



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE  
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*Preserving American Jewish History*

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Series E: General Alphabetical Files. 1960-1992

Box 83, Folder 1, Havurah, 1979-1981.



SECOND HAVURAH SUMMER INSTITUTE

PLEASE TRY TO BE ON TIME FOR ALL SESSIONS. THE SMOOTH FUNCTIONING OF THE INSTITUTE DEPENDS IN LARGE MEASURE ON YOUR COOPERATION AND PROMPTNESS.

*Additions to this program and schedules for the Children's Program are to be found elsewhere in your kit, and will also be posted.*

*Participants are encouraged to visit the exhibitors and craftspersons who are located on-the ground floor of DuBois Dormitory*

*All meals will be served in Mark Twain (University) Commons, across the street from the dormitories. (Note: this is not where we ate last year.)*

*The food lines in the Commons will close at the indicated times. Do not come late or you will miss a meal.*

PROGRAM

Monday, July 6, 1981

2:00-5:00 P.M.	Arrival and Registration	Mark Twain Commons
5:30-6:30 P.M.	Dinner	Cafeteria-Mark Twain
6:30-7:45 P.M.	<u>Opening Program: Introductions, Greetings, Instructions.</u> Chair: Joseph G. Rosenstein	Cafeteria-Mark Twain
8:45-10:00 P.M.	<u>Second Morning Session</u> (This is the first meeting of the Second Morning Session, which will normally meet from 11:00 A.M.-12:15 P.M.)	Gengras Student Center
	<u>The Prophetic Literature and Social Change</u>	<u>Jeff Dekro</u> Room D
	<u>Jewish Women in the Modern World: Recovering a Lost Past</u>	<u>Sue Elwell</u> Room C
	<u>Contemporary Jewish Issues</u>	<u>Edward Feld</u> Room E

Monday, July 6, 1981 (continued)

The Eastern European Jewish Experience

How Can a Modern Jew Believe

Responses to Catastrophe in Jewish Literature

Covenant

The Golden Age of Andalusian Spain

Modern Hebrew and Yiddish Poetic Midrashim on Biblical Personalities

Relationships Between Jews and Non-Jews

Jewish Folk Tales

Gershon Hundert

Hillyer Rm. 130

Tu, W, Th, F - Hillyer Rm. 246

Hershel Matt

Hillyer Rm. 135

Tu, W, Th, F - Hillyer Rm. 255

Alan Mintz

Gengras Rm. F

Ludwig Nadelmann

Gengras-Board Room

Michael Paley

Gengras-Faculty Dining Room

Max Ticktin

Gengras Room G

Ellen Umansky

Gengras Room B

Chava Weissler

Gengras Room H

10:15-11:00 P.M.

Reference Groups

After a short break, please return to the room you were just in. The class, including the teacher, will be reconstituted as a reference group, with one member of the class designated as leader of the group.

11:10-

Snack and Free Time

Tuesday, July 7, 1981

7:15-8:00 A.M.

Tefillot

Leader: Bill Kavesh

Lounge in basement of Willard

7:30-8:30 A.M.

Breakfast

Cafeteria-Mark Twain

Tuesday, July 7, 1981 (continued)

8:30-9:15 A.M.	<u>Beit Midrash (Study Session)</u> Leader: Sharon Strassfeld	Cafeteria-Mark Twain
9:30-10:45 A.M.	<u>First Morning Session</u> <u>An Inquiry into Biblical Text</u>	Gengras (except for Matt and Teutsch) <u>Ruth Zielenziger</u> Room E
	<u>Hasidic Commentaries on the Torah</u>	<u>Meir Tamari</u> Room F
	<u>Psalms</u>	<u>George Savran</u> Room D
	<u>Homiletical Midrash: The Voice of the Rabbis</u>	<u>Barry Holtz</u> Room C
	<u>Midrash on Consciousness</u>	<u>Lawrence Kushner</u> Room G
	<u>Personalities in the Talmud</u>	<u>Solomon Mowshowitz</u> Room H
	<u>Assault and Battery: The Talmudic View</u>	<u>Eliezer Diamond</u> Room B
	<u>Reality Map Adjuncts</u>	<u>Zalman Schachter Shalomi</u> Faculty Dining Room
	<u>Tzedakah</u>	<u>Allan Lehmann</u> Board Room
	<u>Zohar</u>	<u>Daniel Matt</u> Hillyer, Rm. 246 (On Shabbat, Hillyer Rm. 130)
	<u>From Moses to Mendel to Marvin: Revelation, Inspiration and Authority</u>	<u>David Teutsch</u> Hillyer, Rm. 255 (On Shabbat, Hillyer Rm. 135)
11:00-12:15 P.M.	<u>Second Morning Session</u> (See Monday evening listings)	
12:30-1:30 P.M.	<u>Lunch</u>	Cafeteria-Mark Twain
1:30-3:00 P.M.	<u>Free Time</u>	

Tuesday, July 7, 1981 (continued)

3:00-4:00 P.M.

Informal Sessions

These three workshops will each meet three times (or more) during the Institute. The choir and drama workshops will give brief performances on Shabbat. Whether the Hebrew workshop focuses on reading, speaking or translating will depend on the participants.

Choir Workshop

Leaders: Arlene Agus,  
Ruth Hundert

Gengras-Room D

Drama Workshop

Leader: Deborah Baer Quinn

Gengras-Faculty Dining Room

Hebrew Workshop

Leader: To be announced

Gengras-Room C

3:00-5:00 P.M.

S'micha Examination for  
Michael Paley

Gengras-Room G

4:00-5:00 P.M.

First Afternoon Session

The Bible and Personal Health

Bert Cohen  
Gengras-Board Room

Conversion and Children of  
Converts

Rachel Cowan  
Gengras-Room C

The Jewish Poor: Building Coalitions  
As a Response to the 80's

Misha Avramoff  
Gengras-Faculty Dining Room

The Book of Job

Heidi Ravven  
Gengras-Room D

Havurot Anathemas: Leadership,  
Dependency, Structure, Community

Bernard Reisman  
Gengras-Room E

Traditional Jewish Approaches  
to Nature and the Environment

Eli Schaap  
Gengras-Room F

5:15-6:15 P.M.

Second Afternoon Session

During this session there will be five mini-courses, each of which will also meet on Wednesday and Thursday at this time, as well as another five individual sessions.



Tuesday, July 7, 1981 (continued)

Mini-Courses

Ethical and Moral Issues  
in Economics

Meir Tamari  
Gengras-Room D

This course will discuss what the Jewish tradition, represented by the classical Jewish texts, says about the organization and conduct of business affairs, at both the individual and social levels.

Torah Trop for Beginners

Ellen Frankel  
Gengras-Board Room

Starting from the beginning, this course will culminate in students' preparing and reading the Torah at the Shabbat services.

An Introduction to the Prayerbook

Dan Sherbill  
Gengras-Room C

This course will discuss the format of the prayerbook, the structure of the daily and Shabbat services and the main themes of tefillah. Bring a Siddur (any Siddur) with you.

Arabesque with Zalman  
Topic in flux.

Zalman Schacter-Shalomi  
Gengras-Faculty Dining Room

Writing as Self-Discovery

Merle Feld  
Gengras-Room B

We will use our own spontaneous writing as a means of exploring the self and sharing within the group. The emphasis will not be on writing as final product but rather on writing as process by which we can learn, grow, reflect, enjoy. Jewish and general themes will be explored. Bring an open hand, child's eye, sense of humor. Come for all three sessions or not at all please.

Individual Sessions

Programming for Young Children

Marga Kamm  
Gengras-Room E

Jewish Folk Medicine

Bill Kavesh  
Gengras-Room F

Homosexuality

Hershel Matt  
Gengras-Room H

Tuesday, July 7, 1981 (continued)

	<u>Group Dynamics and Leadership for Havurot I: Theory</u>	<u>Bernard Reisman</u> Gengras-Lounge
	<u>Jewish Cermonial Art-A History (with slides) of the Menorah</u>	<u>Rivka Walton</u> Gengras South Cafeteria
6:30-7:30 P.M.	<u>Dinner</u>	Cafeteria-Mark Twain
7:45-9:15 P.M.		Gengras Lounge
7:30-9:00 P.M.	<u>Panel: Synagogue Havurot</u> Panelists: Lawrence Kushner, Bernard Reisman Moderator: Joseph G. Rosenstein Members of the Hartford community will be specifically invited to this panel.	Gengras South Cafeteria
9:30-11:00 P.M.	<u>Film: Image Before My Eyes</u>	Gengras South Cafeteria
11:10-	<u>Snack and Free Time</u>	Cafeteria-Mark Twain

Wednesday, July 8, 1981

7:15-8:00 A.M.	<u>Tefillot</u> Leader: Michael Paley	Lounge in basement of Willard
7:30-8:30 A.M.	<u>Breakfast</u>	Cafeteria-Mark Twain
8:30-9:15 A.M.	<u>Beit Midrash</u> Preparation for first morning sessions.	Cafeteria-Mark Twain
9:30-10:45 A.M.	<u>First Morning Session</u> See page 3 for schedule.	
11:00-12:15 P.M.	<u>Second Morning Session</u> See pages 1 and 2 for schedule.	
12:30-1:30 P.M.	<u>Lunch</u>	Cafeteria-Mark Twain
1:30-3:00 P.M.	<u>Free Time</u>	
3:00-4:00 P.M.	<u>Informal Sessions</u> See page 4 for schedule.	



Wednesday, July 8, 1981 (continued)

3:00 P.M.-

Program: Spirituality, Torah  
and the Evolution of Consciousness  
Edward Feld and Lawrence Kushner  
will read and discuss passages from  
their books dealing with this topic.

Gengras-Room G

4:00-5:00 P.M.

First Afternoon Session  
During this session, there will be  
six discussion groups dealing with  
different life situations. Each  
group will meet again on Friday  
afternoon.

Functioning as a Jew in the  
Professional World

Facilitator: to be announced  
Gengras-Room C

Writing an Ethical Will

Facilitator: Elizabeth David  
Gengras-Board Room

\*Raising a Jewish Child Today

Facilitator: Arlene Pianko Groner  
Gengras-Room H

\*Concerns of Singles

Facilitator: Bill Novak  
Gengras-Faculty Dining Room

Women's Group

Facilitator: to be announced  
Gengras-Room F

Why Jewish Men and Jewish Women  
Love/Hate One Another

Facilitator: Fern Amper  
Gengras-Room G

\*After an initial discussion  
period, these groups may break  
up into smaller groups, each of  
which will focus on specific issues.  
How this is done will depend on the  
concerns raised by the participants.

5:15-6:15 P.M.

Second Afternoon Session

Mini-Courses

See page 5 for schedule

Individual Sessions

Workshop for Jewish Educators

Itzhak Marmorstein  
Gengras-Room E

Assault and Battery: The Marital  
View or Religious Friction in  
Relationships

Eliezer Diamond, Olga Grun  
Gengras-Room F



Wednesday, July 8, 1981 (continued)

	<u>Chanting and Studying Lamentations</u>	<u>Ben Oxenhandler</u> Gengras-Room G
	<u>Group Dynamics and Leadership for Havurot II: Case Discussions</u>	<u>Bernard Reisman</u> Gengras-Lounge
	<u>Judaism and Vegetarianism</u>	<u>Jonathan Wolf</u> Gengras-Room H
6:30-7:30 P.M.	<u>Dinner</u>	Cafeteria-Mark Twain
7:45-9:30 P.M.	<u>Panel: The Last Taboo--Talking About Money</u> Panelists: Paul Cowan Sharon Strassfeld Moderator: Steve Shaw	Gengras South Cafeteria
7:45-9:15 P.M.	<u>Scavenger Hunt</u> Please volunteer to help.	Head Scavenger: <u>Arleen Stern</u> Meet on patio in front of Mark Twain Commons.
9:30-11:00 P.M.	<u>Israeli and Folk Dancing</u> Teachers: Paul Jenner Sandy Dashefsky	Gengras Lounge
11:10-	<u>Snack and Free Time</u>	Cafeteria-Mark Twain

Thursday, July 9, 1981

7:15-8:00 A.M.	<u>Tefillot</u> Leader: Chava Weissler	Lounge in basement of Willard
7:30-8:30 A.M.	<u>Breakfast</u>	Cafeteria-Mark Twain
8:30-9:15 A.M.	<u>Beit Midrash</u> Preparation for first morning session.	Cafeteria-Mark Twain
9:30-10:45 A.M.	<u>First Morning Session</u> See page 3 for schedule.	
11:00-12:15 P.M.	<u>Second Morning Session</u> See pages 1 and 2 for schedule.	
12:30-1:30 P.M.	<u>Lunch</u>	Cafeteria-Mark Twain
1:30-3:00 P.M.	<u>Free Time</u>	



Thursday, July 9, 1981 (continued)

3:00-5:00 P.M.

Program: Toward Effective  
Equality--Where Do We Go From  
Here?

Gengras Lounge

A program to examine those obstacles which still remain to equality between women and men within the Jewish community (Havurah and otherwise). We wish to focus on what is necessary if we are to be able to live fully satisfying lives as Jewish women in the belief that the reconstruction of Jewish life which would follow will better meet the needs of both men and women. The session will address problems in areas including Jewish education, liturgy, and family and community structures, and will direct attention to ways in which we can take action together in our home communities. Organized by Martha Ackelsberg, Betsy Cohen, Sue Elwell, Lynn Gottlieb, Deborah Hirsch, Judith Plaskow, Ruth Sohn and Chava Weissler.

5:15-6:15 P.M.

Second Afternoon Session

Mini-Courses

See page 5 for schedule

Individual Sessions

Abortion and Reproduction and the  
Jewish Tradition: An Open Forum

Arlene Agus, Dina Rosenfeld  
Gengras-Room H

Judaism and the Elderly

Nancy Berlow, Larry Somer  
Gengras-Room G

Questions and Answers about  
Reconstructionism

Ludwig Nadelmann, David Teutsch  
Gengras Lounge

Living Together

Saul Perlmutter  
Gengras-Room F

Values in Kashrut

Jonathan Wolf  
Hillyer-Room 246

Independent Havurah Schools

Martha Aft.  
Gengras-Room E

6:30-7:30 P.M.

Dinner

Cafeteria-Mark Twain



Thursday, July 9, 1981 (continued)

- |                              |  |   |
|------------------------------|--|---|
| 7:45-9:15 P.M.               | <u>A Fair</u> , featuring...<br>...a variety of "hands-on"<br>activities including making a<br>mezuzah, making a tallit,<br>weaving...<br>...and a variety of "hands-on"<br>tutorial activities including<br>how to make Kiddush, how to put on<br>tefillin, what the inside of a<br>Sefer Torah looks like...   | Gengras South Cafeteria<br><br>Organizer: Rivka Walton<br><br>Organizer: Michael Strassfeld                                     |
| 9:30-11:00 P.M.              | <u>Program: A Feminist Cabaret</u><br>An evening of poetry, storytelling,<br>music and movement designed to<br>express the Jewish feminist vision<br>which underlies demands for<br>religious and institutional change.<br>Selections will have a double<br>focus: Our pain at the silence and<br>subordination of women throughout<br>history and the ways in which<br>women have nonetheless expressed<br>and defined our own experience and<br>are reclaiming our past in the<br>present. | Organizer: Judith Plaskow<br>Participants: Lynn Gottlieb,<br>Chava Weissler,<br>Sue Elwell and<br>others.<br><br>Gengras Lounge |
| 11:10-                       | <u>Snack and Free Time</u>   | Cafeteria-Mark Twain  |
| <u>Friday, July 10, 1981</u> |  |   |
| 7:15-8:00 A.M.               | <u>Tefillot</u><br>Leader: Lainie Bergman  | Lounge in basement<br>of Willard  |
| 7:30-8:30 A.M.               | <u>Breakfast</u>   | Cafeteria-Mark Twain  |
| 8:30-9:15 A.M.               | <u>Beit Midrash</u><br>Preparation for first<br>morning session.   | Cafeteria-Mark Twain  |
| 9:30-10:45 A.M.              | <u>First Morning Session</u><br>See page 3 for schedule.   |   |
| 11:00-12:15 P.M.             | <u>Second Morning Session</u><br>See pages 1 and 2 for schedule.   |   |
| 12:30-1:30 P.M.              | <u>Lunch</u>   | Cafeteria-Mark Twain  |

Friday, July 10, 1981 (continued)

1:45-2:45 P.M.	<u>First Afternoon Session</u>	Gengras
	<u>Starting a Small-Town Havurah</u>	<u>Herb Levine</u> Room B
	<u>Organizing Havurot in Synagogues</u>	<u>Saul Rubin</u> Room C
	<u>Torah and the Arts</u>	<u>Jeff Oboler</u> Room D
	<u>Mikveh, Sexuality and Large Families</u>	<u>Barbara Widis Morris</u> Room E
	<u>Rabbinical Judaism and Psychodynamic Psychology: Striking Parallels in Their Views of Human Nature</u>	<u>Leonard J. Aronson</u> Room F
	<u>Workshop on the Rise of Anti-Semitism</u>	<u>Shemesh Johannes</u> Room G
	<u>Tzniut: Restraint in Dress and Bearing</u>	<u>Dvora Tamari</u> Board Room
	<u>Intermarried Couples</u>	<u>Ateret Cohen</u> Room H
	<u>Working with Retarded Jewish Adults</u>	<u>Sharon Marmorstein</u> Faculty Dining Room
3:00-4:00 P.M.	<u>Second Afternoon Session</u> See page 7 for continuation of groups that met Wednesday, 4-5 P.M.	
4:00-5:00 P.M.	<u>Informal Sessions</u> See page 4 for continuation of workshops that met Tuesday, 3-4 P.M.	
4:00-6:00 P.M.	<u>Free Time/Shabbat Preparation</u>	
6:30-9:00 P.M.	<u>Kabbalat Shabbat/Dinner</u>	Cafeteria-Mark Twain
9:15-10:45 P.M.	<u>Programs</u>	
	<u>Z'mirot</u>	Cafeteria-Mark Twain
	<u>Balaam Roast</u> <u>Study of the Parshat HaShavuah</u>	Lounge, basemant of Willard

Friday, July 10, 1981 (continued)

	<u>Story-telling</u> The story of Elijah and other stories told with participation	<u>Yitzhak Buxbaum &amp; others</u> Malcolm X Lounge
11:10-	<u>Snack and Free Time</u>	Cafeteria-Mark Twain

Shabbat, July 11, 1981

8:15-9:15 A.M.	<u>Breakfast</u>	Cafeteria-Mark Twain
9:15-12:15 P.M.	<u>Tefillot</u>	
	<u>Service for Beginners</u>	Gengras-Room C
	<u>Traditional Service with Torah Reading and Discussion</u>	Gengras-Lounge
	<u>Full Traditional Service</u>	Gengras-Room F
	<u>Service with Zalman Schachter-Shalomi</u>	Gengras-Faculty Dining Room
12:30-1:30 P.M.	<u>Lunch</u>	Cafeteria-Mark Twain
1:30-3:45 P.M.	<u>Free Time</u>	
3:45-4:15 P.M.	<u>Mincha</u>	Gengras Lounge
4:15-5:00 P.M.	<u>Beit Midrash</u>	Meet in regular First Morning Session classroom
5:00-6:15 P.M.	<u>First Morning Session</u> See page 3 for schedule.	
6:30-7:30 P.M.	<u>Seudah Shlishit-Dinner</u>	Cafeteria-Mark Twain
7:30-9:00 P.M.	<u>Siyyum</u> Celebrating our completion of a week of study.	Organizer: Joseph G. Rosenstein Cafeteria-Mark Twain
9:00-10:00 P.M.	<u>Havdala</u> Leader: Michael Strassfeld	Cafeteria-Mark Twain
10:00-	<u>Evening Program:</u> Entertainment and Auction	Organizer: Peggy Brill Cafeteria-Mark Twain



Sunday, July 12, 1981

7:45-8:30 A.M.	<u>Tefillot</u> Leader: to be announced	Lounge, Willard basement
8:15-9:15 A.M.	<u>Breakfast</u>	Cafeteria-Mark Twain
8:45-9:45 A.M.	<u>Closing Session</u> Chair: David Teutsch	Cafeteria-Mark Twain



# National Jewish Conference Center

250 W. 57th Suite 216 NYC 10019 (212) 582-6116

Elie Wiesel, Honorary Chairman  
Neil Norry, Chairman  
Dr. Irving Greenberg, Director  
Jeffrey Heilpern, Executive Director

August 3, 1979  
10 Av, 1979

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR . . .

