

The Concept of Havurah: An Analysis

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DURING THE PAST SEVEN YEARS the idea of forming *havurot*, or fellowships within the larger body of synagogues, has captured the imagination of Jews concerned about the quality of Jewish religious and communal life in America. The concept of *havurah* has its origins in antiquity when *havurot* were formed in both the Essene and Pharisee communities. While their respective relationships to the larger Jewish community were quite different, they, like their current offspring, sought to enrich and intensify Jewish life through the communal fulfillment of Jewish purposes.¹

There are currently in existence three types of *havurot*. One type has been labeled by Jacob Neusner "havurah as commune." Its origins can be traced to 1968 in Somerville, Massachusetts, where some university students and Jewish graduates created a common living experience by studying Jewish texts, celebrating Shabbat and the holidays, and working together on a daily basis to accomplish the functional necessities of their common existence. Many *havurot* of the commune type flourished on the campuses of large universities in the late 1960s and 1970s. While there are no solid data either on the numbers or the life spans of these university *havurah* communes, it is generally believed that at one time or another during the past decade several dozen have been formed and have had varying lengths of duration.

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The second type of *havurah* is that of the "community" or family cluster. Two examples of this type were formed in Denver in 1967 and in Washington, D.C., under the same name of *Fabrangen*, in 1971. These *havurot* focused on the Jewish education of both adults and children within a social structure of a small, ardent, informed congregation of believers and enthusiasts. *Havurah* as commune and *havurah* as community share a common ideological tenet, namely, the dissatisfaction of their members with the traditional institutional forms of Jewish life, particularly the synagogue. More specifically, for the joiners of these *havurot*, the synagogue did not offer an experience in shared Jewish purposes. In their minds, the synagogue too often expressed either the cold impersonality of a large-scale business corporation or acted as the dispenser of discrete life-cycle services, e.g., day-care nursery, men's groups, Hebrew school; it was a kind of multipurpose social service center without an overarching serious Jewish mission. What was missing was an encompassing feeling, namely, the synagogue as a locus of common peoplehood, a social and psychological matrix where important Jewish texts and issues might be absorbed and discussed within an ambience of fellowship—closeness, warmth, and shared purpose. In brief, the synagogue, in their eyes, did not fulfill the mission of enhancing Jewish beliefs, traditions, and values.

Havurah as a Response to a Diagnosis

In 1970 Rabbi Harold M. Schulweis initiated synagogue-based *havurot*, which are the third type. Since that time, synagogue-based *havurot* have been founded in various parts of the United States. It is not known how many of this type of *havurah* have been started, nor are there any data which describe and explain their methods of population selection, structures and modes of operation, types of activities, relative "success" and "failure" rates, termination rates, including reasons for termination, and so on. Exploratory studies of *havurot* have been done and are being carried out in Boston and Los Angeles, and perhaps in other places. Yet, as has been suggested, most of the written documents about *havurot* are either theoretical or impressionistic. It is difficult, if not impossible, to know what impact, if any, *havurot* have had on the quality of synagogue life, and the meaning that a *havurah* has had on peoples' lives in a Jewish sense, except for those rare synagogues in which studies have been done.²

If the *havurah* as commune can be characterized as an "anti-establishment" social institution—an outgrowth of the larger

counter-culture of the late 1960s—then *havurah* as a decentralized *minyan* of families embedded within the larger body of the synagogue congregation can be viewed at once as a potentially strengthening element of the traditional synagogue social structure and as a potential force for its transformation. A *havurah* movement within a synagogue ideally is both a conservative and a radical force, designed to strengthen the synagogue by infusing its total purposes through the creation of more “Jewish” Jews and by changing the roles of both its professionals and lay members.

The size of synagogue-based *havurot* vary from eight to twelve families, depending on a variety of factors, such as design, drop-out rate, willingness to experiment with size, and so on. Rabbi Schulweis projected the idea of the *havurah* as a *minyan* of families—hence, ten families—who would engage in study, celebrate the holidays together and undertake, in time, the emotionally supportive roles of an extended family. In this perspective, the *havurah* is a small-scale social structure whose mission is to enrich the intellectual and affective lives of its members through the sharing of Jewish values, knowledge and experience, and whose relationship to the individual family and to the larger synagogue is that of a “half-way house,” a linkage between the micro- and macroscopic social worlds.

