral student — he dropped out of that, but — and me, and Allan Lehmann, all of us were there.

JG: All of you ended up in Philly in the same period in the 1970s.

BH: Yeah, yeah. Art came first, and then Jeffery came to study with Art. Lehmann and Paley came to study at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, and I came to teach at Akiba. So we all ended up there, and Art’s first year — he had been there a year or two by the time we got there. He was kind of unhappy that there wasn’t a *davening* thing that he liked. Then we all arrived, and that gave enough people power to start the Library Minyan.

JG: Was the Germantown Minyan up and happening again?

BH: No. That happened later, when Art moved to Germantown. So in a way we replicated (02:18:00) certain aspects of the *havurah*, but we said we're not a *havurah*, we're a minyan, which essentially meant that this official signing on the dotted line, which we kind of did — not quite the way Art's lifelong commitment, that kind of thing — but this idea of the level of involvement in one another's lives was not — even though it may have even happened, it wasn't official. One of the marking points was that we didn't have a communal meal like we did in the *havurah*. The communal meal — I don't know how successful it was in its original idea, but it was a really important marker for the *havurah*. Having Shabbos dinner with people in informal ways, in groups — subgroups developed within the *havurah*, and you would invite certain people more often than others, and all that stuff — that's one thing. But having twenty people or thirty people or eighteen people — whatever the numbers were in any given year — all get together every Wednesday or Thursday night? We decided in Philadelphia, oh no, we're not going to do that. We just felt that we needed something less intense, because the *havurah* was the most intense experience of our lives, before or after, without a doubt. I think that means for all of us — I don't want to say for all of us because I'm sure it's not true for all of us. For many of us who were part of that, there is a kind of a sense of bonding that is directly related to the intensity of those meetings that went on forever, in which you had to have, not a majority, but a complete — what was that called?

JG: Consensus.

BH: Yeah, consensus. And the meals, the communal meals, and the *davening*, and the Shabbos stuff, lunches and dinner, and the studying. That brought people together in an intense way that you really couldn't sustain over a lifetime, I think. I think it was just so heavy. And that's even before people started having children. Now what happened — to skip ahead and off of your topic in a way, but on it to some extent — that is, what were the after effects of Havurat Shalom? (02:21:00)

JG: Tell me one thing, because we're really going to come back to that.

BH: Yeah. I was going to say, Minyan M'at, for example. In the early years of Minyan M'at, it was almost as intense. It just didn't have the same structures, but the meetings that went on forever, that was absolutely true. Also, in Minyan M'at, there was also a real tension between the people with a lot of Jewish knowledge and the people with a little Jewish knowledge, if any. There was a real tension, particularly in the first year. There wasn't a schism. People didn't walk. But there was a real tension of what we were. I think

for those of us who came from Havurat Shalom, who were the founders of Minyan M'at, we were still used to that other thing. We had a sense of who the members could be and a certain level of intensity. It was kind of assumed early on that there would be the Shabbos inviting community. I want to circle back to a famous definition of the *havurah* that was offered in one of these meetings. It became a shtick between Michael Paley and me, and probably a few other people — Strassfeld also — which was the line, What do we mean by community? It was like a joke line with Michael. What do we mean by community? Do we swap wives? You know, that kind of thing. What do we mean by community? So these umpteen conversations about what do we mean by community, and what are the limits. You know, the position papers of someone like Stef Krieger versus Art, versus Joey and Janet's and mine, that was all trying to figure what do we mean by community. We did land at, I think, a fairly comfortable place. I'm sure people like Stef wanted it to be more uncomfortable. What is the definition? The definition of the *havurah* — I think it might have been in the first year someone said this, because I remember it came up at a meeting and somebody said this — To be a member of the *havurah* means, when you land at Logan Airport, you can call anyone on the *havurah* list without embarrassment (02:24:00) and ask them to come pick you up. That was the position paper. It's kind of like a Talmudic *sugya*. And then the addition to that was, you can call anyone and ask them to come pick you up without embarrassment, and you can say no, without embarrassment. I remember once getting a call from Joel Rosenberg, who was at Logan, saying, "Could you come pick me up?" There was something about that that made me so happy, because even though I love Joel and admire him, he wasn't my closest friend in the *havurah*. Whenever I see him even now, I love talking to him because he's a really great person and incredibly interesting. But I was so happy that he called because I could fulfill my duty — it's kind of my mitzvah — of picking him up at the airport, and I didn't want to say no, even though I knew I was allowed to say no, because he had sort of checked off the box there of what you're allowed to do. I also think the after-effects of the *havurah* in terms of the sense of connection to people who were in it with you is like intense experiences that people have in other things in life, like being part of some labor union that went on strike for thirty days, or being in the army or something like that, only here, because the topic was almost always, what do we mean by community, then the fact that you bump into somebody that you haven't seen for a while — you know, it's a cliche to say — but the conversation picks up as if you hadn't stopped. I feel that with many, many — there are very few people from Havurat Shalom that I don't feel that with, even people that I haven't had sort of a continual relationship with for all these years.

JG: You mentioned just a few minutes ago, the purchase of the house and how that really changed (02:27:00) everything. This was on —

BH: College Avenue.

JG: College Avenue in Somerville. Can you talk a little bit about what impact having the house had on the community?

BH: Well, first of all, it gave us an opportunity to make a rule. The rule was one of the most important rules, namely, you had to live within walking distance of the house. Because there was a house, you could draw a circle with a compass, and say walking distance equals, whatever you think it is, and draw a circle. As I said to you once, one of the funny things about that is, you could live on the far east of the circle and someone else on the far west, and it's a long walk, but it essentially meant that you could pretty much have anyone for Shabbos and you wouldn't have to drive, even though there were people that drove on Shabbos, and probably quite a few. It meant there was a central marker in your life, that house. Just literally, I was hours a week at the *havurah* house because there was the communal meal, and then there were meetings that sometimes came after the communal meal, and sometimes were separate from the communal meal. Sometimes there was a program after the communal meal. That was often true — a member of the group gave a talk, or we sometimes invited someone to come. My professor, Allen Grossman, came for a couple of communal meals and spoke each time. And you would have classes. Then there was Friday night *davening*, which was kind of a requirement of the —

JG: Friday night *davening*?

BH: The Friday night *davening*. And then there was the Shabbos morning *davening*. Almost by accident, I feel, we evolved a kind of rule, which was that the Friday night *davening* is for Havurat Shalom members only. Now, if a person strolled in, because they thought it was like a shul and they strolled in, no one would have kicked them out. But almost everybody came on Friday night, in my recollection. Maybe I've romanticized it. But we all felt it was the greatest *davening*, the most intense, the most beautiful.

JG: And then people would disperse (02:30:00) to Shabbos meals in people's homes.

BH: Yes, that's right. I mean, there was some tension about what time we should set the *davening* for. The people who worked and the people who were not conventional Shabbos observers wanted the *davening* set a little bit later. I remember Art saying, "In the wintertime, it's a pain in the neck. We're done preparing for Shabbos, it's 4:30, and we're not *davening* until 6:30?" That kind of thing. But the Friday night *davening* was really extraordinary. It was dark, it was just candlelit. Of course, everybody sat on the floor. More often than not, it was just a sensational, intense thing that was aided by the fact that you were there with your community. Shabbos morning, we used to say, that's

our service to the Jewish community, and literally the service to the Jewish community. There we had a lot of people who would come, and anybody could come. As we became famous, we kind of got tourists, you might say, Jewish tourists, who would come to Havurat Shalom. We ran the *davening*, but it was wide open. There were certain people who were really, what we called — maybe; I don't know if we used this language — but who were really the fellow travelers.

JG: Yeah.

BH: That included, in particular, Steve and Elaine Cohen. They would often come for that *davening*. I think Tamara [their oldest child] was already born at that time. Nobody had kids. Steve and Elaine Cohen are in my mind the best example of people that should have been in the *havurah* but for their own reasons chose not to be, even though the members of the *havurah* had a lot of contact with them through other things. Bill Novak was very much involved with them at the time of the war in 1973. Steve Mitchell, Hillel Levine, Stephen P. Cohen. Buzzy, I think, was part of that group. That was a kind of little elite, elite group within Havurat Shalom. I was never (02:33:00) admitted into that. *[laughs]* So that was the Shabbos — and Shabbos lunch was also a very communal experience. People had it by families.

JG: But *Seudah Shlishit* was also the third Sabbath meal.

BH: Yeah.

JG: It became the gathering point, right? For the community?

