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THE HAVURAH GUIDE
A Handbook of Havurah Dynamics

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INTRODUCTION

Havurah of South Florida has a common core of activity available to all its members - study sessions, Shabbat services, festival celebrations, High Holyday services, retreats - but the foundation of the organization is the network of havurot, each pursuing its own course. This guide is intended for the existing havurot of Havurah of South Florida, and those who would like to form a havurah within our organization. And also those who are curious about what our organization does and would like to learn from our experience.

The word *havurah* is Hebrew for *fellowship*. The plural is havurot. We form a havurah because something is lacking in our Jewish lives. Perhaps we lack intensity in Jewish study, or Jewish prayer, or Jewish celebration, or Jewish community, or Jewish social action. If our desire to fill the void is great enough, we become willing to expend some energy to find others who have a similar desire, and a havurah is formed. The havurah determines for itself how often it will meet, how many members it will have, what its programs will be. *Havurah of South Florida* serves as a resources to each havurah and provides programming upon request.

While a havurah may form about one particular need - study, or prayer, or celebration, or community, or social action - ultimately all of the other expressions of Jewish life are experienced within the group. There cannot be study without community, or a community that ignores celebration, or a celebration devoid of prayer, or prayer without concern for the greater community. So all aspects of this guide apply to every havurah. Certain sections will be used first, but ultimately all aspects of Jewish life will emerge.

The guide is divided into five sections, the havurah expressions of Community, Study, Celebration, Prayer and Social Action. Two appendices contain "The Havurah Program" and a master calendar to assist havurot in their programming. We encourage you to study the guide as a whole. We regret that it is incomplete, but imperfect as it is, it still represents 10 years of experience, and with the feedback we receive from your experience, we anticipate that our handbook of havurah dynamics will become better and better.

HAVURAH COMMUNITY

Egalitarian fellowship

The Hebrew work *havurah* means *fellowship*, and fellowship is the mark of the havurah community. The havurah community is structured as an egalitarian fellowship - egalitarian as to sex, egalitarian as to level of learning and Jewish experience, egalitarian as to age, and egalitarian as to marital status. Every member has an equal voice and equal opportunity for participation within the havurah community.

This does not mean that all participate equally, or that all speak with the same substance and wisdom. But care must be taken to develop a receptive environment in which all will be encouraged to risk speaking, and risk participating, and not be intimidated by those who appear to have a more substantial Jewish background or education.

Often it is those who experience a text or ritual for the first time who bring innovative and creative understanding to it, and if the environment is not an accepting one, that understanding might well be lost. All havurot are not mixtures of all ages, of singles and couple, of male and female. Our experience has been that a havurah that is primarily text oriented or issue oriented will be such a mixture, but a havurah that is oriented primarily around life situation and the relevance of Jewish tradition to that situation will be constituted primarily of those in that situation.

What are text or issue orientations?

- Study of a period of Jewish history.
- Study of particular source materials (e.g. - Jewish mysticism; bio-ethics in Jewish tradition).
- Performance of charitable deeds within the community.
- Social action

If the primary agenda is clearly learning or issue oriented, the mixing of ages, of singles, of sexes and of levels of experience is not at all uncommon.

What are life situations?

- Young couples and singles, beginning to explore together the constitution of a Jewish home, generally families without children or children not yet of religious school age.
- Older couples and singles who have children who have left home or are on the verge of doing so, and who now have the energy to explore their own ties to the tradition and to God.
- Families with children of religious school age who desire to enrich their Jewish family life together. This may or may not involve education of the children.
- Women who desire to explore together their emerging role in the new expression of Jewish tradition.

It is not uncommon for a person to be a member of two havurot, one of each kind.

Social expectations

The primary purpose of a havurah is Jewish fellowship, a fellowship entered into to encourage growth of some component of Jewish life. This should be the only expectation.

If singles enter primarily to meet other Jewish singles, or couples primarily for social contact, the experience is not likely to be rewarding. Such contact and meeting is inevitable whenever people come together, but if

that is the primary focus of the group, the group contains little energy for Jewish pursuits, and it is almost certain to founder.

Paradoxically, if one enters primarily for a Jewish pursuit, with that as the primary expectation, then not only is that goal likely to be achieved, but the social contacts made become a source of enrichment as well. The energy devoted to Jewish study serves to break down barriers that keep people distant from each other.

How often and where does a havurah meet?

Each havurah determines its own schedule and program. Most of our havurot meet once a month, at a set time each month (i.e. first Monday evening, third Sunday brunch), and the meeting moves from home to home. A program is generally chosen that will occupy an entire year – ten to twelve sessions.

Settings are not limited to homes. Some of our havurot choose to meet occasionally in a park, on the beach, in the Everglades.

How many individuals form a havurah?