Rabbi Schulweis’ idea of forming *havurot* within a larger congregation grew out of his own personal observations as a rabbi and through his knowledge of synagogue life and Jewish communal life in general. For Rabbi Schulweis, the decrepitude of Jewish synagogue life was evidenced not simply by the relative ignorance, or lack of learning, in Jewish matters on the part of the vast majority of the membership, but the poverty in the relationships among people, all *formally* a part of an organization called a “synagogue” but essentially alienated from its values and purposes and from each other. The formal act of membership in the synagogue presupposes neither a commitment to others who are members, nor a set of convictions which would identify members as being practicing Jews—ethically, morally, or ritually. According to Rabbi Schulweis:

The *havurah* experiences the joy of belonging. . . . the anonymity which threatens our lives is overcome. . . . Moreover, the *havurah* will affect the form and content of the synagogue program itself. The temple thus becomes a *havurah*—a community of communities, a family of families. . . . I have found no way more promising for Jewish renewal than that of *havurah*. . . . It may well prove to be a transforming experience.³

Professor Jacob Neusner is another important theorist of *havurah*. In Neusner’s perspective, the *havurah* is a fellowship which

he defines as "a relationship among individuals characterized by both reciprocity of profound concern for one another and dedication to a goal held in common." Neusner makes an important distinction between fellowship and friendship:

Friendship is the consequence of primarily interpersonal and reciprocal benefit, sometimes intellectual, sometimes emotional, sometimes psychological. . . . It is a static relationship. . . . Fellowship, on the other hand, may very well be achieved without friendship at all, for it is predicated on a common goal or ideal shared among two or more people, drawing them together despite, not because of, their particularities and uniqueness.⁴

Neusner's emphasis is somewhat more weighted toward the "dedication to a goal held in common," than Schulweis' formulations. While Neusner's definition of *havurah* includes an affective component—"reciprocity of profound concern for one another"—Schulweis specifies that concern in terms of the *havurah* transforming itself over a period of time into an extended family.

Neusner delineates five activities which a *havurah* should undertake in order to fulfill its mission as a Jewish institution. The members of a *havurah* should make an effort to pray together. Without prayer, Jews banded together cannot be said to be engaging in a religious activity. The second activity is that of study. He suggests the study of Jewish texts. A *havurah* should perform acts of compassion and kindness. This would involve the members of a *havurah* in undertaking visitations of, and assistance to, Jews who have suffered a severe blow in life through the loss of physical, mental or social functions. The mentally ill, the aged, or prison inmates might be target groups. The celebration of the Sabbath and the holidays would be a fourth component of *havurah* life. Finally, Neusner suggests that each *havurah* keep a record, a history of its experiences. As Jews are "the people of the Book," it is an important part of the tradition for them to keep a record for themselves and posterity.⁵

Schulweis and Neusner represent the two most important conceptual formulations of *havurah*. There are differences in emphasis. Schulweis' writings about the *havurah* are infused with a feeling that synagogue life in America needs to be revitalized and that this can only be accomplished through structural reform, i.e., decentralization, the creation of *havurot* where human warmth and intimacy are the products of study, celebration, sharing joys and tragedies, and engaging in mutually helpful activities. Perhaps Schulweis' experience as a synagogue rabbi and his profound concern for the wellbeing

of his congregants fill his written work with passion as well as high intellectual and moral content. Neusner is a historian whose main habitat is not the synagogue but the university. His writings tend to be almost exclusively "intellectual," and while his concern for the religious flowering of the Jewish community is no less intense than that of Schulweis, his hopes for the *havurah* are considerably more modest. He views the *havurah* as a limited instrument. Its impact upon the greater life of the Jewish community is questionable, he believes. In brief, Neusner would be dubious of any notions of "transformation" within the synagogue as the outcome of a *havurah* movement. He is willing to "settle" for a much less ambitious goal, namely, that of the benefit which individual Jews and families might derive from their *havurah* experience. In brief, Neusner's expectations with respect to the capacity of *havurah* to "transform" Jewish religious life as it is expressed in the totality of synagogue life are minimal.