BH: I think that that's true, but I don't think we had a *Seudah Shlishit* every week. I can't remember that, and I feel bad about that, because I usually can remember things. But I can't remember that, and I hope other people do remember that, because I don't remember. I can remember going to *Seudah Shlishit*, for sure, but I didn't remember how often we did it, and I'm not sure that we did it every week.

JG: Were there other ways in which the house served as a sort of gathering point?

BH: Well, it was a meeting point. There were two things that kind of seem odd that I think do play a role. The oddest one — but I've probably mentioned this to you before, because I think it's actually quite important — and that was, the *havurah* bought a washing machine and dryer, in the basement, and that became a fantastic meeting place, because it was open to any member of the *havurah*. So none of us lived, in those days, in apartments that had washing machines. You had to take your laundry to the laundromat.

So the *havurah* became, for many of us — I certainly remember this — it became the laundromat. Most of us were students, so we didn't have full time jobs. So our lives were — we had a kind of freedom in our lives that probably, if it hadn't been for that, we couldn't have created the *havurah*. But we — I remember taking my laundry over, putting it in the washing machine. Sometimes you had to stand in line and wait for somebody. Not a literal line, but you had to wait. Then, you didn't stay in the basement. You threw your stuff in the wash, and you went upstairs, and you sat in the kitchen, and whoever was living in the *havurah* house at the time — because there were always at least three people, sometimes more, who were full-time residents of the house who paid rent to help keep it going, to help pay the mortgage and keep the heat going — (03:36:00) you'd hang out with them. There was always somebody around. So the laundry is one thing. Then, one year, under the influence of Everett, we created a community garden in the backyard. Janet ran that. That was her project, and she studied with Everett on organic gardening. That was open to anybody in the *havurah*. It was a vegetable garden. There may have been some flowers, but it was essentially a vegetable garden. It ran all during the growing season in Boston, which is essentially the late spring and summer into the early fall. People could come and harvest tomatoes and string beans and stuff like that. So that was another way that the house played a role. It was our house, you know? It really felt like our house. And in that sense, it was a little bit like a commune.

JG: Can you just describe the aesthetics of this house a little bit? What was the feel of it?

BH: The feel was kind of some combination of aging Boston lower middle-class house, wood, dark, a jumble of furniture because the furniture was basically people donating stuff that they had, so it was basically like — it had no aesthetic in particular. It was just what was cobbled together.

JG: There were cushions, right, in the room where the services took place? Where did they come from?

BH: Well, the original idea of the cushions was Zalman's, that we should sit on the floor. I don't remember. I guess we did that on Franklin Street in Cambridge. I remember — I didn't go on this, but Zalman led a scavenger hunt to get pillows, and he said, "The place you want to go is where the rich people are, where they get rid of their stuff, because they have good stuff." So they went to Beacon Hill on, like, garbage collection day, or furniture collection day, and came back with a bunch of these pillows. I don't know where the other ones came from, but they were hodgepodge. They all looked different from one another. The ark was this (02:39:00) basket, this large basket, made out of — what are baskets made out of?

JG: Whatever that stuff is. Reeds, I don't know.

BH: Yeah. It had a covering, an ark cover, which was a macrame piece that I think Richie Siegel's mother made. It may still be there. Janet and I — Janet's older brother Gabriel sent us a wedding present, two enormous candlesticks. Black metal candlesticks. When I say enormous, I mean they were four feet high. What were we going to do with these? So we donated them to the *havurah*, and they stood beside the ark, and on Friday night, those were the candles that we lit, along with other candles for lighting purposes. But those were the Shabbos candles that were lit. Those things might still be there. I have no idea. Then upstairs, there were a bunch of rooms. There were, on the third floor, three bedrooms, maybe two — one in the turret of the house that was Richie's room. On the second floor, there was at least one, maybe two. There was a bathroom on the second floor as well as on the first floor. There were the classrooms and library. It was a fantastic Jewish library. Burt Jacobson, who was — and now I keep forgetting all the people — Burt Jacobson, who graduated the Seminary the same year as Art and was one of the original teachers — he gave his library, temporary loan, though I don't think it's ever left. So we had all, you know, a full Jewish library. It took up a lot of space. There were tables, like old-fashioned kind of tables. Everything was rickety, but there was something charming about it. It was kind of this combination of your parent's furniture, but in a rickety state.

JG: A little disheveled.

BH: A little disheveled, kind of a little hippy-esque in decor. Then, what I didn't mentioned is, there was an old-fashioned kitchen on the first floor. So the first floor, when you walked in there was a stairway up, and then to the right there was the living room. Then there was the room that we called the Prayer Room, (02:42:00), with the cushions on the floor. And to the left was a room that we used as a classroom during the week, and on Shabbos that's where we would have Kiddush or *Seudah Shlishit*. Then after that, there was a pretty big, but very old-fashioned kitchen. That led out to a nice backyard, actually quite nice in size. When we had the reunion three years ago [forty-fifth reunion], this was the first time I had been back to the house in a long, long, long time, they put a tent up in the backyard. It was good they did it because it turned out the weather was kind of gloomy and rainy. That was a pretty good size backyard, big enough to have this garden, which wasn't there from the beginning, but it was there for a couple years. And the *sukkah*. The *sukkah* has an extremely important — I don't even mean that jokingly — place in the history of American Judaism, which is, that *sukkah* was originally conceptualized by Epi. He had drawn it in the second year. The second year was when we had our own house, so we had room. I don't think we had put up a *sukkah* in the first year. There was no backyard on Franklin Street. But we wanted to put up the

sukkah, and Epi kind of had an interest in carpentry. It was a kind of a bit of a hobby of his. So he figured out how the *sukkah* should be constructed. So that became our *sukkah*. He left the *havurah* after — I think he was only there in the second and third years, and then he moved up to Toronto to do his doctorate — he'd done a Master's at Brandeis with Lukinsky — moved up to there. So there it is, in the fall. He's not there anymore, and we're trying to put up the *sukkah*. Somebody says, "I wish there was a way that we could know how to put up a *sukkah* without Epi," which in my view — I think Richie would say this — was the beginning of the *Jewish Catalog*. It was, hey, there should be a resource like that. Then, he and George Savran, who created the idea, they were very influenced by the *Whole Earth Catalog*, which were tools for living, you might say. (02:45:00)

JG: In the general counterculture.

BH: Yes. So the *sukkah* of Havurat Shalom led to the *Jewish Catalog*.

JG: And the whole Do-It-Yourself —

BH: Do-It-Yourself Jewishness, yeah. Exactly.

JG: One of the things that I wanted to touch on for a minute is the fact that this was largely — largely, not entirely, but largely — a male community. How did this affect sort of male-to-male relationships and friendships, compared to anything you'd done previously?

BH: Well, it's a great question. I want to dispute the premise, but I think that the question still stands. So here's my dispute. Yes, it was a male community, but kind of. So since it was — since so many people in the first two years, maybe even the first three years, came for the draft deferment, of course it was male. And, very important and certainly fair to say, because at that point, I don't think HUC had started to ordain women quite yet.

JG: Seventy-two.

BH: Oh. So when we started, there was no seminary ordaining women. So the idea that women would be members — first thing, they weren't going to be drafted. Second thing, who ever heard of a woman rabbi? Both of those things were off the table, so it brought men. Now once we moved toward a definition of community as opposed to seminary, one of the things that changed was, we no longer had to deal with — we no longer were sort of locked into — the seminary notion. Because only a boy could be a rabbi, and boys and girls can both be part of a community. Women came into the community mostly through

these men, but they became the couples. I mean, in a way, one thing about the *havurah* that's really interesting is that in a certain (02:48:00) sense, even among the Dorton crowd, we were a very conventional crew, namely. They were a bunch of married couples. Now there were two cultures in the *havurah*, I truly believe. There was the culture that I knew really well, the culture of the marrieds, and then there were the single mostly men, hugely mostly men. There was one case of a woman who had been the girlfriend of a guy in the first year, and they split up, and she continued to be part of the community. But it wasn't until Allison Orr applied for membership and became a member in like the fourth year of the *havurah* that a woman became a member in and of herself. Then there were other women who came in — I think Barbara Menkow. There were a few other women who came in independently. But there were women who were full-fledged members of the community side and chose to really be involved. Others weren't so involved. I would say Mona Fishbane was really involved, really involved. I think Bella was ambivalent, but George and Bella were a core inviting couple. Remember, one thing that was an unwritten rule, that oddly no one ever stated, which was, the married couples always looked after the single men. It's like eating days in yeshiva. I guess the single men would sometimes make their own meals, but by and large, there were men who were single who were always invited. There were certain people who Janet and I always had.