## ABOUT THIS PAPER

Michael Goldberg's study offers both an interesting historical framework and concrete proposals for action in a key, developing area of Jewish life--the havurah. The emerging common interests he describes must be nurtured carefully. With trust and cooperation, the whole community will be strengthened by the havurah. However, if rivalry and short-sighted competitive attitudes prevail, the impact of a potentially strong source for spiritual renewal will be severely limited. Indeed, the manner in which this new communal form is handled by both federations and synagogues will be a test case of cooperation for the common good.

We, at the NJCC, see great potential for the havurah movement; we support its growth and further integration into the mainstream of American Jewish life.

## ABOUT NJCC'S PROGRAM

### The First National Havurah Conference:

Our commitment to the development of the havurah movement found concrete expression this past month: the NJCC co-sponsored the First National Havurah Conference. With over 300 participants, the Conference was uniformly described as a major success, bringing together individuals from synagogue and independent havurot all over the country. The story was picked up by the New York Times and several Jewish newspapers and magazines, signifying the importance of this new form of religious community. We are preparing a photo-essay on the Conference which we will share with you in the coming months.

### The National Conference on Change and the Jewish Professional:

The Conference on Change and the Jewish Professional will take place on August 21 and 22, at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. It will bring together approximately 45 key younger Jewish professionals to examine the direction of American Jewish life and to consider both personal and professional goals and tactics. One main portion of the program will be devoted to the Israel-Diaspora connection--its dilemmas and challenges, in a panel with Ira Silverman, Arnold Wolfe and Ted Mann. Another main focus will be the problematics of innovation and change in the American Jewish community. The Conference promises to be the start of a valuable network of committed younger Jewish professionals across the country--a network which will paral-

lel the network of scholars from the Pawling Conference.

The National Conference on Change and the Jewish Professional marks the completion of our 1978-79 program year, our fullest ever. A year-end report is being prepared and will be distributed in early fall.

We are encouraged and energized by the very positive response our programs have generated from our many target audiences: lay leaders, community groups, Jewish academics, Jewish professionals, and emerging groups such as the Havurah movement. We look forward to continuing to serve the needs of these diverse groups, working together to help enrich and renew the Jewish community.

Sincerely,



Irving Greenberg

AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES



זכר אלה יעקב וישראל

National Jewish Conference Center  
**POLICY STUDIES '79**

250W57 Suite 216 NYC 10019 (212) 582-6116

Elie Wiesel, Honorary Chairman  
Neil Nory, Chairman  
Dr. Irving Greenberg, Director

August, 1979



*This study suggests new approaches to integrating the relationship between the federations and the synagogue and to applying their considerable joint potential to the havurah. Interrelationships between these institutions are still difficult because of competition for limited resources. Several proposals for cooperation are made: federation-sponsored rabbinical student internships in federations, federation staff rabbis and permanent communal scholars-in-residence to serve as resource persons to havurot.*

\* \* \*

Dr. Irving Greenberg has frequently suggested that the Jewish people are now entering the "third era of Jewish history," an era demanding additional modes of Jewish identity and group affiliation. This community is not the first to be so situated. The generation after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE also was required to adapt to a new situation and to create new institutions and channels for personal response.

In that generation, the Temple permeated the existence of every Jew. It was the center and focus of Jewish life the world over. It was both the concrete embodiment of God's Covenant with Israel and the place where Israel and its God drew near to one another. As such it was also the symbol of national identity, self-determination, and self-government. The Temple remains an ever-present reality to this day through the liturgy.

By destroying the Temple, the Romans shredded the Jewish communal fabric, but the religio-legal leaders of the day immediately reweave the fragments into a new institutional garment. Actually, it was an old/new garment, for much of the old material was reshaped into new and different forms. The synagogue - the mikdash m'at, the small Temple - now became the major ideological and physical mode of expression of the Jewish community, its representative institution.

Transformed into a house of assembly, the synagogue offered a place for prayer, study, community business and social life, thus shaping the texture of the Jewish community for the next 2000 years.

Today, the synagogue (like the Temple of old) is slowly giving way to a new center and focus of Jewish life - the federation and its constituent agencies. However, unlike the Temple, which was plundered by the enemy, the synagogue is being divested of its functions from the "inside," by the Jewish community itself. This radical shift characterizes the "third era of Jewish history."

The lure of the majority culture, resulting in natural trends of acculturation, assimilation, and alienation, the impact of the Holocaust, and the rebirth of Israel have divested the synagogue of many of its former functions and transferred them to newly created institutions more effective in serving the community's needs: the Jewish federations. In some instances the transfer has been fully justified by improved performance. In raising funds for communal needs, for instance, the synagogue cannot compete with Federation-UJA. Combining the traditional, ingrained Jewish practice of tzedakah with streamlined community organization has made UJA into the most successful philanthropy in the world.

Few synagogues have the physical facilities of the Jewish community center with its handball courts, swimming pool, library, game rooms, and all the activities that typically go with them. There are also far more effective Jewish educational programs available now than some offered by the synagogue. Many examples can be given: work holidays and missions to Israel, summer camps, communal day schools, federation-sponsored lecture series, weekends and retreats. All of these kindle sparks of Jewish commitment that the congregational Sunday and afternoon schools have not generally managed to ignite. Out of its original functions, the one area left to the synagogue is prayer and the rituals of the life-cycle and few modern people have the desire to pray, especially in this structured manner.

As the synagogue loses its vital function, it also loses its vital force. The most recent CJF (Council of Jewish Federations) census shows American Jews leaving the synagogue in ever larger numbers so that less than half are now synagogue-affiliated. There are good reasons for this statistic. Frequently synagogues have adopted the money-standard of success or have been smitten by what is jokingly called the "edifice complex." Commitment, study, observance, and participation are upheld as ideals but are not generally required as conditions for membership. When such congregations become "successful," their growth makes it increasingly difficult for the rabbi, the professional staff, or the core of committed congregants to reach out to the membership on any kind of sustained or personal level.

Though many Jews first come to the synagogue to find "sanctuary" from the impersonality of society, many soon identify the synagogue as just another example of the depersonalizing, monolithic, impermeable society from which they tried to escape. Starkly put, the problem is: If the synagogue only reproduces and reinforces the overwhelming sense of anonymity, alienation, and money-based value system prevalent in the larger society, what is its positive value?

On its side, the synagogue must struggle with the economies of scale: How many members are required to assure continuity? What are the economics of establishing a religious school, and what are the effects of the declining birthrate on an already established school? What of demographic stability? The rabbis have their own problems: Their task of building religious community is made difficult by the synagogue's structure and the limits on their role. At the same time they must struggle against the lack of commitment and consensus among the membership. Given the prevailing secularist tendencies of the times, the synagogue may well use membership figures to point out that all things considered, it's not doing such a bad job. That this is true is borne out by the fact that communal movement is not totally "away from the synagogue." The picture is far more complex than that. Demographic shifts, individual leaders' charisma, and occasional exceptional programming have sometimes resulted in a considerable rise in the membership figures and dollar income of certain congregations.

One response to the difficulties that beset the Jewish community has been the creation of a new organization within the framework of the synagogue. The havurah is one of the fruitful results of the search for Jewish roots in the 1960's. It is an attempt to create an intimate setting for Jewish learning, community-building, prayer, and celebration. The first havurot were formed in reaction to existing communal structures, but lately both synagogues and community centers have successfully adapted this model to fill their needs.

The historical roots of the havurah, like those of the synagogue, reach back to Temple times. The early havurot attempted to stem the disintegration and alienation imposed by the intense pressure of the Roman empire by creating places for Jews where they belonged and where it mattered that they belonged.

Responding to similar pressures, today's havurot seek escape from the pressure and bland impersonality of mass-society in government, in the street and in the synagogue; they seek a community of consensus that can reasonably be created in associations of ten or twenty members but which miscarries in larger groups. "Consensus" means "to feel with" and connotes "belonging in both affective and cognitive ways." This necessarily involves creating values and characteristics that are unique to the group and make belonging important. The struggle to arrive at a consensus requires that the group identify and think through their convictions about what is central in Judaism.

Matters such as group observance of Shabbat and Kashrut are examples of the kind of questions havurot must address. Many havurot reach crises over such issues. Despite that danger, the increased discussion and dialogue are usually good for the individual's growth as well as the group's.

The coming of age of the havurot is symbolized by a recently concluded conference sponsored by the NJCC: The First National Havurah Conference brought together 250 leaders of the many different varieties of havurot from all over the country. It welded the many parts of the movement into a united group of radiant centers and showed the common interests that havurah members have regardless of age or other ideological commitments.

Havurot have helped to reduce some of the problems affecting Jewish life in America, but a great deal of additional effort is required before they can become visible small communities within the larger group. If the federations have indeed displaced the synagogue as the center of Jewish institutional life, how can this benefit the synagogue, which remains, after all, the most time-honored and complete expression of Jewish tradition and religiosity? If the havurot are to be encouraged as a way to help people in their quest for Jewishness, how can they gain maximal access to educational resources and resource people? The synagogue alone cannot provide them. Rabbis, already hard-pressed for the time and energy required to reach out to their congregants in the standard synagogue structure, cannot now assume the additional, however challenging, burden of ministering to the diverse needs of the havurot, e.g. leadership training, observing and modifying group dynamics, teaching, adapting the group to a new lifestyle. One key to helping rabbis adapt to the new needs generated by havurot must be retraining.

In that area federations can be of considerable assistance to congregational rabbis. This parallels the federations' services to families, children and the aged, which make wide use of group therapy techniques and require specially trained technicians. The federations' expertise could be applied productively to training congregational rabbis in "process skills." This involves instruction in group dynamics, from bringing the group together and directing the interplay among the various personality types to facilitating the group's development into maturity and the beginnings of its old age. Groups tend to disintegrate eventually, but this kind of expertise is invaluable if havurot are to have full and rich lifespans. All too often they disintegrate because they do not get enough help in solving their problems. This is generally not a significant part of rabbis' professional training - their strength is in Jewish textual studies, ritual, moral questions. Federations may train rabbis directly or provide specialists in group work to assist them. Increasing the rabbis' competence in this area will prepare them for what may turn into an important new tool for dealing with members of their congregations. By offering such training, federations can help significantly to strengthen synagogue life.

An extension of this approach might take the form of one year internships for rabbinical students. They could combine this kind of

study, exposure to federation work and efforts reaching out to the unaffiliated and linking them to already existing resources. These interns might aid havurot, synagogues, and the federations at the same time. The synagogues might find that their havurot can reach the unaffiliated more effectively than the less personal and more stratified main institution, thus aiding everyone. And later, as rabbis, the people trained in this way will be natural synagogue - federation links.

The federations, with their genius for applying the American techniques of efficient division of labor and organizational design to the Jewish community, could provide a reservoir of other resources to havurot as well. Through a variety of agencies, the federations already provide a range of specialized services and resources: counselors and caseworkers through Jewish Family Services, social and recreational activities through Jewish community centers, education through adult classes and lecture series. Just as the federations retain staffs of social workers and psychologists, they could retain a variety of rabbis, scholars and teachers on staff to meet the various needs of the different havurot.

Let's suppose that a havurah has formed around the conviction that regular, in-depth study of traditional texts is central to living an authentic Jewish life. It could then approach the federation for contact with rabbis or teachers on its staff whose strength or specialty is instruction in such texts. A part of the difficulty of relying solely on congregational rabbis is the unrealistic expectation that they excel at each and every task without recognition that different rabbis have different strengths. If the federation rabbi and a particular havurah found each other congenial, that havurah would become a part of that rabbi's caseload. They then would begin to build a long-term relationship in which they could utilize the rabbi as a resource whenever they needed one. Should the rabbi and havurah find one another incompatible or should the havurah's needs change, the group could cooperate with the federation to seek alternative guidance, an opportunity not afforded at present by the synagogue.

In either case, unlike the unrealizable concept of the present system that envisions a rabbi able to relate meaningfully to each and every congregant, the proposed model sees federation-rabbis each with a caseload of havurot comprising ten or twenty families. In this way, the rabbis and the people they serve will have a reasonable chance to relate, while the responsibility of forming a community will fall on the havurah members themselves.

Improved federation-synagogue-havurah relationships are bound to revitalize synagogue life. In their search for richer expressions of their Jewishness, havurah members will want to learn the skills necessary to live authentic Jewish lives. The federation-rabbi could be instrumental in laying theoretical foundations, developing actual skills, and facilitating members' integration back into the synagogue. The result could be revolutionary in bringing about what Rabbi Harold Schulweis has called the "declergyfication" of the synagogue, the ability of ordinary Jews to "rabbi" for themselves. This represents the revitalization of the traditional Jewish practice of expecting congregants to serve as ba'alei

tefillah (leaders of the worship service) and assuming that Jews can guide the ritual life of their families. The Jewish people are supposed to be a nation of priests, not a nation with priests. As people return to being their own priests, the pastoral responsibilities of congregational rabbis will be eased so that they will be able to return to the role of resource persons and guides, reaching their congregants in a deeper and more personal manner. The benefits to Jewish education will also be enormous. A havurah's members, having attained such skills and devotion to practice, will be able to teach them, indeed, will automatically teach them to others. Close havurah-congregation contacts will increase the pool of knowledge and the will to participate within the synagogue, thus returning to that institution the richness and vibrance that is often lacking now.

Retaining a staff of scholars and rabbis at federations will be costly. A part of the expense may be covered by budget allocations. Since the synagogue is the direct or indirect beneficiary, it could reasonably be asked to allocate a certain percentage of its budget to federation to pay for its services. The havurot could pay on a sliding scale or pay-as-you-go basis.

Should the federation be allowed to involve itself in supporting independent (i.e. non-synagogue-affiliated) havurot? This may easily become another area of tension. Affiliation or non-affiliation does not matter to federation, but from the synagogue's point of view the federation here trespasses on its territory, threatening both its ideological role and its financial underpinnings. In such a case, the federation might charge for its services and return all or a percentage of the money to the synagogue or synagogues under its umbrella. This problem too demands a greater degree of resolution.

No matter what method of financing is adopted, closer economic and organizational ties between havurot, synagogues, and federations will lead to closer and more frequent contacts among them. Such contacts will bring federations into greater contact with Jewish ideologies. Rabbis on the staff would probably act as voices on behalf of Jewish tradition and values. They could also provide better Jewish training for the staffs of federations' constituent agencies. As these are "Judaized", one facet of synagogue-federation tension would be resolved. As the synagogue and the havurot become increasingly involved with the federation, their capacity to influence federation will increase. This can only result in greater dialogue and mutual understanding among all concerned.

Federations will take a giant step forward by appointing "scholars-in-residence" to permanent staff positions. In larger cities with many havurot, several such scholars could be engaged as specialists.

The scholar-in-residence will help the rabbis who are already over-committed or a rabbi whose expertise focuses on one area while a havurah is interested in another. The direct linkage of the scholar-in-residence with a havurah could also help to overcome the limited focus and knowledge characteristic of some havurot.

While everyone could unquestionably benefit, will potential intellectual competition or division of authority threaten synagogue autonomy? The degree to which it does can be minimized by careful planning. A more knowledgeable and committed congregation might more than compensate through increased commitment for apparent initial dispersion of control.

Apart from these considerations, such appointments will provide very attractive alternatives to existing opportunities. A rabbi may well feel that a federation rather than a synagogue setting offers him the better opportunity to serve in the traditional role of teacher; or Jewish academics may determine that the federation, rather than a university position, offer them the environment in which they can best utilize their teaching abilities, pursue their research, and best of all, join a Jewish community of which they can be valued members. As desirable synagogue and university positions become scarcer, federation may do well in drawing the best Jewish minds back into the Jewish community. If we truly want more and better teaching, we must create a growing number of attractive positions for Jewish educators to bring them "into the fold," keep them there, and enable them to apply their talents to a maximum benefit.

The federation, the synagogue, and the havurot are the institutional bases of the Jewish community as it is now constituted. At present they are very inefficiently linked. To assure greater cooperation, major administrative and emotional obstacles must be faced directly and overcome. In part these involve division of authority, demarcation of responsibilities, and inevitably, budgets. Above all, there is need for greater mutual trust.

Tension will be reduced when it is recognized that federation will not involve itself with questions even bordering on theology or denominational ideologies -- this is simply not federation's business. Before a federation agency begins to work with a synagogue, this policy must be made absolutely clear.