The idea of *havurah* emerged out of a diagnosis of Jewish religious life as it is expressed by the status and role of the membership in a large synagogue. Specifically, the friendly critics of American synagogue Judaism see the large synagogue as performing a variety of social functions—educational and caretaker services—on behalf of Jews who are little interested in Judaism as "a way of life," as a disciplined approach to study and as a practice through which one's being as a person can undergo a change from alienation and loneliness to involvement with others through community.

The idea of *havurah* also emerged out of a diagnosis of chronic despair among those most concerned about Jewish religious life, namely, Reform and Conservative rabbis and laymen who held the conviction that Judaism was the central element of Jewish historical continuity and creativity. According to Schulweis' "diagnosis of despair," the life of the synagogue confronts two chronic "problems:" first, with some exceptions, a synagogue membership of Jews who know little or nothing about Judaism, and, second, a synagogue ambience consisting of Jewish people who do not relate to each other as if they were connected in ways which testify to shared values and purposes—in brief, Jews without a sense of community.

In support of Schulweis' thesis, Leonard Fein and his colleagues,⁶ on the basis of research done in Reform Jewish congregations, reported that:

Through all of our work, no single conclusion registers so strongly as our sense that there is, among the people we have come to know, a powerful, perhaps even desperate, *longing for community* [our empha-

sis], a longing that is, apparently, not adequately addressed by any of the relevant institutions in most people's lives.⁷

And, further, they wrote:

Our sense of the matter is that the need for community is so strong, and the prospect of community so weak, that people are reluctant to acknowledge the need, knowing or believing that it is not likely to be satisfied. . . . People . . . talk about their own sense of human deprivation. And even then, not all do. Some, to be sure, are silent because they have so long been accustomed to segmented and superficial relationships that they can scarcely imagine the possibility of something being different.⁸

What emerges from Fein's analysis of the need for community among Jews who are members of Reform synagogues is what Gregory Bateson has termed a "double-bind message." One part of the message is, "Yes, we need a sense of community, a need to feel that we belong, that we share our Jewishness with others," but then there is the contradiction: "No, we hardly believe it is possible. We no longer know what community means." It is as if the feeling of community has become a trace memory within the Jewish collective unconscious, a memory available for current application to concrete purposes.

Professor Bernard Reisman and some of his students have been the driving force in the organization of *havurot* in five Boston synagogues. Reisman theorizes that there are four basic concepts which form the principles of the *havurah* experience. First, the *havurah* is a primary experience in that it brings people together (a centripetal experience) into intimate association. Second, the *havurah* is an autonomous body in which specialization and professionalization play no significant role. The group functions on the assumption that people are capable of self-direction. Third, the *havurah* has a Jewish purpose; its tie to the synagogue, and the transmission of the Jewish heritage among the participants, validates the experience as being specifically Jewish. And fourth, the *havurah* is responsive to the need for organizational renewal and the modification of both professional and lay roles within the synagogue.⁹

As one of the authors of *Reform is a Verb*, Reisman is sensitive to the theme of the need for community. He, like all community advocates, believes that a socially cohesive community is the most powerful antidote to loneliness and alienation. With respect to loneliness, the psychiatrist Robert Weiss states:

We have found that the form of loneliness associated with the absence of an engaging social network—the 'loneliness of social isolation'—can be remedied only by access to such a network.¹⁰

Thus, a small-scale social institution like the *havurah* can be understood as an important social network, a human support system of non-kin, yet intimately bound people.

Alienation is a much more elusive concept. It has a variety of political, sociological, and psychological meanings, and the very lack of precision of definition makes for more confusion than clarity in the literature. For our specific purposes, we can think of an alienated member of a synagogue as one whose formal membership connotes little or no psychological investment in its workings or purposes and whose attachment to Jewishness is devoid of any passion.