JG: When did you and Janet become a couple? Were you always a couple during your entire membership there?

BH: No. Janet and I — Janet was my girlfriend when the *havurah* started, and we got married at the end of the first year of the *havurah*. We got married in June of 1969. But we split up in December of 1972, and she left the *havurah* and went off to California and then eventually to India. I became a single person at that point. So for the first three years or so of the *havurah*, we were a couple. (02:51:00) Then I stayed. I was in the *havurah* a couple of years after that, another two or three years after that. So yeah.

JG: So you were an inviting couple?

BH: We were very much an inviting couple, very, very much. Now Janet and Kathy really were involved in the *havurah*, and both of them, more than a number of the other women, had a really serious spiritual interest. There were other people, other women, who were not that interested in the kind of hasidic, spiritual side of Havurat Shalom. I would say Bella was like that, and Gail Reimer was like that. I think Mona was kind of not so into the spiritual thing, but probably more than Gail or Bella. I don't know. Gail and Bella both grew up Orthodox. I think that there was a kind of complicated thing about having grown up as an Orthodox girl. You weren't so interested in that. But

certainly George and Bella were an inviting couple, and Joey and Gail were an inviting couple. Debbie Fine was very much part of the community and not so into the spiritual thing so much — somewhat more than the others, but not so much. But they were an inviting — Gershom and Ruth Hundert. They were all very much part — these women were very much part of the community thing, and I think that they came to the communal meals.

JG: The meetings?

BH: They came to the meetings, yeah. That's right. I think they voted. I might be wrong about this. It might be my own sexist lens. But I think they voted. Mona might say, "What are you talking about? You never allowed us to vote." I don't think that's true. I think that, on the one hand, to say that women were secondary in the communal side is — I would say it's much more complicated than that. I'm not saying that it was exactly the same for the men and for the women, (02:54:00) because by and large the men applied for membership, but later on couples were interviewed as couples.

JG: The Strassfelds being the first.

BH: Yeah, I think that's true. And Sharon, of course, became very central to the community, both on the *tefilah* side and on the community side. That is for sure. I think you're right, that they were the first.

JG: I believe that's what they said.

BH: Yeah. However, I think that the issue of male friendship — and you're asking, in some ways, what might have been different about that. Well, I think we were in a way on the cutting edge of something that was probably affecting the entire counterculture, the non-Jewish counterculture, of reimagining the kinds of relationships that men had with men, which had to do with a kind of openness about emotion and a kind of openness about affection. There's an interesting story in my life about this, actually, which was, I have a group of friends that I'm still in touch with, my friends from grade school and high school that I remained in touch with all through college. My Brookline friends, or really, my K.I. friends, plus Sam Heilman, honorary K.I. person. I still see those guys, and their wives. I don't see them a lot, but I see them regularly. We have a reunion at least every other year. This summer, the whole group of them — that's three couples, plus us — they came up to visit us and spent two days up in Northampton. So, here's a story from the first year of the *havurah*. Janet and I were in Cambridge. I'm picturing this. We were in Cambridge, (02:57:00) and we're getting together at a cafe that's still there, I think. Is the Cafe Pamplona still there?

JG: Yeah.

BH: So that was a favorite of my group of friends from high school. When we were first discovering the coffeehouse culture of the sixties and folk music and all that stuff. We used to love going to Cafe Pamplona when we were first drinking coffee. So we've got to meet these other couples at the Pamplona, and they come, the other couples. I'd been in the *havurah* now for a few months, and Janet has been coming regularly up to Boston. And I was living in the — I didn't mention this. Arnie Cover, Steve Zweibaum, and I all lived in the house on Franklin Street. We had rooms there, and Art and Kathy lived there. They had an apartment there, and we had rooms on the top floor. So Janet would come, and actually Buzzy had a room there that he would take for Shabbos, and Mona would come visit him. So we're meeting my high school friends, and I see them, and I go over and I'm shaking hands with the guys. They weren't in — Heilman must have been with Ellin. Oh, yeah, and Alvan [Kaunfer] was already with Marcia. So there were two couples and one single guy, and I'm shaking hands with the guys, and Janet says to me, "What's with the shaking hands? How come you don't hug?" And I realized, the ethos of Havurat Shalom from the beginning was when you saw somebody, when you greeted somebody — that somebody being a man — you would hug him. This hadn't been done in American culture. It really, I mean, my father would not hug his friends when he saw them. He would shake hands. My father was a very gregarious guy, and he was a very warm person, but he would always just shake hands in a manly sort of way. *[laughs]* It wouldn't occur to him. I don't even know if he hugged his brothers when he saw them. He had two brothers. I don't know if he hugged them. Havurat Shalom, there was this kind of brotherhood. This is not a story I've ever told before, and I kind of forgot. It's not embarrassing. It was really such an interesting contrast. I was like, hmm, there's something different in the *havurah* about this. (03:00:00) I think about this now. I'm often struck by this memory. It's not like I'd forgotten this story, but this memory. I'm often struck by it now watching sports. I'm a big sports fan. All the guys hug each other.

JG: Yeah.

BH: Did Bill Russell hug Bob Cousy at the end of a game? I really don't remember seeing that. Now there's a lot of that going on, you know? It's just like —

JG: Maybe there's been a transformation more generally?

BH: Yes, and I think we were on the cutting edge of that. That was somewhat related to the assumption in the *havurah* of a kind of intense emotional openness to one another. Art really set the standard or the assumption of what that would be like. I think those

male friendships in the *havurah*, and perhaps part of their lastingness, has to do with the idea that it was kind of understood that you would have these intensive, intense conversations about your emotional life, what's important to you, things like that, without embarrassment, with these other men in the community. That may have led to some of the power, and the lasting power, of the *havurah* experience.

JG: And yet, many members have mentioned, if not talked more fully about, the challenge that that demand for continual openness to absolutely everybody presented to them. As you've said, you were closer to some people than to others. You were more open to some people than to others.

BH: I'll tell you, what I found difficult personally in the *havurah* was not that, as far as I remember. It had to do with one aspect of the culture that I think was very much part of Art's thinking or influence, (03:03:00) and that had to do with the non-verbal kinds of — there were things in the *havurah* where there were these silences, a kind of intense silence where everyone was quiet or looking at somebody very intensely without speaking. That was too much for me. I always tried to break that up. I was bad. *[laughs]*

JG: Were there ritualized times at which that silence was present, if I can say it that way?

BH: Yeah. The most notable was, every once in a while, we had a silent meal. Art had been influenced, as he's probably said to you, by his experience visiting a particular monastery. He was really struck by a lot of the monks eat in silence, and sometimes they eat in silence where one of the monks is reading biblical passages. So we tried stuff like that. I didn't find the communal meals uncomfortable. I just found them frustrating because you wanted to chat.

JG: Was that the rule at communal meals in general, or just sometimes?

BH: No, sometimes. It was these other moments connected to *Seudah Shlishit* of, you know, you're going to be quiet and look at one another. That kind of thing. Sometimes at *tefilah*, like on Friday night. I didn't like that. I just didn't like it. Some people liked that a lot.

JG: Have you ever been drawn to Eastern practices like meditation?

BH: No, no.

JG: Were there others in the groups that you were aware of sort of drawn to those?

BH: People didn't know much about it, but people were drawn to it as they were discovering it. It very much had a huge impact on Janet and led her to essentially become Hindu. Art once said, "Back in the *havurah*, we talked a lot about spirituality, and Janet was the one who took it seriously." She now meditates like, four hours a day. She remarried a similar seeker. They live in Italy, and that's what they do. They do a lot of meditation all day long. And the meditation came into the *havurah* in the second or third year. There was a group that was meeting regularly in the morning at the *havurah* house, which was a meditation group. It's interesting. We never had a daily service, but there was a (03:06:00) period of time — there were four or five people, just a small group. It was Art, Kathy, Janet, and Richie Siegel, and maybe a couple of other people joined in, and they would meet — I don't know if it was every morning, but they would meet regularly for this meditation service. Not service, meditation experience. I remember this very well because I was totally not into that, but I, like a bunch of other people, would show up after it was ended with donuts, and we would eat in the *havurah* house. We'd have breakfast in the *havurah* house.

JG: Where would they do this meditation?

BH: In the prayer room.

JG: And then they'd have donuts.

BH: Yeah, there was a donut place nearby.

JG: Let's move to the issue of *tefilah* and worship, because the creation of a spiritual community was also a paramount value within the *havurah*. Can we start by your talking about how you understood the place of *tefilah*, of prayer, within the *havurah* in general?

