NONTRADITIONAL JEWISH RELIGIOUS STUDY CIRCLES:

A CASE STUDY 1994

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the 'study circle' in the context of non-traditional adult Jewish religious education.

The focus of the thesis is a case study of the Hadassah Israel Study Groups which are located in Jerusalem. The research questions query the types of interaction which take place in the study circle, the types of learning which take place, the social functions of the study circle and the implications of the findings for non-traditional religious adult Jewish education.

Following an introductory chapter, a review of the literature relating to different definitions of the study circle which reflect a variety of educational philosophies is pursued. The review includes a the history of the study circle with emphasis on North America where the Hadassah study group originated. Thereafter in keeping with the traditional bias of the research, there is an analysis of Jewish texts and approaches which deal with the study circle in the context of traditional Jewish learning followed by an overview of the history of frameworks of Jewish learning which resemble the study circle.

Given the open-ended nature of the research questions, qualitative research procedures have been used: observations and open-ended interviews. As well a background questionnaire was submitted in order to determine the profile of the participants.

On the basis of the observations three categories of interaction are identified and discussed. These are the text centered interaction mode, the social interaction mode and the self-help therapy group
mode. Content analysis is used to determine the boundaries and sequences of each mode in the recorded sessions. On the basis of the interviews the types of learning in each mode of interaction are discussed as well as the social functions of the study circle.

Finally the implications of the findings for adult Jewish education are discussed with recommended areas for future research.
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Introduction

During the past few years we have witnessed a growing interest in adult religious Jewish education both in the United States and in Israel. This interest is reflected in the increasing number of synagogue based adult education programs, in the increasing number of participants in the international Talmud ‘Page a Day’ study scheme and in the growth of three international religious Orthodox outreach networks -- Lubavitch, Ohr Sameach and Aish Hatorah. An important growth area has been concentrated in two sectors which previously did not engage in Torah study -- observant women and the non-observant. Both sectors may be termed 'non-traditional' for different reasons. According to the tradition there is a unanimous opinion regarding the virtue of Torah study for men however regarding women, traditional opinions vary from limited support to opposition. Therefore women’s Torah study may be termed ‘non-traditional.’

Torah study among observant women is becoming increasingly popular both in Israel and the United States. A manifestation of this interest is the weekly lessons for women which have mushroomed in Jerusalem -- at Matan, Midreshet Lindenbaum, The Israel Center and The Jerusalem College for adults -- attracting hundreds of women. In New York, the Drisha Institute for Women has attracted an increasing number of adults who want to engage in serious text study and synagogue sponsored women’s learning groups have become increasingly popular. While there are aspects of this research which relate to this type of 'non-traditional' learning, we will focus on the second type of 'non-traditional' study.

Torah study among non-observant Jews may also be termed 'non-traditional.' The tradition links Torah study to the practice of its precepts and since this group does not necessarily make this link, it lies outside of the traditional realm.
In this area of non-traditional religious learning, we are witnessing as well a growth of learning networks. In Israel there are two national networks, Bamot and Shorashim, which are attracting increasing numbers of adult learners to regular weekend seminars. As well, Elul has established itself as an institution which undertakes serious Torah study, opening its doors to religious and non-religious alike. In the United States three new national adult education networks -- Klal, the Wexner Fellows and the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School -- have been established over the last ten years. They have all experienced both participant and financial support and increasing public demand.

It is important to stress that most of the 'non-traditional' learning networks study the traditional sources as religious texts. They do not deal with the issues relating to divine authorship and divine inspiration and are prepared to accept these as assumptions of the text. Therefore, while from a constituent point of view they are classified as non-traditional, it could be claimed that the participants engage in traditional religious study.

The emerging interest in non-traditional adult Jewish education has sparked interest in a search for alternative adult education formats. The present situation is problematic since the classic lecture format is contingent on the availability of experienced teachers usually found only in large population centers. Furthermore, the organization of formal lectures requires both an organizational structure and a budget which often prove to be a hindrance in the quest for making adult Jewish education universally accessible.

It has therefore been suggested in many forums that the study circle should be promoted as an additional Jewish adult educational format. The study circle, as will be explained further on, alleviates the need for experienced teachers, offers Jewish education at little or no cost and provides adult learners with an opportunity to engage in serious study without an authoritative teacher. Furthermore the study
circle could be perceived to be a natural link in the chain of Jewish learning. As the antecedant of traditional frameworks of collaborative Jewish study, it could be seen as a normative traditional framework.

In making this suggestion the proponents could neither vouch for the educational processes which take place in a non-traditional Jewish religious study circle nor could they vouch for their educational outcomes, since a serious study of this framework had yet to be embarked upon. In lieu of this situation this research study was undertaken.

A Traditional Perspective

Despite the non-traditional nature of the case study, this inquiry will be undertaken from a traditional perspective. This is in keeping with the syllabus of study circle which, as will be mentioned later is traditional, and with my personal bias. This will include a discussion of educational objectives based on a selection of traditional Jewish sources and a discussion of the implications of the research from a traditional point of view.

Locating a Non-Traditional Study Circle

In my search for a non-traditional study circle in Israel, I discovered the study groups of the Hadassah Women's Organization, which has the largest network of Jewish study circles in the world. These Israel study groups comprise Western female immigrants from all religious denominations with varying degrees of observance. As an organizational framework, the Hadassah Study Groups define themselves as pluralist and non-coercive, attempting to appeal to as wide a community as possible. After a thorough investigation, I decided to make a case study of the Hadassah Study Groups in Jerusalem.
In planning my case study I first sought a definition. An examination of the literature revealed a number of different positions. Definitions usually divide on the question of whether a case study is an object of study (Yin 1993; Stake 1994), a study of a phenomenon using a particular qualitative research method (Merriam 1985) or a method of reporting a qualitatively researched phenomenon (Lincoln and Guba 1985). An important issue which emanates from these definitions is the connection between case studies and qualitative research. According to Yin and Stake, this connection is contingent upon the research problem. They believe that one should employ a research strategy which best serves the interests of the research even if it is quantitative and give examples of case studies which have been performed using quantitative research. Merriam, however, views the case study as a qualitative research method and thus excludes the possibility of the case study being used in quantitative research. Lincoln and Guba agree upon the integral relationship between case studies and qualitative research, yet see it as a specific method of reporting qualitative research (or 'natural inquiry,' in their terminology), following a certain procedure.

This thesis will adopt Merriam's approach, in which the case study offers a framework for investigating complex social units containing multiple variables. Grounded in a real life context, the case study as a holistic, lifelike account offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand the experiences of its readers (Merriam 1985, p.285).

In Chapter Six I shall define the term 'qualitative inquiry' and describe how the case study differs from other strategies of qualitative research.

Having discussed the parameters of a case study it is important to elaborate on the key concept, the 'study circle.'
The Study Circle

The study circle is a democratic framework of adult education and will be defined in the following chapter. This framework is popular in many Western countries, emphasizing the autonomy of the participants and their ability to sustain a learning group without the guidance of expert adult teachers. The popular nature of this framework has enabled it to function at a minimum cost and, in many instances, independent of an institutional structure.

The study circle is generally associated with Sweden and has thus been referred to as the Scandinavian Study Circle (Kurland 1982). In Sweden, the government sponsors participation in study circles, providing both stability and growth for a study circle movement (Brattset 1982). In other parts of the world where it exists it is often not referred to as a ‘study circle.’ While in the United States there is the New York Consortium of Study Circles (Kurland 1982), a study circle framework which has had a far greater impact than this consortium, yet has never carried the name ‘study circle,’ is The Great Books Program (Adler 1976). In the United Kingdom and elsewhere there is the University of the Third Age, Autonomous Adult Learning Groups (Brookfield 1979) and there were the University of Manchester Department of Extramural Studies Discussion Groups (Brookfield 1986). In Canada there was an initiative for Living Room Learning, a radio organized home discussion group (Brookfield 1986).

In the realm of religious adult education there are house churches which utilize the study circle, as well as Bible study groups (Knowles 1984). These are only the recorded examples of study circles, which are far more widespread, yet are unknown because they exist outside of institutional frameworks.
The widespread, yet unknown phenomenon of the study circle became apparent to the author in this current research into study circles in Israel. It was discovered that study circles are an important feature of Israeli adult education popularly known as 'Hugei Bayit' -- Home Study Groups.

**A Jewish Religious Study Circle**

The concept 'Jewish religious' is complex in that opinions differ regarding what constitutes 'Jewish' and what constitutes 'religious.' Furthermore, do these concepts define the group or the subject matter? In using the concept 'Jewish' in relation to the group, there is a general consensus in defining 'Jewish' people as those born to a Jewish mother, according to a traditional perspective, or those born to a Jewish father as well, according to a Reform perspective, in addition to those who have converted to Judaism.

The concept 'religious' is far more complex. First, what criteria should be used to determine whether a text or a group is religious? Relating to the group, are there objective criteria, beliefs and actions which are decisive or are the criteria subjective? Furthermore, does religious subject matter refer to the content, the authorship or official sanction or all three criteria? In adopting a traditional perspective, religious subject matter will be defined as 'Torah' - the written Torah and the oral Torah and all their commentaries and derivations i.e. Bible, Talmud, Jewish Philosophy, Jewish Law, Jewish Ethics and Jewish Mysticism. However it is important that those who study these texts acknowledge their religious nature as well.
I will therefore arbitrarily define a Jewish religious study circle for the purpose of this research as being:

A study circle whose participants are Jewish and who study texts which they and the tradition define as Jewish - religious texts.

The following study circles are therefore excluded:

a. A Jewish Great Books group which studies Maimonides as a classical example of Aristotelian philosophy.
b. Jews who study modern poetry which they define as religious yet which falls outside of the tradition.
c. A group of non-Jews who study the Talmud, a traditional Jewish text.

The first group study religious texts from a non-religious perspective, the second study texts which are non-religious from a traditional perspective and the third study religious texts which do not bind them.

The Research Questions

Based on the above analysis I have posed the following research questions:

1. What happens in the Hadassah study group, a non-traditional Jewish religious study circle? Are there distinct patterns of interaction in the group?
2. What are the implications of these findings for similar non-traditional Jewish religious study circles?

In order to broaden these findings the following additional questions will be asked:

3. What types of learning take place in this study circle?
4. What are the social functions of the study circle?
Thereafter in order to assess the study circle as a framework for non-traditional adult Jewish education, I will ask:

5. What are the implications of the case study for adult Jewish education?

In approaching this study circle very little is known about what happens in the circle. Therefore my primary question is descriptive and interpretive (Geertz 1973). I will try to describe the study circle by asking ‘What is going on here?’ (Ball 1981 p. xvii) and seeking out patterns of interaction. On the basis of this ‘thick description’ I will try to interpret the evidence and allocate the study circle sessions into conceptual categories. Thereafter implications will be sought for similar study circles and the field of adult Jewish education.

Finally it is important to review previous research studies of the study circle.

Research Studies of Study Circles

In the area of research at least three studies have been made of study circles, focusing on three major aspects of the study circle: the participants, the group process and its institutionalization.

a. In 1957 Davis researched the participants of the Great Books project. In his study he investigated three important issues. The first was a survey of the participants and their ‘social characteristics,’ i.e., their stage in the life cycle, their memberships, their institutional affiliations and their self-conceptions. The second was an investigation of the cultural abilities and interests of the participants and the third was the affect of the Great Books on the participants (Davis 1961).
b. In the years 1973-76, Jan Bystrom undertook a comprehensive study of the group processes of study circles in Sweden. This study 'The Study Circle as a Pedagogical Situation' was summarized in his book, "All 'Study Circles' do not become Study Circles" (Bystrom 1976). In his study, Bystrom paid special attention to the circle leader and to the different directions in which study circles develop. The essence of Bystrom's findings are that many study circles which do not correspond to the ideal, deviate in three main ways: they can develop into a 'school class,' with recipient pupils and an instructing teacher, they can develop into a 'coffee party,' with emphasis on the comradeship of the circle and discussions which have nothing to do with the studies of the members, and they can develop into a 'therapeutical group,' in which activities concentrate upon individual mental or social problems and are likely to stifle the studies of the members (Brattset 1982).

c. In 1985 Oliver researched the institutionalization of Swedish study circles with a view towards replicating this movement in the United States. Oliver's research focused on three questions: how study circles originated in Sweden, how they are used to promote adult civic education and how they have evolved into a permanent national institution (Oliver 1988).

In this thesis I shall relate to only one of three aspects researched: to the group process with particular emphasis on the educational process. In relating to the group process I will be cognizant of Bystrom's findings and look for comparative patterns of interaction.

Hopefully this thesis will generate thinking and research into adult Jewish education in order to ensure that this 2000-year-old field of practice will continue to develop into an area of inquiry as well.
SECTION ONE

THEORY

In this research I shall focus on the non-traditional Jewish religious study circle, in general, and on the Hadassah Study Groups, in particular. It is my assumption that this format of adult religious education has historical roots in adult education in the Western world, reflecting a number of traditional Western education philosophies. Likewise this format has Jewish historical roots and reflects a traditional Jewish educational philosophy. In this section I shall define the study circle and demonstrate the link between the different definitions and differing philosophical schools of education. In addition, I shall trace the history of the study circle in the Western world and outline contemporary study circle frameworks. I will then discuss the study circle within the context of the Jewish tradition and formulate a definition for a traditional study circle. Thereafter I will trace its development as a framework for Jewish religious adult education. Finally, I will discuss the history of the Hadassah Study Group and describe its composition.
Chapter One

The Study Circle: Definitions and Models

Definitions of the Study Circle

The key concept in this thesis is the 'study circle.' It has been used to describe a variety of adult educational settings ranging from formal adult teacher-centered classes (Heilman 1984) to informal adult discussion groups (Brattset 1982). This loose application of the concept begs an operative definition for the purpose of further discussion.

In defining the concept 'study circle,' it is evident that the focus of the circle is on study. This would differentiate this circle from other types of circles which may meet primarily for social or other purposes. The term 'circle' is more complex. While the term assumes a group activity, it obviously denotes a specific type of group activity, otherwise an alternative concept the 'study group' would be used. The 'circle' aspect of the group activity suggests the following:

**The physical format of the group:** The group sits in a circular formation when studying.

**Social equality:** All members of the group are equal. All are equidistant from the centre and from the circumference. No group member takes preference over another.

**The continuous syllabus:** There is no defined beginning or end. One topic may flow into another -- the syllabus is an ongoing process.
While the physical format, social equality and the continuous syllabus may all be derived from the concept 'circle' the development of subject matter and methodology seem to be open questions.

It is perhaps this ambiguity which allows for the different definitions and types of study circles.

The Three Definitions of a Study Circle

My first definition is the one used by the Swedish government for whom the study circle is an officially sponsored adult educational framework. For legislative procedures it was necessary to define a study circle and therefore a definition was developed which has operative financial ramifications. The 'study circle' according to this definition is:

an informal group which meets for the common pursuit of well planned studies of a subject or problem area which has previously been decided upon (Oliver, 1988 p.6).

This definition has four components:
- The study circle is a group activity.
- The nature of the group is informal.
- There is a common pursuit.
- The subject has been well planned and decided upon in advance.

The central concept in this definition, 'informal,' is neither defined nor clarified. 'Informal' could relate to the following: to the physical surroundings, to the manner of seating, to the social relationships or to the curriculum. The concept 'circle' could be applied in all of its contexts.
Jarvis, who accepts this definition of the study circle, adds the following:

These are democratic groups with no educational prerequisites for membership based upon the principle of equality, cooperation, companionship, participation, freedom and self-determination (Jarvis 1990, p.327).

One may assume that Jarvis defines 'informal' as relating to the social relationships and the democratic composition of the group. Furthermore he broadens the definition to include the principles upon which the social dynamics of the group are based, i.e., equality, cooperation, companionship, participation, freedom and self-determination.

The 'common pursuit' element of the definition implies a methodology of group involvement and team effort. This could be through group discussion or rotating turns of presentation.

In referring to the methodology suggested by 'common pursuit,' Jarvis states:

There is a generally agreed teaching approach in study circles which includes: equality and democracy among participants; an endeavor to help participants feel free to express their own opinions; a freedom for all participants; recognition that all members bring to the circle their own experience; a democratic but forward looking planning process; and a sense of continuity (Jarvis 1990, p.327).

According to the third component of the definition, the curriculum is not decided upon within the study circle. There is no allusion to the 'correct process' for determining the subject matter. One must be aware that the democratic nature of the group may be seriously limited if it is presented with the curriculum as specified in the definition, and is not involved in its formulation.
An alternative Swedish definition defines the 'study circle' as:

A group of comrades where the participants and group leader jointly determine the formulation of the studies. These are based on the participants' own wishes concerning the rate of study and course material and are not guided by a predetermined syllabus (The Committee on Methods Testing in Adult Education in Sweden 1974, p.5).

According to this definition, the important aspects of the study circle are:

a group of comrades
where the participants and group leader jointly determine
the formulation of the studies

'A group of comrades' refers to a group activity where there is social equality.

'Where the participants and group leader jointly determine' refers to a prescribed methodology of group involvement suggesting the discussion method.

'The formulation of the studies' refers to the process of planning the curriculum.

The first two aspects of this definition seem to be similar to the previous definition. The 'group of comrades' in this definition could coincide with the 'informal group' in the previous definition in keeping with Jarvis's interpretation of 'informal,' and the discussion method is probably mutually preferred.

It is the third part of the definition which differs from the previous one. While in the first definition the planning of the syllabus is not a function of the study circle, according to the second definition it is the mutual process of planning the syllabus which differentiates the study circle from other frameworks.
This difference in definition is important when deciding whether circles which have syllabi planned by outside agencies, e.g. the Great Books Program, are defined as study circles. For my research, the difference will be regarding the inclusion of the Talmud Circles, the cooperative learning of Talmudic texts, in our study.

A third definition is offered by Brattset, a Norwegian. She maintains that the most common definition of a study circle which appears in handbooks, manuals and encyclopedias is:

A circle of friends who come together to discuss problems or subjects of common interest (Brattset 1982, p.9).

According to this definition the study circle has three criteria;

- The study circle members are a 'circle of friends'
- The methodology is 'discussion'
- The subject matter is a 'problems or subjects of common interest.'

The first criterion, the participants, closely resembles the 'informal group,' which according to Jarvis is a democratic group, and the 'group of comrades' which appear in the first two definitions.

The second criterion, the prescribed methodology -- the discussion method -- could be common to the previous definitions as well. It is the third criterion which is unique.

According to Brattset the curriculum should comprise problems or subjects of common interest. While the other definitions neither relate to nor limit the subject matter, this definition could negate a liberal arts curriculum which focuses on classical sources which do not relate to the participants' problems or subjects of common
interest. Despite the fact that 'subjects of common interest' are only mentioned in this definition, one may not assume that this has been purposely rejected by the other definitions as it may be self-evident that if a voluntary study circle does not discuss subjects of common interest the members will cease their participation.

In formulating an operative definition of the study circle for this thesis I am confronted with the problem that the three definitions are not only descriptive but prescriptive as well. Each definition reflects different educational philosophies which stress different aspects of the study circle. Thus, in opting for one of the definitions I run the risk of defining a study circle from a specific educational perspective which may be incongruent with the goals of the study circle within the realm of adult Jewish religious education. Since this very issue is a core problem of this thesis, I do not want to prejudice my perspective apriori but rather adopt a neutral stance, if possible. The prescriptive nature of these definitions becomes apparent when shown that in essence they suggest three different adult education models.

Three Study Circle Models

It is my contention that the three definitions of the study circle prescribe contrasting educational models. In using the concept 'model' I acknowledge that this concept has varied connotations and therefore refer to one of the definitions offered by Barrow and Milburn. They suggest that a 'model' could refer to a 'simplified statement of relationships between variables' (Barrow and Milburn 1990). In context of this thesis, these variables are the characteristics of the study circle, i.e. the centrality of the learner, the discussion method as a desired methodology and the democratic nature and social equality of the group, which have different relationships according to each model.
As stated previously, according to the first definition participants of the study circle must study a predetermined curriculum while according to the second the participants themselves must define the curriculum. By differing in regard to the preparation of the subject-matter, each definition propagates a different educational model based on different educational reasons for the importance of the common study circle characteristics. Each model has its own hierarchy of educational goals which define a successful study circle encounter. In the following section the three models are discussed, analyzing the importance of the common characteristics for each model and their ramifications for a successful study circle.

The Liberal Arts Model

The first Swedish definition clearly stresses the importance of well planned studies for the study circle. This focus upon the importance of well planned studies does not clearly define the responsibility of the participants of the study circle. Are they responsible for the planning of the studies? Are they responsible for the curriculum of the subject? This latitude could lead to study circles where the participants do their own curriculum planning and to circles where the curriculum is devised by others. Whereas according to an alternative definition the autonomy and sovereignty of the group is inherently important and the group is obligated to plan the studies itself, in this definition value is attached to the studies being well planned, with the possibility of this process taking place outside of the group thereby limiting its autonomy. This definition thus validates a model of the study circle which sees the transmission and creation of knowledge as its core with the autonomy of the circle as secondary. This model I have called the 'Liberal Arts' model.
The Liberal Arts model of the study circle is used for the study of the Great Books and for other liberal arts discussion groups (Davis 1961). The study circle is viewed as an effective framework for the transmission of knowledge and intellectual pursuit which Adler, an important liberal arts philosopher of education, perceives to be the essence of education (Adler 1977). (1)

The Liberal Arts Perspective of Education

The liberal arts perspective of education is based on the perceived common aspects of the human being. These aspects, which were common in the past as well, challenged the ancient philosophers in the same manner in which they challenge our contemporary philosophers (Hutchins 1953). Thus the classical works of the philosophers throughout the ages deal with human dilemmas and questions which have been, and always will be, pertinent to human existence. The importance of studying classical works is not merely a positive act; it is considered to be vital for the intellectual and moral development of the human being (Hutchins 1953).

This perspective envisages a community of adults engaged in the 'Great Conversation,' a dialogue with the philosophers of old, dealing with new-old problems (Hutchins 1953; 1954). Participation in this dialogue necessitates cultural growth. An important emphasis is placed on the sharpening of the intellectual tools which are vital

1) This liberal arts perspective of education reflects the neo-rationalist philosophical group. Mention must be made of a second liberal arts philosophical school, the neo-Thomists, who base their educational philosophy on the religious works of Thomas Aquinas (Elias and Merriam 1980).
for rational thinking. The continuous participation in the Great Conversation leads to the development of a human being who is intellectually developed and steeped in culture.

Hutchins (1954) maintains that a person who does not or cannot participate in the Great Conversation is not capable of making rational and responsible decisions. It is thus important for the successful flourishing of a democracy that every citizen, because of his/her participation in the decision making process, be exposed to or take part in the Great Conversation.

The champions of this educational perspective confer upon the classical works of the past and contemporary classical scholars an authority to determine what should be studied. This authority carries both moral weight and expertise. According to Hutchins:

Educators ought to know better than their pupils what an education is. If educators do not, they have wasted their lives. The art of teaching consists in large part of interesting people in things that ought to interest them but do not. The task of educators is to discover what an education is and then to invent the methods of instruction interesting their students in it (Hutchins 1954, p.86).

The Focus on the Learner

The Liberal Arts Study Circle model differs from other liberal arts educational models in its focus on the learner. According to the previous description of liberal arts educational goals, an educational model based on the centrality of the teacher is seemingly preferable. The teacher could and should be central in determining the subject matter, in challenging the student and in ensuring an intellectually enriching educational experience. However, in the study circle model the centrality of the learner is emphasized.
A reason for this emphasis is that technically the learning process requires the active participation of the learner. According to Adler

"...but because he is a living thing, and not dead clay, the transformation can only take place through his (the learner's) own activity. Teachers of every sort can help, but they can only help in the process of learning that must be dominated every moment by the activity of the learner (Adler 1977, p.277)."

Learning can only take place through active participation. The learner must be motivated and stimulated to think and analyze. In the study circle, the learner is encouraged to become actively involved in analyzing the texts and participating in the discussion. S/he may be asked to prepare a text or to chair the session. The dynamic of the group discourages passivity, urging all participants to become actively engaged.

The focus on the learner is thus preferred because methodologically active learning is perceived to be more effective. Therefore, theoretically if the learning process could be more effective in a passive setting, e.g. a lecture, the passive approach would be preferred.

Discussion, a Preferred Methodology

In the Liberal Arts model of the study circle, the discussion method is preferred for the following two reasons:

a. As stated previously, an important aspect of liberal arts education is the dialogue with Western classical culture, a dialogue termed the Great Conversation. The learner conducts a dialogue and discussion with philosophers of old, challenging their assumptions and pondering their approaches to contemporary problems. According to
Hutchins, it is fitting that this Great Conversation should take place through a medium of contemporary conversation. In describing the 'University of the Utopia,' Hutchins explains this preference for the discussion method.

Almost all teaching in Utopia is conducted through the discussion. The educational system is a paradigm of the conversation through which learning is advanced and through which a society works (Hutchins 1953, p.57).

b. A second reason for the preference of the discussion method is its sharpening of intellectual tools (Elias and Merriam 1980; Brookfield 1985). In pursuing a discussion, the participant in the study circle must constantly evaluate his/her own position. Is the position being supported by other facts or opinions? What are the assumptions of the different opinions offered? Are the statements being made empirical or normative?