One of the best models of cooperation is Congregation Beth Shalom in Encino, California. There a federation agency, the JCA (Jewish Center Association), sponsors a program for the lay leaders of the congregation's havurot, training them in group skills. This is a clear example of how federation personnel and money can work through the synagogue to support havurah activity. The synagogue's autonomy is not threatened because the program works through the synagogue structure along clearly marked and limited lines.

The synagogue, insisting upon the sole exercise of its traditional role and authority, may be extremely reluctant to function with and for federation, or to have to deal with federation employees planted on its "turf;" it may (wrongly) come to regard itself as no more than an indifferent regional outpost of federation. Initially the synagogue may not like the new pattern, but deriving so many benefits from the relationship, it may learn to accept, even to like it. The question of the degree of independence the synagogue can maintain while accepting federation funds and services has not yet been solved.

A new balance of power is required in which the cooperative nature of the venture overcomes initial resistance to allow a new trust-relationship to develop.

The model of the "scholar on staff" proposed in this essay - a person of recognized credentials working at the top echelon apart from ideological or denominational divisions, available to all who require an expert's knowledge and advice - will go a long way toward binding the federations, synagogues, and havurot - the cornerstones of the Jewish community - closer to one another and in so doing will eliminate some of the painful divisions that now hurt the community's unity and progress.

Once federations have rabbis, scholars-in-residence, and educators (Jewish outreach workers) on their staff, federations and congregations may be able to do something they are failing to do now: By organizing havurot and other less structured religious and educational activities, they may begin to reach out to the unaffiliated and draw them back into active Jewish involvement. Were that their only accomplishment, this venture could be judged a major success.



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# Why Pawling Was Special

## A report on a uniquely Jewish "call to arms" in the quiet hills of New York State.

BY GARY ROSENBLATT  
EDITOR

**I**t was, in a sense, a call to arms. A unique, five-day conference whose participants were asked to serve as "Jewish guerillas" in a struggle not only with the outside Jewish establishment but with their own inner tensions and conflicts as well. The challenge was to change the Jewish community by first changing one's self.

These were not militants or even radicals. They were young academics and professionals, and their leader was not Meir Kahane, but Irving "Yitz" Greenberg, a 46-year-old scholar, rabbi and director of the National Jewish Conference Center.

Greenberg and the Center have a bold vision of re-

structuring and strengthening American Jewish communal life, not by tearing down existing organizations but by linking disparate groups and transcending denominational barriers. Whether or not they will succeed remains to be seen, but the success or failure of their effort will be in an indication of where the Jewish community is heading in the decade ahead.

What follows is report on what is at the very least, an inspiring conference, and at best, the birth of a movement recalling the Biblical days of Ezra and Nehemiah, a period when Jewish scholars and fundraisers worked in consonance for the good of the community and develop a common Jewish agenda:

**T**here's an old mystery novel that opens with a group of strangers on their way to a deserted house. Though they don't know each other, they soon discover they have something in common: they each know the eccentric owner of the house and have received a cryptic message from him, offering a sum of money to spend the night there. Curiosity has motivated them to discover what mysterious plans their host has in store...

That scene flashes through my mind as I sit in a car with three strangers, on a clear, cold Wednesday morning this winter, each of us hundreds of miles from home and family. Our destination: a conference center in Pawling, New York, in the foothills of the Berkshire mountains.

We are on our way to "the first Jewish Leadership Education Training Seminar." None of us has the faintest idea of what that means, or what to expect. But it soon emerges from our discussion that we each know Steve Shaw, an activist rabbi and co-founder of the National Jewish Conference Center, which is co-sponsoring the seminar. Steve had asked us to participate in what he described in his letter as "a unique five-day conference that may play a key role in influencing the direction of the American Jewish community over the next decade."

How can I say no? I had thought when I read the letter. There would be 35 young Jewish academics and professionals from all over the country at the conference, our expenses were to be paid by the NJCC and, most importantly, here was an opportunity to be part of a new project that sounded exciting and important, albeit a bit vague.

Now, here I am two weeks later, about to find out what mysterious plans Steve Shaw and his colleagues have in store for us at Pawling.

### WHY ARE WE HERE?

Riding with me in the car are Jack Mayer, a leadership development specialist for the Council of Jewish Federations; Richard Davis, a Hillel rabbi from Rochester, New York; Gita Rotenberg, a ghost writer for a large Zionist women's organization in Montreal; and Cindy Chazan, a program director for a large Jewish cultural center in Montreal.

Conversation comes easily during the two-hour drive from LaGuardia Airport and by the time we arrive in Pawling, our quartet has become fast friends.

The location is ideal for a retreat. The YMCA adult conference center is actually a small cluster of buildings on a 500-acre tract of rolling country-side, complete with a lake (frozen) and a forest of majestic pine trees.

It is like camp. Remote, idyllic, unreal. There are no outside contacts, no stores, no television or radio, no newspapers, no use for money — just two pay phones connecting us with the real world.

We register and set out to meet our fellow participants, who, it turns out, are mostly academics — teachers of Jewish studies, history and philosophy at more than a dozen universities. All of us, with one or two exceptions, are in our 30's and share a strong commitment to Jewish life on both a personal and professional level.

I am introduced to my roommate for the conference, Arnie Eisen, who teaches Jewish studies at Columbia University, and we are soon discussing our anxieties about the conference — the vague goals, possible "hidden agendas," and the potential for competition among so many bright young intellectuals.

Our fears, it turns out, are shared by the others. At the first session in the afternoon, the whole group is asked to break up into Reference Groups of five or six people.

The Reference Groups are an integral part of the social dynamics here. The idea behind them is to allow every participant to get to know five people well, to create a vehicle for group discussion and to provide an organized way for people to give ongoing evaluation and feed-back to the conference organizers. The Reference Groups, to which membership is assigned randomly, meet about twice each day and it is from them that the most energy emanates.

At this first session, each Reference Group is asked to draw up a list of collective hopes and fears for the conference. A few common themes become evident. First are the hopes: of establishing real personal friendships and professional relationships; of common, specific goals emerging; of gaining practical know-how that could be car-

ried over to one's own life; of creating an ongoing resource group. The fears included those Arnie and I discussed earlier, as well as the concern that this would be a one-shot conference with no follow-up and no lasting value. And there is always the question: what are we here to accomplish — and why us?

Steve Shaw sets out to answer those questions. A short, round-faced bearded man with a warm smile and manner, he is always the "facilitator." A kind of Jewish gnome, Shaw begins by alluding to a key passage in Danial Elazar's *Community and*

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**We are on our way to "the first Jewish Leadership Education Training Seminar." None of us has the faintest idea of what that means.**

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*Polity*, a major book on the organizational dynamics of American Jewry. Published several years ago, Shaw says it has become his bible of Jewish organizational life. In the passage, Elazar point out that while Jewish academics enjoy great prestige among American Jews, they are "peripheral participants" in the communal structure. Largely untapped potential.

Writer Elazar of academics: "By combining the resources at their disposal with a willingness to serve the Jewish people, they become very influential indeed, particularly since they are almost the only leaders in the community who do not gain power because they are employed by the community or give large sum of money to it. Perhaps the biggest problem of academics in pursuing leadership roles is that their universe of discourse is so often alien to the majority of the communal leadership. Only academics who can overcome this communications gap can rise to positions of importance."

Enter the NJCC with a plan to bridge the gap between communal leaders and academics by exposing them to each other. And thus, the Pawling retreat.

"A group like this can bring its great intellectual resources to work with, and on, the Jewish community," Steve Shaw is saying. "We have to make *shidduchim* (matches) between academicians and

communal leaders, to build new alliances. And we have to come up with a game plan that goes beyond the weekend retreat model."

## THE 'SUPERSTARS'

The weekend retreat is currently a very successful method of increasing Jewish identity among the masses. And there are a handful of men with scholarly backgrounds and charismatic personalities who have been able to transmit the idea of "doing Jewish" to large numbers of Federation, UJA, synagogue and other community groups in the last decade.

Known informally (and with a mixture of acclaim and sarcasm) as "the superstars," four men in particular — Yitz Greenberg, Leonard Fein, Mervin Verbit and Allan Pollack — come from diverse backgrounds and levels of observance but have the common ability to touch an audience's Jewish heart and mind.

They are in constant demand and spend a great amount of time flying around the country — for a fee — and conducting weekend retreats and all-day seminars.

scholars who can go out and reach people, but to nurture them and replenish them."

And so, a second agenda for Pawling: "finding such talented people, helping them grow Jewishly, and seeing that the community uses them properly," according to Shaw.

One of the current "superstars," Leonard Fein, Brandeis University sociologist and editor of *MOMENT*, has come to share his experiences of life on the road. In an afternoon and evening conversation, he emphasizes that there are thousands of Jews "who want desperately

**"A group like this can bring its great intellectual resources to work with, and on, the Jewish community."**

to be better Jews yet simply don't know how ... Ten years ago, the condition of American Jewry was, in a word, malnutrition. People were not even aware they were underfed. Today, the condition is one of hunger — they feel the need and they want to satisfy it."



Steve Shaw addresses the group as his ever-present tape recorder, on the floor in the center of the room, records all.

They are seen as rational Jewish gurus by many whose lives they have profoundly inspired.

But for all their success, they would be the first to admit that other models and personalities are needed. The "superstars" are in their 40's, and after 10 years or so at it, they tire of the pace, the strain, the demands made upon them. "In a sense, the Jewish community chews up these few scholars and spits them out," observes Steve Shaw, who is worried about the burn-out effects on the scholars and on the community.

"I'm willing to be used, to be co-opted, even to be an 'entertainer,' to do what I have to do, because the end results make it worth it," confides Yitz Greenberg, "but I would like to parley my own acceptance into an institution that can multiply the number of scholars and stimulate serious thinking about the future as well."

Says Steve Shaw: "There is a great need to not only develop a new generation of

Fein also notes that his generation accepted a role it was thrust into because of the Holocaust, a role it was unprepared for. "This generation is far more educated and prepared for Jewish life than mine," he says. The message is clear to us all: the future is in our hands.

Fein's message is at once inspiring and disturbing. After he leaves, we break up into reference groups to discuss again what is expected of us and what we can accomplish.

More striking to me than the discussion itself is the nature of it — strangers until this morning, we are now totally open with each other and there is a definite bond of friendship growing.

After all, despite our varied backgrounds, we do have much in common, not the least of which is an unspoken but shared belief that all of our endless talking can have some positive impact on the Jewish community.



Yitz Greenberg (left) and Zalman Schachter (next to him) participate in a group session.

Too keyed up for sleep after the long day, most of us return to the lounge for more relaxed conversation. Walking across the room, one overhears snatches of talk from various groups, ranging from theological debates to professional Jewish gossip to third-grade "knock-knock" jokes. It's been a long day.

## MINYAN AND 'DECISION MAKING'

Thursday morning, early. We are awakened for minyan, and I am back in my yeshiva days. Here, though, there are two morning services, traditional and alternative. Most people opt for the latter. It is being led by Levi Kelman, a senior at the Jewish Theological Seminary who has spent the last few summers at the Bardin-Brandeis Institute in California helping youngsters learn, for the first time, to *daven*, or pray.

Levi shares some experiential and conceptual techniques. "My agenda isn't to make the kids into *daveners* but to teach them about it," he says of his summer work. "I teach *davening* without God or philosophy, because for me theology isn't the key to prayer."

Noting that *davening* exists "in the tension between silence and words," Levi explains how he divides each session between silence, breathing exercises and *nigun* or melody. The effect is soothing and natural and by the time the group has reached the stage of *nigun*, all join in unselfconsciously. A perfect moment.

Meanwhile, the traditional minyan, held in a small room nearby, is just shy of the needed quorum. The problem is solved when several males are quietly recruited from the other service for the reading of the Torah. No hassle.

Interestingly, the participants cover virtually the entire spectrum of religious observance. But it is impossible to label anyone by appearance — i.e. length of beard, or size of yarmulke. One of the organizers of the traditional minyan is a graduate of the Reform seminary; a leader of the alternative service is the product of a Brooklyn yeshiva. So much for old labels.

And a practical lesson in denominational stereotypes for us all.

After breakfast, a group session on teaching the Holocaust. Debbie Lipstadt, who teaches Jewish studies at the University of Washington, and Michael Berenbaum of Zacher, the Holocaust Resource Center, discuss various approaches. Each warns against the temptation of "using" the Holocaust as a means of heightening an individual's Jewish identity. Ms. Lipstadt confesses that, years before, when she taught "a particularly obnoxious" Hebrew school class, she found that the only subject that could hold the youngsters' attention was the Holocaust. "And so I used it, and it worked, but I still feel badly about it," she says. "Young Jews will want to give up their Jewishness if this is all we emphasize," she cautions.

We break up next into "skill workshops," which range from Modern Liturgy, and Educational Uses of Bible and Midrash, to Israel and Zionism as Program Resources and Creative Use of Film and Media in Adult Educational Settings. It is hoped that the workshops will lead to ongoing projects, task forces in each area which will continue after the conference. For now we pick and choose, attending at least three of the eight offered during the retreat.

In the afternoon there is an evaluation session on how we're doing and where we're going. More discussion, more hopes, more fears. Then another skill workshop before dinner, and the day's main event.

Four prominent Jewish leaders — officials of the Council of Jewish Federations, American Jewish Committee, Central Conference of American Rabbis, and the 92nd Street YMHA — have come up from New York City to discuss "decision making in the American Jewish community."

For the most part their message is: if you want to make changes in American Jewish life, you're going to have to get involved from the inside. "Academics are going to have to remove the chip from their shoulders and get involved, like everyone else," one leader asserts. But others argue that the Jewish Establishment has failed to

involve academics precisely because it treats them like everyone else and does not recognize or tap their special talents.

The discussion between the guests and the group becomes heated at times and reflects a wide gap between those who defend the current system of Jewish oligarchy — with its painfully slow and deliberate decision-making process and its desire for consensus — and those who seek new and more creative modes of expression and action.

After the session, which was perhaps marred by an overdose of reality, the visitors return to New York and the conferees unwind by alternately critiquing the evening and swapping jokes.

## ZALMAN, AND THE THIRD ERA

Friday morning the agenda moves from the practical to the ideological, and there is a lively discussion on "the covenant as a model for contemporary Jewish theology," led by Jon Levenson of Wellesley College and Reuven Kimelman of Brandeis. While some of the non-academics seemed less than interested by all of the abstract talk, a number of their more intellectually-inclined counterparts are clearly enjoying the philosophical discussion.

The afternoon is devoted to getting us into the mood for Shabbat. Zalman

Schachter, who has just arrived, is offering a preparatory course on how to participate as a congregation in the Kabbalat Shabbat, the Friday evening service, which he will conduct. Schachter, professor of religion at Temple University, is a colorful, charismatic, and controversial figure.

Described as "a Jewish bear with an urgent mission on his back," he is a large man with a flowing beard and mystical presence. People react strongly to Reb Zalman, as he likes to be called, and tend to either praise him as a spiritual genius or mock him for his highly eclectic methods. He has gone from a Lubavitch rabbinical training to a mixed spiritual bag. A guru to many followers, he speaks a language of Judaica, ecumenicism and hip psychology. Within a single sentence he may refer to mantras, energy flows, Tibetan Buddhist chants and Chassidic rebbes. You name it, Reb Zalman has been there.

Now he is rehearsing the Friday night service with us, telling us which tunes he will use to evoke nostalgia, which for fervor, which prayers will be sung in Hebrew and which in his original English translations, put to traditional Jewish melodies. "Very few people rehearse the *davvening*," Schachter acknowledges. "Everyone in the congregational orchestra is somehow supposed to just pick up their violin and play without rehearsing." And, he feels, it just doesn't work. But some in the group resent what they call "programmed spontaneity."



Ira Silverman of the American Jewish Committee (left) and Reynolds Levy of the 92nd Street Y in New York (center) join Steve Shaw for the session on decision making.

As it turns out, most of the group enjoyed the Friday afternoon rehearsal more than the actual Friday evening service, which they felt was too structured and programmed.

extend to which the synagogue is unlikely to be the vehicle of Jewish perpetuation," Greenberg believes. "But the synagogue can be helped to become more effective and to serve as an educational and training base to send people into the community and to move federations and organizations into Jewish living."

In the Third Era, new ways must be developed to reach the majority of Jews who no longer come to the community in a serious way and to transcend denominational lines.

It is a lengthy talk, filled with intriguing premises and ideas, some of which are later challenged by the group during a lively discussion.

In a way, the response is not unpredictable — it is a popular-style talk delivered to a critical, academic audience, but everyone agrees with the conclusion: that we are on the verge of a new era in which traditional approaches to Jewish life will not hold up and new alternatives must be developed.

## SHABBAT, AND 'SATURDAY NIGHT'

Shabbat morning, following the two services, Rabbi Joe Polak, the Hillel director at Boston University, presents a lesson in the use of age-old *bet madresh* techniques to the entire group. An intense Lubavitch-trained rabbi, Polak tells us to pair off and share a text — it is a passage from Maimonides in Hebrew and English — and for each partner to take turns reading the section aloud to our partners before discussing it. He then picks three people at random to explain what the passage meant to them.

This, in turn, generates a good deal of discussion. Polak later points out the benefit of the high noise level in studying — "it helps to hear what you're thinking" — and stresses that though no preparation is necessary, a good text will insure a lively,

# A Well-Kept Secret

Until now, the National Jewish Conference Center has been one of the best-kept secrets in American Jewish organizational life. Founded in 1973 by Yitz Greenberg, Elie Wiesel and Steve Shaw, the Center has had a decidedly low profile, and one of its problems has been that its activities have been virtually synonymous with Greenberg, its director.

"The Center was basically a one-man show and that wasn't healthy, neither for the Center nor for me," acknowledges Greenberg, who left his position as chairman of the Jewish Studies Department of the City College of New York last year to run the Conference Center full-time. His goal is to see it expand far beyond his own numerous speaking tours, and recent progress indicates that it has.

Plagued in its early years by lack of organization, a fuzzy image and a tendency to take on every new project, the Center has in recent months increased its staff and narrowed its goals to concentrate on the areas of leadership education and policy planning.

"We are particularly interested in linking a new generation of Jewish academics rabbis, and communal professionals with their lay counterparts," says Greenberg, citing the Pawling conference as an example.