Marshall Sklare believes that the synagogue is focused primarily on Jewish survival, and that "the *havurah* will protect and advance the spiritual life of those individuals who are ready for a richer religious diet than the synagogue makes available."¹¹ In Sklare's perception, the *havurah* can be viewed ideally as a small-scale group designed to enhance individual and communal religious feelings.

In two studies done as group master's theses at the UCLA School of Social Welfare in the academic years 1973-74 and 1974-75, some important findings emerged which deserve further exploration. Both studies concluded that the observed *havurot* (a total of eight in both studies) were essentially peer support groups. In respect to this important social function, one of the studies concluded that:

With few exceptions, there was little generational contact. While there was some talk of family participation, and some activities with children (particularly at holiday times), the strength and focus of the groups seemed to lie in the development of supportive relationships among couples who were close in age and situation.¹²

The earlier study concluded:

In the areas of existential crisis—illness and death—concern and support were freely extended. Thus, in this area, the *havurah* acts as a supportive social arrangement or institution.¹³

With respect to the support system and its Jewishness, the King *et al.* study concludes:

It (the *havurah*) does this by encouraging discussion of Jewish issues and by providing a safe setting for sharing experiences of what it means to be a Jew. Regardless of how they express or practice their Jewishness—as religious faith, or as a sense of peoplehood, or as both—the *havurah* provides the opportunity for direct involvement with a small group of people in Judaic activities of their own choice.¹⁴

Concerning the enhancement of Jewishness through *havurah* membership, the Anderman *et al.* study concludes that:

There are strong indications that through discussion and study, shared ritual observance, and through interaction with one another, *havurah* members experience an enhancement of their identification as Jews. Whether, in fact, this applies equally to individuals with strongly formed Jewish identities as opposed to those with only a peripheral involvement with Judaism prior to *havurah* membership is a speculative issue.¹⁵

Both studies concluded that there was little evidence that the observed *havurot* engaged in what are generally thought of as traditional extended family activities, such as helping each other out financially, reciprocal child care activities, or pooling resources in any way which might suggest mutual assistance efforts.

In both studies observations were made of the celebratory activities of *havurot* in which families, including children, shared in the enjoyment of such holidays as *Purim*, *Hannukah* and *Pesach*. These celebrations are reminiscent of large families, including extended family, coming together for the purposes of sharing joyful activities. Psychoanalyst Nathan Ackerman believes:

There is significant, restitutive, regenerative potential in such events as family gatherings, religious observances, rituals of confession and atonement, feasts, festivals, music and dance, initiation ceremonies, weddings, births, deaths, and rituals of mourning. The essence of healing is revitalization in an experience of human closeness, a triumph of life over death, of pleasure over pain, a reaffirmation and renewal of the exhilarating sense of being alive and well.¹⁶

The other principal finding of the two student studies was that when a *havurah* has been able to attain a life of approximately two years, a crisis arises in which the *havurah's* direction and purposes demand redefinition. The content of the crisis might be focused around a split in the *havurah* in which one subgroup, for instance, wishes to emphasize a higher commitment to Judaic interests, whereas another subgroup may wish to retain an original "socializing" focus with a minimum of Jewish study.

One of the present authors, Harry Wasserman, interviewed eighteen couples reputed to be enthusiasts of *havurah*.¹⁷ He chose to interview three couples from each of six *havurot* with two research aims in mind: first, to seek out the meaning of the *havurah* experience for each individual and, second, to construct a tentative "typology" of *havurot*, which is to say, a system of categorization.