The Democratic Nature of the Group

An important goal of the Liberal Arts model is the perpetuation of democracy. According to Hutchins (1954), 'The kind of education that will develop the requisite development for democratic citizenship is the liberal education.' As mentioned previously a Liberal education encourages rational thought. A Liberal Arts study circle model enhances the commitment to democracy by encouraging discussion in its educational process which, according to Hutchins, is vital for democracy.

Discussion implies that there is more than one way of arriving at the truth. The notion that truth may be arrived at by discussion is peculiarly applicable to practical, political, economic matters. A civilization in which the opinion of the majority is taken on such matters and must then be adopted by all, is doomed to stagnation. It ignores the fact that the most precious possession of any society is the thought of the minority, even a minority of one. The rule of the majority without discussion and criticism is tyranny (Hutchins 1953 p.90).
The Liberal Arts Study Circle model serves as a catalyst for democracy. The internal democratic processes are congruent with its democratic goals. A group which functions democratically and exercises democracy is certain to enhance democratic processes in the greater society.

The Humanist Model

This second Swedish definition which focuses upon the joint formulation of the curriculum by the participants and group leader, indicates that the process of mutually creating the subject matter is paramount. This definition suggests a model which emphasizes the autonomy of the student, the 'Humanist Study Circle Model.' This model embraces humanistic educational philosophy and views the study circle as an important medium for humanist education.

A Humanist Perspective of Education

In order to understand fully the principles of humanistic education, an all encompassing description of humanist education may be necessary. It is felt however that such an analysis falls beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead attention will be drawn to those aspects and principles of humanist education which are facilitated by the Humanist Study Circle model.

In contrast to the liberal arts approach to education, which stresses that which is common to mankind and tries to develop a dialogue based on a common Western tradition, the humanist approach stresses the uniqueness and individuality of people (Elias and Merriam 1984). It is incumbent upon education to enable people to realize their full potential. This realization of potential is made possible by the development of the individual’s qualities and attributes. This quest requires a tailor-made education for each individual.
In addition, the individual should be encouraged to reach self-actualization (Maslow 1970). If actualization is accomplished the adult becomes fully functioning, having satisfied a hierarchy of common needs. The educational process must also take into account the different individual life experiences, giving legitimacy to knowledge attained through experience.

A second difference between the liberal arts approach and the humanist approach is the question of authority and autonomy. According to the proponents of humanistic education, every person is an autonomous being and should be encouraged at all times to practice this autonomy. S/he should not accept the authority of any tradition or value system without critically examining the system (Brookfield 1989). S/he should be responsible for his/her own education by mutually developing the curriculum with a facilitator and entering into a learning contract (Knowles 1986).

From a humanist perspective it is the learner’s needs which are primary. Therefore it is not surprising that in the Humanist Study Circle model the focus is on the learner.

The Focus on the Learner

According to the humanist viewpoint, the learning process should be cognizant of the learner as an adult which, according to the psychological perspective, means being responsible for ones own life (Knowles 1980). Knowles maintains that if the learning process fails to recognize the person’s adulthood there will be negative consequences.

When we have arrived at that point (of being responsible for ones own life), we develop a deep psychological need to be perceived by others and treated by others as capable of taking responsibility for ourselves. And when we find ourselves in
situations where we feel that others are imposing their wills on us without our participating in making decisions affecting us, we experience a feeling, often subconsciously, of resentment and resistance (Knowles 1984, p.9).

The learner's being an adult is not only an issue of a psychological need to shoulder responsibility in a learning situation but presents as well an ethical problem. From a humanist point of view, recognition must be made of the ethical problem of bringing a mature adult into a tutorial relationship with another adult (Lawson 1975). Recognition must be made of the autonomous nature of each adult with the educator not imposing his/her values on the learner. This implies that the learner must be encouraged to draw up the curriculum together with the facilitator and to be party to all educational decisions.

The Humanist Study Circle, by focusing on the learner and his/her needs, is an ideal framework for self-directed learning which Knowles describes in the following manner:

In its broadest meaning 'self-directed learning' describes a process in which the individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes (Knowles 1975, p.15).

The commitment to self directed learning is not limited to its being a preferred methodology as a result of the psychological or ethical issues. For the humanist educator its promotion is a central goal of adult education. This view is clearly stated by Kidd (1973, p.47) in the following passage.

It has often been said that the purpose of adult education, or of any kind of education, is to make the subject a continuing 'inner directed' self-operating learner.
Discussion, a Preferred Methodology

The discussion methodology is preferred because of its facilitation of self-directed learning. Paterson notes this point of view in his philosophical analysis of 'discussion.'

It is asserted that the individual student's sense of participation in the aims and achievements of the class is crucially heightened by his experience of participating in free, progressive class discussion (Paterson 1970, p.28).

The learner is able to exercise an element of control over the learning process. Whereas in a frontal lesson the student is passive and is forced to submit to the dictates of the lecturer or teacher, in the discussion the learner is party to the development of the topic and to the direction of the subject.

The Democratic Nature of the Study Circle

The democratic nature of the study circle is cardinal to humanist educators for whom a democratic philosophy is paramount. Knowles maintains that:

A democratic philosophy is characterized by a concern for the development of persons, a deep conviction as to the worth of every individual, and faith that people will make the right decisions for themselves if given the necessary information and support. It gives precedence to the growth of people over the accomplishment of things when these two values are in conflict. It emphasizes the release of human potential over the control of human behavior (Knowles 1980, p.67).

In the Humanist Study Circle the participants have total autonomy regarding the formation of the curriculum and its implementation. They are responsible for the educational outcomes and plan the
educational process accordingly. An assumption of the model is the democratic conviction (as expressed by Knowles) that people will make the right decisions for themselves if given the necessary information and support.

The democratic functioning of the study circle, from a humanist adult educational perspective, is not only a required methodology but also an important educational objective. Lindeman, a pioneer in adult education research stresses this issue:

In conventional education the pupils adapt themselves to the curriculum offered, but in adult education the pupils aid in forming the curricula. Under democratic conditions authority is of the group. This is not an easy lesson to learn, but until it is learned democracy cannot succeed (Knowles 1980, p.68).

The study circle is viewed as a framework for teaching democracy. The adult is empowered to be part of the decision making process. S/he learns to listen to others yet is encouraged to pursue his/her own convictions. S/he learns the importance of listening to the minority point of view and to take decisions according to the majority opinion. As part of the group s/he is party to these decisions and is responsible for their outcomes. S/he learns the power of the word instead of the power of the sword.

The Progressive Model

The third definition, offered by Brattset, stresses both the equality of the circle as well as the problem-centered nature of the curriculum. In focusing on these aspects she seems to suggest a progressive educational perspective which would choose the study circle as a framework for the realization of progressive educational goals. Thus the model suggested by this definition will be referred to as the 'Progressive Model.'
A Progressive Perspective of Education

Progressive education, which was influenced by Lindeman and Dewey, places a stress on the utilitarian nature of education. Contrary to the liberal perspective, which recommends the study of the classical works, progressive theorists focus on the study of practical issues. Thus the focus of an adult education class should be on the solving of problems which have an immediate effect upon the adult's life. Education must take into account the pragmatic issues which the adult deals with. Furthermore the adult's experience should be utilized in the learning process (Dewey 1938).

The two important components of progressive education, therefore, are problem solving and utilization of the adult's experience as a resource. Lindeman eloquently articulates these ideas in the following section:

I am conceiving adult education in terms of a new technique for learning, a technique as essential to the college graduate as to the unlettered manual worker. It represents a process by which the adult learns to become aware of and to evaluate his experience. To do this he cannot begin by studying subjects in the hope that one day this will be useful. On the contrary he begins by giving attention to situations in which he finds himself, to problems which include obstacles to his self-fulfillment. Facts and information from the differentiated spheres of knowledge are used, not for the purpose of accumulation, but because of need in solving problems (Knowles 1980, p.50).

The Focus on the Learner

The study circle is an ideal framework for protagonists of progressive education because it stresses the active role of the learner in the learning process. In the study circle the facilitator is able to draw upon each participant's experiences and to make these the focus of the discussion. Furthermore the participants play an
active role in the solving of problems, each person contributing his/her unique perception of the issue and possible methods and strategies for handling the problem.

Discussion, a Preferred Methodology

The Progressive model of the study circle prefers the discussion method because it facilitates and encourages a personal involvement, the pooling of resources and combining of personal experiences. Whereas in the Liberal Arts model, the discussion is seen as a sharpening of intellectual tools pitting one participant against the other, in the Progressive model the discussion focuses on practical issues, combining the group’s forces in solving the issue.

The Democratic Nature of the Group

According to Dewey (1916), one goal of education should be the catalyzation of social change. In engaging in democratic interchange and relationships, the group fosters a mini-society which, by engaging in dialogue in a spirit of democracy, could affect social change. Since the need for social change could require the mustering of a consensus for change utilizing the democratic process, the very use of this process within the study circle should promote its use in other spheres as well.

While the Liberal Arts, Humanist and Progressive study circle models differ regarding their priorities, they agree that the democratic process is both an important educational feature as well as an educational goal. They all emphasize empowerment, a process that will give the adult the confidence and the ability to take a stand on an issue and to defend his/her position. Hopefully this empowerment will
filter over to the social and political domains, enabling democratic societies to flourish.

In the context of religious adult education this feature of the study circle poses an important challenge. In the religious study circle, and particularly in the Jewish religious study circle, is the democratic process an educational means only or is it an educational end as well? This question will be developed fully in Chapter Three which will focus on the study circle in the context of traditional Jewish learning.

As previously mentioned, given the fact that each definition of the study circle is prescriptive as well as descriptive, none of these definitions can be adopted apriori to define the Jewish religious study circle because this would prejudice the research which seeks, among other issues, to ascertain the educational ideologies which underlie the Jewish religious study circle. It is my intention, therefore, to combine the common elements of these definitions and try to offer an inclusive definition which will not prescribe any of the above models for Jewish religious education.

Despite their differences, none of the above definitions relate directly to the size of the study circle group or to the life cycle of the study circle. Since these issues are important for a comprehensive definition, I shall clarify them prior to offering an operative definition.

Properties of the Study Circle

Number of Participants which Constitute a Study Circle Group

All definitions agree that study circles are a group activity. However no definition specifies the required minimum or maximum size
of these groups. A determining factor in specifying the size of the study circle group should be the effectiveness of the group in engaging in group discussion. This calls for a group large enough to be composed of different opinions and resources, yet small enough to ensure the participation of all circle members who wish to contribute to the discussion.

In Sweden it became legally necessary to specify minimum and maximum study circle group sizes in order to develop criteria for qualification for government aid. Thus, in 1981 a new Act of Parliament which changed the regulations regarding subsidies for study circles, specified that in order to qualify for a subsidy, a circle must have a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 20 participants (Sundqvist 1982).

The Study Circle Life Cycle

An aspect of study circles which is not mentioned specifically in the above definitions yet which is assumed, is that the study circle should have a minimum life cycle. This is an important difference between a study circle and a 'discussion group.' The study circle is a learning process spread over a period of time, while a discussion group may be a single group encounter.

The determining factors for prescribing a minimum study circle life cycle depend on the weight one attaches to the study circle either being primarily a group encounter or an intellectual encounter. If the study circle is primarily a group encounter then the determining factor for specifying the minimum number of meetings should be the number of sessions needed for the group to function as a cohesive unit and for all participants to contribute. If, however, the study
circle is primarily an intellectual encounter with the aim of covering a certain subject, the nature of the subject will determine the life cycle of the group.

In practice it is impossible to decide arbitrarily upon a minimum number of sessions according to either encounter. The number of sessions needed to ensure a successful group encounter depends on, among other factors, the size of the group and the personalities of the participants, thus this number will change from group to group. Likewise, the minimum number of sessions required for a successful intellectual encounter will be determined not only by the subject matter but will depend on other variables such as previous knowledge, the nature of the subject matter and the intellectual ability of the participants.

In Sweden, where legislators were required to decide upon a minimum number of sessions, two requirements were specified; a minimum number of hours over a minimum amount of weeks, i.e., at least 15 hours spread over four weeks of study (Sundqvist 1982). These requirements ensure that the study circle should not be over-concentrated, allowing time for reflection and perhaps preparation between sessions.

Is there a maximum life cycle? The maximum length of time a study circle should study is not specified by any definition nor by Swedish legislation. A successful study group could continue almost indefinitely, only to cease functioning when the group socially dissolves or the subject matter becomes exhausted. In the United States, a Great Books Program representative claimed (1) that there are Great Books Study Circles which have been functioning for over 45 years.

An Operative Definition of a 'Study Circle'

In formulating an operative definition of the study circle, I have chosen to collate those elements which are common to all three definitions. The above definitions demonstrate a consensus regarding three important aspects of the study circle:

- The focus on the learner
- Social equality among the participants
- The preferability of the discussion method

In addition, I have noted the importance of the study circle group comprising a minimum and maximum size as well as its meeting for a minimum number of sessions.

The operative definition of the study circle for this thesis will therefore be:

A continuous group learning activity, comprising a minimum of five participants and a maximum of 20, in which the learner is an active participant (1), where there is social equality amongst the participants and where the discussion method is the preferred methodology.

My preference for basing the operative definition on the common characteristics is primarily to ensure a definition which is as inclusive as possible. Furthermore I have decided to delete the unique characteristics of each Swedish definition because it is my contention that these unique characteristics make each definition prescriptive as well as descriptive.

1. 'The focus on the learner' has been changed to 'active learning by the learner' to stress the difference between the study circle and other frameworks where the focus is on the learner yet s/he is passive.
Chapter Two

Early and Contemporary Study Circles

In the introduction, attention was drawn to the potential existence of the study circle independent of organizations and institutions. Since the documentation at hand relates, understandably, to institutionally supported study circles, the picture remains incomplete. There is no data available on the many different living-room study circles, such as those that Brookfield (1979) encountered in England, nor is there data on the history of every informal grouping. Thus any description will be far from complete.

The informal nature of the study circle coupled with the paucity of knowledge regarding the extent of the institutionally sponsored study circle worldwide, renders an attempt to write a comprehensive history almost futile. Instead a brief sketch of early study circle frameworks will be made, concentrating primarily on the United States. This emphasis was chosen based on the following three factors:

a. Comprehensive historical accounts of the history of adult education in the United States have been written (Knowles 1963; Stubblefield 1988).

b. The Swedish Study Circle movement, which is perhaps the most extensive in the world, was 'imported' by Oscar Olson to Sweden from the United States (Oliver 1988).

c. The Hadassah study group, the case study, originated in the United States and its development could be seen in the context of the evolution of study circles in that country.
In its present form the study circle is a general adult education framework, sponsored in most situations by secular organizations studying texts of all types. In its original form the study circle was a framework of religious education dedicated to the study of religious texts. Its religious origins could be traced to the rise of Protestantism which viewed the Biblical text as the authority, in contrast to the Papacy. In focusing on the text, Protestantism promoted interpretation of text, an outlook which led to sectarianism among Protestants who each had their unique interpretation (Meyer 1965). This validation of unmediated text study provided an important basis for the religious study circle which valued group text study without an authoritative teacher.

In particular the study circle could be traced to the Protestant Moravians and Quakers. These sects have been singled out as the most liberal of those in the late 18th-century North American colonies in terms of their educational policy towards equality and women (Mulhern 1960). The Moravian educational perspective was influenced particularly by John Cormenius (1592-1671), a bishop of the Moravian Church.

Cormenius prescribed a new curriculum and method for schoolchildren, yet many of his ideas were pertinent to adult education and were probably adopted both by the Junto and Chautauqua, early study circle frameworks. Cormenius gave equal stress to both the curriculum and the teaching method. For the curriculum, "He would teach the meanings of all the main facts in the world and would stress the vernacular and the things of nature rather than the classics or words" (Mulhern 1960, p.364). The methodology for delving into meanings would be the use of the inductive method of Bacon and the approach to learning
through the senses. Cormenius stressed the active learning of the student through experience:

(Men must) be taught to become wise by studying the heavens, the earth, oaks and beeches, but not by studying books; that is to say they must learn to investigate the things themselves, and not the observations that other people have made about the things (Mulhern 1960, p.365).

Cormenius here lays down principles which are cardinal to the study circle:

a. The rationality of people and their ability to master the powers of learning.
b. People should have confidence in their ability to learn.
c. Learning should be an active experience.
b. The importance of encouraging people to be self-directed in their learning.

It is these principles upon which the Junto, Lyceum and Chautauqua -- the first study circle frameworks -- were based. The Quakers also played a major ideological role in the propagation of study circles. While Cormenius stressed the rationality of man, it was the Quakers who stressed the authority of the group as well as openness and religious tolerance towards those who were different. The Quakers organized their communal lives in the form of 'meetings,' popular assemblies which met at both local and regional levels. These meetings organized the community and the church, defining priorities (Woody 1969). Group deliberation and decision making was thus an essential element in the sect's structure. The Quakers seemed ambivalent in their approach to non-utilitarian higher education, however they totally endorsed every citizen's right to a basic education be they Quaker or non-Quaker, male or female, rich or poor, white or Negro.
Quaker influence was particularly strong in Pennsylvania, the colony which William Penn, a Quaker leader, received from the Crown Prince. In Pennsylvania a progressive school system was established which stressed equality between the sexes and races (Meyer 1965). This educational philosophy was probably instrumental in the establishment of the Junto in Pennsylvania.

The Junto

The first recorded study circle in the United States, which survives to this day, is the Junto (Knowles 1963). The term 'Junto' according to Moreland and Goldenstein (1985) is a variant of 'junta,' an association of persons for a common purpose. (This definition closely resembles Brattset's definition of the study circle). It was started in 1727 by Benjamin Franklin who, together with 11 colleagues started a discussion club in Philadelphia to explore such intellectual problems as morals, politics and natural philosophy. While Quaker influence is apparent, little is known regarding Franklin's being influenced by Cormenius. There is, however, little doubt that given the educational philosophy he followed, Franklin's Junto, as well as his academy for schoolchildren, have roots in Cormenius's ideas.

This discussion club adopted a format of alternative participant responsibility for the proceedings, which was later adopted by the Lyceum and subsequently by other study circles as well. Moreland and Goldenstein quote Franklin's description of the Junto's procedures:

We met on Friday evenings. The rules that I drew up required that every member, in his turn, should produce one or more queries on any point of Morals, Politics, or Natural Philosophy, to be discussed by the company; and once in three months produce and read an essay of his own writing, on any subject he pleased (Moreland and Goldenstein 1985, p.11).
Over the years this club developed from a men’s club into a civic organization sponsored by larger agencies and in 1941 it was revived as an independent adult educational institution with ‘Fun in Learning’ as its motto (Knowles 1963).

The Lyceum Movement

A national movement which encouraged study circle type learning was the ‘Lyceum’. In October 1826, Josiah Holbrook described in the ‘American Journal of Education’ a full-scale plan for a nation-wide organization of adult education societies. These societies he called ‘Lyceums’ (Knowles 1963; Elias and Merriam 1980).

Knowles (1963, p.16) quotes Barnard’s following description of a Lyceum:

Lyceums are associations formed for the mutual benefit of their members and the common benefit of society. Their members meet on frank cordial and equal grounds... each may become in turns a learner and a teacher. All unnecessary formalities, as well as expenses, are to be avoided, that the way of learning may be rendered as free as possible.

In Barnard’s description we see key principles of the study circle; social equality, informality and the responsibility for the learning process exercised by the learners. Barnard’s description of the Lyceum, which suggests a study circle, seems to be only a partial description, as the principle of shared group responsibility for learning was not universal. There were Lyceums which had formal expert lecturers, such as Ralph Emerson (Mulhern 1960; Long 1991).

Holbrook’s vision and drive were instrumental in the establishment and growth of the Lyceums. While the innovation and organizational skills are attributed to Holbrook, it must be noted that popular
societies did exist in the 1820s. Long (1991) mentions the Methuen Society which was influenced by Timothy Claxton in 1823. This society resembled a study circle and Lyceum featuring the following activities:

1. Reading by all its members
2. Reading by one member for all
3. An original lecture
4. Discussion (Claxton 1839, p.62)

The Lyceum movement experienced dramatic growth, a growth which counterbalanced the Junto's sharp decline. Within two years there were one hundred Lyceums in local towns and several county Lyceums. By 1835 there were about 3,000 town Lyceums, over 100 county Lyceums and 15 or 16 state Lyceums. In May 1831 a national organization of the Lyceum movement was founded. An attempt was made to organize a national hierarchy of Lyceums on local, county and state levels. Poor attendance of the national organization's annual meetings led to the weakening of the organization. This was followed by the disintegration of the national Lyceums, reducing them to a scattered lecture series.

According to Gould (1961), it was the catastrophic struggle of the American Civil War which contributed to the breakdown of the Lyceum programs. The informal machinery which guaranteed lecturers, audience fees and travel arrangements broke down during the civil war, with many of the sponsoring organizations being disrupted. The Lyceums on the local level continued to operate despite the demise of the national societies. Around 1869 the local popular format of the Lyceum was changed when the function of providing lecture and other adult education services was taken over by commercial enterprises.

The Lyceums also became commercialized, providing lecturers for clubs and groups. Lyceum Bureaus were thus developed (Knowles 1963). The Lyceums continued for many decades, ending as an American social institution with the war between the states (Bode 1968).
Chautauqua

The Chautauqua Institution was founded on the shores of the Chautauqua Lake by Dr. John Vincent, secretary of the Methodist Sunday Union, and Lewis Miller, a businessman and church lay leader, in 1874 (Long 1991).

The original idea was the formation of a pan-denominational summer school for Sunday school teachers. The idea of a summer education program became so successful that Chautauqua Institution opened its ranks to the general public, broadening the curriculum to include other cultural subjects as well.

In 1878 Vincent introduced a four-year plan of guided reading which would involve private home reading and discussion in local study circles. This would enable participants to continue their studies through the year as well. The response to this initiative exceeded all expectations. In that year more than 8,400 persons joined these circles and within 10 years, enrollment climbed to 100,000 (Gould 1961). This program became known as the Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle. In its first year the C.L.S.C. included Green's 'History of the English People,' Mahaffey's 'Old Greek Life,' Brooke's 'Primer of English Literature,' two books on the Bible, one on astronomy, one on psychology, and study guides for each. Later the four year sequence consisted of an English year followed by the American, the Continental European and the classical years. These readings were divided into yearly cycles with all circles following the same readings. The circles met as democratic groups without professionally trained course leaders. They stimulated participation, encouraging participants to contribute according to their
understanding of the texts. A description of these circles is offered by Adams:

The course of reading is carried on in leisure hours by Chautauquans at home, but once a week they come together in local circles in neighborhoods and villages all over the country and, under the best local guidance they can find, devote an evening to the discussion of topics suggested by 'The Chautauquan' and other private reading (Adams 1900, p.9).

The Chautauquan referred to was a monthly magazine added in 1880 to the C.L.S.C. programs to provide inspiration, supplementary readings, discussion questions and news about local circles.

According to Gould (1961, p.9) within a short period of time nearly every community in the United States had at least one person following the C.L.S.C. Travelers reported finding train crews in western railroads who had formed a circle and "there were crossroad storekeepers who dragooned their crackerbarrel philosophers into joining C.L.S.C., giving form and purpose to the traditional desultory conversations."

The summer seminars at Chautauqua continue until the present, although the national C.L.S.C. ceased to exist in 1914. Despite the termination of the national program, local circles continue to meet on a private basis. 'The Chautauquan' was discontinued once the national program ceased to function.

Gould attributes Chautauqua's openness to other denominations to Vincent's mixed religious background. His parents were Presbyterian and Lutheran and became Methodist. His grandfather had been a friend of the Unitarian scientist Joseph Priestly. A further influence could be attributed to the Quakers. Vincent's parents were born in Pennsylvania, a Quaker stronghold, and his family moved back there from Alabama in his youth. The popular nature of Chautauqua and its religious tolerance are fundamental to the Quaker perspective, which characterized religious attitudes in Pennsylvania.
The roots of the Swedish Study Circle stem from Chautauqua. In 1893 Edvard Varvinsky from Sweden, an advocate of the temperance movement, visited Lake Chautauqua. He was impressed by the C.L.S.C. home study circles and wrote an article about them. By 1902 Oscar Olson, a leader in Sweden’s temperance movement, picked up upon the idea and organized a series of study circles within the temperance movement (Oliver 1988). Other socially conscious movements followed suit, among them the S.A.P. (The Social Democratic Party), blue-collar trade unions, consumer cooperatives and the free or non-conformist church movement for which the study circles provided an effective method for recruiting and educating their members.

In 1919 the Brevskolan was founded in order to produce educational materials for the worker study circles. Beginning with correspondence materials, Brevskolan gave study circles access for the first time to quality materials geared to their level of education and interests. By 1920 the temperance movement, the free church and the blue-collar unions had recruited over one million members. Besides serving the educational goals of the sponsoring organizations, the study circles also taught participants how to function democratically in communities and organizations and brought to the surface new leadership from among circle members. A carry over took place from the study circle sphere to the political one.