There is no set amount. But fewer than ten doesn't work well. Nor does more than twenty-four.

Caring community?

Community is not formed as a rule in the first or second meeting. But after five or six sessions, if the sharing has been open, if risks have been taken, the havurah becomes a caring community.

Unlike the usual Jewish study program which is academically oriented - teacher and students all individuals independent of each other, Havurah programming is utterly dependent upon the interactions between individuals. Individuals in havurot that have formed primarily for study begin to celebrate together, to share concerns, to become more than students in common, to become haverim-friends.

Havurot that have been together for years often share together the life cycle events of members - marriages, births, bar/bat mitzvah, anniversaries, deaths.

Difficulties experienced in formation of a havurah

Not every initial meeting of a group intending to become a havurah results on the formation of a havurah. This does not indicate a failure. The meeting itself will have been a learning experience.

A havurah may not form for one of several different reasons, or a combination of reasons:

- False expectations (generally the desire for a social group rather than Jewish growth).
- Lack of Jewish energy (ready to be taught but not ready to study)
- Uncompromising demands (“I want to study only the even numbered psalms!”)
- Inability to articulate a need, even though the need may be experienced.

These last two warrant closer examination. Concerning uncompromising demands: While our example seems extreme, realize that the earnest desire to study is more important than the precise material to be studied. *This is not like choosing an academic course.* The process will be more rewarding than the content. Whether the attempt is to form a text or issue oriented havurah, or a havurah to explore life situations, the entry point for study and experience is not of greatest importance. It is the interaction and the energy devoted to the work that is important.

Concerning inability to articulate a need: It is *often very difficult to articulate a need for theological or traditional growth!* We have not been trained to take these matters seriously, yet they are very serious indeed, affecting the whole flow of our lives. It may take several attempts before one is able to understand and express what type of personal growth is needed.

First meetings

Clarification of goals is the primary agenda for the first meeting. We have several programs and techniques available to “break the ice” and begin the process of study and/or examination of life situation.

The basic tool for most havurah exercises is *Bayt Midrash* study (explained in detail later in this guide), and this can be used even for the purpose of introduction and learning names. *The quicker this tool is acquired, the better!* The primary barrier that most individuals must overcome is fear of their own ignorance, of not being able to do meaningful Jewish work. *Bayt Midrash* is the device which enables *everyone* to do meaningful Jewish work.

At the first meeting, set a tentative agenda for the next few meetings. Please provide our office with a list of names, addresses, phone numbers, place and time of the next meeting. We will be happy to send out memos and name lists to all of the members.

Adding members to an existing havurah

Each havurah determines its own procedure for adding members. In the formative months, this is not difficult. After the havurah has developed its own momentum and bonds have been formed within the group, adding members becomes more difficult. Often each person within the group wants to bring in his or her friends, and the group cannot accommodate them all. Care should be taken to discuss the process of adding more members openly and fully.

Requests can be made for additional compatible members to the Havurah Committee. And the rabbi can be invited to facilitate the process, if the havurah should chose to do so.

Is a havurah forever?

Havurot will frequently change direction with maturation. A havurah that began with a study goal may move into exploration if life situation. Such a change may not meet the needs of some of the individual members, who might then chose to leave the havurah, and this in an appropriate decision.

A havurah may have achieved its original goals and chose to disband. This is also an appropriate decision.

The Havurah Committee

Each havurah is asked to send a delegate to the Havurah Committee. The delegate should serve for a year. The committee provides a forum for the exchange of ideas, problem solving, formation of new havurot, and the enhancement of the common program of the organization. The Havurah Committee is of real value and assistance to each of the havurot.

Food

It is unusual to have a havurah meeting without eating something. Some havurot combine their meetings with a potluck dinner, lunch or brunch. Other just have cake and coffee on the side.

Take care lest more energy be devoted to food than to the learning process. The first time one household brings out the fine china and home-baked delicacies, every other household will feel an obligation to do so. This can become burdensome. Paper plates and simple condiments are the rule within the organization, not that there can't be specific exceptions from time to time.

Read the section on “Community: again

Now if you like. But certainly periodically. See if it applies to what your havurah has been doing. Perhaps it will provide insight and aid in the development of your havurah community.

Perhaps your havurah has developed other techniques for the formation of community. Please share them with us. This guide is maintained on computer disks and is easily amended.

Thank you.

HAVURAH STUDY

Bayt Midrash Study

The primary dynamic of havurah study is *Bayt Midrash* and is different from that of conventional study.

Bayt Midrash means literally House of Inquiry and is a system of study that has its origins in the first century of this era, perhaps even earlier than that. It is the antithesis of the conventional system of learning experienced today.