BH: Well, I would say that Shabbat *davening* was kind of the high point of the week. It was very much the — if the *havurah* wasn't a seminary, if it was a community more than anything else, and I think that's a better way to view it — it's a community that had certain elements of importance to our vision of an ideal Jewish community. That is, I would say an ideal Jewish community would be a place where people would, without hesitation, take care of one another, pick people up at the airport. It was a place where people would spend significant time together as a group, and that was like the communal meal. It was a place where people would study Judaism together — *limud Torah* as its fundamental value — and those were the classes. And it was a place where people would pray together. So that was our sort of core vision, I think, of an ideal community.

JG: Would you add social justice activity?

BH: Social justice activity, in my view, was always kind of the (03:09:00) poor relation for me. I mean, we did go to protests as a group. That was important, protesting the war and stuff. But there was this idea that Art voiced which was, in a time like this, what we can do best is we can create a kind of ideal world as a kind of model, given how much the world is in crisis. So there was prayer. We didn't have a daily prayer group. All we had was the Shabbat *davening*. There may have been on occasion other — Shabbat and Jewish holidays. But it was a big high point of the week for many people.

JG: And when you say Shabbat prayer, are you including both Erev Shabbat *davening* and the morning?

BH: Yeah, yes. I don't remember us having Mincha, but it may be connected. I don't remember us having Mincha. So we made some decisions, what we had and what we didn't have. A real Jewish community had *davening* three times a day. We never had that.

JG: Do you remember that being a decision?

BH: No.

JG: Just the way it was.

BH: Just the way it was. I think for those of us who came from Conservative and Reform backgrounds, the idea that prayer was essentially a Shabbat and holiday activity — that made sense. I don't know, for example, what Nehemia Polen thought when he joined. I think Joey was far enough away from his Orthodox upbringing, or in revolt against it, that he didn't stand up and say, "How can we not have *davening* every morning?" I think the most traditional person from a Conservative background, not counting the people who were Conservative rabbis and had their own issues or interests — I mean, Eddie Feld never said, "Why don't we have a daily prayer?" That I can remember. Epi was the most conventionally traditional, put on *tefillin* every day kind of guy. (03:12:00) Swirsky was very Orthodox. You know, he was a *frum* Conservative rabbi. Anyway, so prayer was very important, and our mode of prayer — this idea that prayer had to be participatory. It had to be spiritual. That means, kind of intense. So Art would say—Art always objected, I think overly objected, to the idea that Steve Lerner wrote about, saying that Havurat Shalom was an outgrowth of Camp Ramah. That was a big point that Lerner made. Art hated that.

JG: This is the piece in *Response*?

BH: Yeah. Art said no. Why did he not like that? A couple of reasons. One is, he didn't want to give the Conservative Movement credit for the *havurah* movement. All right, *b'seder*. But the other thing was, he thought the *davening* at Camp Ramah was not a spiritual experience by and large. It was, yeah, people singing. That was very nice, but they were singing like they're singing songs. There wasn't a kind of intensity or *kavanah* that he expected in the services at Havurat Shalom.

JG: And what did that mean?

BH: It meant a kind of deep engagement mentally with the words of prayer and what they mean to you. I would put it like that. Or — and — a kind of spiritual, mystical experience. It wasn't just singing a few songs. It was like being transported by a *niggun*, which never happened at Camp Ramah, until the *havurah* people started introducing that stuff. Then it gets more complicated. But let's set that aside. So the *davening* at Havurat Shalom very much had the sense of *niggun*. The singing was not like "tra-la-la-la," but it was like, really intense, engaged, meditative, spiritual singing. And the other thing that was more complicated — I mean, I said participatory and I said spiritual, *kavanah*. (03:15:00) I guess I tried to cover that. The third element was more complicated, I think, and that is: not professionally led. There was no rabbi at Havurat Shalom. Actually there were a lot of rabbis, actually ordained rabbis, but there was no rabbi. There was in some sense a rebbe, which was Art. And in the first year when Zalman was really involved, there was some kind of [*hand motions indicating pushing and pulling*] whatever, but Zalman — I think Zalman always viewed Havurat Shalom as Art's. That was his hasidim. Zalman didn't really try to be the rebbe. He taught a little, and he had an influence on a lot of people, but Art was the rebbe, and Art was in revolt about being the rebbe. "I don't want to be the rebbe, I do want to be the rebbe." I mean, that was Art's deep ambivalence. A very, very big part of his life at the *havurah* for those years was, am a I rebbe or not a rebbe? But he was the rebbe as we saw it. The Friday night *davening*, by rule, always started on time, whatever time was set. Six o'clock, six-thirty, five-thirty. It changed by the seasons.

JG: By the clock?

BH: But it wasn't like an Orthodox synagogue, where Friday night *davening* started like, at eight. It always started on time. The *shaliach tzibur* started on time, except when Art wasn't there yet. That was true, because you didn't want to be the leader of the service and have him pissed off that we started without him. Why? Because he was the rebbe. It didn't bother us. *[laughs]* You know what I mean? And we didn't treat him like a real hasidic rebbe. He was our teacher. He was wise. He knew more than anybody, and he understood spirituality more than any of us.

JG: Many people have described services at Havurat Shalom as neo-hasidic.

BH: Yes.

JG: Clearly Art had a major role in bringing the Jewish mystical tradition in.

BH: Yes. Absolutely, yeah. That's absolutely true. Neo-hasidic. It's like it took elements from hasidic prayer, but it had a kind of modern Americanized (03:18:00) spin to it.

JG: Can you elaborate on that?

BH: It's hard for me to do that because if you went to a real hasidic service, you would see it's not exactly what we do. One year, he taught a course on Hasidism, and we did a field trip to Brooklyn. We went and stayed at somebody's house we knew, I don't know who, that lived within walking distance of the Bobover hasidim. We went to Bobov, all of us in the class. Not the whole *havurah*, but four of five of us who were in his class. We went to *daven* there. It was both completely foreign and somewhat familiar. It was different.

JG: How was it different?

BH: *[Sighs]* I don't know how to answer that. It wasn't participatory in the way we understood participatory. Let's put it that way. There was no innovation. Ah, there was no innovation. No one would throw in a *niggun* at a certain point. It was very formalized. Like —

JG: Set liturgy.

BH: Set liturgy. They didn't skip anything, which we did on Shabbos morning. And people would innovate.

JG: At Havurat Shalom?

BH; Yeah, and they don't do that. They do their thing.

JG: What would people do at Havurat Shalom?

BH: Someone would stop the service and say, "Today I thought that we would sing this prayer because it's the Fourth of July, and we want to think about what does it mean to be

an American in our times with the war and all this stuff?" and we would sing to this tune. Or, we're going to add a special reading on — There was a little of the special readings, but mostly it was, how are we going to vary the service and make it more meaningful to people? "Today, we're going to slow down, and everybody's going to read this prayer to themselves, but really slowly, and think about what it means to them, really slowly. Then we'll pick up the *davening* with all of us together." The *shaliach tzibur* had complete freedom to do that. So I would say, yeah, it was neo-hasidic (03:21:00) in that sense. We took elements of the intensity of the hasidic prayer experience and we used it as a jumping off point.

JG: You were just saying — Art, for instance, described the approach to experimentation as a "patchwork of creativity."

BH: Yeah, that's right. Oh, I wanted to say something, because I got off track. I said no professional leadership. There was a tension in the *havurah* that later came to fruition in my later experiences at the Library Minyan and at Minayn M'at. This happened less at Havurat Shalom, now that I think about it. Who really can lead a prayer service? And once I left the *havurah* and created the Library Minyan and created Minyan M'at, in both of these cases — we started off in both of those places with an ethos that was of the Havurat Shalom ethos which was, you had to be really confident to lead. Then in both cases, certainly in Minyan M'at, we lost that battle.

JG: Lost that battle?

BH: Lost the battle because of the participatory nature of the community. Why can't people lead the service, even if you don't think they're good enough? Who makes you the king? At the *havurah,* actually, there never was that because there was a kind of apprenticeship. We had the fortune of having extremely good role models, and those people — it was understood who would lead the service. You had to be one of those people to lead the service.

JG: How would someone new start to the lead the service? How would that happen?