The study circles were instrumental in supplementing the education of Sweden’s undereducated adult population. The participants met in homes, churches or meeting halls usually without a trained leader. In a democratic atmosphere and with limited materials they shared ideas and experiences. Regardless of sponsorship, study circles encouraged self-directed learning and full participation (Oliver 1988).
In 1947 the Swedish government recognized and formalized the organizational structure of study circles, introducing government grants to subsidize the costs of leader salaries and materials. At the time there were ten national study circle organizations. These were officially recognized for the purposes of financial support with no new organization being added until today.

The Swedish Study Circle is to this day very much part of Swedish cultural life. Titmus (1981) estimates that over 60 percent of Sweden’s adult population participate in study circles. Titmus quotes Frenchman Bastides’ description of the centrality of the study circle in Swedish villages:

There is not a village in Sweden which does not have, every evening, at least one study circle; the members of these circles meet at home after dinner, that is to say, about 6 o’clock, ... and make their way to the town pastrycook’s: in this country of semi-prohibition the pastrycook’s takes the place of the cafe, where one may listen to an incredible quantity of lectures. One is among friends, everybody is on familiar terms with the other. There may be a retired colonel, a housewife, a scholar, an employer, a stationmaster and the lampman from the same station. People study in order not to be alone, but also in order to improve the lives of all, and to understand each other better (Titmus 1981, p.69).

The Swedish form of study circle is not limited to Sweden. It exists in all Scandinavian countries and in ‘animation socio-culturelle’ in France. However, it is associated with Sweden because of its unique domination of Sweden’s adult life (Titmus 1981).

The Great Books Project

Another study circle network which can be traced to Chautauqua is ‘The Great Books Project’. This project involves the studying of classical Western literature in study circles led by laymen participants who have attended workshops on the art of chairing a study circle using the ‘Shared Inquiry Method’ (The Great Books
Foundation 1985). According to Gould (1961) the Scientific Circle, which has been mentioned here as the forerunner of the Swedish study circle, was duplicated at the University of Chicago, along with other Chautauquan institutions, by William Harper, who left Chautauqua in 1890 in order to establish the University of Chicago. The Great Books Project which commenced 45 years later, was in principle a similar model.

Stubblefield (1988) attributes the roots of the Great Books Project to Columbia University, yet does not allude to the Chautauqua Scientific Circles which were established at Chicago. According to Stubblefield the idea of the Great Books Project should be traced to John Erskine, a professor of English at Columbia University in 1921. Erskine held that every educated person had the competence to lead discussions about great books. He subsequently divided his General Honors class into two parts, each class meeting once a week discussing one book which they had read. Erskine believed that "this store of information would be the true scholarly and cultural basis for human understanding and communication." The General Honors course was open to juniors and seniors and Mortimer Adler a member of the junior class applied and was accepted. After graduating Adler accepted a faculty appointment and became a discussion leader.

In 1929 Robert Hutchins was appointed president of Chicago University. After his inauguration, he appointed Adler as associate professor of philosophy. The following year he asked Adler to co-teach a General Honors course. This program was to be modeled on the program at Columbia (Stubblefield 1988). Shortly after Hutchins and Adler began teaching the General Honors course, university alumni in Highland Park, Illinois, asked Adler to conduct a Great Books discussion group for them. This was the first layman Great Books discussion group. Even though this group continued for 15 years, it remained an isolated endeavor, with the Great Books being introduced to the general public some 10 years later.
In 1940 Adler wrote a book called 'How to Read a Book' aimed at the average adult reader. This book was intended for adults who had not attained the art of reading and comprehension of classical books through the school system. Adler prescribed a three stage process for 'correct' reading. Adler's goal was to equip adults with a liberal education. Adler, following in the wake of Erskine, believed that the best way to achieve a liberal education was to read the Great Books. He subsequently drew up a list of 130 recommended authors which he advocated as the curriculum of adult education. By reading and comprehending these great works the adult could participate in the Great Conversation.

In 1939 the first Great Book seminars were offered to the general public by the University of Chicago. However, it was not until 1943 that the seminars began to catch on. A prominent group of 30 businessmen, bankers, lawyers and their wives were invited to a discussion group jointly chaired by Hutchins and Adler. This prominent group caught the attention of the public, generating favorable press coverage. The subsequent interest drew increased applications to Chicago University College, with the demand exceeding the capacity.

A turning point in the nature of the program came in 1944 when people with no prior teaching experience were invited to participate in a training program for discussion leaders. This successful experiment enabled the program to open its discussion leader ranks to the public at large, creating a tremendous growth in participants.

In 1947 Robert Hutchins and William Benton, with the assistance of foundations and Chicago University, organized the Great Books Foundation. The Great Books Foundation sold books, trained leaders and organized discussion groups. Within a year more than 7,000 people in Chicago had enrolled in Great Books Foundation discussion groups. The interest which was generated is indicated by the fact that less than a year later over 43,000 in 43 cities were members of Great Book
clubs (Stubblefield 1988). Until today Great Books discussion groups continue to flourish. Over 50,000 adults meet weekly to discuss the Great Books, continuing the Great Conversation.

The Liberal Arts Study Discussion Groups

In 1951 the Ford Foundation established the Fund for Adult Education for the purpose of "supporting programs of liberal arts education which will contribute to the development of mature, wise, and responsible citizens who can participate intelligently in a free society" (Fletcher 1960). It was perceived that the best framework for the attainment of these ideals would be adult discussion groups, which we have identified as study circles.

From 1951 to 1958 more than two million dollars were spent on an Experimental Discussion Project which included the developing of packaged materials in the liberal arts subjects and their utilization by discussion groups (Burch 1960). These discussion groups took place under the auspices of the continuing education divisions of various universities and community colleges. When the Fund for Adult Education ceased its funding of the program in 1958 over 15,000 participants were enrolled in Fund-sponsored liberal arts discussion groups (Fletcher 1960).

Contemporary Study Circles

Contemporary study circles include the New York Consortium of Study Circles, which is based on the Scandinavian model and was reported in 1982 (Kurland 1982) to run over 400 study circles in New York state. These study circles take place in community agencies, hospitals,
health centers, churches, libraries, businesses and homes (Brookfield 1987). Issues discussed include nuclear disarmament, social welfare policy, educational priorities and American foreign policy.

In the United Kingdom, the Department of Extramural Studies at the University of Manchester distributed packages to local discussion groups (Brookfield 1986) and the University of the Third Age runs study circles for senior citizens.

As previously emphasized there are probably many contemporary study circles whose existence has yet to be recorded. This section, in relying on the available literature, should thus be viewed as incomplete.
Chapter Three

Jewish Religious Study Circles

The Study Circle in the Context of Adult Jewish Religious Learning

The opening chapters dealt with definitions, alternative philosophies and the history of the study circle in the context of Western adult education. It is assumed that the Hadassah study group, like other non-traditional study circles, views itself not only in the context of general adult education but as a link in the chain of the Jewish tradition of learning as well. This assumption will be examined in this chapter and the next on the basis of a discussion of the study circle in the literature of traditional Jewish sources and a review of the history of study circle-like formats of adult Jewish learning.

The study circle is a modern concept and as such is not mentioned in traditional Jewish sources. Therefore, in dealing with the study circle as viewed by the sources, I shall adopt a hypothetical stance and base the discussion on the salient features of the contemporary study circle as they appear in the sources while speculating as to the possible approach of the tradition to the framework as it appears today. Similarly when dealing with the history of the study circle in Jewish learning tradition I shall relate to frameworks which resembled and incorporated features of the contemporary study circle without claiming that these are identical frameworks. Subject to these qualifications, this chapter and the next shall deal with the study circle as viewed by traditional Jewish sources as well as the history of the study circle as a framework for Jewish adult religious study. While for analytical purposes I will differentiate between the two, they are highly interrelated.
The Reciprocal Nature of Traditional Sources and the Development of Educational Frameworks

Adult Jewish learning has been a fundamental part of traditional Jewish society for at least 2000 years and is treated as a central and religious act in traditional Jewish sources. According to some of these sources the study of Torah is the central commandment. This is stated by the Mishnah (Pe’ah) which, in listing those commandments for which there is no maximum limit in time or size, cites the study of Torah as being weighted against them all. Because Jewish sources relate not only to the narrow performance of the commandments but to adjacent factors as well, there are sections which discuss not only the virtues of study but also the implementation of study in terms of, among others, the following factors:

- The age of study
- Group or individual study
- The purpose of study
- The curriculum
- Time to be devoted to study
- The role of the teacher
- The ideal class size

The sources, given their normative nature, have thus influenced Jewish pedagogy and andragogy through the ages. This influence, however, has been reciprocal. If one assumes that the sources were developed in an active Jewish environment in which learning was a norm it is reasonable to suggest that the Rabbinical Sages were affected by their educational reality and made pedagogic and andragogic suggestions based on their practical experience. These experiences were then incorporated into the sources, appearing as
normative suggestions. The sources, therefore, both reflect a reality and influence this reality, a dynamic which continues in traditional circles to this day.

As in general adult education, the study circle is utilized in adult Jewish education for the effective realization of educational goals. These goals are dictated by different educational approaches which emphasize different objectives. Therefore in discussing the suitability of the study circle as a framework according to traditional sources, an analysis of traditional approaches to adult Jewish learning is necessary.

One Traditional Jewish Approach to Adult Jewish Learning: Maimonides

Traditional Jewish sources are extensive, they spread over centuries and contain a number of conflicting views. In presenting a traditional Jewish viewpoint I have decided to focus on the views of Maimonides (1135-1204) whose legal codes, the 'Yad Hachazakah' and 'Sefer Hamitzvot,' were and continue to be the cornerstones of Jewish legal thought. These codes were formulated on the basis of discussions in the Talmud which are often scattered and which present a plurality of views. Maimonides' authoritative laws pertaining to education have provoked articles and theses (Ben Hallal 1985) researching his educational theory. This contemporary analysis, which takes place outside of a religious framework, continues this line of educational research.

Two Approaches to Adult Jewish Education

In his 'Yad Hachazakah,' Maimonides states two different imperatives regarding the study of Torah. These two imperatives differ in their target populations, their objectives, their syllabi and periods of obligation, representing two alternative approaches to adult Jewish
education. In distinguishing between the two we can, in my opinion, refer to the first as 'second chance education' and the second as 'lifelong learning.'

Second Chance Education

In the Laws of the Study of Torah, Chapter 1, Law 3, Maimonides states:

And he should hire a teacher to teach his son. And he should only teach the son of his friend without payment. A person whose father did not teach him, must teach himself when he realizes it, as it says (regarding the commandments) "And you shall teach them and beware to do them" (Deut. 11). And so one sees in every place that the study precedes the action because the study leads to action and the action does not lead to study. (My translation).

This law opens with an obligation to teach one's children. Education is clearly primarily for children, only applying to adults if they were not taught in their youth. Adult education is thus second chance education remedying the ills of the past. This perception of adult education would define the target population.

The Target Population

According to this law the target population is limited to ignorant adults. Their lack of knowledge is probably an impediment in their motivation and ability to perform and adhere to the many commandments. Hopefully once they have mastered the basic knowledge they will be noble, practicing Jews.

The Purpose of Study and the Syllabus

This imperative clearly articulates the object of study, i.e., the performance of the commandments. Given the centrality of the performance of the commandments in the Jewish religion, it is logical
that the Jewish adult be expected to study in order to ensure the proper performance. This performance centered objective would naturally determine the syllabus of study. The syllabus required would clearly be defined as the areas of Jewish Law which are applicable to one's daily life. There would be no requirement to study an aspect of Bible or Midrash or any area of Jewish learning which has no bearing upon the performance of the commandments. Furthermore emphasis would be placed on the practical, demonstrating the performance of the different rituals.

Motivation for Study

This imperative does not mention the desired motivation for study. The adult who was not educated as a youth could be legitimately motivated to learn by a number of factors. These could range from intellectual curiosity to the search for practical guidance for the performance of the commandments. Maimonides seems to suggest that even if performance was not the original intention of the learner, in the end the person will be motivated to perform the commandments since 'study leads to action.' Here there is a strong belief in the ability of study to affect action.

Allocation of Time for Study

The time to be set aside for study would depend, among other factors, on the following:

- The background of the student
- The student's intellectual ability
- The quality of teacher, if one is hired
- The amount of subject material

Once the adult has completed the core curriculum and is proficient in fulfilling the commandments, he is not obligated to learn unless he requires a refresher course.
This approach to adult education, which is aimed at a limited target populated, has a limited time-frame and a clearly defined objective, must be contrasted with a second approach which Maimonides advocates further on in the chapter.

Lifelong Learning

In the Laws of the Study of Torah, Chapter 1, Law 8, Maimonides states the following:

Every Israelite is under an obligation to study Torah (obligated to the study of Torah -- my translation), whether he is poor or rich, in sound health or ailing, in the vigor of youth or very old and feeble. Even a man so poor that he is maintained by charity or goes begging from door to door, as also a man with a wife and children to support, is under the obligation to set aside a definite period during the day and at night for the study of the Torah, as it is said, "But you shall meditate therein day and night" (Joshua 1:8) (Twersky 1972, p.64).

This imperative is far more inclusive, offering a much broader realm for adult study. It differs from the previous in its inclusiveness and in its defined periods of obligation. However, no mention is made of either the purpose of study or the syllabus.

Allocation of Time for Study

This unequivocal statement stresses study as both a daily routine and a lifelong commitment from which there is no graduation. While the notion of lifelong learning is an accepted norm among contemporary adult educators (Cross 1981), the perception of adult study as a daily routine could be considered revolutionary. Learning is perceived as a religious daily obligation which forms part of the religious routine in the same manner as the daily prayers and grace after meals. The importance of daily study is so great that it precipitated an argument in the Talmud as to whether one should
dedicate one's day entirely to study or whether one should work as well. Maimonides sides with the more lenient view warning against total immersion in Torah study.

The Target Population

While the first imperative opened with the importance of educating one's children, with adult education being viewed as a corrective act, this imperative is primarily addressed to adults. With the purpose of inclusiveness, this imperative specifically mentions all strata regardless of physical condition, financial status, age or marital situation. All males seem to be addressed with a striving towards the creation of a learning community. A missing element in this imperative is a reference to the level of knowledge among adults. Are knowledgeable adults instructed to learn with the same intensity as novices? This issue is clarified in Law 9, the law that follows:

Among the great sages of Israel, some were hewers of wood, some drawers of water, while others were blind. Nevertheless they devoted themselves daily to the study of Torah. They are included among the transmitters of tradition in the direct line from Moses (Twersky 1975, p.65).

In this passage, the great sages are singled out specifically to demonstrate that despite their expertise they committed themselves daily to the study of Torah. Thus regardless of one's level of knowledge it is incumbent upon every male adult to engage in daily Torah study.

The Purpose of Study and the Syllabus

In Law 8 the object of study is not articulated as it is in Law 3. Does this mean that the same objective, i.e., the acquisition of
practical knowledge, applies? A clue to the answer of this question may be found in the syllabus guidelines specified for the fulfillment of this precept, which are laid down in Law 11.

The time allotted to study should be divided into three parts. A third should be devoted to the Written Law, a third to the Oral Law and the last third in reflection, deducing conclusions from premises, developing implications from statements, comparing dicta, studying the hermeneutical principles by which the Torah is interpreted, till one knows the essence of these principles, and how to deduce what is permitted and what is forbidden from what one has learned traditionally. This is termed Talmud (Twersky 1972, p.65)

In the above statement, Maimonides suggests an equal division of study time between the Written Law, the Oral Law and reflection. The final goal of reflection is "till one knows the essence of these principles, and how to deduce what is permitted and what is forbidden from what one has learned traditionally." This goal seems to suggest a practical objective for study, if knowledge of the essence of the principles is in order, to deduce what is forbidden and what is permissible. An alternative reading of this law would differentiate between two different objectives:

a. Knowledge of the essence of principles: an independent objective which is only cognitive

b. Knowledge with a practical concern: how to deduce what is forbidden and what is permissible

If we accept the alternative understanding of this law we may conclude that Law 3, which has practical concerns only, and Law 8, which has theoretical as well as practical concerns, represent two different types of study. However, if we opt for the first understanding, Law 8 becomes a consolidation of Law 3. In order to perform the commandments in a perfect manner one needs to know the inside story as well as the principles which determine the
details(1). Furthermore, in order to perform the many commandments, lifelong daily reinforcement of the details of the precepts is necessary.

Motivation for Study

In his ‘Yad Hachazakah,’ Maimonides does not allude to the desired motivation for the study of Torah. However, in his introduction to the tenth chapter of Tractate Sanhedrin, he discusses in detail the importance of striving to teach students who have this desired motivation without discounting the reality in which students may need a physical reward to entice them to learn. Maimonides refers to this desired motivation towards which every student should strive as ‘learning for its own sake,’ a dictum cited in the Talmud in a discussion regarding legitimate motivations to learn (Pesachim 50a.)

The phrase ‘learning for its own sake’ neither defines who the subject is nor explains what ‘its own sake’ means, yet it is central to an understanding of the desired motivation for lifelong learning. A detailed analysis of this phrase is therefore necessary.

The Study of Torah For Its Own Sake

In the Talmud, Tractate Ta’anit, it is stated that a person who studies Torah for its own sake has taken the ‘drug of life,’ while the person who studies Torah not for its own sake has taken the -----------------------------

(1) These two understandings suggest the progressive and liberal approaches to adult education. The first approach maintains that ultimately all adult education must be problem centered (Knowles 1980) while the second suggests a cognitive ideal as proposed by proponents of the liberal arts (Hutchins 1953).
'drug of death' (Ta'anit 6a). This source is in direct contrast to a discussion in Tractate Pesachim, which states that a person should even study Torah not for its own sake since it leads to the study of Torah for its own sake (Pesachim 50a).

The Tosafot, a group of medieval traditional commentators, raise the problem of these seemingly contradictory sources and resolve the apparent contradiction by distinguishing between two different types of study 'which is not for its own sake.' The first is one which is totally forbidden while the second is one which is acceptable in non-ideal circumstances (Tosafot, Ta'anit 6a). The forbidden type of study applies to learners who are motivated by the desire to quarrel with the tradition. This type of study is thus discouraged as it delegitimizes and endangers the tradition (1). The permissible motivation, on the other hand, is learning motivated for self-gain or self-pride.

The noble motivation to learn -- 'Torah for its own sake' -- is not defined by the early Medieval commentators. According to Lamm (1989), it has been defined by the later Medieval and pre-modern commentators in three different ways: the functional, the devotional and the cognitive. Thus, according to Lamm, Torah for its own sake has three distinct definitions:

1) **The functional** - The purpose of the study of Torah is for the sake of knowing how to perform the precepts.

2) **The devotional** - The study of Torah fulfills the needs of the learner to feel close to G-d. In learning, he has a sense of spiritual upliftment. This form of learning was espoused by the founders of Hasidism.

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(1) Another definition proposed by Tosfot Shans, a medieval traditional commentator, defines the forbidden motivation as the desire to learn with the expressed desire of not performing precepts.
3) **The cognitive** - The study of Torah is performed for the sake of the knowledge itself. This position was strongly supported by Rabbi Hayyim of Velozhon, who introduced the notion of ‘Torah for the sake of Torah’.(1)

According to the first definition the desired motivation for study should be the performance of the commandments. According to this definition the purposes of lifelong education and second chance education are identical, with lifelong education being the guarantee that the adult will continue to perform the commandments. This perception of lifelong learning is congruent with that of contemporary proponents of lifelong learning who view adult learning as essential for keeping abreast of social and modern technological developments (Cross 1981).

(1) Careful reading of the different support verses quoted in Laws 1 and 8 reveal that in Law 1 the support verse mentions study while in Law 8 a more general term, ‘to meditate,’ is mentioned. Furthermore in contrast to Twersky’s translation, when referring to lifelong learning even Maimonides does not command one to study but rather relates to the obligation of study. This change in nuance, as in all legal texts, must be examined carefully. If indeed this subtle difference is significant, a difference between the two approaches could be highlighted. According to the first approach the command is to study, a strictly cognitive action. According to the second approach the command is to meditate, an action which could involve study yet which reaches far beyond the cognitive domain. This differentiation is supported by a Talmudic statement by Rav who says that one should first study and thereafter only meditate (Avoda Zara 19b). The use of the concept ‘meditate’ with its non-cognitive overtones could explain the definition which defines ‘Torah for its own sake’ in emotional terms.
If one follows the second definition, the gap between the two approaches widens. The lifelong learning approach views daily study as a religious act comparable with prayer whose cognitive outcome is of secondary importance. In learning, studying G-d’s words daily, the Jew engages in a dialogue with the Divine, resulting in a feeling of upliftment and closeness. This approach, which is uniquely religious, does not contend too much with the importance of studying for the sake of performing the precepts, designating that type of study as a second chance learning which may need occasional reinforcement.

The third definition, which stresses the cognitive, seems to reflect Maimonides’ approach (1). This approach, which proposes learning for the sake of learning without any practical considerations, would certainly differentiate between lifelong learning motivated by cognitive objectives and second chance education motivated by practical objectives. While this imperative is aimed at all strata, it would clearly appeal to a limited target population: those who enjoy intellectual stimulation. One could therefore expect that the ideal of lifelong learning would never be universal. This assumption, however, does not preclude Maimonides from striving for universal study which is facilitated by as easy access as possible to all, to the gates of learning.

At this juncture it is important to distinguish between the concept of ‘learning for its own sake’ as it is used in traditional Jewish literature and this concept as it is used in liberal education.

1) While there may be a problem in deducing Maimonides’ educational philosophy from his legal codes, his philosophical work, ‘A Guide to the Perplexed,’ is far more comprehensive. cf. Rosenak (1995) for a detailed analysis of Maimonides’ educational philosophy as portrayed in his ‘Guide.’
philosophy. R. S. Peters, in drawing the distinction between knowledge for its own sake and knowledge for practical ends, discusses the concept as follows:

...the reasons for study are immanent in the study itself as distinct from the benefits which may accrue from it. These might be stated in a mundane way by saying that a person did it out of curiosity or out of interest or in a more Platonic way by saying that a person was led by a passion for grasping principles, for finding the forms in the facts.... All such reasons for pursuing the knowledge have the common feature that they are intrinsic to the pursuit of it and hence definitive of the mind’s untravelled developments (Peters 1977, p.49).

It is evident from this comment that Peters' definition of 'learning for its own sake' excludes the motivation for praxis and therefore runs contrary to the traditional functional definition which stresses the motivation to learn for the sake of action. However at first glance, the traditional devotional category may well match Peters' definition since both definitions attach importance to the process of study rather than to the practical outcomes. This must too be rejected since this motivation, which does not place an emphasis on the cognitive aspects of knowledge, seems to exclude it from being classified as liberal education within the context of which Peters places 'learning for its own sake.'

It may be argued as well that this use of 'learning for its own sake' closely resembles the third traditional, i.e., the cognitive, category. This resemblance between Peters and R' Hayyim's cognitive category should not be accepted at face value. According to Peters' definition, a motivation for study which is driven by the desire to fulfill the precept of Torah study, which R' Hayyim's would endorse, could be viewed as an extrinsic motivation and therefore as not deserving the definition of study for its own sake. Similarly R' Hayyim may not define study which is totally motivated by passion as
being 'study for its own sake,' in contrast with Peters, because of the lack of religious motivation. This position is stressed by Lamm

'For the sake of Torah' must not be taken to include a dilettantism (or for that matter even a rigorous academic scholarship) in Torah. The transformation of the study of Torah from a religio-intellectual to a cultural exercise is sinful. A secularist, detached uncommitted study of Torah is considered by R' Hayyim a subversion of his definition of 'lishmah' and his understanding of the purpose of the study of Torah (Lamm, 1989 p.242).

Thus the traditional connotations attached to 'learning for its own sake' are all at variance with Peters' understanding of the concept and despite the use of identical terminology, the traditional concept and the liberal education concept as explicated by Peters, should be understood differently.

'Learning for its Own Sake' - Motivation or Learning Outcomes?

Up to this point in the discussion, 'learning for its own sake' has been understood as a desired motivation. It does not relate however to prescribed learning outcomes which is an important component of education philosophy. The understanding of 'learning for its own sake' as motivation is well grounded in primary texts as is evident from the following exert:

'To love the L-rd your G-d' (Deut. 11:13) - perhaps you will say 'I will study Torah so that I may be called a wise man,' 'so that I sit in the assembly of scholars,' 'or that I have length of days in the world-to-come'? Therefore, it is written (in Deut.) 'to love the L-rd your G-d': study regardless of reward and in the end honor will come by itself ... R. Eleazar ben R. Zadok says 'Do things for the sake of the deed, study them for their own sake' (Sifre Devarim ch. 48, Lamm translation 1989 pp. 190-191)

According to this text 'study which is not for its own sake' is study that which one approaches with an ulterior motive. This sage makes a clear distinction between the motivation of honor which is considered
to be negative and an outcome resulting in honor which is considered to be legitimate. Whatever the learning outcomes are, this is called 'learning which is not for its own sake' because of its negative motivation.