In a conventional academic setting, a teacher addresses students. In *Bayt Midrash* students address each other. In a conventional setting there is quiet in the classroom, other than for the voice of the teacher and the questions of the students. In *Bayt Midrash* the interaction within groups of students is nearly constant, and it is not uncommon to hear a din within the rooms as students argue texts and situations with each other,

In a conventional setting, a student must risk oneself before the entire class when speaking. In *Bayt Midrash* the risk is limited to one other student, perhaps two or three others at most, and ultimately to accepting friends rather than just fellow students, so risk and involvement is encouraged.

If you have ever visited a *yeshiva*, and Orthodox house of learning, or seen the movie *Yentl*, you have seen *Bayt Midrash* in action. But you need not be orthodox to use the technique.

Bayt Midrash for the study of texts within the havurah

Rather than have a teacher prepare and expound a text for a class of students, students group together in pairs, threes or fours, and each group is provided with copies of the text, and reads and discusses the text out loud. Each person on the group has responsibility to explain the text and react to it.

It is appropriate to question one's partner or partners in study, *but it is not appropriate to be judgmental* - this is, to dismiss another's statement as "the dumbest thing you ever heard" or other such commentary which touches upon the person rather than the text. Each student offers his or her own understanding with sincerity. That understanding may be right or wrong, but it is always sincere, and must be accepted as such. The two elements which are necessary to a successful *Bayt Midrash* are:

- Motivated students
- An accepting environment

After the groups of students have had adequate opportunity to consider the text, the havurah reassembles as a whole. Perhaps there is consensus of thought concerning the text. Perhaps one group answered a difficulty raised by another. All of the students have a stake in the discussion, because all have devoted some energy to the text, and each has acquired some understanding. A typical session might involve the study of three or four separate texts around a common theme, the havurah dividing into *Bayt Midrash* groupings, and coming back together for each separate text.

Bayt Midrash study of other than texts

Any material is suitable for *Bayt Midrash*. It need not be textual. For example, a discussion of "How we celebrated Passover as kids" will do better in *Bayt Midrash* than as a discussion in the havurah as a whole. If the individuals pair off and compare backgrounds for five or ten minutes, and then report back to the havurah as a whole, the participation will be greater, and the experience richer. *Bayt Midrash* takes much of the risk out of sharing. Ethical questions are often treated within a havurah, and these too are best handled through the process of *Bayt Midrash*. Rather than ask each person within the group to address an issue in turn, divide into pairs. In pairs each person will be more willing to take and justify a position, and then afterwards share that position with the entire havurah.

What are appropriate topics for study?

Nothing is inappropriate, but some topics lend themselves better than others. Primary materials work better than secondary materials. That is, actual texts rather than books about the texts. Books about texts can be studied well by an individual. The texts themselves are best argued within a havurah.

For this reason it is difficult to study history within a havurah using the *Bayt Midrash* technique. Most study of history is done using secondary materials - books based on historical documents. To use the *Bayt Midrash* for the study of history, the havurah would have to study the historical documents themselves and develop its own understanding of history, rather than rely upon someone else's understanding. This does not mean that history cannot be studied within a havurah. It just means that a different technique is likely to be used.

One of our havurot studied Jewish history successfully for years. Texts, questions of ethics, exploration of tradition, personal experience - all of these can be readily studied using the *Bayt Midrash* technique.

What texts are most often studied within a havurah?

Most studied in the Torah - the first five books of the Bible. We have experienced two different approaches to Torah study. One havurah receives a guide to the weekly portion scheduled to be read at the time of the next meeting, and using the guide, the individuals do some work in advance, reading the Torah portion, and anticipating the discussion of questions raised in the guide. Another havurah does similar work, but examines themes within a larger section of the Torah each meeting. The first havurah is more inclined to be involved with detail and specifics of language, the second with an overview of the themes of the Torah.

Biblical and rabbinic texts pertaining to modern ethics are the next most commonly studied. What kind of ethics? Medical, political, business ethics. What kind of texts? Mishnah, Talmud, Midrash, Codes, Responsa - to name a few.

What is we don't know what those things are?

Most of us who have been studying within a havurah didn't know the difference between Mishnah and Midrash when we began, or hadn't heard of either before. We have developed programs that build familiarity with the texts. *The only difficulty in beginning to study in a havurah setting is the fear of ignorance.* The ignorance itself is no barrier - only an incentive.

How much time do we have to commit?

Commitment of time is a decision of the havurah. Some require no preparation whatsoever. The work is done entirely in the monthly meeting. Some, such as the Torah study havurot mentioned above, require a few minutes of preparation prior to each meeting, perhaps as much as an hour.

An alternative to *Bayt Midrash* study is to ask members of the havurah to prepare certain materials for presentation. (*Bayt Midrash* technique is encouraged, because we have found it to be efficient and successful, but it isn't required of any of our havurot). Such a technique requires considerable effort on the part of the presenters. The havurah which studies history follows such a process.