BH: Well, the way it worked is, there was a person who coordinated the Shabbos morning service. Not the Friday night. The Friday night was kind of spontaneous. There were a certain number of people who led on Friday nights. It was kind of spontaneous. People would be sitting there waiting, and then someone would start, or someone would look at someone like, you start. (03:24:00) There was this kind of nod. George and I led often. *[nods]* Like that, and George would lead. Shabbos morning, because it was a public event maybe and we didn't want to leave it to chance, and it was a long service, of

course, there were a group of *daveners*. The coordinator — I don't remember how it worked exactly — would ask someone, Can you do it this Shabbos? and that person would do it. You didn't walk in on Shabbos morning and start nodding at everyone. Someone could do it. There was a pretty sizable group of people who could lead the service, but everybody — in our view, pretty much everybody that did it was really good. Now honestly, just as an example, I am a person considered to be a very good *shaliach tzibur*. I don't want to sound boastful for eternity, but that is true. I am considered to be very good. I had, you know, I had learned these synagogue skills in high school. I did not dare to lead a service at Havurat Shalom until May of the first year of Havurat Shalom. I just, I didn't feel that I was worthy to do it. Partly, I think, because what I knew was kind of conventional prayer leadership stuff. I had never led a service with a *niggun*. So it took me a year of watching — watching Zalman, and watching Burt Jacobson, who was a wonderful *shaliach tzibur*, and watching Art, who has a terrible singing voice, as he'll quickly tell you, but in some ways was a great *davener* because of the *kavanah* that he brings to it, and in those days, when he'd give little introductions to the prayers along the way, you know, he was great. Hillel Levine was a great *shaliach tzibur*. People were really good. I didn't *daven* High Holidays at Havurat Shalom until some of the people left. I think Hillel left the *havurah* and I took over doing Shacharit for Rosh (03:27:00) Hashanah and Yom Kippur, but I wouldn't have done that before then.

JG: So was the assumption that no one would put themselves forward as someone who could be the *shaliach tzibur* unless he, in the beginning years, possessed enough of the skills to do so?

BH: Yeah. And thinking of "he," I think the only woman to lead Havurat Shalom *davening* was Sharon.

JG: That was several years into it, as we said. They came in year four?

BH: Yeah. I think that some of the women who were members could have led, but they didn't want to. Janet wouldn't have done it. She didn't have a strong enough personality or a strong enough — she had a very strong personality in some ways, but she didn't have the kind of "take the room," and she didn't have a great singing voice. But there were people like Ruthie Mencow [Hundert], who had a beautiful singing voice. Ruthie Hundert, and she never did it. They didn't feel comfortable. Probably the way they grew up, they didn't have those role models. Sharon really broke the mold there. She really just totally broke the mold.

JG: What made someone a truly inspiring and excellent *shaliach tzibur*? My understanding is that whoever was leading the prayer had pretty much full discretion to

do whatever they wanted in terms of *kavanah* or deciding additional readings or songs or melodies or —

BH: Usually people started off with a *kavanah* introduction and set a theme. You know, We're going to focus on X today, as we go through the words, and they would choose what to skip. There were certain things that weren't ever skipped, but the whole opening part of the service, all the Psalms, we skipped a lot of those, up to the discretion of — well, a lot of it had to do with musicality, I think, and the kind of ability to bring people along with the singing. It wasn't musicality as far as —

JG: Performance.

BH: Performance.

JG: Which harked back to the synagogue model that you were getting away from.

BH: If anyone came out sounding like a hazan, (03:30:00) they wouldn't have been — I mean, Art would say, "We don't want a hazan; we want a *ba'al tefilah*." And I think that that was —

JG: Yeah. What about the role of Torah reading and Torah discussion?

BH: Well, we never read a full parashah. We only read the opening of the parashah, the first aliyah. It's kind of weird. Why? Because we wanted to have a Torah discussion, so people could comment. Usually, I think always, someone gave an opening to the Torah discussion, some reflections. Not a formal *dvar torah* usually, but some questions, some issues, some insights. Kind of a mini *dvar torah*, and then threw it open for discussion. It was, I would say, the least successful part of the service because of the visitors. *[laughs]*

JG: Even when the visitors were "regular" visitors?

BH: Yeah, because there were visitors who just said obnoxious things. I'm not going to, I mean — people made stupid comments, to be honest. There were fantastic Torah discussions when we were on retreats. You know, the *havurah* would go on retreats.

JG: You're talking about Havurat Shalom by itself.

BH: Right. And those Torah discussions were fantastic, and there were some wonderful people from the general community that had very smart things to say. But there were also — any nudnik could say anything, and there was one guy that used to come all the time.

He was, you know — and there was a woman who was kind of insane, probably truly insane. She would come and say, “Wha?” You know, off the wall. You didn’t know what to say after that.

JG: Right.

BH: When we created the Library Minyan, one of the first things we said is, no Torah discussion — because of that. We’ll have a *drash* instead.

JG: Interesting. Let’s focus on the issue of women’s roles in the context of public worship. So as we've said, the first cohorts were men, but there were definitely women who were part of the community. What roles did women have in public worship from the beginning, (03:33:00) and how did that change over time?

BH: The real issue had to do with, were we counting women in a minyan? That was a decision — there was sort of a kind of famous incident. Have you heard about this story?

JG: No one's told it, so please.

BH: Here's my recollection. We were on a retreat. This must have been the second year of the *havurah*. We were on a retreat, and Epi had to say kaddish.

JG: For his father.

BH: For his father. And there weren’t enough men to make up a minyan. Now how that could have been, I don’t know. I really don’t, because there must have been enough men on the retreat. Maybe at that particular moment, we were having Mincha or something to make the minyan for him to say kaddish, and there weren't enough men. At that point, someone — I think it was Mona — brought up, "Well, why can’t we count women?" And thence ensued a lengthy discussion about this. Back and forth. I can't remember the details of it, but whether we should, whether we shouldn't, whether we could, whether we couldn’t. That kind of thing.

JG: Right on the spot?

BH: On the spot, I think. I think on the spot. Finally somebody said — we kept on being like, "Well, Epi needs a minyan," blah blah blah — and finally someone said, "Epi, what do you think?" And he said, "I guess it's okay." *[laughs]* Like that. That was it. That was the decision. There wasn't a learned investigation of Jewish sources and a *teshuvah* written by — that was it. "Yeah, I guess it's okay. All right, so we'll do that.” I mean, it

was just like — my recollection is that it was fraught, that's for sure, but the decision itself was kind of casual, emanating out of a very intense conversation.

JG: But once made, it stuck.

BH :Yeah, yeah. We never went back. It didn't occur to anybody to do that. You know, it's funny because it was spontaneous. There was another issue that came up, having nothing to do with women, which had to do with the fact that one particular year, Rosh Hashanah fell on a Shabbat. Early on, it must have been the second year. (03:36:00) So there was the question of blowing the shofar. You're not allowed by Halachah to blow the shofar on Shabbat. So when Rosh Hashanah falls on Shabbat, there are certain things you don't do, certain prayers you don't say — *Avinu Malkainu*. You don't blow the shofar. Well, we wanted to blow the shofar. I remember watching the conversation — because I didn't have the learning to be part of this conversation — in the study room on the ground floor, with books open. Hillel and Art, back and forth, looking at all these sources about can we or can we not blow the shofar. Then, finally, the decision was, we can blow the shofar — pause — except we're not going to. *[laughs]* Which was, we could if we wanted to because we're not going to go by this, because the reasons behind the rabbis' decision not to blow a shofar, we don't hold by those reasons. But we're not going to do it anyway. That was the opposite with the women's discussion. I mean, we're not going to blow the shofar because Jews don't blow the shofar on Shabbos. You know? That's the way it ended, even though we could. We want it known we could, but Jews don't blow the shofar on Shabbat. On counting the women, there was no delving into books. I mean, people knew things that they threw in, but it was not a — you know. So that's my recollection. But I would say, it is important that until Sharon there was not a real prayer leader amongst the women. This may have been because of the background of the women. Even those with very good Jewish educations — like Janet had a very fine Hebrew College Hebrew knowledge, all that kind of stuff. Gail had a day school background. But they hadn't been educated in doing that, and they kind of didn't feel comfortable. You'll have to find out from Sharon, why was she able to do that, because she came from a *frum* background. So I don't have a lot to say about the role of the women because really, I think a lot of the women liked the *davening* a lot. I want to tell you one anecdote about this. My daughter is now twenty-seven. Some years ago, (03:39:00) we had a Havurat Shalom reunion. We've had regular reunions, and one year she came. I don't think my son — he must have been away — but she came on the Havurat Shalom reunion. She was like a teenager. I remember the *davening*. Michael Strassfeld led the Friday night *davening*. Sophia wasn't in the room. She was off someplace or another, and I went running to find her, and I brought her to make sure that she came to the service. So she was there for the service that Michael led. It was great. Afterward she said to me, "Now I see what this whole thing's about." She understood

Havurat Shalom from being at that Friday night service. Not that she hadn't been to other Friday night services in her time, but that kind of like, *[raises hands]* power, which was amplified because of the reunion emotion. Joel Rosenberg, at one of the reunions, said something that was interesting. He said, "I've been in the same room with all of the people here, but I've never been in the same room with all of them at the same time." Because it was generations of the *havurah* that were all there at the same time. It was kind of like the Platonic Havurat Shalom that has people in it. It's kind of like in the Talmud, you have rabbis talking to each other that couldn't have, because they lived hundreds of years apart. You know, there were people — Epi and Sharon Strassfeld were never in the *havurah* at the same time, but they were part of that Platonic *havurah*.