It is my contention that 'learning for its own sake' could be understood as prescribed learning outcomes as well. This is validated by the use of 'learning for its own sake' in the following passage:

If a man wishes to study 'lishmah' (for its own sake), what shall he intend in his heart when he studies? - "Whatever I study will practice." If one interrupts his study of Torah and engages in idle chatter, he will be fed burning coals, as it is said "Those who pluck saltwort with wormwood, the root of burning coals is their bread" (Job 30:4). But if he practices (what he studies), that is 'lishmah' (Sefer Hahassidim no. 944 p. 508, Lamm translation 1989 p. 207).

This text places its emphasis on both the learning practice and the outcomes. While initially the text links 'lishmah' - for its own sake - to motivation for practice, the text validates as well a situation in which the learner approaches the learning situation with a negative motivation yet ends the learning process with a positive act of praxis. The act is called 'lishmah' because of its positive results.

This alternative use of 'learning for its own sake' as reflecting the learning outcomes as well enables one to understand the functional, devotional and cognitive definitions of 'learning for its own sake' as not only prescribed motivations but prescribed learning outcomes as well.

Prescribed Learning Outcomes

As was described in a previous paragraph which dealt with the desired purpose of learning, Maimonides prescribes the following two learning objectives or outcomes:
a. Knowledge of the essence of principles: an independent objective which is only cognitive. This is an objective which is congruent with the cognitive definition of 'learning for its own sake'.

b. Knowledge with a practical concern: how to deduce what is forbidden and what is permissible. This is congruent with the functional definition of 'learning for its own sake'.

To the above objectives we can add a third which Maimonides does not endorse:

c. Learning which brings one to feel close to G-d, to have a religious experience. This is in congruence with the devotional category of 'learning for its own sake'.

On the basis of this discussion it is possible to determine the prescribed learning outcomes of all Torah study for adults and in particular for the study circle. Therefore in answering the research question regarding whether the study circle can be a traditional framework of study these prescribed learning outcomes will be an important measure of its applicability.

Popular Access to Study.

Contrary to Platonic thought, in which study is considered the prerogative of the selective few, according to traditional Jewish sources as reflected by Maimonides, study is encouraged for all and an obligation for all. The democratic nature of study is exemplified by the following passage:

With three crowns was Israel crowned -- with the crown of Torah, with the crown of priesthood and the crown of sovereignty. The crown of priesthood was bestowed upon Aaron... The crown of sovereignty was bestowed upon David... The crown of Torah, however, is for all Israel... Whoever desires it can win it. Do not suppose that the other two crowns are greater than the crown of Torah... the crown of Torah is greater than the other two crowns (Maimonides 3:1, Twersky 1972, p.66).
In order to ensure that even the poor have access to learning teachers are forbidden to accept payment for their services. The denial of monetary gain for teachers could lead to a dearth of voluntary teachers who would rather learn on their own or utilize their time for commercial gain. However, according to Maimonides, the highest level of learning is teaching (Ben Hallal 1985), thus all learners should be motivated to teach, enabling them to teach for selfish motives, i.e., the furtherance of their own learning.

Women and Torah Study

This section would not be complete without relating to an issue which does not directly affect the nature of the study circle but rather affects its composition. This is the obligation of women to study Torah.

The attitude to women's study is ambivalent. According to Maimonides, women are neither obligated to second chance learning (1:1) nor are they obligated to lifelong learning (1:13) however the act of study is considered to be a positive act resulting in Divine reward. This reward is not equal to that of a male, since learning for a male is considered obligatory while for a female it is optional. The ambivalence of Maimonides to women's study is further demonstrated by the following passage:

...even though she has reward (for the study of Torah), the Sages commanded that a man should not teach his daughter Torah because regarding most women their minds are not geared for study but rather they take the words of Torah out of their context because of their lack of knowledge (Maimonides 1:13).

This passage, which quotes a ruling by the Sages based on sociological and psychological assumptions, has understandably been under assault in the modern era even from traditionalists (Lichtenstein 1975). However the spirit of Maimonides ruling, which differentiates between males and females, continues to this very day
in Orthodox circles to affect the nature and quality of Torah learning offered to the different sexes in their youth. In addition, few institutions encourage advanced adult Torah study for women, leaving this domain predominantly male, especially since most advanced adult Torah study is undertaken in Orthodox circles.

Given the religious nature of Torah study, co-educational study even for adults may be frowned upon in traditional circles. In the Jewish tradition there is an approach which maintains that public acts of a holy nature should involve a separation of the sexes. Thus Orthodox congregations have separate seating for men and women divided by a partition. Therefore group learning, which is seen as an act of holiness, should, according to some traditionalists, involve the separation of the sexes.

Based on the difference in attitude towards women's study in the sources and the discouragement of co-educational study in traditional circles, one could expect in traditional circles more males participating in study than women, different study circles for men and women and different types of text study for male and female study circles.

The Study Circle as a Framework for Adult Religious Jewish Education

Having discussed two traditional approaches to adult Jewish study -- second chance learning and lifelong learning -- provides a context within which to view the study circle as a framework for adult Jewish religious study as viewed by the sources. Adoption of the study circle framework necessitates an analysis of the following three issues:

a. The absence of a teacher and self-directed learning
b. Group study
c. Peer learning and the use of the discussion method
The Absence of a Teacher and Self-directed Learning

Traditional sources attach supreme importance to the respect and reverence given the teacher. One is commanded to respect one’s teachers in the same manner that one should respect one’s parents. One’s primary teacher has an elevated status. One should stand before him (1) and furthermore mourn for him as if he were a parent. One should never teach others in front of him nor answer a question in his presence. This special relationship raises a question regarding the necessity of the teacher: does the teacher’s position as role model and expert resource make him an inherent part of the educational process, or is the role of the teacher purely functional, enabling him to be replaced if a more effective method of instruction is found?

This question should be also considered from the point of view of the society. Should students embark on a course of self-directed learning? Should students be encouraged to engage in independent, uncontrolled and unmediated text study? Is there no danger of their arriving at unorthodox conclusions as a result of their independent research and interpretation? While group study in a study circle may mellow the problem due to the ‘supervision’ of other participants, the absence of a teacher in a group situation may be even more problematic, as the group could take a self-directed anti-traditional public stance in its group interpretation of the text.

In addition to the above, having differentiated between the two traditional approaches to adult Jewish learning, is there a difference in attitude towards self-directed learning according to the two approaches?

(1) The male gender is used because traditionally teachers are males.
In reviewing the traditional sources, the focus once again will be on the legal rulings of Maimonides, for reasons of consistency.

In the Laws of the Study of Torah (1:1), Maimonides states as follows:

...but a minor, his father is obligated to teach him Torah as it says (Deuteronomy 11:19) 'You shall teach them your children that they should be conversant.'

According to this imperative the onus of educating children is on the father. This onus, which prescribes a teacher-student relationship between parent and child, should not be viewed merely as a functional responsibility but as an essential part of the family fabric. This relationship has important ramifications both for the nature and quality of the pedagogy. Since children (and adults) learn through imitation and role modelling, the instruction goes beyond the realm of the formal lesson, taking place around the dinner table and in the course of all family interaction.

Maimonides, knowing the reality of the ability of parents to give children formal instruction proceeds in Law 3 as follows:

And he is obligated to hire a teacher to teach his son

A teacher is hired in 'locus parentis' with the parent delegating his responsibilities to the teacher. We can therefore understand the parent-like reverence which a student should have for his/her teacher. Since the teacher is an agent and fulfilling an important parental role, one can expect and demand from the student a parent-like reverence for the teacher.

This, of course, is all true in the formative years when the child is part of his parental family. When the adult embarks on a path of
learning without the immediate dependent relationship with his parents or in a situation in which they are no longer living, is he obligated to engage a teacher 'locus parentis' if he was not taught in his youth by his parents? Maimonides, in the same law, deals with this issue:

A person whose father did not teach him is obligated to teach himself that he should know as it says (Deuteronomy 5:1) 'and you shall teach them and be careful to observe them.'

Categorically, Maimonides states that the adult should teach himself; he is not required to hire a teacher even in a situation of second chance education in which the obligation to hire a teacher could be expected. From this ruling we see that Maimonides encourages self-directed learning for the adult even in second chance education. The encouragement to adopt self-directed learning is also evident in the previously quoted section relating to life-long learning in which Maimonides specifically mentions that the person should delve in Torah study. This action does not require a teacher and no mention is made of a teacher in that section at all.

Maimonides' differentiation between pedagogy, which requires a teacher, i.e., the father should teach his son, and andragogy is reminiscent of Knowles' (1980) dichotomy between pedagogy and andragogy. According to Knowles one of the characteristics of pedagogy is a dependent student-teacher relationship while a characteristic of andragogy is a self-directed peer learning relationship.

In light of Maimonides' preference for adult self-directed learning we could expect him to encourage the study circle as a framework for adult Jewish religious education.
Group study

There are contradicting sources regarding the utility of individual study (Berachot 63b; Avot 3:6). However, there is universal recognition of the value of group study. Endorsement of group learning is mentioned specifically in at least two places in the Talmud. In the Talmud (Berachot 63b) it is stated:

Form yourselves into bands for the study of Torah, for the Torah is acquired only in groups

And in Mishnah Avot (3:6) it is written:

Rabbi Halifta, a resident of the town of Hananiah, used to say: Ten who sit and delve in Torah, the Divine Presence is amongst them as it says (Psalms 82) "G-d places himself in a divine community." (Since the Rabbis understand a community to consist of no less than ten, the community mentioned in the Psalms consists of no less than ten who are physically together in one place).

The first quote relates to the functional importance of group study, while the second quote relates to an essential difference in group study. According to the first statement, group study is more effective because, in the act of interchange there is peer learning with students drawing upon each others' resources and experiences. Furthermore, in having to verbalize one's thoughts one is challenged, forcing one to modify one's position. In private study there is no interaction, no peer learning and no modification of premises.

According to the second quote, group study becomes changed in essence, with the Divine Presence participating in the discussion. Given the importance of revelation in Judaism, His presence and participation elevates the discussion from a rudimentary discussion on legal issues to a holy discussion giving this discourse a dimension which would not exist in private individual study.
Peer Learning, the Use of the Discussion Method and the Democratic Process

According to Talmudic sources there is a distinct advantage to using peer learning and the discussion method. The preference for the discussion method could be attributed to the heightened understanding of the text which a critical discussion affords. The traditional sources mention the following two positive factors which emanate from the discussion method:

a. Interaction with another is vital for the understanding and retention of the text. This is expressed in the words of the Talmud; "Just as fire cannot ignite itself so Torah cannot endure with him who studies alone" (Ta'anit 7a). The contribution of a compatriot stimulates one's learning and if one engages in mutual reflection retention is enhanced.

b. Interaction leads to a sharpening of the intellect. This happens both in situations when the participants are of equal stature as well as when a group consists of different levels. When the participants are of equal stature, according to an opinion in the Talmud:

Just as one piece of iron sharpens another; so do two students of Torah stimulate each other in the study of Torah (Ta'anit 7a).

Mutual critical analysis enhances intellectual growth and study. In a group in which there are different levels, those of a lower level benefit from the insights of the more advanced participants, while those on a more senior level benefit from the critical questioning of their junior compatriots. The Talmud, using the metaphor of fire once again, states:

Just as a small piece of wood kindles a large piece, so do lesser scholars by their inquiries sharpen the scholarship of the greater scholars. (Ta'anit 7a)
In order for mutual critical learning to take place there has to prevail a spirit of democracy. If there is seniority or an authority whose opinion prevails the other participants in the group may feel intimidated rather adopt a critical stance. This aspect is but one of the differences between the traditional study circle framework and the general study circle. In the general study circle democracy is both an important process and an educational goal; in the traditional study circle its importance is for the process rather than for the goal.

According to Maimonides, we see that for both second chance learning and lifelong learning the study circle is a desired framework. Historically, however the study circle in adult religious Jewish education has played a secondary role to the classic authoritative teacher-student framework. In the wake of Maimonides, the participants of non-traditional Jewish study circles may indeed see themselves as adopting a traditional format of study whether their quest is second chance learning or lifelong learning or both. Historically, as well, they are following in the footsteps of learning frameworks which adopted similar learning strategies, as will be demonstrated in the following chapter.

The 'Traditional' Jewish Religious Study Circle: a Definition

In the introduction to this thesis I formulated an operational definition of the Jewish religious study circle as being:

A study circle whose participants are Jewish and who study texts which they and the tradition define as Jewish - religious texts.
This definition is descriptive and does not specify desirable educational outcomes. However in the first chapter I claimed that the different definitions of the general study circles are not only descriptive but prescriptive as well reflecting contrasting educational philosophies, educating towards different educational objectives. On this basis I would like to suggest an additional prescriptive component to the definition. This addition will relate to prescribed educational objectives emerging from a traditional perspective and will enable me to differentiate between a 'traditional' Jewish religious study circle and other Jewish religious study circles.

In order to introduce the issue of prescribed objectives, a clarification must be made regarding the concept 'learning for its own sake,' which I believe to be a key concept in determining learning objectives.

'Learning for its Own Sake' - Motivation or Learning Outcomes?

Up to this point in the discussion, 'learning for its own sake' has been understood as a desired motivation. It does not relate, however, to prescribed learning outcomes, which are an important component of education philosophy. The understanding of 'learning for its own sake' as motivation is well-grounded in primary texts as is evident from the following excerpt:

'To love the L-rd your G-d' (Deut. 11:13) - perhaps you will say 'I will study Torah so that I may be called a wise man,' 'so that I sit in the assembly of scholars,' 'or that I have length of days in the world-to-come'? Therefore, it is written (in Deut.) 'to love the L-rd your G-d': study regardless of reward
and in the end honor will come by itself.... R. Eleazar ben R. Zadok says 'Do things for the sake of the deed, study them for their own sake' (Sifre Devarim ch. 48, Lamm translation 1989, pp.190-191).

According to this text, 'study which is not for its own sake' is study which one approaches with an ulterior motive. This sage makes a clear distinction between the motivation of honor, which is considered to be negative, and an outcome resulting in honor, which is considered to be legitimate. Whatever the learning outcomes are, this is called 'learning which is not for its own sake' because of its negative motivation.

It is my contention that 'learning for its own sake' could be understood as prescribed learning outcomes as well. This is validated by the use of 'learning for its own sake' in the following passage:

If a man wishes to study 'lishmah,' what shall he intend in his heart when he studies? -- "Whatever I study I will practice." If one interrupts his study of Torah and engages in idle chatter, he will be fed burning coals, as it is said "Those who pluck saltwort with wormwood, the root of burning coals is their bread" (Job 30:4). But if he practices (what he studies), that is 'lishmah' (Sefer Hasaidim no.944, p.508, Lamm translation 1989, p.207).

This text places its emphasis on both the learning practice and the outcomes. While initially the text links 'lishmah' to motivation for practice, the text also validates a situation in which the learner approaches the learning situation with a negative motivation yet ends the learning process with a positive act of praxis. The act is called 'lishmah' because of its positive results.

This alternative use of 'learning for its own sake' as also reflecting learning outcomes enables one to understand the functional, devotional and cognitive definitions of 'learning for its
'own sake' as not only prescribed motivations but prescribed learning outcomes as well. It is in lieu of this understanding of 'learning for its own sake' that prescribed learning outcomes may be determined.

**Prescribed Learning Outcomes**

As was described in a previous paragraph which dealt with the desired purpose of learning, Maimonides prescribes the following two learning objectives or outcomes:

a. Knowledge of the essence of principles: an independent objective which is only cognitive. This objective is congruent with the cognitive definition of 'learning for its own sake.'

b. Knowledge with a practical concern: how to deduce what is forbidden and what is permissible. This is congruent with the functional definition of 'learning for its own sake' and includes second chance learning.

To the above objectives can be added a third, which Maimonides does not endorse:

c. Learning which brings one to feel close to G-d, to have a religious experience. This is in congruence with the devotional category of 'learning for its own sake.'

While it is possible to develop three different definitions of the traditional study circle based on these alternative learning
objectives, a comprehensive definition will be offered. Thus a 'traditional' Jewish religious study circle may be defined as:

A Jewish religious study circle which precipitates knowledge of the principles of Judaism and/or knowledge which leads to the performance of the precepts and/or a feeling of closeness to G-d and spiritual upliftment.
As mentioned in the previous chapter, the study circle framework which advocates democracy and legitimizes critical thought may be a contemporary development for religious Jewish adult education. However, it may be traced back to the peer learning groups who studied religious Jewish texts dating to 100 B.C.E. (1) and who interacted in a critical manner. For the purpose of the analysis these learning groups will be referred to as 'study circles' and it is their history which will be discussed.

The Sanhedrin

The origins of the text study circle can be traced to the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem which functioned from 200 B.C.E. until after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 C.E. The Sanhedrin was a political and legal group of scholars who, in addition to their legal discussions, held study sessions as well. These study sessions were both in the form of formal lessons for the general public and study circles for the members of the Sanhedrin (Mantel 1961).

In addition to the Sanhedrin, the study circle framework could be found at the Academies which existed during this period both in Babylonia and in Israel. About 100 years after the destruction of the Temple (70 C.E.), Academies flourished in Babylonia: Sura, Nehardia, Pumbedita and Mechoza developed as centers of Jewish learning, nurturing scholars of Torah. At these centers different study methods

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1. Traditional Jewish writings substitute 'B.C.E.' - before the common era - for 'B.C.' and 'C.E.' for 'A.D.' This tradition will be adopted in this thesis.
were used. One of these methods was the study circle as a framework in which scholars would discuss the text, analyze it and debate its meaning (Alon 1953). These discussions were recorded in the Talmud and are studied to this day.

An important aspect of this study circle is that it was found in a setting of advanced Jewish adult learning. In this setting the study circle may be but one of a number of frameworks in which the student may participate, the others being private individual study, paired study or lectures. Participants were usually advanced students capable of independent study, having spent many years studying in other formats. One could surmise that since this framework was for advanced students only, this study circle would have exclusive membership requiring entrance qualifications.

The Ancient Havurot

A different type of study circle developed around 160 B.C.E. (Neusner 1975). During this period, Pharisees established communities called ‘Havurot’ or fellowships. The Hebrew word ‘Havurot’ is derived from the root ‘Haver,’ meaning comrade or friend. The use of this word indicates the egalitarian relationship which prevailed between the members of the Havurot. This word became the basis of subsequent fellowship and study circles through the ages.

The Havurot took upon themselves stringencies which were not practiced by the common Jew. These stringencies were primarily in two domains:

a. A special emphasis on tithing
b. Ritual purity when partaking of foods.

Membership in these fellowships was voluntary and could be exercised by all who took care to adhere to the fellowships' principles. The
democratic nature of the fellowships enabled both priests and non-priests to enroll and thus some families were split between those who accepted the stringencies and between those who were more lenient. The literature is neither clear regarding the importance of group study amongst the Havurot nor does it specify the prescribed manner of study, however it is apparent that the members of the Havurot were perceived to be learned, distinguishing them from the ignorant. Given their community structure one could suppose that when studying they functioned as a study circle.

The Kallah

From the third to 11th centuries in Babylonia there flourished an almost unprecedented institution for the widespread dissemination of Jewish learning among adults. This institution was know as the Kallah (Goldman 1975). The Kallah was an organization of extra-mural centers for Jewish learning which took place outside of the constituencies of the Academies. Each Kallah was formed by a minimum of ten participants; the different Kallahs were divided into more advanced and less advanced groups. In a format which would later be replicated, unintentionally, at Chautauqua, students would meet for a month semi-annually at the central Academies for seminars with the great scholars of the time. It has been recorded that in the days of Rav, during the first half of the third century, no less than 12,000 students came daily from morning to evening to his Academy during the months in which the Kallahs met centrally.

The Kallah groups did not have erudite scholars in their communities to lead the study sessions. Therefore the onus fell on the participants of the group, forming the basis of a study circle. It is evident that this peer learning did not commence out of choice but rather as a necessity due to the dearth of advanced scholars in the community areas which were distant from the Academies.
The Holy Brotherhoods

A study circle which resembled the Havurot were the holy brotherhoods which existed in Spain during the 13th, 14th and 15th centuries (Goldman 1975). These holy brotherhoods were similar to the Christian guilds which were formed in Spanish society and were both of a religious and commercial nature. The Jewish holy brotherhoods were formed in order to safeguard the community economically and worked towards this goal. These holy brotherhoods, many of which were formed according to profession, established their own small synagogues for communal prayer. Among these brotherhoods were those who obligated their members to devote themselves to communal learning as well. This learning was deemed to be important for the spiritual well-being of the community.

The Hevrot

After the Talmudic period, the public study of religious texts was neglected until the advent of 'Hevrot' (study guilds) in the 16th century. Shochet (1956) traces the origin of these guilds to the 15th century study groups which gathered daily in Jerusalem in synagogues and study halls. While the first accounts of these study groups suggest the classical centralist teacher mode, there are accounts from the 16th century which suggest a rotating system of presentation of the text (Shochet 1956).

One of the earliest recorded Hevrot is the Kabbalist (Jewish mystic) Hevrah founded in Safed in the 16th century. These followers of R’ Isaac Luria banded together for prayer, meditation and learning (Shochet 1956). The Hevrot which were later established in Central and Eastern Europe were developed for a number of different purposes (Levitats 1943). Some guilds were founded for communal purposes, such
as visiting the sick or burial of the dead, while others were organized on a commercial basis around trades, i.e. cobblers or butchers. Among the communal Hevrot, guilds for the purpose of study were established. These study Hevrot were usually organized according to subject matter, e.g., Mishnah, Talmud and Psalms.

The study Hevrot often took the format of classical teacher-centralized lessons (Goldman 1975). However, there are recorded a number of accounts where these Hevrot took the form of study circles. Testimony to this is the description of the Talmud Society of Helishau, Moravia (1759), which appears in the minute books of the society.

The place of the meeting shall be at the home of the ‘gabbai’ (a group chairman). Each year a new ‘gabbai’ shall be elected by lot. This first year the sessions shall be at the home of David Segal. Each day another member shall recite the page. For this reason we have ordained that each member shall prepare the lesson daily most carefully with all its commentaries so that if he should be chosen by lot to lead in study that day he should not fall short in the requirements (Goldman 1975, p.240).

An analysis of the minute books of the different study guilds which Goldman (1975) describes reveals that the study circle format was only prevalent among the Talmud guilds. Since the study of Talmud requires an element of expertise the study circle was used only among the learned echelons. Furthermore, for the study circle method to be used in the study of Talmud, participants would have to be deft at preparing the lesson, an expertise which requires several years of disciplined textual analysis and training. One must be aware that these participants did not attend full-time academies but rather devoted their spare time in the evenings or the early mornings to study.

While this study circle was an independent learning unit which met for the prime purpose of study, the frequency of the daily learning sessions continued over a long period of time, giving the learning experience an intensity which probably provided a catalyst for
community formation and community building. Following this tradition, the Hevrot continue today in many communities. They meet regularly in synagogues and study halls often on a daily basis. While their rigid written constitutions may be something of the past, they have unwritten constitutions which continue to foster community responsibility among the participants (Heilman 1983).

The Haburah

A contemporary text study circle which is mentioned in the literature is the 'Haburah.' The Haburah is study circle framework which is usually constituted by the senior students at a Yeshivah (a junior academy) or a Kollel (senior academy usually for married students).

Helmreich defines a Haburah as follows:

This is a cluster or group of students (usually six to 12 individuals), on the advanced level who form seminars and meet weekly. At these seminars, students present an oral discussion based on a portion of the Talmud. Members of the Haburah critically evaluate the thesis challenging the presenter to defend his ideas (Helmreich 1982, p.113).

A similar description is offered by Bomzer:

Unique within the Haburah is that each member presents an original piece of research or leads group discussions on a rotating basis. This is known as "saying the Haburah." Each member is free to evaluate the thesis being presented, and the discussion is both erudite and lively (Bomzer 1985, p.21).

At the Yeshivah and Kollel, study is intensive, occupying most of the day and sometimes night as well. This daily study takes place privately, in pairs and in formal lessons in addition to the Haburah. The Haburah is therefore neither an independent framework nor does it represent the totality of the learning and social experience of the participants.
The History of the Haburot

While the literature does refer to the existence of the Haburot, little is known regarding its evolution. Since the Haburah is an important contemporary Kollel study format, one could trace its roots to the establishment of the first Kollel in Kovno in 1880 (Shtampfer 1981). The study frameworks used at Kovno are unknown and therefore this association is mere conjecture. There is, however, evidence of the Haburah framework in Lithuania during this period. Katz (1963) describes a Haburah type of learning at the Volozhin Yeshivah in the 1880s. Students used to organize communal means and invite their colleagues for lessons. This was done on an alternating basis, allowing different students to make presentations.

Contemporary Chavurot

All the frameworks which have been discussed up to this point have been traditional frameworks of religious learning. Perhaps the most researched non-traditional framework which exists is the 'Chavurah' (Reisman 1977; Bubis 1983) whose name comes from the same root as 'Hevrah' and 'Haburah'.