Will the rabbi come and teach?

Rabbi in our organization does not mean teacher as much as it means coach, and it is the rabbi's task to teach us how to learn rather than to just teach us. The rabbi stays in touch with all of the havurot and is responsive to the needs of each.

If the rabbi doesn't come, how do we learn?

Every time a havurah meets, a full program is provided, Materials for study, and introduction to the materials, and suggestions for procedure will be in the hands of the havurah. The havurah has the option of following the suggested procedure or developing its own.

Examples of material studied by “text-oriented” havurot

- *An introduction to Jewish texts.* Beginning with the Torah, then Commentaries, Talmud, Codes. Each session complete in itself, and each adding greater awareness to the full scope of Jewish literary tradition.
- *Sex ethics in Jewish tradition.* Beginning with Adam and Eve, then other Biblical texts, and on to rabbinic texts – Talmud, Codes and Responsa.
- *Jewish spirituality.* An exploration of Jewish mysticism (Kabbalah), again beginning with biblical texts and moving on to rabbinic works, this time with the emphasis on esoteric works.

Examples of materials studied by “life-situation” havurot

- *Jewish time.* Programs around the Jewish year and its celebrations. An examination of past and present experience, and a process for enrichment of future experience.
- *Jewish Space.* A look at the Jewish situations in the world, past and present. American Jewish civilization and its relationship to Israel. Israel's relationship with her neighbors.
- *Jewish life.* The life-cycle from birth to death. What our experience has been like, how it might be for our children or grandchildren, with references to texts along the way.

The Havurah Program

The most successful sessions experienced by our havurot through the years have been stores on computer disks and have become the Havurah program. These programs are readily available to any of our havurot. AN index of the Havurah program is appended at the end of this manual.

Havurot are by no means limited to material already stored. We continually produce new programs, and encourage havurot to make demands on us for new materials. Such work enriches us all.

HAVURAH CELEBRATION

INTRODUCTION

- It is the goal of Havurah of South Florida to create a community of knowledgeable, confident, independent Jews. Therefore at all times we encourage havurot to learn how to conduct ceremonies and celebrations for themselves.
- Some holidays and festivals are enriched by a larger community, and for these all of the havurot are encouraged to come together - especially on the High Holydays, Simhat Torah and Purim. A havurah is nonetheless free to do its own thing instead, or in addition.
- Celebration falls into two broad categories, those determined by the calendar and those determined by the life cycle. Some of these joyous occasions are more observance than celebration, more solemn than joyous, but all are treated here.

HAVURAH HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

Shabbat evening

Twice a month there is a Shared Shabbat open to the entire community, and those who desire to share the Shabbat bring a vegetarian dish to a designated home and the dinner is enveloped in song prayer and study. Individual havurot frequently do the same.

What if we don't know how to do it?

This question applies not only to Shabbat, but to every celebration the havurah will do for itself. Can we do it without a rabbi? Of course we can. Programs are available for assistance. And whereas one person in the havurah might have difficulty recalling or doing all of the specifics associated with a particular celebration, it is not unusual to find that the collective memory and abilities of the havurah are quite sufficient.

Sukkot

Although the community builds a *sukkah* in common plans and programs are readily available to enable each havurah and each individual family to build its own, and celebrate in it.

Simhat Torah

Again, although the community celebrates together, each havurah may have its own celebration as well. Our *Sifrei Torah* (Torah scrolls) are rotated through the homes of members, and any havurah that would like to reserve it for a celebration need only call the havurah office to do so.

Hannukah

We generally do something family-oriented for the community as a whole. Many of the havurot conduct their own Hannukah parties. Again, we have substantial programs readily available to enhance such celebrations.

Passover

The community conducts a workshop prior to the first seder. Many of our havurot conduct their own seders, if not the first or the second, then as improvised third. We do not have a community-wide seder, but assure that each individual in our community has a seder to attend.

Lag Ba-omer

A picnic holiday we sometimes celebrate as a community with a picnic. But we have some wonderful programs available for havurot desiring to get outdoors and celebrate on their own.

Shavuot

We sometimes do *tikkun* - an all night study session before Shavuot. Again programs are available for any havurah desiring to do its own thing. Shavuot generally comes in close proximity to our spring retreat for the whole community, and in past years more energy has been devoted to the retreat than the festival.

HAVURAH LIFE CYCLE CELEBRATIONS, OBSERVANCES AND CEREMONIES

Baby Namings

For boys, best done by a mohel on the eighth day along with the circumcision. For girls, it can be done with just as much celebration in the home, on a more convenient day, if you chose. The havurah can prepare the ceremony.

Don't we need a rabbi?