In respect to the latter, Wasserman found three types of *havurot*, the definitional boundaries of which are loose and overlapping. There are *havurot* (1) which emphasize study, (2) some which focus on social activities and (3) others which combine the two activities into a workable meld of the intellectual and the social, including extended

family components. The *havurot* ranged in age from sixteen months to five years. Wasserman found that all of the *havurot* engaged in the celebration of some of the Jewish holidays—*Hannukah*, *Purim*, *Succot* (with the communal building of a *Succah*), *Pesach* (with the whole *havurah* sometimes including three generations), *Lag B'omer*, and so on. There are some exceptions, but the inclusion of children in *havurah* activities tends to be reserved for celebratory events. On the whole, the *havurot* are age-segregated groups (25-35, 40-50, etc.). The most vibrant of the groups tend to be mixtures of homogeneous and heterogeneous elements—homogeneous, for instance, in respect to the age of the children and the interests of the adults, and heterogeneous in terms of the adults' competencies, talents and skills. Heterogeneity encourages the spread of leadership roles within a *havurah*, providing individuals the opportunity to contribute in an active way to *havurah* life. One or two people may be expert in dance or leading the group in singing, others are excellent discussion leaders, still others know how to organize retreats, etc.

The *havurot* which are study-oriented slowly tend to become more "affectively-oriented" as they become older. As people get to know each other, an easy familiarity and closeness develops. Those with a high "socializing" component, however, tend to have some difficulty in injecting and maintaining a focus on study. Often it seems that some of the men in the *havurah* are resistant to undertaking systematic study of Jewish texts which, in their minds, is an added burden to highly active business or professional lives. From this perspective, the *havurah* should be an arena of easy familiarity, relaxation and good times. A conflict arises in the "social" *havurah* when a subgroup begins to agitate for a more specifically Jewish involvement which entails the necessity of active roles. Going to the theater to see a Jewish play is not resisted because it is seen by the "social" types as a social activity and not one of active Jewish learning.

The *havurot* which are of the study type are, for the most part, autonomous peer study groups with little or no direction from or by the synagogue professionals. The latter are sometimes utilized as resource persons, but they are not sought out as active teachers. The study *havurah* is the implementation of the concept of "andragogy" which has been developed by Malcolm S. Knowles. As Brin states:

Andragogy emphasizes the maturing process within learner as the prime focus of the teaching-learning transaction, as opposed to the presentation and imparting of knowledge by the teacher, traditionally found in pedagogy.¹⁸

Wasserman found that the *havurot* tend to become extended families in varying degrees. They undertake such activities as visiting the sick members of the *havurah*, filling the familial roles of afflicted persons (providing sustenance and care to a husband and children when a mother is hospitalized), providing emotional support to the bereaved in fulfilling the traditional practice of the *Shivah*, gathering together of all *haverim* and their children for the festive holidays, and the communal celebration of *B'nai* and *B'not Mitzvah*, *Hannukat Habayit*, etc. In these kinds of extended family activities, the *havurot* behave as human support systems, providing a context of sharing joys on proper occasions and a matrix of people who give mutual aid through the provision of succor and care when illness and death strike.

There is a tendency for the members of "successful" *havurot* to enhance their participation within the body of the larger synagogues through increased attendance at worship services and/or increased participation in educational and social activities. There are, of course, *haverim* whose participation in the activities of the synagogue remains the same or is decreased. The latter is quite exceptional.

As far as religious practice or the observance of ritual are concerned, the celebration of the *Havdalah* at the close of the Sabbath has become an institutionalized practice of many of the *havurot*. For most of the people, the *Havdalah* is an entirely new religious practice. This celebration is particularly gratifying because of the warmth and intimacy engendered by people standing together arm-in-arm reciting the prayers. (The social component to this practice will be discussed later.)

Wasserman found some disquieting aspects of *havurah* practice which deserve mention: a tendency in one group toward conformity by threatening to exclude those who do not enthusiastically support all *havurah* activities; a tendency in study-oriented *havurot* to be insensitive to the feelings of those who are not interested in Jewish learning; and a tendency in one of the "social" *havurot* to maintain an ambience of "good times" to the virtual neglect of any specifically Jewish study emphasis.¹⁹

Some observers of the *havurah* have noted other negative results and possible unwelcome consequences in the *havurah* movement. Rabbi Daniel Polish thinks that the *havurah* idea can be easily abused, and that there is a tendency for any Jewish group, regardless of purpose and function, to call itself a *havurah*. He argues for "some semantic rigor" so that a situation is avoided in which "many have

come to treat the word itself as some panacea for all the problems of congregations."²⁰