This study circle, which has become part of American Jewish religious community life, began in the 1960s when a number of members of the Reconstructionist denomination of Judaism established a Chavurah (Reisman 1977). The initial Chavurot consisted of prayer groups who met for study as well. There were two major developments of the Chavurah, the first was the formation of Chavurat Shalom in Boston in 1968 and the second was the establishment of Chavurot at the Valley Beth Shalom Congregation in Encino, California, by Conservative Rabbi Harold Schulweis in 1974 (Reisman 1977).
A contemporary Jewish scholar who influenced the Chavurah movement is Neusner. According to Neusner (1972), the Chavurah should be a community whose basis is fellowship. A focus of this community should be communal study which would function as a study circle. Neusner proposed that in this ‘study circle’ the study of text and its analysis could be secondary to the discussion which a text could precipitate. Indeed, Bubis (1981) shows that many Chavurot adopted this method of text study, in many instances as a result of the participants being unable to undertake serious text study due to their weak background in religious textual analysis.

The Chavurot thrived in the late 1970s and in the 1980s, with many continuing until today. There is a national Chavurah organization which disseminates study material for the different Chavurot and makes suggestions for curricula.

In this chapter we have not covered the many types of adult Jewish religious study circles which have yet to be documented. As in the case of general study circles, many groups meet in private homes both within and outside of institutional frameworks. In Jerusalem in the past few years there has been a growth of women study circles who pride themselves in serious text study. They meet to discuss the weekly portion, to study the Talmud and other Jewish classical sources of interest. One of these circles is the Hadassah Study Group which is the focus of this research.
Chapter Five

The Hadassah Israel Study Group

My case study focused on the Hadassah Israel Study Groups. These study groups form part of the activities of the Jerusalem Chapter of the Israel Hadassah Organization. (In this organization they are referred to as 'study groups' and therefore when referring to the study circles in this context we will refer to them using their organizational name). Israel Hadassah is a branch organization of Hadassah, the Women’s Zionist Organization of America, an organization which has educational, ideological and philanthropic goals. As part of their educational goals, most chapters have a study group which meets on a monthly basis. In order to understand the educational ethos of these study groups, a brief history of these groups and the parent organization is necessary.

The History of the Hadassah Organization.

As yet no official history of the Hadassah Organization has been published. However, a number of articles have been written by founder members of Hadassah relating to their personal involvement in its founding. These testimonies will be used as a basis for sketching the history of Hadassah.

According to Lotta Levensohn who gave an interview to a local Jewish newspaper in 1967, the Hadassah Study Group was founded in New York in 1907 and preceded the founding of its parent organization, Hadassah Women’s Organization. The prime initiators of this venture were Dr. Judah Magnes, then honorary secretary of the Association of American Zionists, and Lotta Levensohn. According to Levensohn, after mutual deliberation they drew up "a program of study for small groups of women which included reading and discussion of the Zionist classics; Zionist aspirations and activities in Palestine; and
keeping up to date with the Jewish world in general. They hoped that a successful study group (as it later became known), would lead to the establishment of a comprehensive Zionist women’s organization. Magnes and Levensohn then invited a group of 20-25 young women to a meeting called in order to inaugurate the study group. The renowned Zionist leader Henrietta Szold was asked to participate as well. The study group commenced as planned, adopting a Biblical name from the Book of Esther, ‘Hadassah,’ which was Esther’s Hebrew name.

As envisaged, the study group became the nucleus for the establishment of an American Women’s Zionist Organization which was founded in 1912 with the twin purposes of Zionist education in America and a specific health project in Palestine. The organization, initially called Daughters of Zion, later became known as Hadassah adopting the name of the study group.

The initial Hadassah Study Group was not a unique phenomenon among Jewish women. In 1937, in a local interview, Doniger was asked about the history of Hadassah and she testified to the existence of another study circle in 1912, which, similar to Hadassah, consisted of young women dedicated to the study of Judaism and the propagation of Zionism. This group, which was guided by Jessie Sampter met every Saturday afternoon to discuss and learn about Jewish attitudes to those issues which confronted Jewish women and the Jewish people. Later this group’s participants joined the Hadassah Study Group and became active Zionist leaders.

Initially the study groups seemed to be referred to as ‘study circles.’ In 1917 an article about Hadassah which appeared in a local newspaper reported that "study circles, sewing circles and singing circles were formed within the chapters." The use of the term study circles, as well as its formation a mere 30 years after the advent of the Chautauqua Scientific Circles, seems to suggest that the Hadassah
Study Groups might have been influenced by Chautauqua. Why and when the concept 'study circle' was discontinued and replaced by the name 'study group' is not known.

The Hadassah Women’s Organization has evolved into a nationwide network with thousands of Jewish female members in the United States. While there are traditional members of Hadassah, most of its members are not traditional, since more observant Zionists belonging to rival traditional women’s Zionist organizations. In 1985 the Hadassah convention drew up a mission statement which outlined Hadassah’s raison d’etre as follows:

Hadassah offers each member, within her own time-frame, an opportunity to realize fully her potential as a powerful and positive force within the Jewish community and in the United States through:
1). Fostering a broad innovative program that strengthens the personal commitment of our members to the ideals and values of Zionism and Judaism.
2). Sustaining and developing the medical, educational and youth institutions and land reclamation programs and services consistent with Israel’s evolving needs.
3). Providing our youth with a strong sense of Jewish identity and Zionist commitment through Young Judea, the American Zionist youth movement sponsored by Hadassah, thereby creating a cadre of future leaders for the Jewish world.
4). Encouraging informed and active participation in the American democratic process (Introduction to the official Hadassah manual; no date of publication).

In order to achieve these educational, ideological and philanthropic goals the organization is divided into over 1,000 chapters around North America which meet at least once a month. Usually the educational and philanthropic agendas are kept apart, with soliciting and fundraising being organized independently by different committees. The educational aspects are the responsibility of the chapter’s education committee which organizes the study of the Hebrew language, monthly education days consisting of an invited speaker or forum of speakers, a local library, communal Sabbath meals and a monthly study group.
Hadassah Israel

As mentioned American Hadassah was established primarily for ideological reasons, however the Israel movement was established for more mundane reasons. In 1984 American Jewish immigrants to Israel who were active Hadassah members in their former country established an Israel Hadassah in nostalgia for their organization back ‘home.’ While this position has never been formally articulated by Hadassah Israel, a close analysis of the American Hadassah mission statement reveals that it is almost irrelevant in the Israeli context and that the Israeli counterpart would require a different ideological charter if it intended to entrench itself as an ideological women’s organization in Israel. The adaptation of these goals to the Israeli setting is problematic for the following reasons:

The first goal, which refers to Zionist and Jewish commitment, was written with the goal of offsetting the threat of assimilation in America and increasing the commitment of Jewish women to Israel. Obviously among women who have made the supreme commitment to the Zionist ideal, i.e., immigration to Israel, this goal is anachronistic.

The second goal, which refers to fundraising for Israeli organizations, is far more appealing in the Diaspora than it is in Israel. Israel’s socialist economy which finances educational and medical institutions from the taxpayer’s pocket does not promote philanthropy as a norm, since the citizen feels that it is the government’s responsibility to guarantee these services.

The third goal, which refers to the promotion of Zionist youth groups, would require the establishment of a Hadassah type of youth movement in Israel and the fourth goal, which refers to the active participation in the American process, is not even translatable in the Israeli context. This goal was probably articulated to ensure
that Zionist and Jewish commitment would not conflict with one's commitment to the United States, a problem of dual loyalty which does not exist in the Jewish State.

In addition to its ideological void, Hadassah Israel faces the problem of a cultural difference between the United States and Israel in regard to women's volunteer organizations. In the United States, until the recent recession, Hadassah had been able to recruit many members from among housewives who did not seek employment and were willing to commit their time for volunteer work. Thus, traditionally many activities take place in the mornings. In Israel the economic realities force many women to enter the labor market following or during their child rearing years. Thus women's morning voluntary organizations are not as widespread.

Hadassah Israel has opened about 20 chapters around the country. However, given the cultural gap and lack of ideological basis, Hadassah's growth in Israel has been limited to Western immigrants who see Hadassah as a 'landsmanschaft' in which old cultural norms are perpetuated. Most chapters, therefore, conduct their business in the mornings in English and for many new participants it is an opportunity to feel 'at home' in a foreign environment.

The Hadassah Israel Study Groups

The first study group in Israel was established in Jerusalem in 1988, three years prior to the commencement of this research. American immigrants, active in Hadassah Israel and who had participated in Hadassah study group sessions in the United States, longed for a similar forum in Israel and the local Hadassah chairperson set about recruiting a lay person to launch the study group. A retired American
professor of education, B., was recruited to found an education department and to organize monthly study groups. In her words, this is how the study group started:

Many of the people in the Central Jerusalem group were study group participants in the States. When I came into the job, the group, this group had already been formed because when K. left the presidency -- she was president of Hadassah Jerusalem -- when she left the presidency she said that some friends approached her and said one of the things they missed -- they love having Hadassah in Israel, it’s relatively new, seven or eight years at the most, and they liked it -- but they missed the study groups from the States, so that was in K.’s mind and she approached a few people, and they had set up the first meeting before. I came to the first meeting as an observer and I took the group over as coordinator from there on and kept it, and moved it along.

Approaching past and current Hadassah members, B. established four study groups in Jerusalem in three years. These were understandably founded in suburbs of large Western immigration and drew women who were 55 years and older. These study groups lured a number of women from non-American English speaking countries who were attracted to the idea of learning in the study group. In this manner the relationship between the study group in Jerusalem and the parent Hadassah organization resembles the relationship between the early study groups in the United States and the organization, when the study groups provided a pool from which the organization could build itself. These four study groups are the focus of this research.

How the Study Group is Organized

Similar to its American Hadassah counterpart the Israel study groups take place once a month in private homes hosted on a rotating basis. Presentations are made by the participant members who present topics of a traditional Jewish nature. In this section I will describe the roles of the study group functionaries, followed by the study group framework. Finally I will relate to the syllabus and the available resources.
As a constituent of the national Israel organization, executive responsibility for the study groups lies with the Hadassah Israel president. As with all macro issues regarding the study groups, this research could not have been undertaken without her support. As part of her board she has a national coordinator who is directly responsible for education in the chapters, including the study groups. In the United States there is both a professional and lay director. However, in Israel this position is combined into a single lay position.

The national coordinator

The national coordinator is responsible for the establishment of new study groups and for the smooth maintenance of the established groups. She ensures that local study group coordinators have sufficient resources for curriculum material and plays an instrumental part in the deliberations of the different groups regarding the proposed syllabus.

The study group coordinator

The local study group coordinator plays the principal role in the functioning of the study group. She is responsible for the following:

a. Membership of the study group. She enrolls new members and follows up on members who cease participation.

b. Syllabus. She forges a consensus among the participants regarding the subject to be studied and suggests suitable study materials.
c. The sessions. She appoints a participant to prepare the following presentation and finds a host for each session. Either the coordinator or a secretary notifies study group members of forthcoming sessions.

d. Responsibility to the mother organization. This entails maintaining a connection with Hadassah on both educational and organizational matters. She reports regularly to the chapter chairperson and is expected to ensure that all participants are notified about and encouraged to participate in the organization's activities.

According to her 'job description' the coordinator as the first of all equals could have a pivotal role in the functioning of the study group. Different styles of coordination will be discussed in the course of this research.

The host

The hosting of the group rotates every meeting. The role of the host is important for the attraction and retention of the participants, which according to Knowles (1980), are the factors which ensure the successful functioning of every adult education enterprise.

The host plays an important role in recruitment of the participants as she feels personally responsible for the success of the session taking place in her home. This success, which includes the participation of as many learners as possible, motivates her to invite her friends personally, even if they have had no previous connections with the study group.
In the climate setting, which is important for the successful retention of the learner (Knowles 1980), the host plays a crucial part. The host sets up the room, arranging the setting for maximum intimacy. She is also responsible for the tea and cake and personally receives the participants as they enter.

The presenter

The presenter is usually a participant of the study group. Occasionally an outside expert or a member of a sister study group is invited to make a presentation. The presenter is usually appointed the previous month by the coordinator to make a single presentation. Although the study group studies along a theme, a presenter rarely makes two successive presentations.

The Study Group Framework

Having described the roles of the study group functionaries, it is now possible to outline the study group framework.

Recruitment and membership

The universe from which the Hadassah Study Group recruits its members comprises female English speaking immigrants. While former members of American Hadassah are natural potential members, an attempt is made to recruit those Americans who have had no previous connection with Hadassah as well as immigrants who come from other English speaking countries where Hadassah does not exist.
Recruitment for the study group takes place through a number of channels. A natural source for members is the local Hadassah chapter. Social friends are also invited to participate. The most active in the recruitment is the coordinator, who is responsible for notifying members and possible interested parties about the forthcoming session. This notification is done by means of a standard postcard which appears as follows:

![Postcard Image]

This card refers to the date, time, and place of the forthcoming study session. In this standard wording there is no mention of either the topic or the presenter. The omission of this important information, which is a focal point of most adult education advertisements, suggests an assumption by Hadassah that the study group has the ability to attract committed participants irrespective
of the presenter and the topic. Despite this official omission, most coordinators add both the names of the presenters and the topics on their own initiative, realizing the importance of this information.

Recruitment for individual sessions is also carried out by the presenter and host. The presenter would like there to be a large turn-out for her presentation as would the host, who would like to host as large a group as possible.

The Study Group Session

The study group session consists of both an informal and formal sections. The informal section is an unstructured tea while the formal section consists of announcements, the presentation and discussion.

a. The tea

An important social aspect of the study group session is the tea. In most groups tea and cake are served immediately upon arrival, prior to the session, while in some groups they are served after the session. A half an hour is usually allocated to the tea, which is accompanied by 'small' social conversation.

b. The announcements

The formal proceedings commence in the host’s living room. The local coordinator opens the session with formal Hadassah announcements. She then attends to study group matters which include the topic, presenter and host of the forthcoming session. She then introduces the presenter and the topic.
c. The presentation and discussion

The presentation and discussion take place in one of two modes. In the first the presentation is a 25-minute monologue given by the presenter and followed by the discussion. In this mode the presenter usually reads from prepared notes and then opens the presentation for discussion. In the second mode the presenter makes a short introduction and then leads a discussion which she may interrupt in order to add important information.

Resources

In the United States there is a national education department with a professional director who edits and distributes source materials for the study groups. The source materials consist of booklets which deal with topics such as Jewish Ethics and a precis of books of the Bible. A monthly bulletin called 'Textures' is distributed among the coordinators, containing articles which could be discussed. A recent addition to the materials is a source book, 'Jewish Marital Status,' which collates articles on the topic of Jewish marriage for discussion among the study groups.

The Syllabus and Resources

The syllabus of the Hadassah group is determined by the individual groups. At the beginning of each year each group is addressed by the national coordinator who discusses with the group the different options. In order to assist the groups the Hadassah office in the United States has a professional director of education who produces
material for the study groups. These materials are offered in the form of booklets and cover the following subjects:

- Bible
- Hebrew
- The Jewish Calendar
- Zionism
- Texts and Issues in Jewish Studies
- Literature
- Jewish Ethics
- Israel

In addition to these booklets the Hadassah department of education in the United States publishes a monthly bulletin called 'Textures'. This bulletin is distributed among the coordinators of the study groups and contains articles which are suitable for discussion in the study groups. A recent addition to the materials is a source book, 'Jewish Marital Status,' which collates articles on the topic of Jewish marriage.

Most of these materials are more suited to the American milieu, forcing the Israeli study groups to do a significant amount of independent research. In my observations I discovered that the lack of suitable materials proved to be a major obstacle, discouraging many women from volunteering to make presentations.
SECTION TWO

METHODOLOGY

This section will have a dual focus: a description of the inquiry paradigm and a survey of the research procedure. The motivation for describing the research paradigm is the existence of different approaches in qualitative inquiry and the need to specify the approach which has been adopted. An analysis of the research procedure is important in order to give researchers an opportunity to determine the reliability of the research and its validity (McMillan and Schumacher 1989).

The description of the research procedure will deal with 'content analysis,' 'participant observation' and 'interviewing' -- the key research tools used in the research procedure.
Chapter 6

Qualitative Inquiry

A Choice of Methodological Inquiry

The methodology used in a case study can be both qualitative and quantitative (Stake 1994; Yin 1992). The decision to opt for a particular methodology emerged after examining the purpose of the research as indicated by the research question:

What happens in the Hadassah Study Group, a non-traditional Jewish religious study circle?

This question neither poses a hypothesis nor does it suggest a theory calling for a quantitative analysis. It rather asks for a 'thick description' (Geertz 1973) which will serve as the basis for a second series of questions. This quest to know 'what is going on here' is the question which qualitative analysis investigates (Ball 1981). On this basis it was decided to use qualitative inquiry for the primary analysis. Thus while some researchers opt for qualitative inquiry on philosophical grounds (Roman and Apple 1990), my decision was motivated by the nature of the research question. Therefore at the second stage of inquiry I had no philosophical compunctions about using a quantitative analytical tool, 'contact analysis,' to further the analysis.

A Definition of Qualitative Inquiry

In commencing the research I sought an operative definition for 'qualitative inquiry.'
In researching the literature I found it difficult to locate a precise definition. Bogden and Biklen (1982) refer to it as an umbrella term which refers to several research statements that share certain characteristics, while other authors of works related to qualitative inquiry fail to offer definitions (Kirk and Miller 1986; Patton 1990). Strauss and Corbin (1990, p.17) commence their definition with a negative statement by defining qualitative research as "any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification." However, they immediately offer a positive definition which is phrased tentatively, "It can refer to research about person's lives, stories, behavior, but also about organizational functioning, social movements, or interactional relationships." They also admit that the term is confusing because it means different things to different people.

In the wake of this remark, it is important to clarify what I mean by 'qualitative inquiry'. I have decided to adopt the definition of Sherman and Webb (1988, p.7) who summarize their approach to qualitative as being "a direct concern with experience as it is 'lived', 'felt' or 'undergone.'" This study is concerned with the study group processes as they develop and shall attempt to categorize the different educational experiences.

Strauss and Corbin (1990), in contrasting qualitative research with quantitative research, suggest that qualitative inquiry is an alternative paradigm. This issue is fundamental to qualitative research and determines the nature of knowledge which this type of inquiry can develop.

The Qualitative Inquiry Paradigm

According to Ellen (1981), there is an interdependence between theory and research methods and the knowledge of social phenomena. This
interdependence has led to a limited knowledge of social phenomena.

Phillips formulated the problem in the following way:

A fundamental problem in sociology is what we know about social behavior (and indeed, most social phenomena) is dependent on our methods for studying it, while our methods for studying it depend on social behavior. So in order to know more about social behavior and interaction, we need better methods; and to obtain better methods, we need to know more about behavior and interaction. This constitutes a kind of vicious circle which we must break out of if the social sciences are to move beyond their present stage of development (Phillips 1973, p.78).

In order to break this vicious circle one has to decide whether one's priorities lie with theory or methods of science (Ellen 1981). This question, which has been asked by philosophers of science, has been answered by Winch (1958), who argues that many of the important theoretical issues in social science can only be settled by a priori analysis rather than by empirical research.

In exercising philosophical reflection, a major critique of the scientific paradigm has developed. This critique, according to Ellis, represents a radical departure in the following three spheres of ideas:

In the theory of ideas about the constitution of social phenomena there is a clear move from the theory of social facts as things to the theory of social facts as constructions. This theory holds that 'facts' only exist in a reference, that there is no such thing as 'pure experience,' no such thing as 'facts' that are recorded directly 'from nature.' Theoretical presuppositions are always involved and in consequence a 'fact' is always the product of some interpretation.

In the sphere of ideas about the status of social science, there is a distinct move away from the notion of methodological unity of the natural and social sciences towards the realization that the social sciences require different methods of inquiry from those used in natural science investigations due to the subjective quality of social phenomena.
In the sphere of ideas about the way the researcher gathers his data, there is a distinct notion of observation as the primary method of data gathering (Ellis 1984, pp.27-28)

Based on the above, the qualitative inquiry paradigm stresses three distinct elements:

a. The focus of research is a social construct which must be interpreted
b. The methodology of research must take into account the subjective quality of social phenomena which are substantively different from natural phenomena
c. Observation is the primary method of data gathering

All three elements are interlinked, with the first being the substantive crux of this paradigm. Interpretation and social construction are at the heart of qualitative inquiry and in this context the importance of the 'phenomenological approach,' 'symbolic interaction' and 'culture' -- three key concepts in qualitative inquiry which guided this research -- must be understood.

The Phenomenological Approach

Researchers who adopt the phenomenological approach attempt to understand the meaning of events and interactions in particular situations from the point of view of ordinary people (Bogden and Biklen 1982). This approach has been influenced by the philosophers Husserl and Schutz and is located in the Weberian tradition which emphasizes 'verhsten,' the interpretive understanding of human behavior. This is in contrast to the positivist approach based on the works of Comte, which prefers to research 'hard' facts and the causes of behavior.
The understanding of reality from a subject’s perspective is an important aspect of phenomenological research and while it was Kenneth Pike who coined a term for this approach ‘emic’ in 1954, the emicist orientation was already elucidated by Boas in 1943 who wrote as follows:

If it is our serious purpose to understand the thoughts of a people the whole analysis of experience must be based on their concepts not ours (Boas 1943, p.314).

An opposing approach, ‘etic,’ coined as well by Pike, holds that the conceptual categories of cultural reality must be determined by the researchers based on their identification of the causes of the cultural phenomena (Shimahara 1988). The argument for this orientation was articulated by Harris:

Etic operations have as their hallmark the elevation of observers to the status of ultimate judges of the categories and concepts used in descriptions and analyses... Frequently, etic operations involve the measurement and juxtaposition of activities and events that native informants may find inappropriate or meaningless (Harris 1979, p.32).

The debate between emicists and eticists is, according to Pelto (1970, p.82), the single most important theoretical disagreement in anthropology, involving the foundations of methodological procedures. In reviewing this debate Fetterman (1989) feels that today there is a move towards a use of both approaches and advocates this position:

Most ethnographers start collecting data from the emic perspective then try to make sense of what they have collected both from a native’s point of view and their own scientific analysis. Just as thorough fieldwork requires a sensitive cultural interpretation combined with rigorous data collection techniques, so good ethnography requires both emic and etic perspectives (Fetterman 1989, p.32).

In this research I followed Fetterman’s advocacy, starting the research from an emic perspective and categorizing the data from an etic perspective.
A further issue which is central to the qualitative inquiry paradigm is 'interpretation,' an issue which led to the development of symbolic interaction.

**Symbolic Interaction**

Compatible with the phenomenological perspective is the assumption that all human experience is mediated by interpretation (Bogden and Biklen 1982). This interpretation entails, among other things, the conferring of meaning by people on objects, people, situations and events with whom they interact, which is the focus of symbolic interaction. Essentially, symbolic interactionism has its primary roots in the works of George Herbert Mead, yet today is associated as well with the works of Blumer, Hughes, Becker and Goffman who do not hold a unified perspective (Cohen and Manion 1989). For this research, I shall identify three basic postulates which Woods (1979) sets up and which are central to the research methodology.

a. Human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings they have for them.
b. The attribution of meanings to objects through symbols is a continuous process.
c. This process takes place in a social context.

Symbolic interactionists, therefore, focus on the nature of interaction, the dynamic activities which take place between individuals. "In focusing on the interaction as itself a unit of study, the symbolic interactionist creates a more active image of the human being and rejects the passive, determined organism" (Cohen and Manion 1989, p.35). In this research I focused on this interaction from a learning perspective and categorized the different types of interaction.
Culture

Qualitative research deals with cultural interpretation and therefore the understanding of 'culture' is crucial to the qualitative paradigm. According to Spradley (1980, p.6), culture "is the acquired knowledge which people use to interpret experience and generate behavior." Culture, therefore, embraces what people do, what people know and things that people make and use. In the context of this research it refers to the learning culture of the study circle: the presentation, group participation, the way text is studied and the mode of discussion.

The description of culture or aspects of culture has been called 'ethnography' (Bogden and Biklen 1982). This limited definition of ethnography is in contrast to an opinion in educational research which uses 'ethnography' as a synonym for 'qualitative research' (Goetz and LeCompte 1984).

The discussion of methodology has thus far focused on the definition of qualitative inquiry and important concepts which make up the qualitative inquiry paradigm and are central to the research. In lieu of this definition and the key concepts, I am now able to list the salient features of qualitative research as reflected in what Patton (1990, pp.40-41) calls 'themes of qualitative inquiry' and which have been adopted as the salient features of this research. Following is an abridged version of his table:

Themes of Qualitative Inquiry

1. Naturalistic Inquiry
   Studying real world situations as they unfold naturally; non-manipulative, unobstructive, and non-controlling; openness to whatever emerges -- lack of predetermined constraints on outcomes.
2. **Inductive Analysis**
Immersion in the details and specifics of the data to discover important categories, dimensions and interrelationships; begin by exploring genuinely open questions rather than testing theoretically arrived hypotheses.

3. **Holistic Perspective**
The whole phenomenon under study is understood as a complex system that is more truth than the sum of the parts; focus on complex interdependencies not meaningfully reduced to a few discrete variables and linear, cause effect relationships.

4. **Qualitative Data**
Detailed thick description; inquiry in depth; direct quotations capturing people's personal perspectives and experiences.