The Center serves as a consultant to

UJA Young Leadership and works with the Council of Jewish Federations, local federations and synagogues to inspire and stimulate Jewish lay leaders through retreats, seminars, workshops and educational materials.

An independent and non-profit organization, the Center has created Zachor, a Holocaust resource center, to develop new approaches to Holocaust Liturgy and memorials. It also publishes position papers, ranging from Soviet Jewish emigration to the future of philanthropy, to influence decision-making in the Jewish community.

"The Holocaust and the reborn State of Israel have changed the meaning and direction of Jewish existence," notes an NJCC statement of purpose.

"There is renewed concern for Jewish knowledge and authenticity on the part of our communal leaders, and a new readiness on their part to think and work together across existing dividing lines. The National Jewish Conference Center works to facilitate and reinforce these twin developments."

The Center is planning more retreats and soon hopes to provide a physical site for many of its programs, a combined "retreat center/think tank," where both educational and policy-deliberation activities can be housed.

G.R.

## Walking across the room, one overhears snatches of talk from various groups, ranging from theological debates, to professional Jewish gossip to third-grade "knock-knock" jokes.

Still, there was a sense of peace, of Shabbat, upon us and the Friday night meal was capped by spirited singing and dancing.

Afterwards, Yitz Greenberg presents a major talk, upon whose premise rests his commitment to the NJCC.

Greenberg is spell-binding. Tall and gangly, even awkward, once he begins to speak his control of an audience is total. His delivery is so rapid that the words rush into one another, his thoughts come too quickly at times for a listener to keep up with, but he gives the distinct impression that he is sensitive to and aware of the complexities of Jewish life — and, more remarkable, he seems to have a clear vision of where the Jewish community should be moving and how the many paradoxes can be reconciled to form a new sense of unity.

We are living in a crucial time in Jewish history, he says. The beginning of the Third Era. The Holocaust and the rebirth of Israel have shattered all previous models and we must resynthesize them as well as create new ones. Lay people will become the crucial link between the tradition and the Jewish people. "The extent to which the synagogue goes on with business as usual, the extent to which the existing lines — Orthodox, Conservative, Reform — still maintain themselves unchanged, is the



Debbie Lipstadt, who teaches Jewish studies at the University of Washington, chats with Jewish leader Ted Comet and his wife after the Thursday night session.

productive program. The simple technique is a big success.

In the afternoon, three top Jewish lay leaders meet with us to explain how and why they got involved in communal activities. It is a real revelation for the group, most of whom have had little if any contact with the workings of the organized Jewish community.

Shabbat ebbs during a moving Havdalah service. The group divides up one last time into its reference groups, which have become a vital ingredient to the success of the conference. Close relationships have been formed in these groups, which have served as a "home base" for the participants — a chance to air personal reflections in an intimate environment.

**"Academics are going to have to remove the chip from their shoulders and get involved, like everyone else."**

Saturday night, for the first time since we have arrived, there are no sessions planned. Instead, we gather in the coziest lounge, fireplace ablaze, and settle in for an evening of spontaneous entertainment. Yechiel Eckstein, who is with the Midwest region of the Anti-Defamation League and who also happens to be a professional singer of original Hebrew compositions, entertains with his guitar and sweet voice. Levi Kelman follows with a perfect David Steinberg imitation.

Zalman Schachter, flute in hand, shares two experiences — one funny, one poignant — with us, and in so doing seems warmer and more direct than he has all Shabos.

I tell an "original" Bible story. Joe Polak leads us in song. But the evening belongs to Moshe Waldoks, a brilliant, intense young man with a wit that can rival Mel Brooks at his best. He does an hour's shpritz, a totally ad-libbed jab at Jewish neuroses that has us rolling.

One can almost feel the bonds of

warmth and friendship cementing together amidst the music and laughter. Later, after a group raids the kitchen for a snack, one Jewish history professor sighs, "It's the last night of camp. From here to reality?"

### IS THERE LIFE AFTER PAWLING?

Sunday morning, the final session, and Yitz Greenberg finally spells out his purpose in calling us together.

"I want to speed up the process of change in the Jewish community," he says. "I think of myself in terms of a Jewish guerilla. But a Jewish guerilla does not just try to overcome the system — he also tries to overcome his own inner conflicts and tensions. He is in a dialectical position between himself and the outside world."

The goal is to change the Jewish community by first changing ourselves. The conference, Greenberg says, has been an attempt to recruit a talented group of young people who will join him in the struggle in a variety of ways. "No one has the answer," he says, "but each of us has part of the answer."

**Described as "a Jewish bear with an urgent mission on his back," Zalman Schachter is a large man with a flowing beard and mystical presence.**

He speaks of his own transformation from "liberal Orthodox" to a more complex, less definable stage that embraces both the entire tradition and change. This personal change began, he says, in the mid-1960's when he became a part of a small study group of Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and secular thinkers who met periodically to learn together and to discuss their Jewish identities and common goals. "Until that point, my reference group had only been the Orthodox community, and being a part of that new study group had a profound affect on me."

One of the goals of the Pawling conference, he adds, was to create "a supportive, nurturing environment" where peers could share ideas and explore issues together — much like the group Greenberg belonged to years before.

"The current generation of Jewish lead-



ers created a model based on work and sentiment that has been successful, Greenberg says, but "it won't hold up" for the next generation of American Jews. Organizational work or nostalgia will not solve the problem of the individual who is unsure of whether or not he wants to be a serious Jew.

The Jewish community needs to increase its scholarly resources, to develop leadership education and to explore policy options in order to be prepared to meet the needs of a newly emerging American Jew.

"These are the needs the Conference Center is addressing itself to," he continues, "and we are looking to you for your talent and participation. We started with you, as a gamble, and we hope you'll be interested in joining with us and helping us recruit similar new talent."

Greenberg is challenging us to take part in an effort to blend the everyday world and spirituality, the establishment and the counter-culture, and we, who straddle both worlds, are eager to follow through. His vision of a Third Era may be vague, but is clearly shared by the group.

The conference ends on a high note. There is a sense of accomplishment, a feeling that an important nucleus of energy has been formed in the cold hills of Pawling. The question is: can we — and the Conference Center — transform our ideas and talk into reality? Maybe it's naive, but I think so. I found the conference inspiring and heartening, not only for its content but for its bringing together a group of strangers who have so much in common. It was a chance for us to meet, to re-charge our "Jewish batteries" and to commit ourselves to higher goals.

Weeks later. Amazingly, the glow has not worn off. Conversations with a number of participants underscore their gut feeling that "Pawling was special." Most agree that, above all, the chief benefit was the opportunity to have met each other, for the chance to establish a potential community of friendship and ideas.

As one participant wrote in a letter to her fellow reference group members: "My rationalist training told me that the high of the conference could not last forever. So be it. But that high has been replaced by a steady sense of self-confirmation brought on by an incredible collection of human beings — you!"

"May we be blessed to gather again."

The Conference Center staff is working toward that goal. They plan to tap the talents of the initial group, broaden its base to include other contemporaries, and continue to build from there.

A similar conference is planned for the summer. This one is for Jewish professionals who share a commitment to personal Jewish living and who share the desire to change Jewish organizations to better reflect integral Jewish concerns.

The Conference Center and its friends share a vision of *tikun olam*, of nothing less than the Kabbalistic concept of repairing and restoring the world. Perhaps the seeds of a new Jewish renaissance were planted in Pawling. ★

FROM  
SOMERVILLE  
TO SAVANNAH  
...AND  
LOS ANGELES  
...AND  
DAYTON...

From its eastern, elitist beginnings a dozen years ago, the Havurah movement now provides large numbers of Jews new forms of access and participation.

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WILLIAM  
NOVAK

It looks as if "havurah" may become one of the most popular Jewish buzzwords of the 1980s. There are now at least several hundred havurah groups in North America; one Los Angeles synagogue contains *sixty* havurot. In Dayton, Ohio, there is even a "havurah coordinator" whose salary is paid by a special grant for innovative programming from the United Way.

*Havurah* is also the name of a new publication, a quarterly newsletter published by—of course!—a group called the National Havurah Coordinating Committee, which this summer sponsored the First National Havurah Institute. Both the Committee and the Institute came out of the First National Havurah Conference, which was held in the summer of 1979 at Rutgers University, and was attended by 350 havurah members and sympathizers from all over the United States and Canada.

For those of us who were part of the early, independent havurot of the late 1960s and early 1970s, all of this havurah activity is more than a little surprising, and it produces mixed feelings, something like watching your next-door neighbor being interviewed on the evening news. It wasn't so long ago that there was one group that was known simply as The Havurah—or, more formally, Havurat Shalom Community. Havurat Shalom (which still exists, but with a different group of members) began in Boston in 1968 as an alternative rabbinical seminary, a place where a new kind of Jewish leader would be trained. Within a year or two that goal gave way to the more modest one of creating a new and stimulating Jewish community—in the days before the word "community" had

*William Novak, a contributing editor of this magazine, whose last article in MOMENT was "Are Good Jewish Men A Vanishing Breed?" (January-February 1980) is co-author, with Moshe Waldoks, of The Big Book Of Jewish Humor, to be published next fall by Harper and Row.*

become an empty cliché.

We did a great many things together in Havurat Shalom, but what we did most of all was to explain who and what we were to an endless stream of curious visitors. Answering the phone was always a calculated risk: it might be a friend calling to arrange dinner, or it might be a stranger who wanted to know "is this the have-you-rat?" and, when that was cleared up, "are you people a commune, or *what?*" And we would explain how no, we weren't a commune, but rather a close-knit and intentional community of about twenty members. Our home was a three-story house in Somerville, a working-class suburb of Boston, next to Cambridge. Three or four of us lived in the house, and everybody else in the havurah lived within three or four blocks. But while we didn't literally live together, we did share our personal and Jewish lives as much as possible, with the Jewish component comprising a long string of innovative and exciting religious services, classes, discussions, weekend retreats and much more.

We were fortunate enough to have some unusually talented and articulate members, but what made the place so special, I think, was not the high level of activities so much as the integration of our Jewish concerns and our communal instincts. Good interpersonal relations within the group were as important as every other aspect of our community, and served as the basis for everything we did. I don't mean that we were especially intimate or open by today's standards, but by and large we liked and trusted each other, and allowed each other to take risks, knowing that this would entail a certain amount of failures—which it did.

For all these reasons the havurah was well-known in Boston and elsewhere, and that we were an unusual community was constantly being affirmed by our many visitors, friends and critics. Our critics were always eager to point out that what we had created might be very nice, but that it was *temporary*: when we had finished graduate school and

had begun families of our own, they said, the project would come to an end. We recognized that this was probably true, but we weren't especially bothered by it. Nor did it detract from what we had at the time, which, we were smart enough to realize, might never again be available to us.

And so we were keenly aware that our experiment was being watched, that it was being modified and repeated in other places. But any talk of a "havurah movement"—a phrase which has been used with growing frequency in the past two or three years—would have been laughed off as a silly joke. The idea of havurot being *organized* into anything larger than themselves was clearly a contradiction: one of the main reasons the havurah had come into existence was the shared belief that American Jewry had gone overboard in its fondness for movements and organizations, and the last thing we wanted to do was to create another one. On the contrary: we believed that a group like ours, independent and self-run, represented an alternative, a structure for Jewish activity which demanded neither affiliation nor membership, but something much more direct: active participation. This was before the ascendancy of the synagogue-based havurot, which we did not anticipate; after all, the most frequent criticism of our experiment was that we were elitists who had isolated ourselves from the rest of Jewish America.

But so much has changed in the past few years, and the term "havurah" is now used by so many different groups, that it is worth taking a moment to review, briefly, the history of the word.

The idea of a havurah—the word is commonly translated as "fellowship," and has come to mean a small and self-run Jewish community—did not begin with Havurat Shalom, nor even with the Reconstructionists, who had established a number of small communities, notably in Denver, during the 1960s. Havurot, it turns out, are an ancient Jewish social framework, dating from Palestine in the first century

B.C.E. As described by Jacob Neusner in his important book, *Contemporary Judaic Fellowship in Theory and in Practice* (New York: Ktav, 1972), there were two kinds of havurot. The Essenes founded communes in the wilderness, coming together as medieval monks would a thousand years later to escape the corruption of urban life, and to establish a more pure and holy society than was possible in the cities.

The Pharisees had a different approach. Hillel's famous statement, *al tifrosh min hatzibur* (do not separate yourself from the larger community) was the Pharisaic response to the Essenes. The Pharisees also established havurot, but they did so in the cities and towns, among the people.

Curiously, a similar debate surfaced in the late 1960s, when Havurat Shalom began, and also in the New York Havurah a year later. In both groups there were those who wanted to emulate the Essenes and create a more *religious* (or spiritual) community that would be located in a country setting. But it was the urban model that prevailed, although for several years Havurat Shalom retained certain characteristics of a more secluded and spiritual group, for which it was both admired and satirized.

These two communities, along with vaguely similar efforts in Philadelphia and Washington, represented the first practical unfolding of the contemporary havurah idea. The groups were completely autonomous, and for a time we all functioned with only an informal and sketchy awareness of each other's activities. But it became increasingly clear through personal contacts, friendships and romances, and from publications like *Response Magazine* and *The Jewish Catalog*, which came directly out of the new havurot and reflected their values, that these various groups had much in common. At the same time, there were significant differences in tone and texture. The Fabrangen, in Washington, D.C., was known for being "political," for example. And I clearly recall leaving the New York Havurah at the end of its fir-

year to join Havurat Shalom in Boston, and being teased about how I would have to learn to adjust to life among the "beautiful people" who, I was told, spoke only in whispers and were perfectly sincere.

The early 1970s saw a further proliferation of new groups, especially in and around universities. Most of these havurot—and many did not use that term—had several features in common: they were generally closed communities of young people (although Washington's Fabrangen was neither) that were open to the rest of the Jewish community on Sabbaths and most holidays, as well as for special programs. The groups were run democratically, and generally included some program of communal study, in addition to regular communal meals and occasional weekend retreats.

Even while the havurot were being criticized in some circles for allegedly being self-serving and divisive, the havurah model was beginning to spread to a few Conservative and Reform congregations. Today, Temple Valley Beth Shalom (Conservative) in suburban Los Angeles includes sixty havurah groups, although it should be kept in mind that synagogue havurot, which usually consist of entire families, are necessarily less intensive groups than those formed by young people with the time and energy to build fairly active and ambitious communities.

Harold Schulweis, rabbi at Valley Beth Shalom and an enthusiastic proponent of synagogue havurot, has no quarrel with the widely-shared critique of the contemporary synagogue as too large and impersonal. Not long ago, addressing his colleagues in the Rabbinical Assembly, Schulweis reminded them of the words spoken by Abraham Joshua Heschel twenty years earlier before the same audience: "The modern Temple suffers from a severe cold," Heschel had said. "The services are prim, the voice is dry, the temple is clean and tidy. . . . No one will cry, the words are still-born."

Schulweis went on to tell his col-

leagues about visiting a woman in the hospital who complained to him that although she had been affiliated with the temple for over a decade, no one had visited her during her three-week illness. "But I am here," he told her. "I mean no disrespect, Rabbi," she replied, "but you are not the congregation."

Schulweis first proposed the idea of synagogue-based havurot ten years ago in a High Holiday sermon, and twelve groups of ten families each were formed that first year. The idea came, says Schulweis, after he attended a retreat with the board of directors shortly after taking over his new pulpit. He was struck by the contrast between the vitality and vibrancy of the retreat and the systematic dullness of regular synagogue life.

"At the retreat," he recalls, "all these people came to know and respond to each other as human beings, and not just as co-workers pursuing a similar task. But in the congregation, they would resume their old roles: as people so dependent on the rabbi and the cantor in their Jewish behavior that it stifled their capacity to assume Jewish initiatives."

I recently spoke with Schulweis about his ten-year-old experiment. He remains enthusiastic, and speaks of the major changes that have already occurred in the congregation, as well as those he hopes to see in the future. "People in a havurah," he told me, "understand the language and the perceptions of communal Jewish leadership. Because they aren't led by a professional, they're all responsible for the leadership of the group. This means that *everyone* has the opportunity to give expression, to make decisions, to take responsibility—and to fulfill some of his or her ego needs. This is what the havurah format encourages, but it's all too easy for a rabbi to forget that lay people often want to and *can* perform many Jewish functions."

Howard and Sima Moss are among those in Schulweis's congregation whose lives have been changed by the establishment of havurot. Before joining their syna-

gogue-havurah, Howard, a physician, had not been to Temple in years. "I was your typical peripheral Jew," he says. "And the same thing goes for most other members. But over the past few years, each of us has become active in various kinds of Jewish activities, from Soviet Jewry to federation work to everything else on the spectrum."

"When we first came together seven years ago," adds Sima, "the people in our havurah didn't know each other at all. And most of us had not been active in Jewish life. We had merely filled out an application form telling Temple a little bit about who we were and what we wanted. Our particular group is fairly active. We meet on a regular basis, perform *havdalah* together, sing for a while and then study; we're slowly reading our way through the Bible. Over the past year we prepared for a havurah trip to Israel and Egypt by studying history and archaeology, and we've also adopted a family of Russian refuseniks.

"I remember when our group was only a few months old, and we still didn't have any real direction. Passover came, and one member took all of us, seventeen adults and thirty-one kids, into the desert for three days. That's where we conducted our *s'darim*. At the time the group was so new that we had little to lose, so it didn't seem like much of a risk. But it had a huge impact."

Because the whole point of havurot is that the members make all their own decisions, each of the sixty groups at Valley Beth Shalom is different. Some are primarily social, while others focus on specific activities such as prayer or study or social action. For a while there was even a camping havurah, whose members all owned campers and trailers. But Sima, whose job it is to place interested new Temple members into existing groups, believes that the most successful havurot are those which combine a variety of activities and interests.

Each havurah has a co-ordinator, a kind of message-carrier, as Sima explains it; they meet to-

gether several times a year to share ideas for programs and talk over common problems. Some of the groups are extremely independent, while others are fairly active in the Temple. Havurot do not generally meet on the Sabbath; that is the Temple's domain, and this marks one of the major differences between independent and synagogue havurot.

While the havurot at Valley Beth Shalom have clearly been important to the Jewish growth of their members, Schulweis believes that the format can be especially helpful in the personal aspects of Jewish life: "We have just tickled the havurah in terms of its potential in helping people cope with the normal crises of modern Jewish life, like kids, intermarriage, divorce. There is still some fear of intimate sharing, but it's being forced on us by what's going on around us.