JG: So let's turn now to the question of study and learning and its role within Havurat Shalom. Can you explain, as you understand it, what the *havurah*'s vision of learning was within the community, and how it was going to achieve that?

BH: Okay, so I would say you have to immediately kind of put on the docket the fact that it started as seminary. So of course, you're taking classes. But I think much more important — and insofar as we were a community, one of the things that Jews have used to define community is (03:42:00) through learning — so a real Jewish community had serious learning. Let's say that. That's not true of every Jewish community, but that is our ideal of a Jewish community, that everybody is learning. But I think the really important thing has to do with what I have often talked about as the pedagogy of the *havurah*. It was very influenced by the experience of our teachers, the teaching members of the *havurah*, in their own education, in their own training in particular. This was a time in which, by and large, our teachers were products of JTS rabbinical school, with the exception, obviously, of Zalman, and with the exception of Buzzy Fishbane. But all of them, except for Zalman, had been educated in a kind of pedagogy of some version of Jewish scholarship of the old school. Even Buzzy, his training at Brandeis in the Bible Department with Nahum Sarna as his doctoral advisor, was very much old-school Bible, what we sometimes, somewhat inaccurately, referred to as Wissenschaft. But it certainly had the elements of the scientific study of Judaism, and I think that the big innovation that happened in the *havurah* was in reaction to that, that the teachers that we had wanted to do a different kind of teaching, which was not the so-called objective, distanced, historical-critical scholarship, but rather a kind of personal connection to what was being studied. Now what was, I think, really extremely interesting and particularly characteristic of those teachers was that at the same time they were revolting against the scientific historical approach and moving us toward (03:45:00) what I would call a personalization, at the same time, they had, in a way, absorbed that historical-critical scholarship. So what was — see, I have seen as a professional in the field of Jewish education, in the last fifteen or twenty years, more and more of a move toward

personalization in the teaching of Jewish subjects amongst regular teachers. Not so much amongst scholars, but amongst regular teachers.

JG: You mean teaching at a high school, or —

BH: Yeah, high school or grade school level. How do you relate to this, you know? This sort of searching for relevance, searching for personal connection. I'm not against that. I'm really not against that. But sometimes it bothers me because it's done without any consideration of, well, what did these texts mean in their context? When we say Wissenschaft, what we really mean is a kind of historical investigation of what the text meant within its context. But what Art and that other group — all of those teachers, Everett, Burt, all of them — Buzzy too, a little less so with Buzzy, but Buzzy too — what they brought was keeping the tension between the historical-critical, so that if you said something, Well, I think this text is saying whatever, they would always try to keep you honest, by saying, You know, there is a historical context here. Like, my favorite example is in the story of the binding of Isaac, the *Akedah*. I've heard teachers say, God tested Abraham, and Abraham failed the test, because he should have protested to God the way he did about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. That's a great *khap*, you know? But that's actually not what the Bible really means, and if you don't balance it — the Bible understood, as far as we can understand the Bible in its context, (03:48:00) that the Bible saw Abraham pass the test by going to the mountain and being prepared to sacrifice his son. So in Havurat Shalom, there was this wonderful balance. I think for many of us, this idea of finding the personal meaning in what we were studying was like a, wow! That's really an innovation. At the same time, being able to trust that the teachers who were teaching us really had a deep historical understanding of where these texts came from, and kind of keeping us honest at the same time. So that's a quick and dirty take on the *havurah*. I always had felt that the innovative pedagogy of the *havurah* has not been mostly addressed or mentioned when people talk about the other innovations, which are more obvious — like about introducing *niggunim* into prayer services, or the smaller communities, and all of that, I understand. Do-it-yourself Judaism and the *Jewish Catalog*. All of that I'm happy that we can take credit for, but I think there is a pedagogical side as well. So I wanted to just have that out there.

JG: Do you think that another aspect of the sort of pedagogical innovation at Havurat Shalom had to do with the introduction of different texts, different materials, that wouldn't have been part of the curriculum? The sort of curricular innovations, I guess.

BH: Well, yeah.

JG: Some of Art's classes on Hasidism or those kinds of things.

BH: Look, I think because of Art, and because of some of the other people, there was a — let's call it a recalibration of the curriculum of the *havurah* toward a sort of broader engagement with the sources of the Jewish mystical tradition. That's a very good point, and I'm glad you made that. That's certainly, certainly true. You know, when I edited *Back to the Sources*, it's so interesting — *Back to the Sources* is kind of, in its own way, a product of Havurat Shalom.

JG: Your book.

BH: Yeah. (03:51:00) In a way, you raise an interesting issue. In a way, you could say that what I chose for that book, another person might have chosen somewhat differently. So the fact is, there's a whole chapter on Kabbalah and a whole chapter on Hasidism, but there isn't a chapter on codes, Medieval legal codes, and there isn't a chapter on *mussar*. There are other things that could have gone in there. There isn't a theology chapter that would have had Buber and Rosenzweig. I never heard anyone really criticize the book for not having a chapter on codes, but I did hear people say, How come you didn't do something on twentieth century Jewish theology? That was an interest in Havurat Shalom, but I really felt like I wanted to stick to — I mean, what I said about that was, I wanted to stick to texts that people couldn't read in English on their own, and I think people could read Buber and Rosenzweig. Not that they're easy, but people could read those on their own. When I was looking at what is the Jewish tradition — another example that shows my own prejudice and the Havurat Shalom prejudice — there's a whole chapter on midrash. My chapter. You know, someone else, coming from a different place, might have said, Well, I'm going to have a chapter on rabbinics, which will mostly focus on Talmud, and I'll mention midrash along the way. That's very interesting. It wouldn't have occurred to me to have done that because of Havurat Shalom. It was much more on the tradition of Aggadah as opposed to Halachah. Not the legal halachic tradition, but — one phrase that people sometimes used; I don't know if this is Art's phrase or somebody else's phrase — but it's aggadic Judaism, not the halachic Judaism. It is the Judaism of the Aggadah, of the non-legal parts of the tradition, the imaginative and, I would say, speculative aspects of the rabbinic tradition, rather than the legal, halachic side. Havurat Shalom, although (03:54:00) there were a good number of observant people, Havurat Shalom was not a community of Halachah. That was not its main thing. I want to be clear. I really mean there were people that were observant. I, myself, in those days I came back in terms of the story of my own life, that was started a long time ago. When I joined Havurat Shalom, first thing is I became a vegetarian after the first year — fish-eating vegetarian, but, you know. And I became much more Shabbat observant than I had been all through college, and more Shabbat observant than I had been even in high school, I think. At a certain point, I stopped driving on Shabbat, and I

haven't since. And why? We were on a retreat and people were talking about their own Shabbos observance. It was one of those meetings, you know, let's talk about our own Shabbos observance. Epi was talking about — and he was more observant than a number of people — he was talking about his own practice, and the issue of driving on Shabbos came up. Driving to shul — like in the Conservative Movement, that's okay. Epi said, "No, I don't drive on Shabbos, and the reason is, I find that six days of the week, really my car is driving me, given the amount of repairs and the amount of stuff I have to put into thinking about my car, and I want a day without my car driving me." I was driving an old car that was constantly having issues, and I said, "Yeah!" From that moment on. I came back from that retreat and stopped driving on Shabbos. But it was always the Aggadah. You needed his reasoning, you know? He had a nice story that spoke to me.

JG: There was a fluidity that allowed for exactly that kind of personalization that felt right in the *havurah* context.

BH: Right. But you're right, I think, that the curriculum of the *havurah* looked really, really different from the curriculum, let's say, of JTS — even if you set aside the fact that JTS had, and still has, a kind of mission of training rabbis to know a lot of different things. The emphasis in the *havurah* curriculum was on (03:57:00) the mystical/aggadic side of the Jewish tradition. Yup, that's a very good insight. You're right.