5. **Personal Contact and Insight**
The researcher has direct contact with and gets close to the people situation and phenomenon under study; researcher's personal experiences and insights are an important part of the inquiry and critical to understanding the phenomenon.

6. **Dynamic Systems**
Attention to process; assumes change is constant and ongoing whether the focus is on an individual or an entire culture.

7. **Unique Case Orientation**
Assumes each case is special and unique; the first level of inquiry is being true to, respecting and capturing the details of the individual cases being studied; cross-case analysis follows from and depends on the quality of individual case studies.

8. **Context Sensitivity**
Places findings in a social, historical and temporal context; dubious of the possibility or meaningfulness of generalizations across time and space.

9. **Empathic Neutrality**
Complete objectivity is impossible; pure subjectivity undermines credibility; the researcher's passion is understanding the world in all its complexity -- not proving something, not advocating, not advancing personal agendas, but understanding; the researcher includes personal experience and empathetic insight as part of the relevant data, while taking a neutral non-judgmental stance toward whatever content may emerge.
10. Design Flexibility
Open to adapting inquiry as understanding deepens and/or situations change; avoids getting locked into rigid designs that eliminate responsiveness; pursues new paths of discovery as they emerge.

Case Studies / Qualitative Research and Generalizations

The uniqueness of each individual case study raises the problem of the relevance of the case study for wider issues. If the phenomenon under observation is a unique phenomenon, is there anything that may be learned from this phenomenon regarding other situations? This question may be at the heart of an antagonistic approach towards qualitative research among social scientists and, given the flexibility of paradigms which a social scientist of a case study has, is it wise to choose a paradigm which only teaches one about this unique phenomenon?

Naturalistic Generalizations

This issue was contemplated by Robert Stake (1978) who distinguished between scientific generalizations, which emanate from quantitative research, and naturalistic generalizations, which emanate from qualitative research.

According to Stake (1978), a comparison could be made between the laws which scientists search for in their disciplines and the human tendency to look for regularity and systems in human experience. They differ, however, in their outcomes. The first leads to law-like generalizations which allow the scientist to make predictions, while the second is much more tentative, leading to expectations which a person could expect from similar situations. This type of expectation Stake calls 'naturalistic generalization.' Stake maintains that:

Naturalistic generalizations develop within a person as a product of experience. They derive from tacit knowledge of how
things are, why they are, how people feel about them and these things are likely to be later or in other places with which this person is familiar. They seldom take the form of predictions but regularly lead to expectations. They guide action, in fact they are inseparable from action. These generalizations may become verbalized, passing of course from tacit knowledge to propositional; but have not yet passed the empirical and logical tests that characterize formal (scholarly, scientific) generalizations (1978, p.6).

Although the concept 'naturalistic generalization' was coined by Stake, this perspective can be traced to Geertz (1973), who discussed the problem of theory resulting from ethnographic research. In his seminal essay 'The interpretation of cultures,' Geertz comments as follows regarding cultural theory:

... to the second condition of cultural theory: it is not at least in the strict meaning of the term predictive. The diagnostician doesn't predict measles; he decides that somebody has them, or at the very most anticipates that someone is shortly likely to get them (1973, p.26)

In this essay Geertz mentions the non-predictive nature of cultural theory, yet stresses the importance of the ability to anticipate certain outcomes as a result of qualitative research. Stake, as well, mentions non-predictability and substitutes 'expectation' for 'anticipation.'

Accepting Stake's notion of natural generalization enables a discussion of expected outcomes of interaction in the non-traditional adult Jewish religious study circle on the basis of the findings of the case study.

The Impact of Qualitative Research on Adult Education

In concluding this discussion of qualitative research, it is important to note the impact of qualitative research on adult education.
In adult education much of the seminal research which has shaped adult education research has been by means of qualitative inquiry (Merriam 1988). Examples of these include Houles’ (1961) essay ‘The Inquiring Mind’ which distinguished between three categories of learners -- goal centered, activity centered and learning centered -- on the basis of a qualitative research of adult learners; Tough’s (1967) research on self-directed learners; Brookfield’s (1981) research on independent learning and Mezirow’s (1978) theory of perspective transformation.

It must be noted that all these major research projects focused on the individual learner. As such, qualitative research on group processes is scant and therefore this contribution is a pioneer in this field.
Chapter Seven

The Research Procedure

The initial research design comprised a literature search and observations of the study groups.

Literature Search

The literature search began in January 1990 with the commencement of the project and involved the study of literature relating to study circles in the areas of Adult Education, Jewish Education and Group Dynamics. This was later extended to the foundation disciplines: Sociology, Social Psychology, Philosophy and Judaism. It soon became evident that almost no research had been conducted on Jewish religious study circles. There has been research, however, into general study circles and this has been surveyed in the introductory chapter.

The paucity of research could, according to Glaser and Strauss' approach (1967), only enhances the quality of the findings. They are of the opinion that in order to avoid the trap of preconceived categories one should take a fresh look at the data without delving into the literature at all. In the context of Jewish religious study circles the temptation to impose categories on the research is diminished because of this paucity of literature.

Following the literature search I commenced observation of the Hadassah Jerusalem Study Groups.
Entree to the Study Groups

My contact with the Hadassah Israel Study Groups began in 1989 after I became interested in the study circle as a framework for adult Jewish education. Having seen a copy of 'Textures,' the official Hadassah monthly educational bulletin, I established contact with B., the coordinator of Hadassah Israel Study Groups. B. is a retired American professor of education and was persuaded to fulfill this voluntary position on the basis of her educational interests despite her not having been connected previously to Hadassah Study Groups in the United States.

I explained the purposes and nature of the research to B. and she was enthusiastic from the outset. My proposal entailed participating in the groups' sessions and recording the proceedings. Taking into account my being male in an environment which was exclusively female, I expected resistance, as this could be perceived as an intrusion. However, from my original encounter with B. onwards, I received both encouragement and support from all for my research. B. informed me that the Hadassah organization would be flattered by my decision to research their study groups and suggested that I contact the chairlady of the organization who would bring the proposal up for approval at an executive meeting. My application was almost immediately approved and B. contacted the other Jerusalem coordinators in order to inform them of my impending research. I then contacted the coordinators who relayed to me the details concerning their next session: time, date, address and topic.

Observations

My observations of the Hadassah study groups commenced in September 1990 and ended in June 1991. It was my original intention to complete the study in February 1991, however the Gulf War, which commenced in
August 1990 and escalated in January 1991, caused the postponement of a number of sessions and therefore my observations continued until June 1991.

Using the qualitative mode, my research design comprised observing 20 sessions of the Hadassah Study Groups, taking field notes and recording the sessions. These sessions took place once a month and therefore my observations had to be spread over a lengthy period. At my first session with each group the coordinator introduced me to the group at the beginning of the proceedings, prior to the presentation. I then explained the nature of my research stressing the importance which I attached to the study circle. I told the participants that I would only be observing and not participating and therefore not making any presentations.

In my initial observations I was not allowed to record the sessions as the Jerusalem coordinator felt that this may cause participants to be self-conscious. After six sessions it was felt that the groups were not intimidated by my presence and that the recording of the sessions would not affect the sessions. The next 14 sessions I was therefore able to record and made sure that my recorder was unobtrusively placed in order to ensure that the participants would not be affected by this recording.

As has been noted, there are four study groups in Jerusalem: Central, Bet Hakerem, Ramot Eshkol and Talpiot Mizrach. It was my intention to attend five study sessions in each group, however the Bet Hakerem group met on Mondays, in conflict with a compulsory seminar, and thus I only managed to attend two sessions. I subsequently attended two extra sessions at Ramot Eshkol and one additional session at the
Central group. My observations thus comprised the following:

Central: 6 sessions  
Ramot Eshkol: 7 sessions  
Bet Hakerem: 2 sessions  
Talpiot Mizrach: 5 sessions

The Elul Study Circle

Having completed my observations of the Hadassah groups, I decided to observe the Hebrew-speaking Elul study circle for the purpose of making a comparative study. (A detailed account of the Elul Circle appears in the text study group case study). In September 1991 I attended the first session and attended five sessions over a period of five months. In the Elul observations I was hampered by not being able to tape record the sessions. The coordinators felt that this would be detrimental to the discussions and therefore I had to rely on my verbatim notes for analysis. The verbatim notes from the sessions were translated personally. Following these observations I conducted three open-ended interviews with participants.

Process of Categorization

Upon entering the study groups I took field notes about everything which I observed: the neighborhoods, homes, tea, social etiquette, seating arrangements, mannerisms of the hosts, mannerisms of the coordinators, mannerisms of the different participants, types of presentations and participation. My research question narrowed down my focus to that of the educational process and thus my wider cultural observations served as background material around which I could build a holistic picture.

After attending eight sessions I realized that certain patterns in
the presentations and discussions were recurrent. The patterns were also accompanied by differences in atmosphere and seating in each session. These patterns formed the following categories: the 'text centered,' 'self-help therapeutic' and 'social interaction' modes which shall be discussed in detail in the next chapter. My final categories emerged after having observed 15 sessions and I utilized the five final sessions to check my categorization.

My observations of the Elul study circle were used to compare their interaction with that of Hadassah and my findings of these observations are reported in a detailed discussion of the text centered mode.

In discussing my observations it is important to raise two issues I faced while conducting this research: my role as participant observer or observer and my being a male researcher in a female environment.

**Participant Observer or Observer**

In the literature there is a clear distinction between the role of observer and the role of participant observer (Cohen and Manion 1980). In the former, the researcher is physically part of the environment yet does not interact directly with those being observed. In the latter, the researcher is part of the environment and interacts with the actors. In a qualitative study there are advantages and disadvantages to both stances. The role of observer may be advantageous since in this situation the researcher does not affect the environment directly and thus does not interfere with the study. Indirectly, of course, the researcher’s presence as a passive actor does affect the environment and may make participants self-conscious unless observations are conducted through one way mirrors (Ellen 1984). The advantage of the participant observer is that it allows the observer to interpret the data from an emic point of view, that of a participant who is experiencing the event.
In my situation it was difficult for me to play the role of participant observer since these groups were exclusively female. I therefore opted for the role of observer. When entering each setting I explained the background and aim of my research and specified that I would be a non-participant observer. In the large Central group which always had more than 15 participants I was always able to maintain this status, sitting unobtrusively in the outer circle. In the Beit Hakerem group, for the two sessions at which I was present, I also managed to uphold my observer status. However, in the Talpiot Mizrach and Ramot Eshkol groups I felt myself drawn into the circle. Both of these groups were smaller and more intimate and I became part of the group no matter how hard I tried to maintain my detached status.

Despite my policy of non-involvement in the interaction, these participants were more than willing to involve me in the discussion, especially in the small talk. In these two groups the coordinators would contact me regarding future scheduling with the same concern in which they would inform their members. Thus, in these smaller groups, while I did not participate in the discussions and therefore was not a participant observer, my role could be not be totally defined as a non-participant observer.

A Male Researcher in a Female Environment

My being a male researcher in a female environment raises two issues regarding the validity of the research. The first relates to the influence of my presence on the group and the second is regarding my ability to interpret the data from an emic perspective, from the participants' point of view.
Regarding the first issue, this is a problem common to all research and as such one should try to 'blend into the woodwork' (Douglas 1976, p.19). In our situation this issue becomes even more problematic because it involved my participation in an all female group. In her study of all-male, all-female and mixed groups, Aries (1977) found differences in their thematic content and social interaction. In the female groups, women showed much concern with interpersonal issues discussing themselves, their homes and families and their relationships. In male groups the participants did not address interpersonal matters directly. Instead men indirectly related personal experiences and feelings through stories and metaphors. Male groups also manifested more themes involving aggression than female groups. In the mixed groups, women talked less of their homes and families and less of achievement and institutions. In these groups women orientated themselves around being with men, assuming the more traditional role.

On the basis of Aries' research, is there room to suspect that some of the female participants felt my presence and changed their role as they would do in a mixed group? This question becomes all the more pertinent in the two groups within which I became more than an unobtrusive observer. While the effect of my presence was never monitored by substituting a female researcher for part of the sessions, my casual questioning of the participants on this issue revealed that all of the groups functioned according to certain patterns which prevailed both with and without my presence. A factor which hopefully minimized the effect my being of the opposite gender was the age gap between myself and the participants. The average age of the participants, 67, was more than 30 years above my age while the youngest member was more than 20 years my senior. Since socially there was a tremendous gap between myself and the group, I relied on my social impact as being negligible.
The second issue, that of my inability to fully comprehend the culture of the group due to my male biases, is raised by Wax (1979). In her opinion the outstanding ethnographic studies conducted in either all male or all female communities were invariably done by researchers of the community gender. Wax cites Whytes' (1943) well known study of a street corner society as valid because Whyte was careful to observe Italian-American men rather than Italian-American women.

Wax's charge, if valid, is impossible to rebut yet could be minimized. A parallel situation exists in cross-cultural qualitative research where the research runs the risk of cultural bias on behalf of the researcher. The credibility of cross-cultural research projects, however, has been maintained through the efforts of the researcher to minimize his/her biases. In the tradition of sound scholarship, I was aware of my biases and tried as much as possible to minimize their impact on my research by being objective and empathetic with the knowledge that a biased perspective would prejudice the quality of my research. Furthermore, in order to validate my interpretations I did a content analysis of the session transcripts and conducted a series of open-ended interviews with the participants. These interviews enabled me to record the participants' perceptions of the sessions, perceptions which confirmed my interpretations.

**Further Development of Research Design**

In adopting a flexible approach to the research design, an approach which is acceptable in qualitative inquiry (Patton 1990), I decided to validate my categories by doing a content analysis of the transcripts of the study sessions and by conducting open-ended interviews with the study group participants.
Content Analysis

In using content analysis I adopted Krippendorff's definition, which defines content analysis as

a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context (Krippendorff 1980, p.21).

This definition stresses the following concepts which I applied to the research:

Research technique: content analysis involves specialized procedures for processing scientific data. Its purpose is to provide knowledge and new insights. In this research I used this tool in a specialized procedure which we will be detailed following the discussion of the definition.

Replicable: If other researchers at different points in time and under different circumstances apply the same techniques and arrive at the same results the techniques are considered to be reliable and replicable. I have attached as an appendix to this study a transcript of a session together with my analysis in order to enable other researchers to check the reliability and replicability of my findings.

Valid inferences: A valid inference is one which distinguishes between symbolic and non-symbolic data. Symbolic communications are about phenomena other than those directly observed and should always be understood within a certain context. Non-symbolic communications may be directly observed and be understood independently of their context. Since different expressions may mean different things to different people, it must noted that shared meanings may not exist and there may be a difference of opinion regarding what is a symbolic communication and what is a non-symbolic communication. In classifying categories of study sessions I had to differentiate between interactions which were text, self-growth or socially
centered. This process required an analysis of the different responses with an open eye towards the possibility that what may be objectively seen as one type of reference could be symbolically defined as an alternative reference.

**Context of the data:** In communication a message may be perceived in a number of contexts: in relation to the sender's intentions, to the receiver's cognitive or behavioral effects, to the institutions within which it is exchanged or to the culture within which it plays a role. Understanding the contexts proved to be a key issue in interpreting processes in the study sessions. In the social interaction study sessions I observed a difference of contexts between the presenters and participants (an issue which will be discussed in detail in Chapter Ten). The larger cultural context of the Gulf War and the participants being immigrants were also important to my understanding of their communications.

Having defined content analysis and its application in this context, I can now proceed towards a description of the coding process which was followed.

**The Coding Process**

In the coding process I was guided by Weber (1990) from whom I selected the following five steps:

1. **Definition of the Categories**

The categories were defined thematically -- self-help, text centered and socially interactive -- based on my phenomenological observations. A statement fitted into the text centered category if it related either directly to the text or to an issue which the text raised. If, however, the statement raised an issue which was tangential to the text or not at all associated with the text, I
classified it in the social interaction category. The third category, self-help, comprised those issues which dealt with personal problems.

My decision to do content analysis according to different themes raised the question of mutual exclusivity. Invariably there were statements which could be interpreted differently depending on the context. I ultimately opted for mutually exclusive categories since the ambiguous contributions were minimal. In an appendix to the thesis there is a detailed coding of a session demonstrating the division into categories.

2. Definition of the Recorded Units

My recorded units were the contributions of each individual whether presenter or participant. In treating each unit as a complete unit I looked for the general theme of that contribution which could comprise a number of statements. If a presentation was interrupted by a comment from the floor, I treated the continuation of the presentation independently of the first part and categorized it accordingly.

3. Test Coding on Sample Text

I then proceeded to test code a sample text. In doing this, it became clear that I would have to develop clear guidelines for what I classified as an 'issue which the text raised' or an issue which was 'tangential to the text.' This demarcation required a clear understanding of the issues under discussion, the culture and the context. A second issue which arose was the emergence of a fourth category, i.e., organizational issues, which I did not pay attention to in my observations. These issues were considered to be minor, although in my analysis I realized that they played a major part in the sample session which I analyzed.
4. Revision of the Coding Rules

This procedure followed on the basis of my previous critique, i.e. clear guidelines differentiating between text related issues and issues tangential to the text, as well as the specification of a category of organizational issues.

5. Coding of the Complete Text

I then transcribed the entire text and coded it according to the categories. In my tabulation I counted the number of transcribed lines of that contribution and tabulated them. Finally, I added up the total number of lines of contribution in the discussion and presented the different categories as percentages. The results were then tabulated on a comparative basis and appear in the following chapter.

Interviews

In February 1991, I conducted 12 open-ended interviews with participants. The breakdown of interviews was as follows:

Central: 5
Ramot Eshkol: 4
Talpiot Mizrach: 3

Those interviewed included all three group coordinators as well as 'knowledgeable informants.' These participants were chosen both because of their regular involvement in the study group and because I had built a rapport with them and felt comfortable about asking for
their active assistance in my research. All of the interviews were conducted at least a week after a session had taken place. Six of these interviews were conducted face to face at the participant’s home while six were done over the telephone. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

The interviews took the form of the 'focused interview.' Cohen and Manion (1989, p.326) define a focused interview as "the prior analysis by the researcher of the situation in which subjects have been involved," a definition which summarizes their list of unique features:

1. The persons interviewed are known to have been involved in a particular situation. They may have watched a TV program, seen a film, read a book or article, or participated in a social situation.

2. By means of the techniques of content analysis, the researcher has previously analyzed elements in the situation which he deems significant. He has thus arrived at a set of hypotheses relating to the meaning and effects of the specific elements.

3. Using his analysis as a basis, the investigator constructs an interview guide. This identifies the major areas of inquiry and the hypotheses which determine the relevant data to be obtained in the interview.

4. The actual interview is focused on the subjective experience of the person who has been exposed to the situation. His/her responses enable the researcher: (a) to test the validity of the hypotheses and (b) to ascertain unanticipated responses to the situation, thus giving rise to further hypotheses.

My interviews took place following the emergence of the categories. Having observed the study sessions, I was able to discuss incidents that occurred in the sessions and ask the participant to reflect on them.
Style of Interview

In determining the style of interview I decided to follow an approach which Patton (1990, p.280) calls the 'general interview guide approach.' This "involves outlining a set of issues that are to be explored with each respondent before interviewing begins." In adopting this approach I drew up a list of issues which I followed with each respondent and asked the questions in different sequences, depending on the flow of the interview. The following is the list of issues which I tried to cover:

a. The participant's motivation for joining the study group
b. The size of the group and the regularity of meetings
c. The difference between a study group and a lecture
d. The importance of Jewish topics within the study group
e. The definition of a successful study group
f. Memorable study group sessions

The interviews confirmed the quest for knowledge, self-growth and social interaction which I had perceived to be motivating factors for participation in study groups. Of significance was the lack of importance which the participants attached to the religious and spiritual significance of the study groups. These issues will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Twelve.

Background Questionnaire

After completing the content analysis and the interviews I realized that I lacked basic data regarding the participants' ages, countries of origin, dates of immigration and previous affiliations with
Hadassah and the study groups. I then obtained permission to circulate a background questionnaire with these details. Among the background questions, I inserted a question regarding the subjective study group experience. This question was phrased as follows:

**The study group experience**

Please arrange these statements in order of preference by marking with a 1, 2, 3 or 4:

a. The study group is for me a social experience  
b. The study group is for me an intellectual experience  
c. The study group is for me a religious experience  
d. The study group is for me an experience of self-growth and self-expression

Other experiences: Please specify

The purpose of this question was to form a correlation between the experience as perceived by the individual participants and the experience as perceived by myself, the observer.

I distributed these questionnaires before the sessions. They were completed anonymously by the participants after the sessions and were posted to me by the coordinators. A total of 19 questionnaires were completed and returned.

Finally, it is worth noting that my research reflects Burgess' list of attributes (1985, pp.4-5) which are present in many qualitative research project.

1. The focus is on the observed present, but the findings are contextualized within a social, cultural and historical framework.

2. The research is conducted within a theoretical framework. While there may only be a small number of questions to orientate a study, further questions may arise during the course of the investigation.

3. The research involves close, detailed intensive work. The researcher participates in the social situation under study.
4. The major research instrument is the researcher who attempts to obtain a participant’s account of the social setting.

5. Unstructured or formal interviews in the form of extended conversations may complement the observational account.

6. Personal documents may give depth and background to the contemporary account.

7. Different methods of investigation may be used to complement qualitative methods with the result that different methodologies may be integrated by the researcher.

8. The decisions regarding the collection and analysis of data take place in the field and are products of the inquiry.

9. The researcher attempts to disturb the process of social life as little as possible.

10. The researcher has to consider the audience for whom he or she is producing the report and the main concerns to be included.

11. Research reports disseminate the knowledge which informants have provided without rendering harm to them, taking into account ethical problems that confront the researcher and the researched.

12. The researcher monitors the dissemination of materials and provides feedback to those who have been researched.
SECTION THREE

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

In his seminal essay, 'Society as Symbolic Interaction,' Herbert Blumer (1969) presented his basic premises regarding the symbolic interactionist approach to society and its methodological consequences. In the section on methodology, I noted these consequences in adopting the phenomenological approach for the research. According to Blumer, symbolic interactionists differs from sociologists in their perception of society: while the sociologist views society in terms of structure or organization and treats social action as an expression of such structure or organization, the social interactionist views society as made up of acting people and the life of society as consisting of their actions or of the actions of social 'acting units'. "The acting units may be separate individuals, collectivities whose members are acting together on a common quest, or organizations acting on behalf of a constituency" (Blumer 1969, p.85). In analyzing society, the researcher must be cognizant of two conditions under which units act. The first condition is that action takes place in and with regard to a situation. A second condition is that action is formed or constructed by interpreting the situation. The acting unit has to identify the things which it has to take into account -- tasks, opportunities, obstacles and the like. On the basis of this identification certain patterns of behavior develop which may repeat themselves under similar conditions as the acting unit accumulates commonly interpreted experiences. These patterns should be discernible to a researcher and it is these patterns which I sought.

In this section I shall analyze how the acting units in the Hadassah Study Groups met the situations (i.e., the study sessions) in which they were placed. These sessions comprised participants of similar backgrounds and each learning situation was similar to previous
situations. One could therefore expect similar learning patterns. However, the difference of text and the subject of discussion were variables which could create a unique learning situation and force the acting unit -- the study group -- to change its mode of interaction. It was thus necessary to engage in a lengthy period of observation in order to highlight the affects of the changing variables. On the basis of these observations I detected distinct patterns of interaction which repeated themselves at different sessions. These patterns of interaction are the basis of my findings and are presented in the following chapter.
Chapter Eight

Categories of Interaction

As mentioned in the chapter on research procedure, I observed 20 Hadassah Study Group sessions. Through my observations I became aware of different categories of interaction which manifested themselves in all of the study groups at different intervals and for different periods of time. The categories on interaction which I observed were as follows:

a. Text Centered Interaction Mode

As is indicated by its name, the focus of this mode is the study of text and its interpretation. In this group a minimum of time is spent on unrelated discussion and social talk. The success of this group is reflected in its ability to evoke and stimulate interest in the text among the participants.

b. Social Interaction Mode

In this mode the study group takes the form of a social discussion group with the participants enjoying social interaction in a learning framework. The success of this group is reflected in its ability to involve as many participants in the discussion as possible, often at the expense of a focused discussion. The tension between encouraging non-focused free discussion and the aspiration to maintain a semblance of focused study is one of the issues which characterized this mode of interaction.
c. Self-help Therapy Group Mode

The self-help therapy mode of interaction in the study circle resembles the type of interaction which one could expect to take place in a self-help therapy group. In this mode a participant or a number of participants utilize the intimacy of the study circle in order to raise personal problems and sentiments in the hope that the support of the group will enable them to lighten their psychological burden. The group discussion precipitates a cathartic process which has therapeutic effects for the troubled participants, a process which ultimately determines the success of the study session.

These three modes occurred in different sequences and for differing lengths of time in a single session. Usually each session was dominated by a primary mode with another mode or modes playing a secondary role. The frequency of the different modes is evident in the following charts of the 13 study sessions which I recorded and categorized using content analysis.