"When people have Jewish problems, the automatic response is to go to a rabbi. But by that time it's often too late, and the problem has already occurred. As a peer group, the havurah can anticipate problems and can deal with them as they unfold.

"I call this the confessional havurah. Look at it this way: groups like Alcoholics Anonymous and Gamblers Anonymous show that people need honesty and group support. I think we need a kind of Jewish Anonymous. So many of our people have tremendous self-doubt and even self-hatred about Jewish things. It's much more profound than we like to think.

"But people don't *want* to have those feelings, and they welcome a place where they can talk out their frustrations, especially about Judaism and their children. I think of the havurot as a halfway house between the individual and the larger community. They're a place where the individual still counts, where the individual's voice can still be heard. In such a setting, people can talk with some degree of openness and trust, and they can expose their collective vulnerabilities. Est and some of the other secular cults can give it to you for a weekend,

but what good does it do for a weekend?"

And then there are the stories: the woman who called Schulweis late one evening after returning home from the hospital after an operation. When she opened her refrigerator, she found it had been stocked with food for Shabbat for her entire family. Her havurah had taken care of her, and when she realized this she started to cry, and not knowing what to do she called the rabbi to thank *him*.

Or the couple who had a boy who was retarded, and had to be placed in an institution. The havurah, knowing that this was financially impossible, called a meeting without the couple, and then went to the rabbi for advice. "How can we help them?" they asked. "You'll have to solve it yourselves," said the rabbi. They each decided to contribute a considerable sum, which they brought to Schulweis, asking that it be made available to the family out of the rabbi's discretionary account. The family never learned the real story.

Synagogue havurot might be the obvious solution to the alienation of modern life in the San Fernando Valley, where intimacy and community and Jewishness may otherwise be hard to find. But they have also flourished in very different settings, like Mickve Israel in Savannah, Georgia, an old and classical Reform temple founded in 1733. In this unlikely context, says Rabbi Saul Rubin, another enthusiast of havurot, the havurah model has greatly affected the synagogue: "Our board has shifted from a concentration on trivia and a tendency to bicker to a positive problem-solving approach to Temple concerns. A 'cold' synagogue environment is suddenly more warm and hospitable. I see a hunger for Jewish leadership, and the emergence of a dynamic new leadership from people who used to be passive dues-paying members. And that's just the impact on the institution; the impact on the people has been even greater."

He continues: "I don't understand why there is still rabbinic

resistance to the havurah movement. We who bear responsibility for affiliated Jews know how religiously indifferent so many are. Rarely does a synagogue have a vital and dynamic Jewish life. Empty pews are the rule, not the exception. Without bar and bat-mitzvahs and guest speakers, our temples would be places the jackals inherit.

"There is so much talent in my congregation, and yet in Jewish terms it rarely surfaces. Those with creative skills are cowed into thinking that they are Jewishly inadequate, and that only the rabbi has expertise on Jewish matters. As the rabbi operates in a havurah setting, he relates to these people as people of value, people whose creativity he respects, and he can encourage them to do even more. The havurah movement offers the promise of Jewish renewal, and I can't understand why some of my colleagues still see it as a threat."

Rabbis whose synagogues now include havurot are quick to point out that they—the rabbis—have not become superfluous, but that it may be this fear which inhibits some of their colleagues. True, the rabbi's role does *change* with the advent of synagogue havurot: he becomes less of a figurehead and more of a teacher, a leader of activists rather than of passive followers. And this, of course, is what most rabbis say they would prefer in any event. As Schulweis puts it, "the rabbi becomes important to the community only when the community itself shares his interests and participates in the sancta of the tradition."

As for the congregants, there are many who find it more meaningful to be part of a smaller, self-run group than a large and possibly alienating synagogue. In the synagogue-based havurah, they can do both, deriving intimacy and autonomy from the havurah, while still taking advantage of the larger resources the synagogue may offer. And while havurot may redirect the focus of some synagogue members, they also bring in a new wave of previously inactive members, who are now prepared to play a role not only

in their own havurah, but also in the larger structure that contains it.

The independent havurot, meanwhile, are still going strong, especially in New York City. To be sure, these groups have changed considerably over the past decade, becoming more family-oriented, and, by necessity, somewhat less intensive as communities. The most conspicuous of these groups, *minyan mi'at* on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, does not even call itself a havurah, and its members are divided as to whether the group should be more than a fraternity of worshippers.

Of late, much of the energy in the independent havurot has gone into the leadership and organization of the first two national havurah gatherings, which, it seems, have turned into an annual event. The first of these, held in the summer of 1979 at Rutgers University, met in a celebratory atmosphere of affirmation and discovery. This was an opportunity to survey the field, and to determine whether, in fact, the various groups which call themselves havurot really have anything more in common than a name.

The answer to that question is probably yes, but it depends on whom you ask. What is clear is that all havurah groups, independent or synagogue-connected, have in common at least two characteristics: they are small (usually between twelve and forty members) and they are self-run.

The second gathering, held this past August at the University of Hartford, was a week-long Institute devoted primarily to Jewish study, with classes in classical texts (Bible, rabbinic commentaries, midrash, Talmud, Chassidic writings), as well as issues (such as theology, feminist spirituality, home and homelessness, the nature of evil, Jewish messianic movements, Jewish attitudes toward nature and the environment). In virtually every case, the classes were a major success. The teachers were delighted at the motivation and the dedication of their students; the students could not praise their teachers enough.

In addition, the Institute featured several lively programs, including a panel discussing dissent in American Jewish life which included Ted Mann, outgoing chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations. Mann's appearance was a small but significant indication that the havurah movement had by now gained a fair degree of respectability in Jewish leadership circles.

I attended the second half of the week-long Institute, and sat in on a class in Talmud taught by Sol Moshowitz, a medical researcher from New York, and the only teacher at the Institute who does not teach Jewish studies professionally. Moshowitz was invited to teach here because of his reputation as a superb and inspiring teacher of Talmud, which is strictly a hobby for him. He is proud of this fact, and is cynical about professional Jewish educators, because, as he likes to say, "if you pay peanuts you get monkeys."

Moshowitz's class, like the others at the Institute, consists of some fourteen students of widely varying backgrounds. This particular group includes nine or ten women, several of whom have never even *seen* a page of Talmud. Moshowitz has provided us with copies of the Steinsaltz edition, which features a vocalized text. "Some of my friends don't like using it," he says. "They think of it as Cliff Notes. But I see it as the way into the text for students who already know some Hebrew."

With periodic digressions on the overall structure of the Talmud, Moshowitz is somehow able to communicate the essence of the material without boring the advanced students or confusing the beginners. In the middle of a discussion about idolatrous cities, Moshowitz is off and running on a lengthy aside about the image of the Prophet Elijah. In the Talmud, Elijah is depicted as a decidedly negative character, a merciless and punishing prophet wanting to be more zealous than God. Most of us are surprised to learn this, and Moshowitz, anticipating the ques-

tion, explains that the reputation of Elijah has been rehabilitated over the centuries by the folk tradition to the point where he is now celebrated for qualities which are precisely the opposite of those ascribed to him in the Talmud.

Sitting in Moshowitz's class, I feel stimulated and ennobled. "Personally I'm a Litvak," Moshowitz remarks after making one of many theological remarks. "I don't go for kabbalistic mysticism, although I appreciate it. I prefer the mysticism of the Talmud, because the Talmudists were essentially realistic and faced truth. They did not retreat into their own mystical universe."

(Intended or not, Moshowitz's approach is in sharp contrast to the prevailing fondness in havurah circles for mysticism related to kabbalah and Chassidism, a trend which can be traced directly to the profound influence of Arthur Green, founder of Havurat Shalom, and to Zalman Schachter, a teaching member during the group's first year, and, ever since, a free-floating figure in havurah circles—and far beyond. So strong was the tendency toward mystical spirituality in the early years of Havurat Shalom that a group of us who were not inclined in those directions formed, only half-jokingly, a faction known as "The Sons of Lithuania," consisting of meat-eaters, television watchers and sports fans.)

The next day I find a few minutes to talk with Moshowitz about his teaching. "I think we need a refuge from relevance for a while," he says. "If every text becomes a projective test, a Rorschach, then nobody is going to grow. The other night I had a dream that the tradition is like a kaleidoscope. My job as a teacher is to supply the little bits of stuff: information, dates, vocabulary, insights. The student supplies the

mirrors. There is a place for people to say: 'I see a butterfly,' and I allow for that. But I stress to my students that the text generally has more depth than they do, and that they shouldn't get overly concerned with their own vision of it."

Moshowitz represents one side of the havurah approach to learning: a retreat from the sixties' mentality which asserted that everyone's vision of the text is equally useful, equally good. At the same time, havurah classes are still relatively open, and the comments of *all* participants are taken seriously. While there is a strong academic influence, generally (but not exclusively) emanating from the teacher, these classes are very different from those at a university. There is more than a hint here of *Torah lishmah*: learning for its own sake.

In an especially innovative piece of programming, the Havurah Institute has allocated close to an hour each morning between the end of breakfast and the beginning of classes for participants to study together in two's and three's at the breakfast tables, reading over the text to be discussed in that morning's class. This is known as a "bet midrash" and for many participants it is the highlight of the week. I found it spiritually invigorating to walk into the cafeteria on the first morning of my stay to find some two hundred adults buzzing quietly with the noise of learning.

Rabbi Saul Rubin found these sessions especially important, he recalls, because he was teamed up with an unexpected study-partner: a young woman from an independent havurah. "She was a person of considerable skill and intellect," he says, "and our textual discussions were interesting and lively. But as soon as she discovered I was a rabbi, she wanted to sit back and listen and no longer contribute. Here was another reminder that my being a rabbi often makes other people feel Jewishly submissive. If the impact of the havurah movement is to teach Jews that they have something to give to Judaism, that they need not feel Jewishly inadequate, and that rabbis, too, are prepared to learn

with them and from them, then it has given me more hope and certainty of a Jewish future than I have ever had before."

On the fifth day of the Institute, a crack appeared in the consensus. Some of the men from a small Orthodox contingent had requested that an "Orthodox minyan" be added to the program as one of the options for *Shabbat* services—an option which in this case would mean a traditional *mechitza* dividing men and women, and a service in which women would not be permitted to assume any of the ritual functions such as acting as cantor or being called to the Torah. At morning services on the first day of the Institute this same group had refused to count women in the minyan, but at that point the issue was not taken seriously.

At lunch on the fifth day, however, participants found on their tables copies of an "open letter" to those attending the Institute, signed by four prominent women from independent havurot. "The havurah community," it began, "is the first—and perhaps the only—place where many of us feel fully comfortable in our identities as women and as Jews." And it continued: "The battles we have all fought—at various moments in our lives—to be able to express ourselves as Jewish women have been long and difficult. They were waged at considerable cost. But we, and the men who took on our struggle as theirs, felt secure in the belief that, in this community at least, the battle had been won. No more would we have the struggle to establish the claim that women be counted in the minyan; here it would go without saying that women and men could participate as equals."

Responding to the events of the first morning service, and to the request for an Orthodox *Shabbat* service, the letter concluded: "Under no circumstances should these be considered as serious options in this community. We would deny no one the opportunity to pray as he or she wishes. But the Havurah Institute should not, itself,

sponsor any minyan which violates the fundamental principles which define this community. We have all struggled to create a Judaism in which, finally, women feel at home. We will not be homeless again."

Predictably, the open letter led to a great deal of discussion about the Orthodox minyan and its place, if any, at such a gathering. Virtually nobody I spoke with disagreed with the principle of equality for women in Jewish life or ritual, although there was some debate about whether the Orthodox minyan should be officially sanctioned as one of several prayer options.

Herschel Matt, a congregational rabbi (Conservative) from New Jersey who attended as a teacher of liturgy, was among those favoring the inclusion of the Orthodox group, explaining: "With all the services that are offered here, all of them egalitarian—if in addition to all the groups served by these options, certain people say 'we feel part of this community, we feel drawn to you, we are in sympathy with what you are here for, study and searching and commitment and community, but when it comes to worship we feel that we cannot truly fulfill our religious obligations in a mixed minyan,' then my question is: why is it a violation of havurah principles to say we want the fellowship of these people too—especially since, when they are engaged in a segregated form of worship, with other options available, they are hurting no one?"

And Paul Cowan, a writer for *The Village Voice* and a member of a havurah in New York, made a similar point: "I understand the objections to the Orthodox minyan, but why rule out anybody who wants to participate? On the contrary: I think our strength lies in our diversity, and I welcome the presence of the Orthodox. I only wish that the spectrum represented here were broader, and that secular Jews were also here with us."

Chava Weissler, a member of a havurah in Philadelphia, and one of the women who signed the open letter, responded to these concerns: "A rock-bottom principle of the

havurah movement, from its very inception, has been the equality of participation and religious roles for men and women. At this kind of conference we are trying to broaden our base of support and interest. Naturally we want to attract other kinds of Jews, including the Orthodox. But at the same time, we also have to be reasonably true to who we are, and we have seen the refusal to count women in the minyan as a denigration of American women, a way of saying we're not full Jews in the current American context. I feel hurt and discriminated against when I hear that at a havurah function there is to be a service that will not count women."

Sharon Strassfeld, co-editor of *The Jewish Catalog*, whose third (and final) volume has just been published, is more outspoken: "First of all, it's time for us to say we're *not* all-inclusive. We'd like to be open to as many people as possible, but this doesn't mean we're open to everyone and everybody. From its inception, the havurah movement has stood for certain things, and one of them is the egalitarian nature of prayer. I think the women's issue is one thing we absolutely totally agree on, and it's been the cause of a lot of people coming into this movement in the first place. It's so fundamental to who we are that to violate it to keep three or four people happy is wrong. I don't think those people belong here; I don't think we have to be a gathering place for the nations.

"It's time for us to say we are serious, that what we are doing is serious Judaism. And as serious Jews, we can't tolerate discrimination against women. If people want to go and *davven* in their rooms without women, in the same way that other kinds of *Shabbat* observances are left up to the individual, that's all right with me. But you can't come to a Jewish organization—the ZOA, for example—and say 'I agree with everything you stand for but why don't you recognize the PLO?' They will tell you that you don't have a place there. Similarly, this is *our* platform, take it or leave it. And in this case, I'm

the one who doesn't have a place—except here—this is my home.”

Later, at a discussion of how to resolve the controversy, Strassfeld again asserts that “this is my home,” and that this entitles her to certain rights. But this time she is challenged by another woman who uses the same metaphor, and asks: “what about the rights of guests in your home?”

It is certainly true that the equality of women is a fundamental principle of havurah Judaism, although to assert that this was “always” the case is to indulge in a little mythmaking. For example, Havurat Shalom stood for many innovative and progressive values during its formative years, but the equality of women was not near the top of the list. For several years the group consisted entirely of men, and a few wives—of whom only a handful were active; it wasn't until the fourth or fifth year that unattached women even sought admission. But when the Jewish women's movement developed in the early 1970's, the havurot were quick to respond, in part, perhaps, because the leaders of the movement were themselves active members of various havurot.

I have left until the end the most difficult question, which is also the most important: what new kind of Judaism is being practiced in these various havurot? Here we must be careful, as most synagogue-based havurot have not deviated significantly from the Jewish styles and observance of their sponsoring congregations.

At the same time, it is clear that *something* new is going on in independent havurot. It is not—or perhaps not *yet*—an ideology, but more of an approach or a process which comes out of the interplay of three forces: study, religious celebration and community.

There is as yet no document outlining the values or beliefs of havurah Judaism, but there is a very good description of the process out of which they emerge. Arthur Waskow's book *Godwrestling* is a fascinating and provocative account of the Fabrang Community in

Washington, and Waskow offers this description of the assumptions operating behind the group's weekly discussion of the Torah reading:

“Sometimes we get tense and angry with each other—there are crucial issues of our lives at stake. But we try to believe and act as if there can be multiple truths in Torah, truths that are heard differently by different people. Some of us hear Torah as the revealed word of God at Sinai. Some of us will not talk of God at all and hear Torah as the distilled wisdom of the Jewish people over the centuries. Some of us hear it as the same conversation between God and the Jews that we ourselves are engaged in—a conversation in which some of the sayings are wise beyond price, some are clumsy or stupid, some are the jokes that enliven and relax a conversation when it gets too heavy—and all of it is learning, God's learning as well as ours. And some of us feel even more than we hear it—feel it as a wrestle, not a conversation.”

Waskow's depiction of havurah Judaism as a kind of *wrestling* with God and the tradition is a rich and powerful metaphor, and it rings true for many havurah members. Another way of seeing havurah Judaism is offered by Edward Feld, Hillel Rabbi at Princeton, and an early member of Havurat Shalom. Feld sees havurah Judaism as *minhag* rather than *halachah*, or, as those terms are usually translated, custom rather than law. As Feld explains it, “*Minhag* is fashion, an aesthetic perspective created in a specific cultural milieu. By definition it is transitory. But to say that the havurah movement is *minhag* is not to denigrate it, because *minhag* has a significant place in the hierarchy of Jewish norms, and much of what we know today as *halachah* actually began as *minhag*. *Minhag* is the specificity of Jewish existence in time and space. Without it one is left only with the timeless—with a Judaism beyond time, unreachable, silent and inhuman. *Minhag* is the bridge by which we can become timely—able to enter and engage our own age in a living way.”

These two descriptions are useful,

but they still don't describe the constituent parts of havurah Judaism. Here, from my perspective, are the main trends:

● Havurah Judaism is holistic and integrative. Above all, it is post-denominational, as Havurah Jews tend to believe that the current fragmentation of American Jewry into various denominations is irrelevant, obsolete and perhaps even harmful to Jewish life. At the same time, we are clearly indebted to each of the major denominations as we draw upon their various strengths and work around their perceived weaknesses.

We are probably closest to the Conservative movement, as many havurah members are products of Conservative youth groups and especially the Ramah camps; Conservative Judaism has contributed its tradition of scholarship and intellectual vitality. Likewise, Reform Judaism has been an important source for social activism as well as for the liberalization of Jewish theology. Reconstructionism has contributed its own unique perspective on Jews as an historical and cultural force. The influence of Orthodoxy is immediately obvious: text, tradition and a sense of authenticity.