Again, the same question can be asked of every life cycle celebration. For a wedding you need a rabbi, and then only to officiate, which means to make sure that everything is done that has to be done within the tradition. Nothing says the rabbi has to conduct the entire wedding service.

For everything else, baby namings, Bar/Bat mitzvahs, funerals, unveilings - the rabbi need not be there.

How can we learn to do what the rabbi would do?

Ask the rabbi to teach you. Of course, if you don't want to do it yourself, or within your havurah, the rabbi is available to assist you to whatever degree you desire. It may be that the rabbi can do a more professional ceremony. But it is doubtful that the ceremony can be any more effective than when done by fellow members of a havurah.

Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Bar (Bat) Mitzvah is a noun. One becomes Bar Mitzvah upon reaching the age of 13. Nothing else is necessary to become a Bar Mitzvah. At that age one becomes responsible for fulfillment of the commandments. No ceremony is required.

Celebration of reaching the age of Bar Mitzvah is something else again, and may entail whatever the individual family or havurah desires to do as an act of celebration. Traditionally Bar Mitzvah is celebrated by reading from the Torah and reciting the Haftarah on Shabbat. This can be done at the weekly Havurah Shabbat *minyan* service, or at any other appropriate service that the family or havurah chooses to conduct. Or some other type of celebration can be arranged.

The rabbi is available to work with both the student and the family and/or havurah to prepare the service to make the occasion of attaining the age of Bar/Bat Mitzvah a cause for true celebration.

Weddings

Again, all sorts of possibilities are available. There are some traditional elements that must be present, but there is still substantial flexibility for family and havurah participation.

Funerals and Unveilings

Unveilings can be conducted very effectively by a havurah for one of its members who is a mourner, The whole procedure can be learned within a few minutes. Funerals are more difficult. But if the havurah has done study, prior to the need, into the Jewish process of mourning, it is entirely possible and appropriate for the havurah to conduct a funeral service. While conducting funerals is rare, conducting services at a house of mourning is not at all unusual for a havurah.

HAVURAH PRAYER

When a havurah comes together for a celebration of Shabbat, or a life cycle ceremony, the havurah prays together. This is true for any religious celebration, observance or ceremony. If the members of the havurah are familiar with prayer, and practices in its disciplines, such events will flow gracefully.

- Any havurah, any individual desiring to become Jewishly responsible, must ultimately struggle with the discipline of prayer.
- Prayer is the discipline of relating to God.
- Few of us have ever taken this discipline seriously. Few of us have ever struggled to develop an adult theology. We simply have not had the opportunity.
- Havurah provides the opportunity.

Within the framework of Havurah of South Florida are ample opportunities to enter the discipline of relating to God. There are the Shared Shabbats two Friday evenings a month, the High Holyday services, many Wednesday evening Bayt Midrash sessions devoted to God and prayer, and there is the Saturday morning minyan, every Saturday from 9:30 to Noon.

This work can be done within a havurah setting as well. We have exercises in prayer and theology for any havurah choosing to use them, and they can be used in conjunction with holiday celebrations and other programs of study. Knowledge of Hebrew is not necessary.

This differs from the study of prayer and theology. It is not learning about prayer, but learning how to pray. It is not learning about theologies, but developing a personal theology for oneself.

The havurah provides an accepting environment in which to conduct this process.

Learning liturgical Hebrew

Individuals can learn enough Hebrew to follow the prayer service within a few weeks if they are disciplined enough to study 30 minutes a day. Programmed instruction books are available. Astonishingly, this can be accomplished without a teacher, From time to time, however, we put together a group to work with a teacher.

HAVURAH SOCIAL ACTION

Social action within a havurah setting may involve the raising of funds, the raising of consciousness, the distribution of funds, the dedication of energy to the community - individual or in any combination.

A Zedakah collective

Zedakah is not charity but rather righteous action, the giving of resources to establish a balance in the world. Havurah of South Florida has a *Zedakah* collective - a fund to which individuals and havurot contribute, which is used to fund agencies and individuals doing acts of *Zedakah* both in our own community and in Israel.

Havurot are encouraged to collect funds if not for this collective, then for their own havurah collective. Contributions come by the way of loose change deposited in a pushkeh at havurah meetings on one extreme, and substantial donations on the part of individuals who choose to use this vehicle for giving a significant portion of their total *Zedakah* contributions for the year. (Such gifts can be designated for use in Israel or use locally).

Distribution of Zedakah collective funds

One of the founding principles of our organization is to fill Jewish vacuums wherever they might exist within our community, and our distribution of *Zedakah* funds is guided by the same principle. It would be the appropriate work of a havurah to explore the various needs that *Zedakah* distributions, and assume the responsibility of distributing our funds to meet those needs, In the past we have made such distributions to the New Israel Fund, to the National Havurah Committee, and to individuals who are sending our Havurah Program to Refuseniks in the Soviet Union.

