

Arlene Turkeltaub's responses to Moshe's questions:

On page 105 of *The Seventh Telling*, Moshe calls Arlene. He learns from her how to establish a havurah network in his congregation, but the book doesn't tell us what he learned. The following is the essence of it:

1. *Why should I create a havurah network at Temple Shalom?*

The havurah provides intimate groupings, even surrogate extended family, within large organizations.

The havurah increases participation within community-wide activities. The havurah is likely to attend services, meetings, programs as a unit.

The havurah provides opportunities for primary Jewish experience -- teaching, leading prayer, active involvement in social projects.

The havurah provides role models for children. They see more adults doing "Jewish."

2. *How do I get it started?*

Support of senior staff is mandatory. Weeks of publicity, encouragement throughout the community is necessary before an initiating event.

Organize a lay committee dedicated to the project.

At that event, anyone skilled in group dynamics can begin a series of exercises to draw people into interest groups.

"Four corner" exercises work well. For example, let each corner represent a different kind of restaurant. Which would you choose to go to? Spend a few minutes there meeting people. Let each corner represent a different leisure activity. A different movie. A different book. Always four very different corners. Work your way to more serious topics. Jewish interests -- prayer, study, social action, other activities. Groups will begin to distill. The lay committee will take notes, gather names, make lists.

In each potential group, find a home for a first meeting.

3. *What do I do with those who aren't selected for a group at the initial meeting, or those who want to join a group later when there isn't a havurah with openings to accommodate them?*

One night a week have a room designated for havurah-style learning. A *Bayt Midrash* -- where everyone, anyone, is invited to come for a learning experience, havurah style. This can be lay led if materials are available. Groups will generate out of this

program. Many will be satisfied with the program itself. It will also establish a program of ongoing learning.

4. *I don't have time to form and motivate havurot. How can that be done without my constant input?*

Establish a Havurah Committee. The committee will have a representative from each of the havurot. The committee members share successes and discuss problems as they arise.

As for motivation, have special services and events for the community at large led or programmed by the havurot. Have an annual havurah retreat to provide an opportunity for each havurah to display what it has learned and experienced within the year.

There was no space to include these questions and responses in *The Seventh Telling*, but it's all implicit in this account beginning on page 105:

Moshe called Arlene Turkeltaub. She had indeed begun a havurah program within her synagogue. He learned from her how it was done and explained the concept to the senior Rabbi. "It's like the couples clubs we used to have," he said. "Sure go ahead. As long as everything else is covered, any constructive use of your time is all right with me."

Moshe explained the concept from the pulpit in a sermon, to the brotherhood at their sports day breakfast, to the sisterhood at their fashion show, to the parent teacher association in the day school. *Havurah* was Hebrew for fellowship, a group of individuals and families willing to assume some substantial responsibility for their own Jewish lives. The plural of havurah was *havurot*. The members of a havurah were *haverim*. Haverim would meet in each other's homes. The staff would provide programs for them, from which they could learn without having a Rabbi or a teacher present.

Enough members volunteered to form two groups, one of young couples, with young children, the other of older members, empty nesters. In both he introduced the *yeshivah* style of learning, what it meant to sit across from a study partner and argue texts. It took some time to convince them they knew enough to argue with each other, but once that threshold was crossed, they could not be restrained.

Moshe instituted a regular Wednesday night class on havurah dynamics. It was called the *Bayt Midrash*, the house of study, a place where one could come once or whenever and learn how to learn. Every week the text was different. From this class, and from the excitement generated by the two existing havurot, additional groups were formed. Soon there were five havurot, two family based and three constituted of older adults.

The members of the family havurot celebrated Hanukkah together in the social hall. They planted a tree for *T"U b'Shvat*, the holiday that celebrated the

new year of the trees. On Purim adult and child alike came in costume to the Temple Purim service. They stamped their feet, pounded on pots and pans, waved *graggers* in the air and elevated what would otherwise have been a sedate service into a traditional outburst of levity and joy.

A column in the weekly Temple letter was devoted to havurah activity. *Havurat Emet*, the Fellowship of Truth, wrote about its study of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, and compared the twelfth century rabbi's understanding of nutrition with modern standards. They accomplished more learning with each other than Moshe had been able to teach in all of his classes. *Havurah Gimmel*, Fellowship #3, wrote about its potluck Shabbat dinners. *Havurat Ha-mishpacha*, the Family Fellowship, wrote about the *haggadah* it was preparing for Passover. They were willing to share it with any other havurah that would like to use it.

One Sunday in May was designated Havurah Day. Each of the nine havurot, even the new ones, gathered on the playing field around its banner. They held games, races, contests, and ultimately a parade of the havurot. The synagogue leadership stood in the center of the field to watch several hundred Temple members march in a huge circle, carrying banners, singing for no apparent purpose whatsoever.