Chassidism holds a special appeal. The surface reasons are clear: Chassidism has a spiritual liveliness that is compelling, and an enviable, unselfconscious ability to celebrate. But the havurah interest in Chassidism goes deeper, as Moshe Waldoks, a teacher, writer and humorist, explains: “When Chassidism began, it contained a non-*halachic* spirituality. But within two generations, because of outside pressures such as the Enlightenment, Chassidism was forced to become more normative in order to survive. And, naturally, it chose Orthodox norms. Havurah Judaism is facing a similar decision, but we have a greater choice of options. Until now we have resisted any norms, but we must soon make our choices, and what we choose does not have to be identical to Orthodoxy.”

● Havurah Judaism emphasizes

aesthetics, affirming, as one woman put it, that you don't make *kiddush* from a paper cup even though there is, technically, no law against it. Havurah Judaism, when it began, was especially interested in such physical activities as challah-baking, tallit-weaving and calligraphy. More recently, the trend has shifted, going beyond functional art and toward art that is more decorative and symbolic.

• Havurah Judaism is—and sees itself as—part of a whole network of new Jewish projects such as the Coalition of Alternatives in Jewish Education, Agenda (the new progressive political organization), The New Israel Fund of California, the independent *tz'dakah* efforts of Danny Siegel, a network of *tz'dakah* collectives and several new publications such as Arthur Waskow's *Menorah* newsletter and the recently-published *Jewish Almanac*.

A key factor linking together these and similar groups is the Radius Institute, a small but active non-profit planning and programming center. Founded and directed by Rabbi Steven Shaw, who has been a tireless organizer, fundraiser, publicist and match-maker for these and other new projects, Radius has provided such organizational skills as grant proposal-writing, programming and public relations. As Shaw sees it, "the generation of the sixties has come of age, and is now programming for the wider Jewish community." He observes that many of the people involved in these projects are currently being courted by the same Jewish organizations that they once rebelled against.

• Havurah Judaism is theologically alive, especially surrounding the making of modern *midrashim*. A number of havurah personalities, such as Arthur Green, Edward Feld, Lawrence Kushner, Marc Gellman, Joel Rosenberg, Judith Goldenberg, Everett Gendler and Zalman Schachter have been speaking and writing on religious subjects, and their influence is reaching far beyond havurah circles.

• There is a havurah style, such as

the use of "reference groups" at conferences—an idea borrowed by Steven Shaw from the human potential movement and used in havurah circles as a way of creating a measure of intimacy and personalness in a larger context, much like the function of the home room in high school. Other examples of havurah style include a wide degree of tolerance when it comes to the religious observance of group members and the use of internal arbitration as a way of settling disputes. (A business conflict among the authors of the first *Jewish Catalog* was resolved by a communal bet-din [court] consisting of three rabbis who were part of the community.)

• The affirmation of diaspora Judaism: havurah Jews see Israel as one center of Jewish life, not the only center, and they do not view a particular Israeli government or policy as deserving of automatic support or loyalty. Nor do havurah Jews believe that the only future for American Jews is in Israel; those who *do* believe this generally resolve the issue by making aliyah. All of this has led to some hard questions and a few raised eyebrows, and not only on the part of outsiders: after the Yom Kippur War, I left Havurat Shalom because I felt that the group did not respond sufficiently to the emergency at hand. But on the whole, havurah Jews are firm supporters of Israel, although, unlike more traditional American Zionists, they assert their right to speak up on government policies with which they may disagree.

This list could go on, and it might include a sympathetic attitude toward vegetarianism (in part to accommodate varying levels of *kashrut*); an interest in the Jewishness not only of the mind and spirit, but also of the body—and, of course, a strong commitment to a substantial Jewish education for one's children.

The long-range future of havurah Judaism is uncertain, but a number of new bridges are being built. Mitchell Chefitz, a Reform Rabbi in Miami, recently left his congregation to begin a project called

"Havurah!"—a non-synagogue approach to unaffiliated Jews in Southern Florida. Chefitz, who sees his effort as "the missing link between independent and synagogue havurot," points out that over 70 percent of Miami's Jews are unaffiliated, and that contrary to the popular stereotype, this is by and large a young community. This past September, Chefitz organized High Holiday services in a storefront, attracting two hundred participants by word of mouth. Four havurot emerged from these services, and Chefitz expects to begin several more.

In addition, several national Jewish organizations have expressed a strong interest in havurot. The Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation has provided temporary housing for the National Havurah Coordinating Committee. The American Jewish Committee has contributed staff time and money, and wants to be more helpful. "It's where the action is," says one staff member. "This thing has come of age." And in an unprecedented move, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the synagogue arm of Reform Judaism, has invited havurot to affiliate, and has announced a decision to establish a "mechanism" for offering resources and services for havurot that are not affiliated with member synagogues.

"This is something important," says David Teutsch, director of special projects for the Reconstructionist Foundation, and an active participant in the havurah movement. "With the breakdown of the extended family, havurot are serving as an anchor point. We've got something the broader community needs for revitalization: people learning to Jew for themselves, rather than always being led. People taking their Jewish lives into their own hands. People furthering the process of democratization, providing direct hands-on contact with Judaism. Havurot are what's happening right now, and everyone wants to jump on the bandwagon while it's still rolling." \*

# Sh'ma

a journal of Jewish responsibility

9/176, SEPTEMBER 7, 1979



A special issue on havurot prepared by The National Havurah Conference with the generous assistance of the National Jewish Conference Center.

*The First National Havurah Conference took place on July 4 - 8, 1979 at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. There were 200 full time participants and an additional 150 people who attended for part of the conference. Participants came from twenty-two states and ranged in age from 20 years to over 60 years. Approximately half were members of independent havurot with members of synagogue affiliated groups and "havurah synagogues" comprising an additional 35% of the representation; the other participants were not currently involved in an ongoing havurah. When asked to identify themselves Jewishly, respondents listed "Reform," "Conservative," "Reconstructionist," "new traditional," "eclectic," "post-denominational," and simply "havurah Jew" among their replies, suggesting a wide range of observance and a great variety of orientations to Judaism.*

*The conference was supported by grants from the EMET Foundation and the Los Angeles Jewish Federations as well as several generous contributions from individual, private supporters. The National Jewish Conference Center was co-sponsor. Sh'ma is happy to open its pages to an account of this meeting and is grateful to the Center for a grant which enabled us to expand this issue to 16 pages.*

## A gathering of communities

Elaine Shizgal Cohen

Why have a national conference of havurot? This question motivated and also frequently frustrated, confused and stymied those of us who had been intrigued by the challenge inherent in the proposal to bring together members of diverse havurah groups from around the country. We constituted a somewhat motley committee that initiated the plans and the program for what was to be The First National Havurah Conference, an opportunity for people involved or interested in havurot to meet and discuss this important, new phenomenon in American Jewish life.

The very diversity of groups and individuals contributed to the difficulties of organizing such a conference. Compounding the problems of difference was the commitment of some havurot to remain staunchly unaffiliated. To these groups, which came into existence partly as a protest against the over-organized nature of established Jewish communal structures, any attempt to organize beyond the limits of their own membership was suspect. There were, as well, differing and sometimes conflicting needs of synagogue-based havurot and independent ones. Indeed, what the commonalities are among groups which take the name "havurah" was in no way clear.

### Great Diversity in Communities

Synagogue-affiliated groups frequently stress the fellowship aspects suggested by the Hebrew term "havurah" itself, providing meaningful social groupings and serving important extended family functions for their members. A specific Jewish focus may find expression through study topics, holiday celebrations, or Sabbath meals, with the prayer aspects of religious and spiritual concerns continuing to be defined as the province of the synagogue. Many independent havurot, on the other hand, see themselves as alternatives to synagogues, taking upon themselves responsibility for communal worship on Shabbat as well as holidays. Those which go by the name of "minyan" perhaps most clearly emphasize the centrality of the prayer experience to the group's life, though usually other social and cultural functions are important too. Some groups have extended themselves with regard to educational and social action outreach programs, while others have developed *tzedakah* collectives (for philanthropic activities).

This brief outline of group models cannot claim to be comprehensive, but seeks only to illustrate some of the inherent complexities in attempting to bring together members of these diverse groups under a common rubric for an "experience of community." In truth, the different populations not only have little natural contact with each other, but frequently carry images and notions of the other that do not facilitate mutual understanding and a sense of commonality. It seems fair to say that independent groups, for example, would comfortably call themselves non-conformist and anti-establishment and might tend to view synagogue havurah members as opposite from themselves along these two salient dimensions, at least.

### Could The Gaps Be Breached?

The importance of these descriptive differences is that they offer a good clue to understanding some of the mutual reservations both constituencies had in seeing a gathering of havurot as like themselves and for themselves. Assumptions that the groups had about each other went beyond the actual differences (more independent groups are located in urban areas and have a high proportion of single members, while more synagogue groups are suburban based and cater primarily to couples and families, for instance) and the perceived differences of style. They extended even to judgements about each others responsibilities to the community as a whole and doubts about the other's real commitments to create and stand by significant changes in the structure of contemporary Jewish life.

So while our publicity brochure invited people to several days of dialogue on the theme of "Community: Creating our Jewish Future," exploratory meetings and conversations with people from both kinds of havurot made us wonder whether the gap between communities was too wide to breach in the context envisioned. Yet the idea of a national conference of havurot had clearly fired the imagination of many and would not let itself be extinguished by doubters. It seemed to the small group of active planners a risk decidedly worth taking.

### A New Community Without Walls

Even once a firm decision was made to follow through with the conference, many problems lay ahead. Because havurot are not linked by any organizational network, there was no way for a

small group of planners in New York City to discover and reach havurot nationwide. Letters of inquiry to rabbis registered with their rabbinical associations yielded few responses. Appeals via letters to the editors of various Jewish publications brought in some inquiries as did announcements on radio spots. The best publicity medium was undoubtedly word of mouth, but communications were sorely limited by the few, previously established contacts primarily among East Coast groups. Lack of financial resources made more experienced recruiting and publicity impossible, which in turn made fund raising for an event few people had heard of extremely difficult.

Despite the many complexities of planning and organization, the First National Havurah Conference was convened in an atmosphere of high expectations and of enthusiasm. When we recited together the *shehecheyanu* blessing at the start of

## Sh'ma

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the first plenary session. a shared feeling of having crossed a threshold to a new passage in Jewish life warmed the faces of all who were gathered. It was the recognition of the creation of a new kind of community, one which respects diversity and does not build walls between Jews of different denominations and orientations.

#### As Commonalities Emerge We Look Ahead

The excitement maintained itself and deepened through the four days of serious study and honest encounters among people from different backgrounds and differing Jewish involvements.

People opened themselves to learning, exploring the way to studying previously unfamiliar Jewish texts, allowing themselves to get to know personally individuals who had always been seen as "the other." The commonalities among groups and individuals began to emerge, to bind, and to heal rifts that had up to that point of meeting kept people from each other.

Perhaps most important of all was that alongside the enthusiasm, the high spirits and the occasional moments of self-congratulatory fervor, a balancing, self-critical caution prevailed. While this experience of a national gathering of havurot was undoubtedly a high moment for most of the participants present, the majority looked to the future with a watchful optimism. Proclamations heralding a new movement were avoided. Future planning centered around the need for a newsletter or some other vehicle of communication among groups. There was talk of another conference or summer institute but no rush to precipitous programming before firmer foundations are established and newly established links consolidated. We have much to learn from each other. The articles in this issue are a first step in the continuing dialogue and sharing of resources. We hope other publications will develop from the extended discussion in the wider community. All existing havurot which are not at this point in contact with the national office are encouraged to write us at the following address: National Havurah Conference, c/o National Jewish Conference Center, 250 W. 57th St., Suite 216, New York, N. Y. 10019.

In time, there are plans for a resource center and directory of havurot nation-wide, as well as a handbook on how to begin and maintain new groups. With help and support and the pooling of creative ideas and energies, we will continue to grow and develop as a significant new stream in Jewish life today.

#### Some reactions to the havurah conference

"... It was only members of Havurot who would gather for a *Chanukat Ha-Bayit*, a dedication of a home, and not bring things you buy, but prayers and things you make, poetry, messages and things you remember. The Havurot, and the movement, hold the key to the future of synagogue life in America for it represents the most exciting and beneficial change in synagogue life to come along in a long, long time..."

Joel Soffin  
Succasunna, N. J.

"... I came not knowing what to expect... I came with all kinds of preconceived notions and I have to say that they were all dispelled for me... I never pictured or interacted with the phenomenon of a woman rabbi before... and now, I really know what it means..."

Elliott Levi  
Kinnelon, N. J.

"... What we come away with is the sense that havurah is not one particular thing, and what I am hoping is that a way be found to bring the notion of havurah into the mainstream of Judaism, so that others, not only those disaffected with synagogue life, but all those who are concerned with Judaism become involved with the ideals of havurah..."

Daniel Sherbill  
Rock Island, Ill.

"... In the synagogue, success is measured by whether you have 40 new members each year. In the Havurah, success is measured by the extent to which the members have grown personally as well as within the group. This is one of the reasons why I feel that the Havurah should, and could, come to be seen as part of the permanent, valid, landscape of American Jewish Life..."

Rim Meiowitz  
New City, N. Y.

"... American Jews have a standard about what Jewish art is. For them, Jewish art is a piece of silver with an *Eilat* stone in it or an olivewood camel. This perception must and can be changed. This conference offered me as a Jewish artist the unique opportunity of sharing my work and helping to change the image of Jewish crafts within our community..."

Fern Amper  
Setauket, N. J.

"... I think that the people for the 60's should feel very proud that they succeeded in influencing people to the extent that they did. Of course, by the time the effect of their energies reaches the synagogue and the temple, it changes somewhat, it gets watered down. Some of you may feel disappointed or co-opted by this, but I think it's the sign of a tremendous success..."

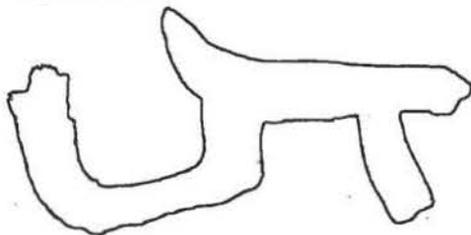
Middle-aged participant in a discussion on the sixties

"... I would like to make mention here of Abraham Joshua Heschel, because I think it was his influence on me and others of us that gave us the courage to undertake such ventures as the formation of havurot and the Havurah Movement. Heschel's theology was a world outlook that not only opened up parts of the Jewish tradition that had been closed to us for many years and generations, but which was also a theology which actively sought the humanizing of American society with a Jewish dimension in the forefront. Beyond this, and in part due to Heschel, our *minyanim* began to experiment with new forms of worship, new roles for men and women, a new openness to spiritual influences from non-Jewish religions, and ultimately to a new rabbi-lay relationship..."

Max Ticktin  
Washington, D. C.

"... What we are doing in the Havurot Movement is developing a participatory Judaism that reaches beyond professionalism, that reaches beyond institutions that depend totally on hired professionals to make them operate. We are instead trying to recreate a Judaism that used to exist, in another century and across the Atlantic, a Judaism in which the community as a whole participated and together created a Jewish Life, in which the most skilled were really resource people for the community as a whole..."

Arthur Waskow  
Washington, D. C.



## A perspective on the havurah movement

*Bernard Reisman*

The term "havurah" is used today as though it described a unitary phenomenon. In fact, included under the rubric of "havurah" is a wide range of diverse groups. The question is: do these groups have anything in common?

As a prelude to exploring the diverse types of havurot it is useful to consider briefly the recent history of the havurah. In the modern era the first havurot were those which appeared in Denver, Colorado, in 1961 under the auspices of the Reconstructionist Movement. These havurot were relatively small clusters of individuals and families which met regularly for self-directed study and worship. The Reconstructionist havurot were seen by the members as alternatives to the synagogue.

A few Jewish study groups, some of which were called havurot, appeared sporadically during the mid-1960's. Most of these groups developed on university campuses and were short-lived, reflecting the transient status of those involved.

### The First Steps Are Taken

The major impetus in the proliferation of havurot in the current era followed the launching in 1968 of Havurat Shalom, an independent, non-organizationally affiliated group in Somerville, Mass. Havurat Shalom emerged during a period of heightened disenchantment with traditional societal institutions and values. Within the Jewish world it was a forerunner of dozens of similar groups. These groups, composed mostly of college or graduate students, or young adults, have had varying life spans. In addition to Havurat Shalom, two of the more prominent similar groups, the New York Havurah, and the Fabrengein in Washington, D. C., both formed in the late 60's, have persisted until the present time. Many other independent havurot, especially those on college campuses, have flourished for short periods of time and then have either gone out of existence or dramatically changed membership or structure.

In 1970, Rabbi Harold Schulweis, of Valley Beth Shalom synagogue in Encino, California, first introduced the idea of the havurah within the synagogue. Small groups of synagogue members (12-20 adults or 6 to 10 family units) form together and meet regularly for Jewish study and celebration and for social activities. In the en-

suing years many other synagogues (one estimate is 25% of Conservative and Reform synagogues) have instituted programs of havurot for their members.

### Common Features Despite Differences

The emergence of the several types of havurot over the past decade reflects a combination of negative (rejecting the status quo) and positive (unique attractions of the concept) factors. On the other hand, as with many of their contemporaries on the general American scene, the initiators of the havurot were dissatisfied with existing Jewish institutional structures and the values they represented. In place of the large, corporate-style synagogue, they preferred a small, more intimate structure. They shunned passive dependence on the rabbi and the cadre of specialized professional staff in the large synagogues, and chose in their havurot to be active and self-directing. The very scope of the modern synagogue operation requires a major investment of membership time and energy in instrumental activities, the major purpose of which is to sustain the institution. Those attracted to havurot prefer a Jewish agenda which focuses more directly on the essence of Judaism and the effort to define its relevance to their lives.

Despite some differences in emphasis and structure, the several havurot all share four basic features:

1. **Sense of Community** – Warm supportive relations among the members is a *sine qua non*. Accordingly all havurot are relatively small in size, have fixed membership, meet regularly, and recognize social ties among the members as an explicit group goal.
2. **Active Participation** – The havurah members involve themselves directly in shaping the structure of their groups and assume responsibility for sustaining the groups over time. The members define the program agenda and participate actively in implementing it.
3. **Egalitarian – Democratic** – Not only is the havurah autonomous, in that there is no professional leadership, but the members are firmly committed to egalitarian-democratic values in the manner in which they operate their groups. Formal, hierarchical structures or patterns of authority are strongly rejected. Decisions reflect equal participation by all; organizational structure is kept at a minimal level.
4. **A Jewish Rationale** – The quest for Jewish meaning is the underlying rationale for the

havurah and is reflected in the expectations of the members and their activities. The intent is to blend the social and Jewish study/celebratory functions so that indeed the havurah is a “fellowship”: “a relationship among individuals characterized by a reciprocity of profound concern for one another and dedication to a goal held in common,” as Jacob Neusner put it.