Mr. Robert Mills, executive director of a large Chicago congregation, is critical of the notion that "depersonalized families" can get together, pray and study together, and find community. He believes that:

The synagogue is society's only institution which has an entire family, and has that family for a lifetime. . . . We alone can put the appropriate theological and psychological knowledge together with our people in a manner of their own capacity to achieve wholeness in the sight of God.²¹

In respect to the meanings individuals have drawn from their *havurah* experiences, there are some which are critically important in a specific Jewish sense. For those Jews who grew up in homes which were devoid of religious observance, the *havurah* experience signifies a Judaism which connotes the sharing of joyful, familial-like activities, such as take place during the festive holidays. In the study-oriented groups, the opportunity of being able to talk about Jewish matters in a serious way is of utmost importance.

Many of the *havurot* have been deeply moved by being the recipients of their colleagues' succor and care when illness and death strike. The natural altruistic response to a personal or family crisis binds the members of the *havurah* together as no other event can.

Just being together as Jews, in a situation where the everyday occupational and social masks of the world of business and the professions fall away, in some measure provides an ambience of good fellowship, an environment of security and warmth.

Some *havurah* members, a minority among those interviewed, have become more learned Jews. They have read, reflected and discussed Jewish texts—history, religious literature, novels, and so on. They have experienced real Jewish intellectual growth. It is not unusual, however, for those few Jews who at the outset of their *havurah* experience were primarily interested in study to have become the most ardent enthusiasts of *havurah* as a result of the deep feelings of fellowship (and sometimes friendship) which ensued.

Havurah and Social and Behavioral Science Theory

The concept of *havurah* converges with many themes and conceptual formulations in sociology and social psychology.

From a macrocosmic perspective, the theme of the loss of community as an outcome of industrialization, urbanization and

secularization is pervasive in the social science literature of the past century. Emile Durkheim's analysis of the breakdown of community in Western European industrial civilization of the latter half of the nineteenth century is the quintessential argument against the notion of the self without society. People need strong, cohesive ties to others in order to cope with the stresses and strains of industrial society. Without the bonds of community, Durkheim argued, the individual became anomic and alienated, with suicide as the possible end-point of disintegration.²² In a more contemporary vein, Robert Nisbet writes:

Where, then, are the dislocations and the deprivations that have driven so many men, in this age of economic abundance and political welfare, to the quest for community, to narcotic relief from the sense of isolation and anxiety? They lie in the realm of the small, primary, personal relationships of society—the relationships that mediate directly between man and his larger world of economic, moral and political and religious values. Our problem may be ultimately concerned with all of these values and their greater or lesser accessibility to man, but it is, I think, primarily social: social in the exact sense of pertaining to the small areas of membership and association in which these values are ordinarily made meaningful and directive to men.

Behind the growing sense of isolation in society, behind the whole quest for community which infuses so many theoretical and practical areas of contemporary life and thought, lies the growing realization that the traditional primary relationships of men have become functionally irrelevant to our state and economy and meaningless to the moral aspirations of individuals. We are forced to the conclusion that a great deal of the peculiar character of contemporary social action comes from the efforts of men to find in large-scale organizations the values of status and security which were formerly gained in the primary associations of family, neighborhood, and church.²³

Thus, the loss of community and its reestablishment through the revitalization of small, primary associations fits quite neatly into the formulations which both Schulweis and Fein *et al.* have asserted in their writings.

Recently, the concept of social network has come into vogue in the social and behavioral sciences. Gitterman and Germain define it as follows:

The concept of social network refers to the important figures in the environment, including relatives, friends, neighbors and peers. Such a network often meets the need of human beings for relatedness; provides recognition, affirmation, and protection from social isolation; and offers the means for socialization to the norms, values, knowledge and belief systems of the particular culture. It serves as a mutual aid system essential for adaptation and for coping with stress.²⁴

Pattison *et al.*²⁵ in their theoretical formulations and empirical research have labeled the social network as a "psychosocial kinship system" made up of kin, friends, neighbors and associates. This social matrix defines the *functional* kin of the individual.