Figure 8.1: Talpiot Mizrach
As is reflected in Figure 8.1 it is evident that the first two sessions of Talpiot Mizrach which I observed, were text centered interaction sessions. In the first session the group moved into a secondary social interaction mode and in the second into a secondary therapeutic mode. The third and fourth sessions were dominated by the social interaction mode. As will be discussed in the analysis of the social interaction mode, the first two sessions which were primarily text centered, were the first following the group's inception. The third and fourth sessions which were dominated by the social interaction mode reflected the development of the group into a social unit.

**Figure 8.2: Ramot Eshkol**

The first two sessions of the Ramot Eshkol group represented by Eshkol 1 and Eshkol 2 in figure 8.2 were social interaction dominated sessions. During these sessions the group dealt with the subject
'Women of the Bible' gravitating towards social interaction. In three additional sessions of Ramot Eshkol the group moved into therapeutic interaction, once in a primary mode and twice in a secondary mode as is reflected by Eshkol 3, Eshkol 4 and Eshkol 5. In two of the sessions the group functioned primarily in the text interactive mode while in the third, the text centered mode seemingly did not feature.

Figure 8.3: The Central Group

The Central group was the most consistent in its interaction; a strong text interactive group as is evident from Figure 8.3. In this group I observed a unique all text session (Central 3), a session which will be referred to further on in the discussion.
I was only able to record one session of the Beit Hakerem group. This session is almost totally text interactive as is reflected by figure 8.3.

On the basis of the content analysis the following factors emerged:

1. **Primary and Secondary Modes**

Twelve of the thirteen sessions had both primary and secondary modes. The one session which interacted in a single text centered mode was a presentation of the Psalms accompanied by recordings from the Chichester Psalms, a presentation in which there was a minimum of group participation and discussion. Besides this session all sessions moved into a primary mode which dominated the session, and a secondary mode or modes which were less time consuming.
The predominance of the text centered mode is clearly evident. It appears as a primary mode in eight of the sessions and as a secondary mode in four of the sessions. As will be shown in the discussion of the self-help therapy group mode, the session in which the text is apparently absent, i.e. the self-help therapy session, there is a meta text which precipitates the discussion even though it is not formally mentioned.

This predominance of the text centered mode is not surprising since the unwritten charter of the Hadassah Study Groups is text study. My interest, therefore, turns toward the five sessions in which the text did not feature as the prime focus. Of these sessions there were four sessions whose primary mode was the social interaction mode. This mode also occurred in six of the sessions as a secondary mode. The third mode, the self-help therapy mode, occurred as a primary mode in only one of the sessions and as a secondary mode in four of the sessions. This minimal occurrence of the self-help therapy mode should not be seen as entirely representative since I did observe at least two other sessions which were not recorded, whose primary mode of interaction was the self-help therapy mode.

While in most groups there were two modes of interaction, in three groups there were three modes. In all three groups the text centered interaction mode was the primary mode with the other modes being secondary.

2. The Sequence of the Modes

The study sessions moved into the different modes in different sequences and at different time intervals. In the Central group the session usually remained in a fixed mode for a lengthy period and thereafter moved into an alternative mode. In the Talpiot Mizrach group the session commenced in one mode, moved into an alternative mode after a short period of time, continued in this mode for half of
the session and thereafter continued to revert back at short intervals. These contrasting patterns are illustrated in Figure 8.5 and 8.6.

Figures 8.5 and 8.6: The Sequences of Interchanging Modes

3. The Modes Manifested Themselves in all the Study Groups

An analysis of the Central, Talpiot Mizrach and Ramot Eshkol study sessions reveals that all three modes were manifested in all three groups. Since only one Beit Hakerem session was recorded it can not be expected that all three modes would take place in that session, since the manifestation of three modes in one session was a relatively rare occurrence. There was, however, a difference in the spread of modes. In the large Central group, the text centered interaction mode was always the primary mode with the social
interaction mode achieving primary status only in the Ramot Eshkol and Talpiot Mizrach groups. In the Ramot Eshkol group, of which we have the largest sample of analyzed sessions, there was an almost even spread of primary modes: two text centered modes, two social interaction modes and one self-help therapy group mode. In the Talpiot Mizrach group there was an even spread between the text centered interaction and social interaction primary modes with each being predominant in two sessions.

In categorizing the different modes, I noted the absence of a spiritual or religious mode. This absence is significant, given the religious nature of the subject matter. This issue is a pertinent finding and its implications will be discussed in Chapter Twelve.

Having developed a general picture regarding the different modes and patterns of interaction which prevailed in the different study sessions, I shall proceed to analyze each mode of interaction on the basis of transcripts of the study sessions.

An Organizational Footnote

This picture of the observations would be incomplete if mention was not made of the organizational time spent either pre-session or post-session in organizing the subject matter.

At most sessions the appointment of the presenter and decision of the topic of the forthcoming session took a maximum of five minutes. However, in the Ramot Eshkol group at three of the six sessions which I observed this process took 15 to 20 minutes. This could be attributed to the following:

a. The participants did not feel at ease with the general topic. They felt ill equipped to master the topic and were reluctant to volunteer to make a presentation.
b. When a presentation was made it was done hesitantly with a minimum of issues for discussion leading to a general debate on the virtues of following the topic as a year syllabus.

c. The coordinator did not succeed in building a consensus for a new topic.

Since this was a local problem of a particular group it will not be discussed in detail. However, the educational ramifications resulting from the successful solution of the organizational questions are worth noting, an issue which I will take up in my final discussion.
The Study Group as Text Centered Interaction

The most prolific primary mode observed was the text centered mode. As indicated by its name, the focus of this mode is the study of text and its interpretation. In this session a minimum of time is spent on unrelated discussion and social talk. The success of this session is reflected in its ability to evoke and stimulate interest in the text among the participants.

Criteria for the Text Centered Mode

The following criteria differentiate the text centered mode from other modes of interaction:

a. A text is the focus of the study session presentation.
b. The participants discuss different interpretations of the text and the ramifications of these interpretations.

The Central Study Group

The study group which adopted the text centered interaction mode to the greatest extent was the Central Study Group, so named because it takes place in the central neighborhoods of Jerusalem. This study group draws its members from the established neighborhoods of Talbieh, the German Colony, Baka’ah, Katamon, Yemin Moshe and Rehavia. These areas are considered the aristocratic neighborhoods of Jerusalem. Housing comprises apartments and free standing homes. The prestige attributed to these areas is reflected in the State of
Israel's choice to house both the President and Prime Minister as well as other state dignitaries in these suburbs.

The coordinator of this group is also the lay national coordinator of all Hadassah Study Groups. She is a 60-year-old retired professor of education who emigrated to Israel five years ago. B., the coordinator, is a short energetic woman whose association with Hadassah only commenced when she immigrated to Israel. B. is an enthusiastic coordinator whose presence is felt at every session.

A Text Centered Study Session

This group meets on the first Tuesday of every month in rotating homes, as is the custom among all Hadassah Study Groups. On entering the host residence one is highly conscious of the time as this study group commences punctually at 10 a.m. At the front door one is met by the hostess and welcomed in. In the large living room a number of chairs are placed in a circular shape utilizing lounge furniture to close the circle. A central figure sits in a large comfortable chair which is strategically placed, giving her visibility from all sides of the room. The figure, who catches the eye immediately, is evidently the presenter and she carefully glances through her notes while awaiting to commence her presentation. In an adjacent room cups and saucers are neatly laid on a table which is adorned as well with cakes and cookies. The first participants arrive slowly, however as the clock approaches 10, there is a last minute surge. The participants enter the living room and huddle in small groups: some sitting and some standing, all engaging in small talk. (In this group I feel a little uncomfortable, very much an outsider despite the many sessions which I have attended). The ladies whom I know from the previous sessions ask me about my research while others ignore my presence completely.
At 10 a.m. prompt the proceedings begin. The coordinator stands and authoritatively raises her voice to make announcements. The first announcement deals with a future Hadassah Organization event. All women are urged to participate in this important fundraising affair. A participant asks questions regarding logistics and the organizer of the event utilizes this opening to take the floor and stress the importance of participation. She also clarifies the logistics and seems to have won over a few more interested ladies. Following this brief and efficient service to the mother organization, the coordinator then proceeds to organize the next study group session. Her first task is the most difficult, that of finding a volunteer for the next presentation. As will be shown in the following dialogue the coordinator is a skilled negotiator and almost effortlessly the issue is settled.

Coordinator: Take this Psalm and do it for us, or any of the other things that I mentioned. Can we get someone who will be willing to do the presentation at our April meeting and someone for May? R’s not sure when she’s ready to come back. I don’t want to force anybody.

B: I’ll do May.

Coordinator: What do you think you’d like to do?.

B: I have to think, when I come back from the States I’ll give you an answer.

Coordinator: I won’t be here. You’ll call S. and coordinate with her so that you know what was done in April and then that’s wonderful. Is there somebody who would be willing to do something for us in Psalms in April? I would suggest that whoever does that consider doing maybe Prof. Leibovitz’s first Psalm, I think she did Psalm 27 first. You also have to be thinking if you want to continue. We have just begun Prof. Leibovitz’s stuff.... We don’t have to decide until June. We need a speaker for April and I know that you are capable, every one of you can do it.... Who never did one before did one in Talpiot Mizrach and I was so sorry that I missed it because she did an outstanding job and everybody raved about it.

R. volunteers by putting up her hand and this is acknowledged by the coordinator.
Coordinator: Oh R. wonderful, I will talk to you about which one to do. Thank you this is wonderful, I can go to America with a free mind.

The coordinator, having successfully negotiated the presentation, asks for volunteers to host the next meeting. Two women raise their hands. The coordinator, gratified by the response asks one volunteer to host in April and the other in May. In conclusion of these formalities the coordinator circulates the invitation cards, asking each participant to fill in her names and address on the front of the card. Finally she turns to introduce the topic which she says is a continuation of the theme 'Psalms,' and calls upon P., the presenter, to commence. Most of the participants take out the Book of Psalms which they have brought. One or two women have a pen and notebook. All attentively await the presentation.

P. remains sitting, holds her notes in front of her and commences to read.

It's not an easy task to choose a favourite Psalm; they are so inspiring. I've chosen two psalms, Psalm 23 and 126. I will start with the introduction by Saul Harmati who is a teacher of Psalms.

She then proceeds to read his introduction which stresses the universality of the Psalms, their optimism:

This spirit of optimism was a factor in the development of the Psalms as a book of the nation, in the full meaning of the phrase, and its ability to speak to Jews in all ages. In its pages every Jew in every period of time found the expression of his heart, his own heart and his own emotions, his fears and his anxieties, his joys, his hopes and plans. This deep identification is expressed in a phrase in the Psalms. There is a passage in the Psalms directed to you.
Psalm 23, Mizmor le David, Hashem Roi Lo Echsar... (quotes the whole verse). "The L-rd (1) is my shepherd, I shall not want, he makes me to lie down in green pastures..."

P. also quotes from Israel's legendary teacher of Bible, Nehama Leibovitz, stressing the difference between the study of Psalms and the study of the other books of the Torah.

This is not meant to be a kind of scientific introduction which serves as a necessary preliminary to the study of the Book of Psalms. All that one requires in order to read and study the Psalms are eyes that see and ears that hear and mainly a responsive heart. Just a few words to indicate to the students the character of the Psalms and the purpose of my lessons: The difference between the Psalms and the books of the Torah and the Prophets lies in this -- that in the Torah and the Prophets, G-d sends his words to man, but in the Psalms man pours out his heart before G-d.

Upon hearing these words there is a nod of agreement among the women.

P. continues reading this introduction, accentuating the ability of the Psalms to speak at all times and in all situations.

The 'I' who speaks in these chapters, is not the I in David, or a Ben-Porath. The I who speaks and reads and who expresses joy, offers thanks to G-d, cries for help, is the I of the reader at that very moment, for indeed all great literature is contemporaneous with the reader at any time. Generation after generation have read these Psalms, during festivals, and in times of mourning; in times of trouble as well as in times of joy; in secrecy and in public; in synagogues, in houses of study and in embattled bunkers and in these recitations, the Psalms fall forth from the lips of the reciters as though they themselves have created them, as though they rose from their own very being.

1. There is a Jewish tradition to write the Divine names with a hyphen i.e., L-rd and G-d when writing non-sacred literature. This tradition will be followed in this thesis.
P. then adds her own words of introduction

Interpretation is a dangerous thing. One takes a poem which is a living entity and begins to dissect it with a surgeon’s scalpel. Often one can indeed say about the dissection of poetry, that the operation succeeded but the patient died, I hope that in my dissection I have been delivered from this danger.

P. asks for a participant to read Psalm 23 and M. gladly volunteers. A second participant who has a different translation asks to read her translation and all nod their approval. P. then requests that the Psalm be read in Hebrew and a third volunteer reads.

P. now introduces Psalm 23:

My experience with Psalm 23, unfortunately, is when the Rabbi delivers a eulogy in memory of a dear friend or a congregant. However, Psalm 23, I understand, is also recited in some congregations on the eve of the Sabbath. It is one of the Psalms for the third Sabbath meal, ‘seuda shlishit.’ In the home it is sung at the Sabbath meal and at the departure of the Sabbath, when it is particularly meaningful. Before the Sabbath, an island of rest and holiness in the sea of secular life and in the rush and speed of the weekdays. Before man returns to his work and to his worries, he fills his heart with the faith expressed in this hymn and feels himself a lamb sheltered by its shepherd. It has to be remarked the world could spare many a large book better than this Psalm. It has dried many tears and supplied the mold into which many hearts have poured their peaceful faith. One of the most precious gems in the treasury of the Biblical literature is the treasury of the heart -- the appeal to our heart has been constant. In a pastoral community the shepherd stood as the personification of the tender fear ..that G-d, the provider of the protector of his human flock. Earliest use of the shepherd was made by Jacob who spoke of the G-d who had been my shepherd all my lifelong. Samson Raphael Hirsch writes, “The goal of the Psalm is to awaken mankind to an awareness of G-d and this did not accrue to the Book of Psalms fortuitously. The King of Israel, in whose heart the spirit of the Psalms found expression, in whose heart the Psalms flow and whose heart awakened the hundreds of... emotions in other poetic spirits, understood that he, in his Psalms, was destined to inspire the praises of G-d among the nation. By his heart he stirred the emotions of men, surely only a David, who divine spirits found herding his flock in Judea thousands of years ago and consecrated to be shepherd of Israel and a spiritual shepherd of humanity, could have spoken these words, ‘Fulfill them. I will acknowledge you among the people my
master. I will sing of you among the nations." (quotes in Hebrew). Note the trust of the believer in his G-d as expressed in verses 1 and 3, that M. read, and 4 and 6. The image of the lamb led by the shepherd and the image of the guest sitting at the table of the host. A basic tenet of our religion is the concept of G-d who has neither bodily form nor substance. Although we are well aware of this, however, in mentioning the L-rd or in speaking to Him an imagery is employed and even though no image can be assigned to the L-rd, we'll illustrate his relationship with us, with his people and with mankind by the use of imagery.

P. then proceeds to explain the Psalm verse by verse:

Verse 1 of the relation of the L-rd to his creatures is pictured in the Bible in various ways. The lover and his beloved in the Song of Songs, the father and his children in Jeremiah, the vineyard and its guardian in Isaiah, the flock and its shepherd, the servants and their masters in Leviticus, the nation and the king in Samuel, and each figure reveals a different aspect of the relationship between the Creator and his creature. In Psalm 23, the relationship with G-d and his people is depicted as that of the shepherd and the lamb.

Immediately after verse 1, two parallel lines follow in the Hebrew. They consist of three and four words, prospectively, that describe what the shepherd does for the lamb in his care: he's concerned for his food and drink, but the connotation of green pastures and still waters are not merely physical. They invoke visions of sweetness, of calm and tranquility. Other translations are 'tranquil waters' and, more accurately, 'waters of quietness.' The good shepherd does not lead his flock to a place of rushing, turbulent waters, but to a place of slow-moving, restful waters. Some translators have misinterpreted verse 3, "Near tranquil waters will he guide me to refresh my being." This is not what the Hebrew says... each stating what the shepherd does, in each sentence the subject is the L-rd and the object is me, my soul. In this context, the Hebrew word 'Nafshi,' does not mean soul as we understand it today. The use of the word soul here would be a digression from the description of the lamb grazing at calm waters. 'Nafshi,' in this context, means 'my whole being.' Rabbi David Kimche Radak, "Like the good shepherd he will not tire the sheep, nor drag them, but lead them slowly. He guides me in straight paths like the good shepherd who will not lead his sheep in the mountains and will not ship them from mountain to mountain and will not burden them to pass from mountain to hill, only he will lead them in the plains, so will he guide me in righteous paths and all that for his namesake, not because I am..."
The poet does not seek to delude us with visions of life as an ideal... of light and sunshine, in verse 4, but he knows that besides light and calm there is also darkness and fear. The lamb passes through the shadows in the valley, the crevices in the rocks, it has strayed from the flock, lost its way, found itself in the narrow, deep and dark valley, or caught in a crevice between the rocks, or held as prey to predatory beasts.

In the central verse 5, the image of the guest sitting at the table of the host, at a table which is set with all the very best, the expression "Thou has anointed my head with oil" appears strange to us. It can be understood only against the background of the customs of the period. The Soncino commentary defines the table, the oil, the full cup as symbols of plenty, of G-d’s generosity which He has showered upon man, of which the enemies cannot be destined.

Thus far the poet has offered no prayer, expressed no demand, no plea. He has stated only in the last verse, following 5 verses, that manifest joy, happiness, security, confidence is the hope for a future expressed. Perhaps this verse is only a declaration of fact. Radak comments: "I thank you for all the good you granted me til now, I ask from you that your goodness may follow me all my days". This is a petition, a request, but there are some who translate it: Yes, kindness and goodness pursue me all through my life. This is a statement of fact and describing his condition. It should be noted that it does not say here goodness and kindness follows, but presuming the Hebrew word ‘yirdifuni,’ pursue me, is commonly in reference to enemies, but here his pursuers are none other than the Lord’s good messengers -- goodness and kindness. Rabbi Ibn Ezra offers a different commentary: "I have such an urge to do the kind and the good, good to myself and kindness to others, to instruct them in the service of the Lord, until it becomes for me a rule, even if I were to abandon for a moment that good it would be..." According to Ibn Ezra, the goodness, then kindness are not to be... as the Lord’s but as the poet’s....

Despite her introduction invoking Leibovitz’s endorsement of a subjective interpretation, P. has chosen to interpret the Psalm in a traditional manner, relying on the classical Rabbinical commentaries.

P. pauses, waiting for reactions and/or questions from the other participants. An elderly lady sitting in the inner circle of the room poses the first question:

PI: I was just wondering. Do you think that the nature, the Eretz Yisrael and the nature here, is helpful to the
understanding of the Psalm or do you think that in any country or climate one is able to understand this Psalm equally as well?

P: Do you know why? G-d is everywhere.

A participant in the outer circle raises her hand.

P2: This Psalm is very important to Christians?

P: 'Cup runneth over...' has become an everyday expression in almost everyday life.

A lady in the front 'jumps in' without waiting to be asked.

P3: Do you have any idea when this was written and who wrote it?

P: Well they attribute it to David. I asked R. about this because she’s teaching Psalms right now in school and she said that this is one of the Psalms that is definitely attributed to David because he uses the imagery so much of the shepherd. David was a shepherd and David did have these trials and tribulations and did have this strong belief that G-d was his protector and everything in it is the shepherd and the flock, the shepherd and the flock, and so this is one of the Psalms that they definitely attribute to David.

A second lady in the front attracts P.’s attention and proceeds to ask:

P4: Did 'Samta shemen beroshi' (You annointed my head with oil), note his coronation, making him a king and therefore 'my cup runneth over'? 

P: My reaction from the poetic point of view would be that every man, head of the household, is the king and therefore it’s symbolic.

P.’s answer shows a move away from the classic commentaries, giving the Psalm a contemporary connotation. While the question is not clear, P.’s answer indicates a deviation from the classical interpretation of G-d anointing David as king.
Yet another participant raises her hand and with P.'s approval takes the floor.

P5: "...walk through the shadow of the valley of death," because I think it's specifically referring to the valleys here where the lambs did get caught in the caves or in the crevices and to the more casual reader whose valleys are just mainstream places between hills, I think it has often been interpreted as the fear of death, whereas I don't think that's quite the way it's intended.

P: Times of stress.

The participant who was the first to have raised a question once more intervenes

P1: What interested me is that you mentioned the difference in follow and pursue. You know, the reason why pursue goodness and kindness, it's as though you're being pursued by it and you have the choice -- you can let yourself be caught by it, you can find goodness and kindness and mercy, it doesn't just follow you, let yourself find it. In other words, you find what you look for. I know I have waited many times, and the number's on call, but I have still found goodness and compassion because I have found 'Shaarei Zedek' is called a hospital with a heart and I have found very caring people in Kupath Cholim. So let yourself be caught by the goodness and the mercy that is pursuing you.

P. does not react to this comment and invites the next question.

P6: ...Back to the metaphors and similes of the lamb and sword. As you stressed, it's repeated over and over in our liturgy and in our literature and so on, but I was just wondering about the valley in the shadow of death. Animals basically are supposed to be frightened by the darkness. I think that's a natural phenomena. Would it be the fear of darkness, of the unknown, that he is referring to here, rather than death as a final end of one's life, because the lamb is afraid of the darkness and the shadows and so on. Except for nocturnal animals, it's true of all animals, at least that's the interpretation that I'd put on it.

P. acknowledges this interpretation and waits for further questions. After a moment's silence the coordinator urges her to continue with the next Psalm to be studied, Psalm 126.
P: I will just, I think it will be kind of lengthy, Psalm 126. Maybe we'll all sing 126 together because if we recall back to our Talmud Torah and Sunday School days, this was at every program when it was about Israel.

At this point all join in song. The formal atmosphere is a little more relaxed and P. continues.

P: It's interesting that the Psalms have had a different meaning to different countries, to different people. They used to say they learn Torah, but there were people who couldn't learn. Everybody used it as their support in their daily lives.

There is an article about Dr. Nelson... who was the archaeologist at Hebrew Union College. He has written about this Psalm in relationship to the Negev. He covered the Negev from end to end on foot and he dug into its depths and photographed its hills and its lowlands and learned to read the tales of the sand and the stones as though they were an open book and he writes this about streams in the Negev in this Psalm: "Terraces built across wadi beds to break an exact... from the occasional winter and spring freshets, cisterns and reservoirs dug and plastered water tight to be filled from their... against the certainty of many a rainless day and all the other devices protected or invented by the Nabiteans and utilized by their immediate successors could never accomplish for the countryside at large the miracles of rebirth the single raindrop, over a wide area, was able to perform. The grass and flowers spring up after the first shower or storm and the groomed desert became a colorful garden overnight as if a magic wand had passed over the face of the earth. Flocks of birds suddenly make their appearance and then to sing and to.... in happy floods and... through the lush green. Camels and goats and sheep and their young... They drink their fill at pools of water collected in... making it unnecessary for months at end to find other supplies for them. Springs flow more strongly, wells rise to their highest level and the underground water is replenished in the wadi, there to remain long after the flowers have withered and gone. Sturdy shrubs remain green all summer long because their roots have the subsurface moisture. This is particularly true where the wadis are wide and shallow and terraced, with the result that the rainwaters tend to sink into the ground. Otherwise, if unintended, they waste down narrow gulleys and dry stream beds, stripping off the covering soil and gouging for themselves ever deeper canyons." This is a description of the Negev.
I would like to close with your feeling about the last verse: "They that sow in fear shall reap in joy." Would anyone like to comment on that? I had many friends who came as 'halutzim,' that actually sowed in fear, caught malaria. They really had a tough time and now when we go out of our beautiful Jerusalem and we see everything green and lovely we are reaping with joy.

In introducing this Psalm, P. prefers not to delve in interpretation but rather quotes an expert opinion explaining the topography of the Negev which is necessary for a more complete understanding of the Psalm. In referring to the final verse, she mentions a contemporary experience which she feels is reflected in this verse.

This personal association evokes another personal 'interpretation' from a dark haired participant who until this moment had not been vocal in this session.

P7: Would you be interested in a very mushy, personal interpretation?

P: Sure.

P7: My own personal interpretations are mushy. Unfortunately, I haven't toughened up. I always seemed to have left family. Born in Hungary, then moved to Belfast, Northern Ireland. I then married an American and moved to Portland, Oregon. My family stayed in London, England, and then I had children and we went back to visit my parents in London. I went with three children, so that the Jewish..., of family that most of us have experienced here. I remember when we 'benched' (said grace after meals, which contains Psalm 126). Afterwards, I always felt this referred to me, because I was very young when I left my parents for the first time to go 6,000 miles away for somebody who wasn't a blood relative, he was only my husband. And then I felt I was returning the joy, I was bringing the grandchildren back to my parents. That's my own personal mushy interpretation.

After this personal account, the study circle moves out of the text centered mode into a social discussion.
Analysis of the Text Centered Mode

In this mode we note the following:

a. The group interaction: There are no heated debates, neither between the participants themselves nor between the presenter and the participants. The group interacts through the chair and participants who want to contribute raise their hands in order to obtain her permission.

b. The mode of interpretation: The presenter relies on the traditional sources while the participants utilize 'subjective' interpretation.