Two major categories of contemporary havurot can be defined, within each of which exist two sub-categories. The prime distinction is between *Independent Havurot* – those groups unaffiliated with a synagogue or other formal Jewish organization, and *Synagogue – based Havurot* – those groups comprised predominantly of members of the same synagogue, and/or whose activities center in the synagogue.

1. **Independent Havurot – a)** (e. g. ,Havurat Shalom, N. Y. Havurah, university *batim* [houses]). Such groups are small – under 35 members, there is a pervasive emotional involvement among the members, and the havurah is afforded a central place in the lives of the members. Most typically the members of community-style havurot are young adults, usually unmarried.

b. **alternative synagogue** – (e. g. , Congregation Havurah in Buffalo, Reconstructionist havurot) A number of havurot seem to be incipient or alternative synagogues. Sometimes those involved are individuals previously non-affiliated with a synagogue, while other groups are made up of split-offs from existing congregations. These havurot are usually larger in size – 35 to 80 members, and more typically the members are older – 30-45 years. Their activities generally include, in addition to Jewish study and worship, Jewish education programs for children. The key question which arises in such havurot is whether to hire a rabbi. When that occurs, although the values of the havurah may persist, it seems more accurate to identify such a group as a synagogue.

### 2. Synagogue-Based havurot

2. *Minyanim* – Within many synagogues separate prayer groups emerge which *daven* apart from the regular synagogue-sponsored service. Those in the *minyan* are synagogue members who have the interest and capacity to be more actively involved in the services. They disdain some of the extra trappings and promotional features of the regular services. Members of *minyanim* have only minimal group activities aside from worshipping together.

**b) Surrogate Family** – The most typical type of synagogue-based havurah are the small groups of members who meet at least monthly in one another's homes. This type of havurah, pioneered by Harold Schulweis, offers a support network – like an extended family – to respond to the member's need for a sense of belonging within the large, anonymous synagogue, and to help in clarifying the meaning of one's Jewishness.

Are these different havurot part of a single movement? Do they share common goals and structural features? In terms of structural characteristics there seems to be sufficient evidence of similarity to define the several groups as part of the same movement. In terms of a shared ideological consciousness on the part of the individuals involved, there is less explicit evidence of unity. But this is likely a reflection of the non-institutional ethos of the havurah, and in that sense, the shared skepticism of the havurah members may be more an indication of a movement than other-wise.

The recent coming together of some 300 individuals, most of whom are chary of structure and organization, at the National Havurah Conference at Rutgers, is a significant development. While the Rutgers Conference may not presage the emergence of a full-blown social movement, it is, at least implicitly, an acknowledgement by these autonomous, independent havurah representatives of their need for support. It may well be they recognize that it is a support which only they can provide each other.

### **A new structure for Jewish survival**

*Saul J. Rubin*

We live after Auschwitz. Holocaust is pivotal for shaping a new Jewish agenda. All Jews alive today must account themselves survivors. Not only was a third of our stock cruelly wiped out and thousand year old enclaves of rich Jewish culture brought to an end, impoverishing us as a people, but we bear the additional burden of knowing that every Jew on earth at the time was programmed for "Final Solution." Our enemies cherished the vision of a world picked clean of Jews. If we believe that we have come through such trauma unaltered, that the old attitudes, structures, and alignments remain adequate for Jewish life in this generation, we have no more conception of our place in time and history than a Buddhist Monk in solitary seclusion.

### **Jews Cannot Afford Divisiveness**

The new Jewish agenda is to promote Jewish survival by furthering Jewish unity (not uniformity). Every Jew is a discomforted survivor. Every Jew needs the support and caring of his fellows in faith. Scrutinize the typical Jewish community in the nation. Ask the question "How have structures and attitudes altered as a consequence of Holocaust?" Truthfully . . . not in the least. The old enmities abide. Reform, Conservative and Orthodox rival for members, power and dollars. The old stereotypes are still peddled from the pulpit. Secular Jewish agencies are caught up in establishment politics. Those with alternative views are as welcome at meetings as an eccentric aunt who drops by for tea and whom we just can't wait to usher out the door. Classic divisions separate us: big givers versus "tokenists"; trusted old timers versus suspect newcomers; seasoned Jewish leaders versus young turks; etc. Divisiveness has plagued American Jewry from the colonial period on. Here in Savannah, the third establishment community of Jews in America, a handful of Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews were at odds in the 1730's, each petitioning the secular authorities for the right to erect a synagogue. That was almost 250 years ago. Holocaust has not ended Jewish fragmentation. I suspect that the younger generation wearies of a Jewish community that will not face up to its place in history. Divisiveness, intolerance, suspicion are luxuries that a generation of survivors can ill afford.

### **Havurah Offers Reconciliation**

Structures are needed to meld Jews together. Havurah is one such structure. I account myself privileged to have attended the First National Havurah Conference. Havurah appealed to me ideologically, as a mechanism for revitalizing the synagogue. It had potential for activating spectator Jews, making them responsible for the conduct of their Jewish lives. It supposedly could fill the void between nuclear family and extended family in a mobile society. It could provide a warm support for those who find the synagogue an inhospitable environment. Everything sounded right. What was not written down is – to me – the most powerful argument for havurah. *It teaches Jews a wholly new way of relating to each other.* It fosters openness, tolerance, mutual respect. The First National Havurah Conference was a clear demonstration of that. Imagine Hasidic Jews and Humanistic Jews sitting together in small discussion groupings and sharing. Imagine

Reform, Conservative, Orthodox and secular Jews; the over thirty's and the proudly twenties; remnants of the radical movements of the 60's, and representatives of the "Silent Majority"; Rabbis and laypersons, male and female, breaking bread together, celebrating *Shabbat*, listening receptively to each other, lending succor and encouragement.

I have never before witnessed Jews relating to fellow Jews with such obvious empathy and caring. In my home community, I could visualize counterparts of the types there represented, coming together. How the fur would fly!

### Jews Can Share Even With Differences

The separateness and suspicion that attend American Jewish community life shame us as people. We who are the remnant, delivered by Providence from the fiery furnace ought to exhaust ourselves in quest of unity. Israel, God's treasure, remains a fractured entity. I weep for my people. I lament its segmentation. I believe divisiveness is the single most corrupting element in Judaism today. I welcome havurah.



### "Let us not become a movement"

Lainie Bergman

I have been a member of the New York Havurah for three years, and of the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, mother synagogue of the Reconstructionist Movement for ten. I grew up in a series of Orthodox and Conservative congregations, and consider myself a "serious Jew."

### Tradition in Periods of Radical Change

*Shabbat Hazon* (the sabbath before *Tisha B'Av*), I found myself describing the Havurah Conference to the SAJ as I took my turn leading the open microphone discussion. My talk examined the connections between the Torah reading (Deut. 1:1-3:22), the *Haftara* (Isaiah 1:1-27), and *Tisha B'Av*, using the *Midrash Rabba*. The threads all intertwined to form a cable to which Israel could

cling as it moved through a period of radical change.

Moses is preparing the people to go from the desert to the Land. The Rabbis, in their choice of *Haftara* and the *Midrashic* commentaries, are laying the groundwork for life in the Diaspora without the Temple service. In each case, the device is the same: retelling of the history to date, emphasizing rebukes of the people for past sins and reassurances of God's blessings in the future. The retelling gives meaning to past suffering by seeing it as God's punishment — a visible sign of His continued involvement in history and His special relationship with the Jews.

### Jews Respond To Changes in American Life

The havurot represented at the Conference (and, we can infer, those not represented as well) have arisen in response to another period of radical change. The Holocaust and the Second World War left American Jewry as the most prosperous and religiously creative component of the Jewish people (the Israelis have been preoccupied with survival and only now, with the glimmer of peace on the horizon, the opportunity to exercise their potential for religious creativity). The American Jewish community has been influenced by the rise in ethnic awareness, the demographic pressure of the post-war "baby boom" (now entering their 30's), and the zero population movement which has meant that today's young Jews have not married and reproduced at the rate their parents did. These Jews, "like everyone else, only more so," have been affected by the greater geographic mobility of American life, which, combined with the other factors, has contributed to the general deterioration of the extended and nuclear families.

Finally, American Jews have been swept up in the growing movement toward religiosity. The result of all this has been the havurah, filling needs previously met by family, synagogue, and community, as well as needs which have never existed before, and have emerged from the vortex of the changes that have engulfed this part of the century.

### Synagogues and Havurot Both Fill Needs

At the Conference, the history of the development of havurot was traced, their successes and failures analyzed, and their future foretold. The most telling analysis, in my opinion, was by Prof. Lawrence Hoffman of the HUC-JIR. He suggested that the major difference between syna-

gogue and havurah was level of commitment: the synagogue a community of limited liability, and the havurah one of potentially total liability. He emphasized that each is good at what it sets out to do, and resisted attempts to criticize synagogues by saying that they do not offer what havurot do, because they never intended to do so.

The problem is that neither synagogue or havurah as presently constituted is an adequate vehicle for carrying the Jewish people through the next era of its history. The synagogue was created for an earlier age, one in which a person was born, raised, married, and died within a single community; an era in which an extended family existed to transmit the ineluctable aspects of non-worship-oriented Judaism, in which a community existed with whom to share life-cycle events. The power structure, educational system, lay-clergy relationship, and fundraising mechanisms of the synagogue have all evolved to be adaptive to that milieu, which is rapidly fading from existence. The havurah, on the other hand, to refer again to Hoffman's analysis, is good at interpersonal interaction, and celebration of life-cycle events, and community, but because its main focus is on process rather than goals, is not very good at providing a consistent set of services to the larger community: daily *minyanim*, community Hebrew (and day) schools, support of scholarship (which, is even in an attenuated way, the goal of a paid rabbinate, and fundraising efforts for rabbinical schools), and community relations.

#### **But Alone, Neither One is Adequate**

The answer, I am convinced, is an institution which can incorporate the best aspects of both. Synagogues, by introducing havurot into their structures, are attempting to evolve into this institution. Hoffman threw out a challenge to havurot to do the same. Certain *minyanim* are certainly already doing so. This process will take time, and no one can yet predict the final shape of what will emerge.

The answer, however, is not a separate movement. Someone in my reference group at the conference drew the analogy to the Reconstructionist experience. At one time, the vast majority of non-Orthodox rabbis were Reconstructionists, by virtue of the influence of Mordecai Kaplan as a teacher at the Jewish Theological Seminary. Once a group of synagogues and havurot gathered together to form a separate Movement, with

its own rabbinical school (although the need for another school was, I believe, there), questions of affiliation and loyalty led to a decline in its influence on the larger community. One member of my discussion group, himself a product of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College, urged havurot to continue to operate within the context of the larger community rather than dissipating their efforts by attempting to form a movement. In this way, he contended, they can help the Jewish community evolve toward a lifestyle adapted to the realities of our times. I can only agree.

### **The vitality of synagogue havurot**

*Richard Braun*

The Havurah program at Valley Beth Shalom had its inception in 1970 under the guidance of Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis, who had assumed the pulpit of that congregation, then numbering approximately 450 families. The Havurot were established to try to penetrate the isolation and anonymity of the members of the synagogue, and to enhance the quality of Jewish life by bringing together small groups of people, usually ten families, to celebrate the regularly recurring events in the Jewish calendar, to support in time of joy or loss, and to study together important Jewish literature. The Havurot had neither structure nor function superimposed from without, but were encouraged in a sense of openness and independence. As the congregation has grown to 1250 families, the number of Havurot has increased to the point where there are now approximately 60 Havurot involving about 600 families. Over the years, members of the Havurah Steering Committee have been instrumental in helping synagogues throughout California start their own programs, and indeed congregations the country over have written to Valley Beth Shalom for materials to aid them in forming Havurot.

#### **Committed Young Jews At Conference**

Although the nine members of Valley Beth Shalom who attended the National Havurah Conference went with their extensive background with synagogue-based Havurot, we had for the most part, only a vague understanding of independent Havurot, especially on the east coast. Certainly we knew of the Whittier (California) Havurah of nineteen years, and had some knowledge of others in the West Fabrengen, New York Havurah, Havurot

Shalom — these were titles with only the most nebulous connotations to us. That which had trickled through were chiefly references to anti-establishment social outcasts, political radicals, secularists, cultists, counter culture iconoclasts. Thus our decision to attend the conference was mixed with apprehension and uncertain expectations.

What we did find was a magnificently prepared meeting which provided opportunity for intense and meaningful interchange on a wide-ranging agenda of issues of the utmost significance with people of the highest level of expertise and with a profound commitment to the furtherance of Jewish life. In the independent havurot, we found people, generally younger than ourselves, who are eagerly struggling with the challenge of applying Jewish values in all of life's activities, who are involved in the continued evolution of relevant ritual and prayer based on authentic sources. It is tremendously reassuring to know that there are so many highly intelligent, competent persons engaged in expanding and enriching their lives as Jews.

#### The Discovery of Shared Concerns

There is no doubt, however, that the majority of members of independent Havurot had little or no knowledge of the nature or scope of synagogue havurot. There was little or no recognition of the significant transformation underway in many synagogues throughout the country via the havurot in terms of altering the nature of Jewish religious experiences, of helping the individual to become more competent as a Jew, and of providing validation for feelings and concerns on issues of importance in our lives. These are certainly goals shared by all Havurot. There was insufficient exposure of this matter to the conference as a whole, but on a personal basis, there were many opportunities for this subject to be discussed.

Another issue surfaced which demonstrates that independent Havurot share many of the same concerns which are thought to characterize the synagogue agenda. As they have grown in size and as the members have married and borne children, they now discuss facilities, finances and schools. The development of educational curricula which are consonant with parental values, utilization of pedagogic methods deemed most effective, selection of teachers as appropriate role models — all these are common to concerned parents of both groups. As far as adult

education is concerned, the degree of professionalism which should be present to provide maximum participation for haverim and still maintain a high level of learning is a matter under constant speculation by both synagogue and independent groups. The seeming polarity of the two species of havurot may thus be somewhat less substantive than initially perceived.

#### A Push To Reexamine Goals

The organization and content of the conference has stimulated our group to reexamine the Havurah program at Valley Beth Shalom. If there is one distinct difference between the synagogue versus the independent Havurah, it is the matter of *davenen*. Except for special situations such as *Havdalah* or retreats, synagogue havurot *daven* at the synagogue, and thus as a matter of course do not experience the degree of participation afforded to the *daveners*. That this has been a feature of great importance to most of the independent Havurot is obvious. It will be a challenge to bring some of this to the synagogue groups. There also seems to be a recurring need for review of goals and agenda by many independent groups, which seems to be a healthy process. Many synagogue havurot who have been together for a number of years would probably benefit from a new look at their original reasons for banding together, seeing how things have changed, and seeking out new directions or goals. Social action, a prominent feature of several independent Havurot, has become more evident in our synagogue groups and can be a focus of involvement for adult and child members alike.

#### Doing jewish things together

Sally Weber

I have always loved *Havdalah*. The first time I experienced this joyful and, at the time, somewhat exotic ritual was at the home of close friends, whose 18-month-old son's eyes were ever aglow with happiness and wonder in the light of the braided candle. Later, *Havdalah* was slowly incorporated into my family life, increasing in importance as the observance of *Shabbat* increased in importance. Today, it is my own youngsters who rush expectantly outside to count the three stars, then watch with their eyes aglow as the multi-wick candle is lit.

The havurot with which I have been affiliated

have always loved *Havdalah*. Each meeting has begun, weather permitting, in the gardens of each others' homes, arms entwined, chanting the ceremony and warmly wishing each other "*Shavu'a Tov!*" When, on a few occasions, we have rushed into the program and forgotten to make *Havdalah*, it is always commented on and regretted.

Nevertheless, I have always found something missing in my Havurah *Havdalah*. I have never been the first to remind the Havurah to make *Havdalah*, sometimes have even been the last to comment on its absence. I had never thought much about this fact. However, through my experiences at the National Havurah Conference, I have begun to understand not only what is missing, but how to put it back.

#### Sharing But With What Purpose?

At Valley Beth Shalom, we have looked to havurot to provide "peer support," "extended family," and an "enhancement of synagogue life." And over and over, we are faced with a crisis of failed purpose. Our Havurah Steering Committee, filled with "organizationally wise" volunteers, has responded by developing workshops, group dynamics training programs, resource materials, speakers' lists; troubleshooting for havurot which are in crisis. Yet the question remains: Why are we together?

What is a Jewish community? When Jewish people gather to "do Jewish things together," what do they do? Perhaps the most important message for me at the National Havurah Conference was that in order to "do Jewish things" together, we must become Jewishly educated together. That "Jewish things" are not merely socializing with other Jews, not doing *tzedakah* for humanitarian reasons only, not celebrating holidays together because that is what the Jewish family has always done. Equally important, one cannot merely "know" — one must also *do* Jewishly. A havurah which works together to create a *Shabbat Seder* is much closer to this goal than one which goes out to dinner, then attends Friday night services. A havurah which studies the laws of Passover, then helps make a member's home *pesachdich* is perhaps closer to this goal than one that hires a caterer in order that they can have *Seder* together. A havurah which spends *Shabbat* together — studying, sharing — understands more of *Havdalah* than one in which everyone returns home from errands, ball games, work, then rushes to a Havurah *Havdalah*.

#### Not A Beginning or End But A Process

It is no longer enough for me to define my havurah experience passively — no longer enough to relegate to the synagogue those things which are spiritual and to the havurah "the other things." The purpose of havurah fails me when it fragments my community, when I attend services at the synagogue for one set of needs, celebrate the holidays with friends and family for another, attend classes to study, meet friends to socialize — then expect havurah to somehow skim the top of all my needs and come up with something else.

For me, *Havdalah* cannot merely "skim" the surface of *Shabbat*. Rather, it is the culmination of an experience in which I have totally participated. Havurah has a similar meaning to me now: it is not a beginning but the whole process and culmination of being and becoming Jews together.