Raising of consciousness

If a havurah in the course of its study and experience has become aware of a need in the community, or an ethical concern, it has an obligation to make the rest of the community aware. This is indeed social action, and is an appropriate activity for a havurah. Our concern with the welfare and the Jewish life and the Soviet Refuseniks is a result of the consciousness raising activity of several of our members.

Direct social action

It may be that individuals or havurot, having become aware of specific needs within the community, are not satisfied with simply raising consciousness, but can do something through the dedication of their own energy to satisfy that need. It is entirely appropriate to do it, and by "raising consciousness" as described above, encourages others to participate with them.

A simple expression of such action is opening our Passover seders to those in the community who have no place to go. We are also exploring the possibility of sharing our skills in havurah formation with other agencies in the community - such as the J.C.C. Senior Center - that might benefit from them.

APPENDIX A

THE HAVURAH PROGRAM

The Havurah program is a series of computer files of programs run successfully by our havurot. These are programs which can easily be run by another havurah. If one of the programs appeals to you, just call the office and we will send you a printed copy, complete with all of the instructions and a list materials needed.

The programs are arranged here in thematic sequence, should you want to string the together, but they can be requested individually. And some of the programs can be used under several different thematic headings.

This is not a complete list of program materials available. We also have many sets of texts, guidelines and our own commentaries which are intended for havurah study. And it is not intended that this list, or what we have already on file should in any way limit a havurah's activity. We are delighted to develop new materials to meet any specific need. If the materials work well, another computer file is entered, and the following list gets longer.

Also, should you use any of the listed materials and find a better way to run the program, please let us know. We would like very much to refine each program, and enhance the experience of the next havurah to run it.

SEX IN JEWISH TRADITION

- The study of sex in the light of Jewish tradition becomes the medium for gaining knowledge of the Jewish sources. We have been raised in a Christian environment and the difference between Jewish and Christian traditions may surprise you. These four programs serve as an introduction to the topic. Other topics will come to mind easily, and the office will assist you in preparing program materials.

ADAM AND EVE: An introduction to Jew sex ethics midrash to the Adam and Eve story. Comparison of Jewish and Christian interpretations, Fun to do. No previous experience necessary.

SEXUAL TRANSGRESSION IN THE BIBLE: Adultery, incest, homosexuality, Judah and Tamar, Onan and Er. A guide to the Biblical passages.

VIRGINITY AND PRE-MARITAL SEX: Texts from the Mishnah. (You might want to do "Introduction to the Mishnah" first. See below). Some early rabbinic concepts.

ABORTION IN JEWISH LAW: A good introduction to situation ethics and the dialectic of Jewish argument. It can be used well independently of the above exercises.

WORKING WITH TEXTS

- Jewish study begins with knowing what to study and how to study it. These programs are best preceded by a session with the rabbi as an introduction to the various kinds of Jewish literature, and then you will be ready to experience the full scope of Jewish study yourselves. To these programs might be added all of the guides we have accumulated for the study of Torah texts.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS: The place to begin for those who have never done Bayt Midrash study before. Suitable for the first meeting of any text-oriented havurah.

THE PROBLEM WITH NOAH: Noah was the most righteous man in his generation. Does that mean he was truly righteous, or that he was the best of a bad lot? Bayt Midrash study, with additional commentary.

THE PROBLEM WITH ISAAC: Question: What did Isaac do worthy of becoming a Patriarch? The program contends he did nothing. You come to Isaac's defense. Compare your defense to that of other havurot that have run the program, and add your own briefs in defense of Isaac in the end.

RASHI'S COMMENTARY: Rashi wrote the 11th century commentary which had become the standard by which all other texts are measured. This is an introduction to his work based on familiar Biblical texts.

INTRODUCTION TO THE MISHNAH: There are two bodies of law in Jewish tradition - Torah law and rabbinic Law. The Mishnah is the cornerstone of rabbinic law, and has almost the authority of the Torah itself. This provides an introduction to the various styles of Mishnaic writing. (This program might be followed by "Virginity and Pre-marital sex. See above).

SATAN IN THE BIBLE: What does the Hebrew word *satan* mean? Every occurrence in the Bible is examined in context, and you emerge with your own understanding. This is the technique of using Torah as its own commentary.

MIRACLES AND WONDERS: A series of texts that leads one to an understanding of miracles and wonders in Jewish tradition. No commentary needed. The texts speak for themselves. Best to have some experience with *Bayt Midrash* before trying this one.

HESED IN THE TORAH: *Hesed* is sometimes translated as *mercy*, sometimes *love*, sometimes *kindness*. Whatever it is, it is a concept central to Jewish behavior. An examination of the use of the word in various contexts. Another exercise in using Torah as its own commentary.