JG: The other thing I just wanted to mention, because many people have mentioned it, is the sort of guiding notion of the relationship between teachers and learners, based, many people say, on the Lehrhaus model. Other people talk about *beis midrash* as a model. Do you see that? That egalitarian sort of ideal as a sort of innovation in any sense of the *havurah* pedagogy?

BH: Well, I would say this. I wouldn't go that far. I think in the first few years it was very clear. We used to call it the "teacher-types" and the "student-types." I think that was even the lingo we used. It was very clear to us that Art and Buzzy and Burt, they were our teachers. Now what happened in the classroom was much more of a participatory pedagogy. There weren't lectures. There were discussions. Some of the classes, many of them, were text-based, but others were less so. There was always the notion that there was a teacher who knew more than you did, but it was very interactive. At the same time, important to note, partially for practical reasons — namely that some of the teachers moved away — that in the later years — we're talking about, fourth, sixth years of the *havurah*, some of the students literally became teachers, because there were people who were very knowledgeable amongst the students at the *havurah*. That is, they weren't people who had rabbinical degrees or doctoral degrees, but they were headed in that direction.

JG: Who for instance?

BH: For example, I remember Danny Matt. Danny Matt taught a class. There's a picture in one of the *Jewish Catalog*s of Matt teaching a class. I was in that class. He taught — I remember very well — we spent the year, I guess, or at least a semester, studying (04:00:00) this book by Agnon, *Atem Re'item*, *You Have Seen*, which is where Agnon collected all the midrashic stuff on the giving of the Torah. It's a beautiful book, and we studied it with Matt. Many, many years later, the book was translated into English by Michael Swirsky and published by JPS. So I taught a class, even though I wasn't a Judaica scholar. I was doing a doctorate on religious poetry, so I taught a course on religious poetry. This was something that I knew. And maybe George taught? I mean, people — there were still some of our old teachers around, but it became really more democratic, partially out of necessity. But that became more like a kind of *Torah lishmah beit midrash* kind of thing. A *beit midrash* without a teacher, but with knowledgeable people. That's a good point.

JG: Let's move to our final section here, because I want to give you an opportunity to reflect somewhat on the larger meaning. Just to summarize, you were a member of Havurat Shalom from its inception in 1968, through 1974. So actually a relatively long period.

BH: Yes.

JG: Why did you leave the *havurah* at that point?

BH: Well, 1974. Do I have that right? Yes, 1974, I got a job. I was done with graduate school. I finished my doctorate in '73.

JG: In English? In English literature?

BH: Yeah, I got the degree in the spring of 1973. I started looking for jobs and didn't find anything. 1973-74, that academic year, I stayed in Somerville. I taught in a variety of Hebrew high school-type settings and was very active in Havurat Shalom. During that year, I had been looking for academic jobs in English, and the market had died that year, or the year before. Died. Nobody was getting jobs. Very depressing. And then I got a call from Joe Reimer, who was teaching at Akiba [Hebrew Academy] in Philadelphia, and he said, (04:03:00) "They're looking for a person at Akiba for a job here, and you may be the only person in the country who really fits the bill. They want someone who can be Chair of the English Department and also teach Jewish Studies." So I had applied for a

variety of academic positions and nothing much. I got two dossier requests. That was it. I couldn't say it was personal. It was just, like, ridiculous. So I went to Akiba to interview on a winter day, and I walked into the school, in its old setting, with this beautiful old building, a beautiful mansion in Marion, with a fire going in the fireplace. I walked in and I said, I want to teach here — just like that, and they offered me a job. So I moved to Philadelphia because it was time to get a job. Coincidentally and fortunately, at that exact same time but for very different reasons, Allan Lehman and Michael Paley both moved to Philadelphia to go to the Reconstructionist Rabbinical School. We moved and all lived nearby, within walking distance of Art.

JG: Where was that?

BH: West Philly.

JG: In West Philly.

BH: And we started a minyan at the Hillel House at Penn, the Library Minyan. So that was the origins.

JG: Since this period, can you just talk for a minute about what your involvement or continued involvement was with the *hauvrah* movement as it developed in those years, and also with *havurot* — particular *havurot* — for the last number of years.

BH: Well, for a number of years after I left, I continued to have involvement with the National Havurah Committee.

JG: Which started in the late seventies.

BH: Yeah. I went on the annual retreat, or whatever.

JG: The institute.

BH: The institute. I went on the institute. I think I taught at the institute. I went a number of times. Bethamie and I, when we started seeing each other — she had been involved in the early days of the institute because she was working for Yitz Greenberg when the whole thing started. I remember going with her. And over time, I kind of drifted away from that, mostly because my friends stopped going. It was a different — it wasn't fun. It was a lot of fun to see my friends (04:06:00) and other people that I knew in the general *havurah* world that I liked—you know, Bob Goldenberg and people like that — but I got too busy. I had a job and I didn't want to spend my vacation doing that, so I kind of — I

still send them money every year, but that's my entire involvement with the national *havurah* movement. I also send a donation to Havurat Shalom every year. But except when we've had reunions and worked together to have the current membership also be a part of the reunions, that I have that connection. I was involved in founding this minyan in Philadelphia and Minyan M'at here in New York. So that's —

JG: In Jerusalem —

BH: Yeah, we started something there too. I spent a year in Jerusalem on leave from Akiba. I got my job at JTS because I was in Jerusalem, and there was a person there that I became kind of a disciple of, Seymour Fox. He arranged for me to get this job at JTS. I wasn't expecting that. The same year that I was there, Allan and Joanne Lehmann were there, and Michael Paley was there, and Naamah Kelman was already living there. Nessa Rapaport was living there. That group of people I just mentioned said — we said, Hey why don't we create a minyan? George and Bella weren't living in Israel yet even. It was a long time ago, '77, '78. And we started a minyan that eventually morphed into an ongoing minyan. I don't remember which of the many minyanim that we were the origins of, but maybe the one George goes to now and has been going to, Mayanot.

JG: In terms of your career.

BH: Yeah.

JG: So eventually you ended up at JTS, through this connection that you said. Would you say that your experiences within the *havurah* had any impact on the ways in which your career developed, and your thinking about Jewish education and pedagogy in your professional life?

BH: Oh yeah. There's no doubt about that. The models of pedagogy that I saw in the *havurah* really fit, actually, very well with what happened to me next, when I came to work (04:09:00) at the Melton Center at JTS and run the curriculum project there.

JG: That was what you came back to at JTS.

BH: Yeah, yeah. The Melton Research Center had just gotten an endowment. It had been around for a long time, but Mr. Melton had finally endowed it. They were looking to hire someone to be the curriculum editor of the materials being produced for congregational schools. Seymour Fox had been the original founder of the Melton Center, and I studied curriculum stuff with him in Jerusalem that year, along with just sitting in on classes at various places that I was interested in. Through that I got the job at Melton, and then two

years later, the late Edy Rauch and I became co-directors of the Melton Center. Edy and I were hired at the same time. I was in charge of the curriculum project, and he was in charge of outreach. And the director of Melton ended up leaving, and so they handed us the keys to the car. For the next twelve years, that's what I did. In the meanwhile, much to my surprise in a way, I ended up first teaching one course at JTS, and then being put on the faculty as a visitor or something. And then, the late Sylvia Ettenberg, who was a force to be a reckoned with and was kind of my boss, before she retired, she said, "You know, you and Edy, you are neither fish nor fowl. You need to be on a tenured line." She got us switched to a tenure track, which was kind of amazing in retrospect, I realize, quite amaizng. She was right. She understood the seminary better than I did at that point. I was a staff person who taught a little, and now I'm a faculty member. When you become a faculty member, that's all that matters there, like at many academic institutions. I started out wanting to be an English professor and I ended up being a professor of Jewish education. That transition was already happening. Not the professor part, but the part that I was going to be in Jewish education rather than being an English professor. That happened already when I was at Akiba — when I realized I had lost interest in being an English professor. Even if there had (04:12:00) been a lot of jobs, I just didn't want to do it. A friend of mine, who I had gone to graduate school with, ended up teaching at Temple. She said to me, "Well, if you want to get a job, you need to write a book." So I came home and said, "Gotta write a book, gotta write a book." I was up all night. I realized by the end of the night, I didn't want to write a book. I had no interest in writing a book about anything in English literature. A few days later, I remember very vividly writing a letter to Joe Reimer. This letter struck me as so important in my life that I actually xeroxed it before I mailed it to him. In the letter, I said, "I now see what I was really meant to do was to go into Jewish education." So when I went to Israel, everybody said to me, You have to go see Seymour Fox, if you want to go into Jewish education. So with much trepidation, I went to see him and he said, "What do you want to do?" And I said, "Really, I'd like to work with teachers and work with curriculum material," and he said, "That sounds interesting. Why don't you sit in on my curriculum course?" What I didn't know is they were looking for someone at Melton to work with teachers and write curriculum material or edit curriculum material that was being written. So that's how that whole thing happened.