#### Between synagogues and independents

Joan Brunwasser

Members of the unaffiliated, independent havurot and synagogue havurah members confront Judaism in their own way and ask different questions. The former asks: how can I create a viable alternative to the traditional communal institutions? The latter, because of belonging to the very institution under scrutiny, phrases the question much differently: How can the synagogue structure/format be changed to include me in a more meaningful way? Clearly, different modes of thinking that necessitate very different answers. It is unrealistic to expect the average congregant to jump right into the kinds of creative activities that characterize independent havurot. They simply have not *yet* cultivated either the skills nor the desire for them. What they end up doing in their havurot may seem remarkably tame and unimaginative to the *vatikim*, the havurah old-timers, but the fact to keep in mind is that they *are doing* (often for the first time) and, in the process, are becoming more responsible, knowledgeable Jews.

Strictly speaking, synagogue havurot may be a co-option, even a bastardization of the havurah ideal, but it is in the movement's best interest, in my opinion, to reach out, share know-how, and inspire towards more ambitious endeavors. The potential is there. It needs encouragement and nurturing. In addition, the independent havurot

have something very important to gain from adopting this approach. They have been accused of elitism and insularity; by reaching out to their synagogue brothers and sisters who are demographically much more diversified, they can use the synagogue as a testing ground for new modes of relating to and experiencing *Yiddishkeit* on a community level.

### An Opportunity For Outreach

Where are the elderly, the single-parent families, the newly converted, the new in town, the suburban, those with older children, the widowed, those who are basically happy within the synagogue but want more personal growth? They certainly aren't members of independent havurot. Moreover, it is unlikely that the independent havurot could or would attempt to absorb all these different elements and maintain their present style or size.

I suggest that the independent havurot take a leap of faith and cast their lot with the synagogue. In the long run, we can accomplish far more by working together than through our separate efforts. The havurah experience has already been adapted by synagogues for their general membership. It is estimated that one-quarter of all Reform and Conservative congregations have some degree of involvement in havurah. But this figure is misleading — many are just getting started, many are underextended. Some have hit snags and are floundering. What happened at Valley Beth Sholom needn't be a pipedream for others. Havurah can touch more people and affect synagogue life to a greater degree.

### Interaction Would Benefit All

The key is local expertise, which the independent havurot have, as well as a backlog of experience and enthusiasm. As consultants working with synagogue havurah leadership where it exists (and helping to create it where it does not), they can break down the barriers which separate them from the rest of the community.

What would be the justification for such a radical rethinking of havurah's communal responsibilities? A chance to more actively mold our Jewish future. Instead of a few urban enclaves scattered among the Jewishly illiterate masses, independent havurot can become the nuclei of entire revitalized communities. The interaction will be mutually beneficial. Cross-pollinating ideas and viewpoints refresh and invigorate the indepen-

dent havurot which face structural and philosophical problems of their own. We saw the value of the exchange at this conference. I'd like to see it as the beginning of a new, outward-looking era for the independent havurot, to ultimately benefit themselves and the entire Jewish community.

### Tikkun hatzot, night mending, a ceremony

Lynn Gottlieb

The House fell at midnight  
stone by stone  
fire burned the Inner Place  
part of God became exiled-in-the-world.  
She is called: *Shechinah*: She-Who-Dwells-Within  
In the desert She made a home of the *Mishkan*.  
In Jerusalem She made a home of *Bet HaMikdash*.  
She dwells within each of us  
She is that part which yearns  
for wholeness  
restoration  
and mending: *Tikkun*.  
How do we bring Her into the world  
and into ourselves?  
What rituals do we use  
what words  
what deeds  
what intentions?  
The mystics used the stories of *Rachel* and *Leah*  
to bring *Shechinah* into the world and into  
themselves.  
They called this ritual: Night Mending: *Tikkun  
Hatzot*: repairing and bringing together through  
the stories of *Rachel* and *Leah*.  
*Rachel* represents sorrow, dispersion, weeping,  
exile: *Galut*.  
She weeps for all that is separate and undone, for  
the uncaring way of the world, and through the  
weeping *Rachel* releases *Rachamin*: the  
compassionate aspect of God, the watery flow  
until the weeping itself becomes the comfort  
and leads you out of sorrow . . . and allows you to  
see. *Leah* represents joy, coming together,  
laughter, return: *TIKKUN*. As we pass through  
the weeping (for we are the Hebrews, the *ivrim*  
the ones who pass through) we work on our  
vision of wholeness;

We intend the sexual coming together of *Yisrael-Leah* like the joining of *Shechinah* with all other  
God aspects: *Y'hud Shechinta* we intend to  
understand the mystical meaning of the names

*Leah* gave to her children . . .

*Rachel-Yaakov*: the heel, the grounded one, the earthbound, the one who loves *Rachel* outside the land, the one who follows her children into exile . . . *Leah-Yisrael*: the God-seer, the released vision, the dreamer of ladders, in the land . . .

The following is a selection from the ritual of *Tikkun Hatzot* taken from versions of the 18th-19th centuries and woven together with *Binah*, with the intuitive landscape, with the midrashic imagination of this author . . .

*Rachel-Leah*, the known and the unknown, the revealed and the hidden, two sisters, two aspects of *Shechinah* may they come together quickly in our days . . . amen.

*Tikkun Rachel: Mending through Rachel's tears*

At midnight  
rise

go to the door  
take off your shoes  
wrap your head  
touch ashes to brow  
in place of *tefillin*  
roll your eyes in the dust  
just as *Shechinah* herself-without eyes  
blind from weeping.

Sit

on a stone scattered road  
in between by-ways  
near the crossing of two streams  
and weep  
for all that is separate and undone  
for loss and pain  
weep for the sadness of exile  
until dust  
turns to praise.

*Shechinah* remembers the first time

Her people were exiled  
the Inner House open to the world  
the Outer House in flames  
She was forced to wander . . .

The halls of heaven began to fill.  
They assembled before the throne  
the sages and prophets, the judges and royalty  
the righteous ones, even the angels and the holy  
souls of the unborn . . . all pleading with their  
own righteous deeds  
begging God to return the people to Jerusalem,  
to rebuild the House.

But no one could stir God from the aspect of  
harsh judgment to the aspect of compassion,  
no one, not even the letters in the Torah,  
not even Abraham, Isaac, Jacob

not even the messiah.

When all seemed lost, as the veil of Harsh  
Judgment turned to stone

Our mother, our sister, our friend Rachel  
wailed out to the wall of God:

Adonai

remember when your servant Jacob served seven  
years to attain my love in marriage  
and on the night of my wedding, my father  
planned to replace me with Leah, and I warned  
Jacob of the plan and we exchanged signs to  
know each other . . .

but afterwards, when I saw Leah, and saw her  
shame I knew I had to give my signs to my sister  
so I allowed her into my tent, with my lover . . .  
and if I, who am a flesh and blood woman  
overcame jealousy with compassion for my own  
enemy then how can You, the Loving Merciful  
One allow Yourself to be jealous of idols, of  
wood and stone.

Rachel began weeping

one of her tears broke down the wall of stones  
and touched the throne of God  
God turned into compassions watery flow,  
gathered the torn shreds of wandering  
and returned Israel to the land.

here ends *Tikkun Rachel*.

**Song of Ascent**

spiraling song of return  
Tzion dreamers  
spilling joy  
the nations remark: their Lord did well with them  
our Lord did well with us  
a great thing returning us  
stream by stream to the desert of our birth  
we went laying our seed cry in the ground  
we come home carrying the smile harvest  
of return . . .

"Behold, in the morning, it was Leah."

Leah

soft eyed

seeing the inside truth of things  
symbol of *Binah*

Mother Source of intuition

holding thought

until it ripens into word-deed

Leah

concealed in the upper worlds

hidden behind soft eyes

veiled in marriage

joined to *Ya-acov* in darkness

buried with *Yisrael* in a cave

her name contains the yearning  
of *Shechinah* for Oneness

to be revealed  
and restored to her rightful place  
above the *Keter*-Throne of God.  
*Ya-acov* loved *Rachel*  
and hated *Leah*  
he did not understand her  
he had no dreams outside the holy land.  
but *Leah* understood his dream of ladders  
*Leah* saw *Yisrael* inside of *Ya-acov*.  
*Leah* saw the vision of *Shechinah*  
passed down to her by her mother at the well.  
This is *Leah's* story:

Mother  
when you died  
the women came  
hair tearing  
hand wailing  
clothes shredded black  
tongue noises rising  
their voices stirred up the hidden signs  
which I alone remember.  
I remember  
once after the rains  
you took us on a journey far from home  
we walked with the moon for many days  
our steps turned sand to fire  
our path brought us to a distant land  
I remember one morning  
as the sun broke on the edge of the world  
You sat near a well of waters  
smiled a memory  
and spoke of the old one  
*Rachmaya* the womb flow  
the old one who came here  
before joining-man time  
before entering man's tent.  
The old one revealed the secret of the well  
the hidden signs of She-Who-Dwells-Within  
*Shechinah*.

Mother touched hand to water  
and sang us *Shechinah's* song  
which she heard from *Rachmaya* by this well:  
"I am She-Who-Dwells-Within  
and seeks the Lover beyond  
I am She who waits for mountain of fire  
to merge with flowing springs  
I am She who streams with the hidden lights  
and calls at the gate of the world to Him beyond  
when will He answer My calling  
when fire joins water  
and holy land joins holy people  
when the world's great yearning  
for a lost One  
releases the flow upward.  
Go spread My word to those who wait by the

well  
for one of you will hear and understand.  
One of you will unite your seed with a man  
who knows Me by a different name.  
I will make you a great nation  
but my covenant with you will be revealed  
through the hidden way,  
Go, tell them  
*Shechinah* sends you  
She-Who-Dwells-Within  
*Shechinah* . . ."

In her old age, alone with her daughter *Dinah*, her  
seventh child, alone in the land, *Ya-acov* in exile  
following *Rachel's* children down into Egypt, into  
the narrows, *Leah* passes the well story to her  
child of journees, *Dinah*:  
One within the other

God within God  
God surrounding God *YeHU-D-ab*

one sees  
undresses the moment  
sees again  
peels off another layer  
hinting at the mystery which lies above  
climbing the ladders  
onebodymind inside another  
She-Who-Dwells-Within  
unfolds God in the world . . .

Guider of the World,  
with strenuous intentions  
and a devoted heart  
I intend my whole being  
a chariot for *Tiferet*  
a House for *Shechinah*  
so that I can  
blend, restore, unite  
the male and female Presence  
in the name of all *Yisrael*  
to create in myself and the world  
the return of the first *Adam*-androgonous being  
the One of all generations  
*amen selah*.

morning breaks  
on the wings of Mother  
*Shechinah* rises up with the dawn  
*selah* hallelujah!  
here ends *Tikkun Leah*

## A theological vision for the 80's

Michael Strassfeld

To renew Judaism after the ideological and historical blows of the modern period, we must begin at the beginning, with the primary aggadic work of Judaism, the book of Genesis. In the beginning, God created the world by separating light from darkness, land from sea, earth from sky. Every living thing He created in two's, male and female. On the sixth day, God created a Human containing both male and female, a reflection of the oneness of God, for God is the only One in a world of dualities. But that Human asked to share in the duality of the world he lived in and so Woman was created. God, the parent, then placed them in an enclosing garden and provided for all their needs.

Adam and Eve had no sense of Self, and thus no sense of Other. God ordered them not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge, hoping both that they would and would not. They did and discovered their sexuality and their selves; in fact, they discovered life. God, afraid that they would eat of the Tree of Eternal Life and be like Him the parent, sent an angel who cut the umbilical cord with a flaming sword, thus expelling them from the garden.

### God Gave Us More Room

Later on, God was still unwilling to accept the development of people along the lines of *their* choosing. God repented of the world He had created, and destroyed it. To begin again and to emphasize the duality of life, He placed two of every living thing in the ark. After a flood lasting nine months, the ark sent forth life into the world. God reached down and took a piece of the line called Horizon that marks the sacred place where earth meets heaven, and placed it in the sky as a rainbow — a rainbow that, reflecting all the colors of this world, was a sign that God had finally accepted the world and especially the maturing of the people He had created. Never again would He destroy them.

But a rainbow is also an inverted smile, for within that promise is the offer to man himself to destroy the world. God, having learned the lessons of the garden and the flood, withdrew from the world leaving more room for people to grow, to mature, and yet to destroy. All human love, art, creation, etc. comes from that *tzimtzum*, that leaving of breathing room. All human suffer-

ing, all gulags, and the Holocaust come from that same space.

Does God still act in our lives and in history? Certainly. Is God removed from our lives and from history? Certainly.

Or, as Rabbi Akiva expressed it: Everything is foreseen by God and yet freewill is given to man. Another duality in a world of dualities — perhaps the most difficult duality of all. Thus, the answer to the Holocaust is the same answer to every death, the same as the one given to Job. Out of the whirlwind comes the answer, but it cannot be heard; the whirlwind itself is the only answer we shall ever hear.



Lynne Avadenka

### Distinctions Make Order of Chaos

When Rabbi Ishmael, a colleague of Akiva's (and one of the ten martyrs of Talmudic times) was being tortured to death, he cried out bitterly. His cry shook God's throne. The ministering angels said: "Shall such a righteous man die so cruelly? Is this the Torah? Is this its reward?" A heavenly voice went out and said: "One more cry and I will turn the world back to *tohu-u-vohu* — the primordial chaos." Ishmael was silent and died. Humans could not live in a world of *tohu*, so, to create a world in which humans can live, God had to create order out of what we call chaos. Thus, God made this world with *havdallot* — distinctions and separations, so that we could know that there is an order. But to know the order itself, to hear the answer contained in the chaotic whirlwind, would be to transform the world back to *tohu*. Thus, for Ismael to have been answered would have meant the end of the world.

There is an order, but to know it would eliminate our humanity. What kind of faith can we have with only questions and no answers?

### Abraham and Sarah Are Models of Faith

In ages past, our models of faith have been the patriarchs, especially Abraham, the man of perfect faith willing to sacrifice his son at God's command. For those of us with an unsure faith, our model should be the matriarchs — especially Sarah. Sarah is skeptical; she laughs at God's promise of a child in old age. Indeed, Sarah laughs even at the moment of that child's birth and names him accordingly *Yitzhak* (what better metaphor for the history of the Jewish people in this century). Sarah, unlike Abraham never hears the word of God directly, but can only guess at His desire. Yet, despite all the disappointments of her life, she still has faith in herself and in God.

How can we live with such unsurety? How shall we act? Let us return for a last time to Genesis: God, regretting having driven us from the garden, gave us the Torah which in itself is an *Etz Hayyim* — a tree of eternal life. Driven from the garden, humans can taste of eternity only through the taste of the Torah. Yet, there are those in our time who believe this tree should be discarded, or simply ignored. Others believe that by trimming only a few dead branches, the tree will be set right again. Others who try to keep the tree protected by keeping it fenced in on all sides because they believe that in that fashion they will be able to keep out all the diseases of the world. In fact, though, they stunt the growth of the tree and thus kill it in the most painful way possible.

### Torah Must Grow To Stay Alive

All of these misunderstand the imagery of the tree of life that is the Torah. A tree is a constantly growing organism which, if it is to remain healthy, needs to be pruned not only of its dead branches but pruned of its live ends too so that it can grow all the more luxuriantly. The tree *must* grow and this *must* change or it will die.

To what can this living sense of tradition be compared? Seder Eliyahu Zuta tells the following parable: Once there was a king who loved two servants. To each he gave a measure of wheat and flax. The wise servant took the flax and spun it into a cloth. He took the wheat and made a loaf of bread which he covered with the cloth. The silly servant did nothing. When the king returned he praised the wise servant and scorned the silly one. So, too, when God gave the Torah to Israel, He gave it as wheat from which flour should be extracted, as flax from which clothing should be made.

### Link the Past to the Present

Our Torah must reflect our lives and concerns. It must be transformed by our experience as well as maintaining a connection with the past. That is why it is Elijah who will come to answer all unresolved halakhic questions in the end of days. Why not Moses? asks Levi of Berditchev. He answers that it is Elijah who has never died and is aware of all that has transpired in the world — all the changes that have occurred. Most of all, he is aware of the present and so it is Elijah who can understand *this* generation's Torah.

Like the rabbis before us, we must change the tradition radically and yet maintain our ties to tradition. Only in this way will the tree of life flourish again. And only then will we see the fulfillment of the verse recited every *Shabbat* upon returning the Torah to the ark: "It (the Torah) is a tree of life to those who grasp it and happy are those who uphold it. Its paths are paths of pleasantness and all its ways partake of the completeness of *Shalom*."

### A conference center afterword

*Jeff Heilpern and David Teutsch*

In a time of serious organizational fragmentation, moral confusion, and personal search, new alliances that create real change and growth in the Jewish world are rare but not impossible. The success of the First National Havurah Conference testifies to such possibilities. Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, Reconstructionist, unaffiliated, and independent Jews came together with tremendous energy and a much greater commonality than most believed existed. The emergence of this new commonality goes further than just movements. It brings together the counter-culture and the mainstream as well as groups across generational lines. The search for community and for meaningful individual expressions of Jewishness, including an exploration of the tradition, united the group.

This search for tradition and community are but part of the struggle for meaningful Jewish identity and involvement in our time. That struggle will lead to a variety of new forms and expressions that can revitalize many already existing institutions if those institutions are flexible enough to keep a pace with the rapid changes of our time.

### A Catalyst For Change

In our rapidly changing world, breakdown and loss co-exist with opportunities for tremendous growth. It is the position of the National Jewish Conference Center that many such new alliances will be emerging within the next few years.

Acting as a catalyst in helping new groups to form and in supporting innovative projects in already established groups, the Conference Center is rapidly becoming a focal point for positive change. The need for new forms of outreach exists because the current generation of Jews, while more American than prior generations, feels less certain about how to participate in Jewish life.

New ways must be devised for our post-Holocaust, technocratic world to help individuals discover the excitement, meaning and richness of the tradition; and to develop new structures for community. The havurah movement is one such mechanism. We look forward to continuing to support the havurah movement and to aiding other innovative projects that will strengthen Jewish life.

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WE WELCOME two new Contributing Editors to Sh'ma: **BLU GREENBERG**, who teaches Jewish studies at Mount Saint Vincent College and writes and lectures on Jewish affairs and **DENNIS PRAGER**, who directs the many activities of the Brandeis-Bardin Institute near Los Angeles.

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