THE CONCEPT OF SALVATION IN JEWISH TRADITION: Once you have an idea of *hesed*, try learning what *salvation* means. Christians don't have a lock on the concept. We had it first. Especially useful to run this program prior to Passover. Again, Torah as its own commentary.

THE JEWISH SITUATION

Bayt Midrash is a powerful analytical tool for examination of Jewish civilization as experienced today. Each of these programs touches upon past experience and applies the dynamics experienced then to the now. More programs can be generated readily from the pages of newspapers and Jewish journals once the technique is mastered.

THE BLESSING AND THE CURSE: Based on the curses listed in Deuteronomy 27. Why those curses, and where are the blessings? From this, an extrapolation to appropriate blessings and curses for our own day.

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE: A compilation of texts relating to the notion that Jews are the elect people of God. Some pro, some con. Enough material here to be argued for several sessions.

SECTARIAN MOVEMENTS OF THE 1ST AND 2ND CENTURIES: A brief introduction to the nature of the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes. The *havurah* then divides into three camps and examines the institutions of the modern Jewish world from the three different perspectives.

DISPOSSESSION AND GUILT: THEN AND NOW: The Biblical instructions to destroy the seven nations of Canaan are explicit. There is a sense of apology in the commentaries of the rabbis. What right do we have to the land of Israel? Is there any guilt resulting from the displacement of some of the Arab population?

THE BORDERS OF THE LAND OF ISRAEL: The Biblical texts and the maps from the various periods of the history of the kingdoms and the state of Israel are provided. You arrive at a consensus for the ultimate borders for a secure modern Israel.

RAMBAM AND THE RADICAL RELIGIOUS RIGHT: How to establish a radical religious state in Israel. Or what to watch for if you want to prevent it. Texts from the Mishnah Torah concerning ordination, prophesy and kings.

ISHMAEL AND ISAAC: The story of the fathers of the Jewish and Arab people, originally done as a video play. Could be used by adults as a light introduction to a serious problem - the resolution of conflict of Jews and Arabs in the Middle East.

THE EIGHT LEVELS OF CHARITY: A text of Maimonides worked into a short drama. Though referred to as Maimonides on charity, it is Zedakah that is being discussed. A good trigger program for a havurah to make a transition into social action.

GUARD YOUR TONGUE FROM EVIL: Texts concerning evil speech and slander from the Hofetz Haim. The program begins with casual conversation, a record of that conversation, examination of texts, and then an examination of the conversation to count the number of violations.

BAYT MIDRASH ON AIDS: A questionnaire concerning attitudes towards AIDS and pertinent Biblical texts. (Also suitable under the heading "Abortion in Jewish Law").

JEWISH SPIRITUALITY

- *Kabbalah* is Jewish mysticism. One can learn about Kabbalah and one can do *Kabbalah*, and the tendency in havurah is to do both. These programs provide an introduction to Jewish mystical tradition, and they might well be followed by study of one of the many Jewish mystical texts now available in English.

EZEKIEL'S VISION: The basic Biblical text upon which much of Jewish mystical speculation is based is the first chapter of Ezekiel. This simple exercise enables novices to penetrate the vision.

AN INTRODUCTION TO HASIDIC TALES: The romantic tales are also elements of a discipline to reinforce appropriate behavior in this world and effect changes in higher worlds. Vocabulary and tales are provided.

ANGER AND HUMILITY, PART I: First an examination of contemporary understanding of anger, and personal experiences. Then anger according to Maimonides. The texts are likely to surprise you, and a re-examination of contemporary understanding is in order.

ANGER AND HUMILITY, PART II: The first exercise seems to result in the annihilation of self. The sequel explores what is left of the self, what is appropriate after the first exercise has been digested.

THE ELEVENTH PLAGUE: While this is intended primarily as an exercise in preparation for Passover, it belongs here as well, for it explores concepts of pride. (It might be useful to do the program in "Salvation" first).

HOW GOD ACTS IN THE WORLD: Mostly work done with texts from Harold Kushner's *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. An opportunity to refine one's model of divine providence - does God pull the strings or not?

THE TWO WORKMEN OF REB NACHMAN: An advanced hasidic tale. The "Introduction" tales were of a more familiar kind. This explores the role of the *Zadik* and raises questions concerning contemporary gurus.

JEWISH TIME

- These programs will be of use to any havurah following the calendar cycle of Jewish festivals and celebrations. We also have in the office materials from havurot all around the country describing techniques they have developed.

THE BLESSING OF SHABBAT: A look at blessings in general, those for Shabbat in particular. Especially useful as an exercise before a havurah Shabbat dinner, or a study session afterwards.