JG: Let me just ask you, as a final question, this — Havurat Shalom was founded with a dream of changing the Jewish world.

BH: Yeah.

JG: So now, approaching fifty years, half a century after the founding this first *havurah*, what would you say have been its most important impacts in the Jewish world?

BH: I think really that I would say, most importantly was Havurat Shalom put the issue of community on the agenda for a lot of institutions in the larger Jewish community. The notion that a synagogue, for example, has to be a place that nurtures community was really not anything that anyone talked about back when we started. You see it not just in synagogues — Jewish community centers and educational institutions, day schools and summer camps. This idea (04:15:00) of nurturing community and creating a caring community, which is lingo that UJA-Federation of New York began using some years ago. This, I think, has had a profound impact on the Jewish community. I think, to some extent, some of the innovations in prayer and study have also had a big impact. We actually live right now, I often say to my students, in the golden age of Jewish adult learning. No one would have predicted what happened in Jewish adult learning. I remember going to the General Assembly of what used to be called the Combined Jewish Philanthropies —

JG: The Federation of Boston.

BH: Right, no. The national — Combined Jewish — not CJP, CJF — which is now called the United Jewish Communities of North America? I can't even remember the lingo anymore. There was a whole *parashat ha-shavua* study thing going on that morning. I was standing next to Alvin Schiff, Orthodox guy who was the very powerful, long-time head of the Board of Jewish Education of New York, not always a friend to the non-Orthodox educational community. I had a relationship with him, always trying to get some money from JTS and Melton and never succeeding. He was a cagey guy. He said to me in wonder, he said, "You know, the first G.A. that I went to, I had trouble getting kosher food. Now look at this, where there are like eight hundred people in the room, studying *parashat hashavua hevruta* style. It had been organized by Joe Reimer and somebody else, with the study sheets, and I said, "My God, Havurat Shalom." You know, it's like, we can't take credit for that, but we were ahead of the zeitgeist on that. I think that even some of the innovations in prayer, like the whole *niggun* music stuff, had something to do with Havurat Shalom, and a lot to do with other figures that both influenced us and were influenced by us. A lot of credit goes to Shlomo Carlebach. A lot of credit goes to Debbie Friedman. Sort of the musicality in the service, we (04:18:00) grabbed that. Shlomo was before us. Zalman was Shlomo's best friend, so he brought a lot of that to us. And I think that kind of neo-hasidic thing has spread in many ways. I know my sister belongs to a Reform congregation in Boca Raton, and she sings in their chorus. It's amazing the kind of music they're singing. It's all different. We had something to do with that. Small communities within synagogues — Harold Schulweis, his innovations. We had something to do with that. I don't want to be immodest about it. And then some of the other institutions that have come up that have clearly been

influenced by the *havurah* movement even when they're not kind enough to acknowledge that. Like Hadar. I think Hadar — not so much the yeshiva of Hadar, although somewhat that, but Hadar as a *davening* community. It's less powerful than it once was, but once upon a time Hadar clearly came out of Minyan M'at, and Minyan M'at came out of Havurat Shalom. Pardes Institute in Israel. Recently, within the past two years, I said to Michael Swirsky, "Don't you think that your —" — he founded Pardes — "didn't that come out of you running that *beit midrash* program at Havurat Shalom?" He said, "Really? I never thought about that." I said, "What?!" *[laughs]* You know what I mean? Like, really? It's so obvious to everybody else. He said, "Oh, that's interesting." And I would say, some aspects of neo-Hasidism — Art once said that he takes great pleasure in the fact that we had a lot to do with the revitalization of Simchas Torah and Purim. You know, that you go to B.J. [B'nai Jeshurun] for Simchas Torah — we started that thing. We went to the Tremont Street Synagogue, the whole *havurah*, and started this kind of neo-hasidic, gender equal dancing with the Torahs. That wasn't the Simchas Torah that I grew up with. It was what I saw when I would go with Alan Mintz in high school to the Talner Rebbe in Simchas Torah. It wasn't what Simchas Torah looked like at K.I., (04:21:00) which was *[hand signals to indicate orderly procession]* waving flags, you know. So I think many of those things have at least some of their origins in what we did at Havurat Shalom. There were plenty of other influences, too. The final thing I'd say about the influence — well, two final things. One, I think that the language of spirituality, which nobody used, a lot of that grew out of Havurat Shalom, its successor institutions, and the people. So that's the final thing I'd say. So many extraordinary people walked through that institution and were influenced by that institution. I remember something Larry Fine said a few years ago, at our *havurah* reunion ten or fifteen years ago. He said, "I don't see many of you people that often, but I'm always happy to find myself in the pages of books that you are writing or editing." The impact there of people that went on in Jewish scholarship and in Jewish education has been extremely significant. People teaching in various professorships, and people writing influential books, and people leading institutions that come out of Havurat Shalom and the other *havurot* as well.

JG: Would you include new ways of conceptualizing what it means to be a rabbi?

BH: Oh, yeah. Well, that, I think — Art was already — in a way, the *havurah* was a try-out for ideas that he then tried at the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, with less success, because he had less power, even though he was the president. He had less power, because it was an institution that had been around for a while and was kind of set in its ways. Then certainly, in the Hebrew College, where he was fully able to realize what he thought he was creating, in a way, when he created the *havurah*, which was a rabbinical training institution. Now he actually is running one that has elements of the community side to it, but certainly in its curriculum and its vision of what it means to be

a rabbi, yeah. Absolutely. (04:24:00) I think that that's absolutely true. And you know, it's interesting to see, if you look at the people who came out of New York Havurah and Fabrangen and Havurat Shalom that ended up running stuff in various ways, the way that their *havurah* experience either influenced those institutions, or at any rate influenced the people and the way they thought about those institutions, it was really kind of remarkable. I feel extremely fortunate that I was able to be part of that sort of flowering. It was just a short period of time, five or six years in my life. But the fact that all those people came together at that period of time. I remember somebody saying to me some years ago that if you look at the history of Isaac Luria in Tzfat, it was three years. I mean, the community continued. But Luria himself, I think — you have to look at Larry Fine's biography of Luria — but I think in Tzfat itself, the famous community in Tzfat, it was only three years with Luria as the head. So there are these moments in Jewish history like the Lehrhaus, where you just get really lucky with who shows up at the same time, and it's a remarkable — in a way what's really remarkable about these kinds of communities is, they're accidental in the sense of who actually comes. As an example, as a kind of parallel but a slight contrast in a way, I've often thought about this is in recent years. There was a moment in time where the Jewish Theological Seminary had essentially the greatest collection of Judaica scholars outside of Israel. It was after the Holocaust, so all that was gone. And of course you had the Hebrew University. But JTS had, for a moment in time, Spiegel and Louis Ginsberg and Lieberman and Heschel, and they were all there. But that's different from the *havurah*, because they were recruited there — (04:27:00) Solomon Schechter, earlier in the century, and Finkelstein for sure. Finkelstein went out to get an all-star team, and he enticed those people to come, and that's not what happened in the *havurah*. I'm not saying that we're better than they were. Finkelstein was a great visionary and that's what he wanted. You could argue whether that was the right thing for the American Jewish community. But given that what happened with the Shoah, I think that Finkelstein wanted there to be a center of scholarship to preserve what mattered to him, which was the great tradition of European academic scholarship. And he said, I've got to have Lieberman. I'm going to get Lieberman. David Weiss Halivni, he's a genius. I'm going to get him. You know, H.L. Ginsberg. But that's different. That's really different. People floated in because they heard about it. That's really what happened. So that's my story. *[laughs]*

JG: Thank you so much, Barry, for sharing your story. It was truly a pleasure and an honor.

BH: Thank you.

Addendum

Pg. 3: After checking with my sister and cousin I realize that at least before my teenage years we went to my grandmother virtually every Friday night! When we got older — when I was in high school — we went less often

Pg. 12: I think what I meant is "You know that connection of Judaism and the Civil Rights movement is something we're aware of."

Pg. 22: Abbie was Bob Abramson's nickname.

Pg. 23: *Memoirs of a Fortunate Jew* by Dan Vittorio Segre