The psychosocial kinship system is based on five variables:

1. The relationship has a relatively high degree of interaction, whether face-to-face, by telephone, or by letter. In other words, a person invests in those with whom he has contact.
2. The relationship has a strong emotional intensity. The degree of investment in others is reflected in the intensity of feeling toward the other.
3. The motion is generally positive. Negative relationships are maintained only when other variables force the maintenance of the relationship, such as a boss or spouse.
4. The relationship has an instrumental base. That is, the other person returns your strong positive feeling and may count on you for instrumental assistance. There is an instrumental *quid pro quo*.
5. The relationship is symmetrically reciprocal. That is, the other person returns your strong positive feeling, and may count on you for instrumental assistance. There is an affective and instrumental *quid pro quo*.²⁵

The *havurah*, according to Schulweis' formulations, fulfills the definition of a social network or a psychosocial kinship system (*sans* kin). Schulweis believes that an ideal *havurah* functions as a modernized version of an extended family. The ten families are not blood related, not kin; however, the network or system possesses some of the properties of the historical extended family, particularly those which are of mutual assistance kind.

Pattison *et al.*'s research reveals the following tantalizing finding: "Our data on the normal population revealed that the healthy person has 20 to 30 people in his intimate psychosocial network."²⁶ This is tantalizing in the sense that the average *havurah* is made up of eight to twelve families (16 to 24 people), and, in essence, replicates in real life the findings of social research based on sociometric analysis.

Another concept which touches upon the structure and function of the *havurah* is that of the modified extended family. Eugene Litwak categorizes contemporary families into four types: the dissolving-weak family, the nuclear family, the extended family, and the modified extended family. Litwak defines the modified extended family as follows:

Between the nuclear and the extended family structure is the modified extended family structure which consists of a coalition of nuclear families in a state of partial dependence. Such partial dependence

means that nuclear family members exchange significant services with each other, thus differing from the isolated nuclear family, as well as retain considerable autonomy (that is, not bound economically or geographically), therefore differing from the classical extended families.²⁷

Litwak's modified extended family is made up of kin, but the concept can be easily transposed into Pattison's notion of a functional psychosocial system which carries out the same purposes and functions.

Litwak has schematized the capacities of the four types of families to utilize assistance as follows:

CAPACITY OF KINSHIP STRUCTURE TO USE FAMILY AND INSTITUTIONAL SOURCES OF AID

Kinship Structure	Capacity to Use Formal Organizations	Capacity to Use Family Aid	Capacity to Use Both
Dissolving Family	High	None	Low
Nuclear Family	High	Some	Moderate
Modified Extended Family	High	High	High
Extended Family	None	High	Low

Litwak's analysis revolves around the high effectiveness of the modified extended family to use both family aid and formal organizations, and hence, its efficiency and effectiveness in coping with the demands and strains and stresses of an industrial, democratic society.²⁸

The *havurah* also can be conceptualized as a small group, and in this sense converges with the formulations and hypotheses of small group theory. Marvin Shaw writes:

A group of thirty persons might function as a small group if all its members were closely related to one another and highly motivated to cooperate toward the achievement of a common goal.²⁹

All of the classical theoretical concerns of small group theory — leadership and participation patterns, group properties and structure, group integrity and cohesion, the differential impact of heterogeneous and homogeneous groupings, and so on — relate directly to *havurah* purposes, structures and functions, and the various outcomes which incorporate the influences of the variables.

Summary

Since 1970, synagogue-based *havurot* have begun to spread throughout synagogues in the United States. Theorists and advocates

of the *havurah* view this contemporary development in Jewish religious and communal life as both an antidote to alienation and loneliness and as a locus for intellectual and religious development. Thus, an ideal *havurah* might be conceptualized as one which maintains a balance between cognitive and affective elements. The Jewish component is the binding force among its members. The "ideology" of the *havurah* might well state the following principle: Jewish study without the interaction of highly valued others is emotionally stultifying, and social interaction without the serious purpose of Jewish study is religiously and intellectually barren.