SHABBAT SHALOM: A short drama depicting one family's journey from no Shabbat to a rich Shabbat celebration. To be acted out, preferably with children playing some of the roles.

USHPIZIN: SUKKOT: We have plans available for the construction of a simple (yet elegant) sukkah. This is a program to do in it. Ushpizin refers to the tradition of bringing guests into the sukkah. Members of the havurah role play guests from the past.

HANNUKAH, HANNUKAH, CHANUKAH: A study into the true origins of Hannukah. The materials include all of the early texts, from 1st and 2nd Maccabees, Talmud and even the Christian Bible.

HANNUKAH STORY:A story to be read and acted out simultaneously, with room for improvisation. Suitable for any Hannukah party.

RABBI AKIVA AND LAG BA-OMER: An outdoor program with lots of interaction between adults and children. Bows and arrows, a bonfire, story telling. Requires some advance preparation.

RABBI SIMEON BAR YOHAI AND LAG BA-OMER: Another outdoor program with lots of interaction between adults and children. Best done in a park. Also requires some preparation in advance. (Also suitable in this theme are "The Eleventh Plague" in preparation for Passover, and "The Problem with Isaac" in preparation for the High Holydays).

APPENDIX B

MASTER CALENDAR

HAVURAH OF SOUTH FLORIDA

- Our havurot are often reluctant to schedule an event that conflicts with the activities of the Havurah of South Florida community as a whole. It is not written that these times are not available to the individual havurot, but in light of such frequently expressed concern, we publish our customary schedule here.

FROM WEEK TO WEEK

Monday Evening Kabbalah Study: Every Monday evening during the academic year those interested in the study and practice of Jewish spiritual discipline meet in a member's home.

Tuesday Noon At MetroFare: An informal gathering at the downtown MetroFare food court for lunch and study.

RaMBaM Downtown: Every Wednesday noon during the academic year there is an ongoing study of texts from Maimonides (*Mishneh Torah* and *The Guide for the Perplexed*) in the conference room of a lawfirm in downtown Miami. Participants often bring lunch.

Wednesday Evening Bayt Midrash: Every Wednesday evening during the academic year, and bi-weekly through the summer, we have a *Bayt Midrash* open to the community. There is a Wednesday Night Committee that meets periodically to choose topics, and a schedule is published in our newsletter a month in advance. The *Bayt Midrash* is conducted in homes of members.

Friday Evening Shared Shabbats: Every other Friday, those who desire to share a *Shabbat* together bring a vegetarian dish to the designated home at 7:00PM, *Kabbalat Shabbat*, dinner, evening service, and Torah study are the usual program.

Saturday Morning Minyan: 9:30 to Noon every Saturday morning at the Hillel House of the University of Miami. Creative *davenning*, Hebrew and English simultaneously, and Torah study. Often there are classes in Hebrew and liturgy that precede service.

Sunday Morning Family Bayt Midrash: Every other Sunday morning during the academic year adults and children gather in members' homes to study a three year curriculum, two years of Jewish history, and one in the broad area of Jewish identity. Study is done first at a level to benefit both children and adults, and then, during a program for the children, is continued at an adult level.

EVERY YEAR

Slichot: A midnight service, spiritual preparation for the High Holydays, generally the Saturday night before *Rosh Hashanah*, sometimes two Saturday nights before.

Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: Services first day *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* are conducted at an appropriate rented facility. We have a communal break-fast following *Yom Kippur*. Second day *Rosh Hashanah* services are conducted in a member's home.

Sukkah Building: The day varies from year to year, but at some time in celebration of *Sukkot* we build a *sukkah* together.

Simhat Torah: A big community celebration, not necessarily on the night of *Simhat Torah* itself, but on the closest night that would allow a large participation - generally a Saturday night.

Hannukah: We do some kind of family celebration, usually in the Sunday afternoon within Hannukah.

Tu B'shvat: Around January we retreat to the Everglades, walk the trails, and have a seder in honor of the *New Year of the Trees*.

Purim: Another big celebration. Sometimes for adults only. Costumes, singing, skits - a joyous and somewhat ribald celebration at a rented facility. We may do a separate celebration to include children.

Pesach: The Wednesday before Passover we conduct a workshop for the seder leaders. We do not have a community seder, but we do our best to place those who are in need with families that have space available.

Spring Retreat: Late in May or early in June we go away, Friday evening through Sunday morning to study and celebrate together.

Annual Meeting: A Sunday or Monday evening late in April or early in May. A review of successes and failures of the past year, and determination of goals for the next year. Election of trustees and officers.

Shavuot: We sometimes have an all-night study session of a spiritual nature in preparation for Shavuot.

National Havurah Institute: We are active participants in the week-long Summer Institute conducted by the National Havurah Committee.