The *havurah* has been conceptualized as a Jewish religious fellowship, an extended family and a peer support group. In the words of one of Wasserman's respondents, "The *havurah* is not a study group, not a peer social group, and not just an extended family. It's all of these."

Notes

¹ See Jacob Neusner, *Contemporary Judaic Fellowship in Theory and in Practice* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1972), and Uriel Tal, "Structures of Fellowship and Community in Judaism," *Conservative Judaism* (Winter, 1974).

² Exploratory studies of a participant-observer nature were done by two groups of graduate students in three synagogues in Los Angeles during the academic years 1973-1974 and 1974-1975 under the direction of Harry Wasserman, UCLA School of Social Welfare. E. Anderman, M. Morton, M. Schleimer and J. Willens, *An Exploratory Study of Havurot* (master's thesis, UCLA School of Social Welfare, June, 1974), and S. King, S. Kleinrock, I. Rokaw and J. Steckel, *Havurah: A Study of Group Interaction* (June 1975).

³ Harold M. Schulweis, *Temple Valley Beth Shalom Bulletin*, Encino, California, Spring 1974.

⁴ Jacob Neusner, *op. cit.*, pp. 60-61.

⁵ Jacob Neusner, *Judaism in the Secular Age* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1970).

⁶ L. Fein, R. Chin, J. Dauber and B. Reisman, *Reform is a Verb* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1972), p. 140.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Bernard Reisman, "The Havurah: An Approach to Humanizing Jewish Organizational Life," *Journal of Jewish Communal Service*, LII, No. 2 (Winter, 1975), pp. 207-209.

¹⁰ Robert Weiss, *Loneliness: The Experience of Emotional and Social Isolation* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1973).

¹¹ Marshall Sklare, *America's Jews* (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 122.

¹² *Ibid.*, see footnote 2, Sandra King *et al.*, p. 73.

¹³ *Ibid.*, see footnote 2, Evelyn Anderman, *et al.*, pp. 78-79.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, King, p. 74.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, Anderman, pp. 78-79.

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¹⁶ Nathan Ackerman, "The Growing Edge of Family Therapy," *Family Process*, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 143-156; cf. p. 146.

¹⁷ Harry Wasserman, *The Emergence of a New Jewish Fellowship: Some Experiences in Havurah* (unpublished manuscript, Los Angeles, 1976).

¹⁸ Reuven Brin, *Some Critical Prerequisites for Planning Adult Educational Programs in Voluntary Organizations: A Comparative Study* (doctoral dissertation, UCLA, 1975), pp. 24-25.

¹⁹ Harry Wasserman, *The Emergence of a New Jewish Fellowship: Some Experiences in Havurah* (unpublished manuscript, Los Angeles, 1976).

²⁰ Daniel Polish, "The Basics of Congregational Havurot," *Reconstructionist*, XLI, No. 9 (December, 1975), pp. 7-12; cf. p. 8.

²¹ Robert Mills, "Remodeling the New Models—No Gimmicks for Holiness," *CCAR Journal* (Winter, 1974), p. 33.

²² Émile Durkheim, *Suicide*, ed. George Simpson (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1951). (First published in 1897.)

²³ Robert A. Nisbet, *The Quest for Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 49.

²⁴ Alex Gitterman and Carol B. Germain, "Social Work Practice: A Life Model," *Social Service Review*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (December, 1976), pp. 601-610; cf. p. 606.

²⁵ E. Mansell Pattison *et al.*, "A Psychosocial Kinship Model for Family Therapy," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, Vol. 132, No. 12 (December, 1975), pp. 1246-1250; cf. p. 1249.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ Eugene Litwak, "Extended Kin Relations in an Industrial Democratic Society," eds. Ethel Shanas and Gordon F. Streib, *Social Structure and the Family: Generational Relations* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 291.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

²⁹ Marvin E. Shaw, *Group Dynamics: The Psychology of Small Group Behavior* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1971), p. 80.