In noting the modes of interaction and interpretation, I asked myself whether these are unique features of this particular study dictated by the subject matter (i.e., the Psalms) or whether they were prevalent in the study of other texts as well. (In this regard it is important to note that Leibovitz’s endorsement of subjective interpretation is limited to the Psalms (1)). Since the Central group was only studying the Psalms, they could not be observed studying another text. Therefore, for purposes of comparison, I decided to observe the Beit Hakerem group which was studying Biblical texts relating to the theme of 'women in the Bible.'

1. In a personal conversation Professor Leibovitz unequivocally stated that textual analysis of the Bible should be only done under the watchful eye of an expert who is trained in the methodology of interpretation. She compared subjective interpretation by novices, to amateurs who engage in complex electrical circuiting, an exercise which could have fatal consequences.
The Beit Hakerem Group

The Beit Hakerem group is smaller than the Central group, numbering about ten regular participants. This group draws its members from the two neighborhoods of Beit Hakerem and Kiryat Moshe, the former being a predominantly secular neighborhood and the latter a religious neighborhood. Apartment blocks are the characteristic type of housing in these areas and all of our sessions took place in three- or four-room apartments. The participants of this group were similar to those in the Central group, consisting of retired Western immigrants. As with the Central group, the participants would consider themselves as representing religious, traditional and secular points of view. In this group, the atmosphere was less formal than in the Central group, with tea being served prior to the session.

A Text Centered Study Session

At this particular session there are nine women, five of whom arrive promptly on time with the last participant arriving 15 minutes after the fixed time. As with all Hadassah Study Groups, the session is preceded by chapter announcements. A speaker for the forthcoming session is successfully chosen, as is a host.

The presenter of this session is a woman in her late 50s and despite the fact that the topic of discussion is a Biblical text, she does not have a Bible in her hand, relying instead on her prepared notes. The coordinator of the group is the only participant with a Bible, with the rest of the members relying upon their having prepared the text at home. The presenter announces that in preparation for this session she has studied the relevant Biblical passages as well as the Encyclopedia Judaica and a Hadassah study guide prepared by Joe Lowin, a past national educational director of Hadassah in North America.
The presenter commences her presentation.

P: Our subject for today is on Batsheva, from the Book of Samuel. Before I read out my notes on Batsheva, I would like to quote, if I may, just a passage from this article on Batsheva. It reads as follows, "Power corrupts, they say, but what about powerlessness? If it doesn’t actually corrupt, it is conducive to creative plotting and, in this way, let us take the case of Batsheva as an example."

Here I start my story, Batsheva. I have to refer all the time to King David, because their lives were intertwined. In the case of King David, he has been described as a man of many virtues: He was, first of all, a descendant of a noble family; he was very good looking; he was liked by his people; he was a fine musician on his harp and also he loved to sing. He was a noble warrior and commander, heroic, extremely clever and a great ruler, all of these wonderful virtues, and yet he had a dark side to his nature and this is where the story of Batsheva comes in.

It was springtime and in the olden days if wars had to be fought, they generally were fought in the spring for a simple reason, the men who fought these wars were needed to bring in the crops, to bring in the harvest, so after the men brought in the harvest and the crops were stowed away, then the men went to war.

Now, as I mentioned before, it was springtime and King David, who usually went to war with his men, this time stayed at home in Jerusalem, whilst he sent his army to the battlefield, headed by his very loyal commander Uriah, who incidentally was Batsheva’s husband. One day King David went up on the roof of his palace and looking down he saw Batsheva on a lower roof bathing and it was described, this is not my wording, "He cast a lustful glance at Batsheva" and immediately ordered her to come to the palace, which she, of course, could not refuse as he was the King.

If I may transgress a little bit to the present day, my husband tells me that up until the time of the Six Day War if a man of high repute wanted a certain girl, he would send his intermediary to the girl’s family, this is a true fact, and ask for the hand in marriage of the girl either for himself or for his son and the girl never refused because it was considered a great honor. Now this is up to the time of the Six Day War, since then times have changed. I’m talking now of the Middle East.

Coming back to Batsheva and King David. Batsheva and King David developed a ‘friendship’ between themselves, as a result of which she became pregnant. King David, hearing of this, knew that this fact that she was pregnant could not remain secret for
long and therefore in order that no slur would be made on his good name, he summoned Uriah, the Hittite, from the battlefield to come back on leave to his wife, in order that he should sleep with her and then, if a child was born, everyone would say that it was Uriah’s child. However, and here the plot thickens, Uriah refused to return and here two explanations are given by our scholars. One being that Uriah was such a fine commander and he was admired so much by his soldiers that he said, "Why should I come on leave and leave my soldiers on the battlefield in their tents? I want to stay with them." The second explanation given by our scholars was that he knew, or he was informed, that his wife was pregnant by King David and he didn’t want to take the responsibility for King David’s deed, and become an instrument in the hands of King David. King David, hearing of this, was obviously very upset, very cross that Uriah did not obey his command to return and in order that Uriah should not blacken his name. King David gave orders that Uriah should be involved in a battle from which he knew he would never return. And so it came to pass that Uriah was killed. When Uriah was killed, then King David married Batsheva and brought her into his palace and in the course of time, Batsheva gave birth to a son whose name was Solomon. Incidentally, Solomon was followed by another three sons, Shimiya, Shovas and Natan. Natan, when he grew up, became Natan the prophet. Batsheva, up to the time she was married to Uriah, was a very beautiful woman, but she wasn’t a woman of great consequence. She was a beautiful women, but once she became King David’s wife matters changed and she was not only beautiful, but she was a woman of great wit and strength of mind and with the help of Natan, her son, she pleaded with King David on his deathbed to anoint her eldest son Solomon king, despite opposition, and this, of course, proved to be the case and King Solomon. This is the story of King David and Batsheva and it only goes to prove that although King David was strong in character in so many ways, yet he became corrupt when it came to women and sex as in the case of Batsheva.

As she makes her presentation, the coordinator pages through her Bible showing great discomfort with the facts as they have been presented. As the presenter finishes with her evaluation of David’s character, the coordinator raises her hand and interjects.

C: I hope you don’t mind if I make a correction. "She conceived and she sent word to David that she was pregnant. David ordered Joab to send Uriah, the Hittite, to him, so Joab sent him to David and when he arrived David asked him for news of Joab and the troops and how the campaign was going and then said to him, ‘Go down to your house and wash your feet after your journey.’ As he left the palace, a present from the king followed him, which Uriah did not return to his house. He lay down at the palace gates with the King’s slaves. David heard that Uriah did
not go home and said to him, 'You have had a long journey, why
did you not go home?' Uriah answered, 'David, Israel and Judah
are under canvas and so is the Ark.' In other words, they were
at war and by the way, in Jewish Law, a man who was fighting did
not have intercourse with his wife. He stayed away from his
wife, so that was one thing. The other thing is that the Rabbis
said that he probably had a feeling that something wasn’t kosher
and, "'My Lord, Joab and your majesty’s officers are camping in
the open. How can I go home to eat and drink and sleep with my
wife? By your life I cannot do this.' David then said to Uriah,
'Stay here another day and tomorrow I will let you go.' He kept
pushing this, so Uriah stayed in Jerusalem that day and the next
David invited him to eat and drink with him, made him drunk. In
the evening Uriah went out to lie down on his blanket among the
king’s slaves and did not go home. The following morning, David
wrote a letter to Joab and sent Uriah with it. He wrote in the
letter, "Put Uriah opposite the enemy where the fighting is
fiercest and then pull back and leave him to meet his death."

The presenter appears to be a little taken aback by this assault. She
pauses for a moment, perhaps waiting for other participants to come
to her aid. After a tension filled moment’s silence, she comes to her
own defense.

P: I’m not speaking in self-defence, more than probably what you
say is quite correct. However, I looked up the Encyclopedia
Judaica under Batsheva and there it said that he did not return
but preferred to stay with the servants.

The coordinator does not relent, apparently determined to present
what she believes to be the correct facts.

C: It probably meant that he did not return to his home. He
returned to Jerusalem. They couldn’t have changed the Bible,
this is quite clear.

P: Do you have the Encyclopedia Judaica? Look it up. I must
admit that I was referring to this and I must have got the wrong
interpretation. Now it’s open to discussion on Batsheva.
The presenter tries to open the discussion apparently in the hope that the coordinator will relent. However the coordinator seems to feel obliged to correct other 'mistakes' as well and continues with her critique.

C: There's a further story involved that's in here, too, about first of all, as I understood from the reading in the actual text, this son that was born was not Solomon.

This correction provokes the first contribution by other participants as well.

P2: No, it was Itai.

C: After they were married.

P: Thank you for telling me that, because she gave birth to a son that died and they say "King David was punished" because he took another man's wife into his palace, so his first born was taken away from him.

The coordinator then volunteers to read Nathan's rebuke to David. The group agrees and she reads the parable about the poor man's only lamb. The discussion is opened to the floor.

P4: commences with her interpretation of the events.

P4: When you read the Book of Samuel and you read how the kings lived in those days, they were all corrupt, all of them, even King Solomon, with all his many wives. He was a very wise man but he, in his way, was also corrupt.

P4: makes an assumption about David and a generalization about all kings. This assumption, which is a personal interpretation, goes unchallenged. P5. agrees with this assumption that power corrupts and finds a modern parallel.

P5: And to come back to the present day, in Iraq we have Hussein. Too much power is given to him and as a result he's become corrupt and the whole world is at war with him. Power corrupts and it's quite true.
The theme ‘power corrupts’ rapidly gains consensus.

P2: Even King David who was a wonderful man.

P3: The great quotation of Lord Acton, "power corrupts, absolute power corrupts."

P6: It's still true to this present day.

The study session continues in the same vein with the participants offering different personal interpretations for the deeds of David.

An Analysis of the Session

This session is similar to the Central text centered session in its utilization of traditional interpretation in the presentation and personal subjective interpretation by the participants. In this session we see an aggressive stance by the coordinator in correcting what she perceives to be factual errors in the presentation. This stance causes an element of tension in the group which is sustained until the presenter acknowledges the criticism as being legitimate and thanks the coordinator. The critique, which is forthright when disputing the facts, suddenly dissipates when the discussion moves to the interpretation stage. The coordinator, who plays the role of ‘gate keeper,’ is prepared to let the group make assumptions, generalizations and value judgements based on personal intuition. This position reflects the culture of the study group which encourages criticism of factual errors yet does not engage in interpretive critique.

This study session highlights the fact that subjective interpretation is not only limited to the Psalms but is part of the Hadassah text centered study group culture, manifesting itself in the study of other texts as well. Although the text in this discussion is not a
Psalm but rather an excerpt of prose from the Book of Samuel, the participants do not feel obliged to follow traditional interpretation, relying upon their personal intuition.

Regarding the interaction, this group is far more intimate than the central group and thus the participants feel far more at ease to interject than they do in the Central group. Perhaps from this it may tentatively concluded that formal interaction through the chair in the Central group is probably a function of the size of the group and its internal dynamics, and not necessarily related to its being a text centered group.

Possible Reasons for Subjective Interpretation

Having isolated subjective interpretation as a predominant mode of interpretation in the Hadassah study group it is important to try to understand the reasons for this phenomenon.

A first possible reason is the striving for egalitarianism within the study group. In order for the participants to feel free to make presentations and to contribute, a spirit of respect must prevail when the participant makes her contribution. No participant has precedence because of her prior knowledge or sharper intellectual skills and thus subjective interpretation, which legitimizes intuitive interpretation, is encouraged.

A second possible reason is the sensitivity to the voluntary nature of the group and its social functions. The group depends on the participants' goodwill for its stability and therefore must be highly sensitive to legitimizing the participants' contributions. The group
also strives to be socially cohesive, thus the attempt to steer clear of tension where possible. This striving, as observed in the Beit Hakerem group, is not at all costs. In that group the coordinator preferred conflict to a mistaken presentation of the facts.

Related to the above is the pluralist nature of the group. While the Hadassah Study Groups are culturally homogeneous, religiously they are diverse, ranging from very Orthodox to secular. In order to encourage pluralist membership, there is a consensus that the group will give legitimacy to all points of view, whether religious or secular. This position encourages subjective interpretation as well.

A third reason relates to the nature of the participants in the group. In the Hadassah Study Groups most participants have no prior disciplined experience in the interpretation of Jewish texts. Any attempt to legislate 'objective' interpretation would preclude most of the participants from participating in the study group.

A fourth reason relates to the ages of the participants. Having accumulated a wealth of life experiences, older adults have a tendency to rely on these experiences when analyzing situations. These experiences become reservoirs of latent knowledge surfacing at different times. It could thus be expected that when an older adult interprets a text, s/he would do so from a subjective perspective, relying on his/her personally accumulated life experiences (Peterson 1983).

A fifth possible reason is the feminine composition of the group. According to BeJenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986), subjective knowledge based on personal intuition is an important feature of women's knowledge. In their survey of 135 women from the ages of 16 to 60, at least half were predominantly feminist in their thinking. For these women, "an externally oriented perspective on knowledge and truth eventuates in a new conception of truth as personal, private and subjectively known or intuitive.... Truth now
resides within the person and can negate answers which the outside world supplies" (Belenky et. al. 1986, p.54). While many of the women in the interviews described listening to their 'inner voices' for most of their lives, the move for many towards a subjective perspective occurred after the age of 40 or 50, after the years of raising children, managing the household or working outside of the home. This concurs with the subjective mode of thinking among the Hadassah group participants, all of whom are over the age of 50 with a wealth of personal experience behind them.

Having discovered the prevalence of subjective interpretation in the Hadassah Study Groups and suggested possible reasons, I sought another text centered study circle which studied religious texts with which I could make a comparison. I discovered a newly formed study circle called 'Elul.'

Elul

Elul was formed in 1989 by a group of 25- to 45-year-old academics who wanted to establish an environment which would engage religious and secular men and women in meaningful Torah text study. This Hebrew-speaking group established a study format which included two mornings a week of study, two hours of which were devoted to study in pairs or threes and a third hour comprising a study circle session. My observations of the group took place from September 1992 to March 1993. The group I observed consisted of 30 members with an even balance between men and women and between religious and secular. The Elul curriculum consisted of themes which were decided upon by the curriculum committee. Responsibility for each theme was delegated to different members and they decided upon choice of text to be studied. Each theme would run as long as necessary, ranging from two to six weeks. During the first part of the morning the participants would be
given texts to study and analyze and then they would meet as a study circle. At the commencement of the study circle session, the presenter would make a short presentation followed by a discussion.

A superficial comparison between Elul and Hadassah reveals a number of similarities and differences which are of specific interest to this research.

They are similar in the following:

a. They are both pluralist groups striving for members from all religious persuasions.

b. They are both voluntary groups relying on the participants' goodwill for participation.

They differ in the following ways, among others:

a. The Elul group is co-educational. This important feature will provide us with an opportunity to determine whether subjective interpretation is limited to the Hadassah women's groups or whether it is prevalent in a co-educational environment as well.

b. The members of Elul are much younger than their Hadassah counterparts. This difference will indicate whether age is an influential factor in the preference for subjective interpretation.

c. The Elul group members have had experience in text analysis. Whereas Hadassah strives for universal female participation, Elul has a limited membership. Potential participants have to apply for membership and are accepted only after completing a personal
interview. An important acceptance requirement is the capability of textual analysis. This difference is important, as it will enable us to decide whether subjective interpretation is also predominant in a circle which has experience in textual analysis.

I decided to observe six sessions of the Elul group and to interview two of the founding members.

An Elul Study Circle Session

The Elul group meets in an Arab-style home in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Yemin Moshe. This was the first Jewish neighborhood to be established outside the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem and has since been renovated to become a modern neighborhood attracting many wealthy Anglo-Saxon immigrants.

The session takes place in the living room, where plastic chairs have been placed in a circle. The entrance to the house is on a higher level than the living room and upon descending into the living room one has the sense that all are focusing on one’s entry. If one enters prior to the study circle session, one can notice various groupings of pairs and threes learning texts in the various parts of the room. All these small clusters have large volumes of the Talmud open in front of each participant with accompanying cross reference books and support texts. In the tradition of Jewish learning there is a hum in the room with all members of the mini-groups conversing actively with one another.

At 11.45 a.m. the mini-groups disband for a coffee break and then form a large circle. Upon entering the room, I greet the group leader, who has given me permission to undertake the research, and
look for an empty seat. Besides the group leader, nobody acknowledges my presence and since I am not formally introduced I am convinced that most participants are not aware of my research status, possibly mistaking me for a student who is interested in the substance of the particular study session. A quick glance around the room reveals the presence of 30 participants evenly divided between males and females. Instinctively, I look for revealing signs, trying to identify which participants are religious and which are secular. Among the males this exercise is fairly straightforward as the religious males don crocheted skull caps while the secular members are bare-headed. There is one gentleman wearing a Yankee baseball cap and I ponder which camp he comes from. The religious women are more difficult to identify. The married women who cover their heads for religious reasons are easy to identify, with their diverse headcoverings. The others do not display overt signs except for one who is wearing a long-sleeved blouse and a particularly long skirt on a summer day.

Not all participants form part of the circle. On the higher entrance level there is a young mother who is trying to distract her year-old son, apparently in the hope that he will give her an opportunity to concentrate during the session.

The presenter moves his chair forward, apparently in the hope that all can see him, and commences:

P: I would like to suggest a question for discussion. I realize that the participants have dealt with the first pages. The next week we will study the Mishna. What is the 'shofar' (ram's horn)? At present we have dealt with it in the context of Rosh Hashanah (the New Year festival). Which approaches of the Sages have been presented? What is their point of origin?
This opening by the presenter contrasts sharply with that of Hadassah. In this circle he is able to rely on the preparation of the material in the previous stage and therefore takes it for granted that all are focused and ready for the discussion. He is similar to the Hadassah presenter in that both are responsible for the preparation of the material for the study session and are therefore the first among equals in the session.

Following this question there is a long minute of silence. The participants glance at their preparation partners, pondering whether to attempt to answer the question. Finally the silence is broken by a young woman who phrases the question which she and her partner grappled with in their preparation session.

P2: We asked: Where did the association between Rosh Hashanah and the seventh month come from? We found a reference to the festival of the ingathering of the harvest. We found a reference to the fact at this time of the year the sun and the moon are equal, one is not greater than the other.

P3: What about the sun?

P2: The sun is compared to a bridegroom who comes out of his bridal chamber. It is the time that time is of the same length (the equinox). Perhaps this is why it is called 'Hag Ha'asif,' the word referring to 'sof' (end) the end of the year when the summer ends.

P2's contribution encourages a show of hands from different parts of the room. The presenter gives a nod to a bearded religious participant.

P4: We went in a different direction. Regarding the shofar. The beginning is not the simple sound of the 'teruah.' It is a loud sound, a sound of people crying out who are stirred up. In this regard, we validated our interpretations through cross referencing the word 'teruah,' which we found in the Concordance. This stirring is due to the judgement which is referred to in the Mishnah: "During four periods the world is judged.... on Rosh Hashanah all the inhabitants in the world pass before Him like sheep (to be counted)." This is the day
which arouses man’s anxieties like a siren. There is a fear of G-d that He will not care about one.... What they needed at the time was a noise that could breach the wall of a city.

P4.’s comments do not arouse any reaction from the other participants. From the far corner a hand is raised and women without a headcovering is given the nod by the presenter.

P6: In my opinion, the word ‘teruah ‘ may be derived from ‘lehitroea’ (to totter). It could be that the tune creates a movement which causes a vibration (in the shofar). In this sense there is a connection with the Day of Judgement. The judgement is like the base of a pendulum which sways evenly with a vibration. Or it could be that the judgement is a central bar in a child’s toy on which a pyramid can be built.

A secular gentlemen sitting next to me intervenes.

P7: I do not understand.

P6. thinks for a moment and then continues.

P6: I’ll start from the beginning. All the festivals are anchored in nature, except for Rosh Hashanah.

From my other side comes another interjection.

P8: There is the creation of man.

P6 seems not to take any notice of the comment and continues.

P6: There are three levels. The first is that there was no judgement after Noah. There is a promise that in the future the covenant will be fulfilled. The second level is the covenant with Abraham. This is a conditional covenant which will be fulfilled if we fulfill the covenant. The third level is the festivals. There is a balance between them regarding their connection to nature and history. Among other nations, are there festivals of moral judgement? Among the festivals there are those which are anchored in nature and those which are anchored in history. In this instance a personal judgement is added and every individual is judged. Therefore Rosh Hashanah has a uniqueness. This is a festival which is natural, historical and moral, and on the moral we are judged.
Another woman raises her hand and upon receipt of permission she takes the floor.

P9: We made a distinction which was not similar to yours (she turns to P6.). The sound of the 'tekiah' (a technical name) is consecutive while the 'teruah' is broken...

An Analysis of the Elul Session

This extract highlights the types of interpretation employed in the Elul session. There is a fair mixture of both traditional interpretation and subjective interpretation. P4. seems to be a traditionalist, relying on cross references and other sources, while P6. exemplifies the subjectivists. P6. makes a clear connection between the words 'teruah' and 'lehitroea,' which are derived from different roots. This casual connection goes unchallenged, deemed legitimate by the group. She is challenged when she makes an assertion that Rosh Hashanah is not anchored in nature. The group is however generally tolerant of her subjective interpretation. This is highlighted by the disjointed connection between P6.‘s explanation of ‘teruah’ and her explanation of the unique aspect of Rosh Hashanah.

As the session proceeds, the participants become more creative in their interpretation of the extracts, usually commencing with a subjective ‘it conjures in me’ or ‘I feel that.’ No debate ensues on the different interpretations offered and questions which are asked are those which call for more clarity. Even interpretations which are totally non-traditional are not challenged by the traditional participants and the legitimacy granted pluralist opinions is strictly adhered to.

As with the two other sessions discussed above, Elul has a non-confrontational dynamic of interaction. The participants limit their questions to those of clarification with the aim being to ensure that the pluralist environment be maintained.
There is a noticeable difference in the modes of subjective interpretation between the Hadassah and Elul groups. In the Hadassah groups the subjective interpretations are presented as intuitive without any attempt to justify them. In the Elul group the interpretations are presented in a context which enables other participants to ask for clarification. It is clearly evident that when exercising subjective interpretation there are unwritten rules. One of the rules is the importance of interpreting only on the basis of texts which are placed before the group. Thus during one of my observations, I witnessed the anger of one of the participants when another presented an interpretation of Rabbi Kook’s philosophy based on a text which was unknown to the other members of the group.

Having isolated subjective interpretation as a predominant mode in Elul, I shall try to explain this phenomenon.

Possible Reasons for the Use of Subjective Interpretation at Elul

Based on interviews with three of the participants I discovered that Elul’s use of subjective interpretation also related to an ideological perception of the relationship between the reader and the text. As a founding participant said:

We do not rely on the interpretations of the text. The commentators like Rashi (a classical commentator) are just voices who certainly do not have the monopoly on the text. It is therefore out of bounds to negate the status of the reader in relationship to the text. The status of the reader is either higher or equal to the status of the text.

This secular participant grounded her viewpoint in what she perceived to be the egalitarian nature of the religious text. A non-traditional stance of this nature gives even the most secular members the opportunity to offer subjective interpretations which are not grounded in tradition at all.
An alternative traditional explanation was offered by a founding religious member.

This approach to learning is the traditional approach. In the times of the Talmud the Sages used to blend their study of text with their personal experiences. This is the meaning of Oral Law. In this context it was the traditionalists who made Oral Law into Written Law, closing the book and devoiding the text of personal relevance.

This approach views subjective interpretation as being vital to the continuation of Judaic learning. Its vitality lies in its ability to be relevant to Jews of different ages who have different concerns.

Another probable reason for the use of subjective interpretation relates to the pluralist nature of the group. In order to maintain a healthy dynamic in the wake of the heterogeneity of views, extreme sensitivity to diverse views must be practiced. This sensitivity encourages subjective interpretation.

Subjective Interpretation

In discussing the Hadassah groups' preference for subjective interpretation, I suggested the inexperience with textual analysis, the senior ages of the participants and their being of the female sex as being prime reasons. However, the Elul group demonstrates that even without these characteristics a pluralist study circle studying religious texts has a tendency towards subjective interpretation. Thus while it is difficult to determine a hierarchy of factors which promote subjective interpretation, the pluralist nature of the group is certainly one of the more dominant factors.

The concept 'subjective interpretation' requires clarification. What renders it subjective? On this matter one may adopt alternative contrasting positions, as reflected in the two study circles.
The position which characterizes the Hadassah groups would maintain that there is no method in interpretation. People may legitimately interpret texts according to their personal perceptions of reality, life experiences and understanding of language. Attention need not be given to the culture of the author, history of the text or previous traditional understandings. From this point of view, differences of opinion would be expected without any attempt made to validate any of the varying opinions. This mode of interpretation, using Madison's terminology, may be termed 'phenomenological hermeneutics' (Madison 1988).

An alternative position, which characterizes the Elul group, would hold that even subjective interpretation must have a method by which the interpretation can be validated. A lack of method would render interpretation arbitrary, without any disciplinary rigor. What makes the mode subjective is its lack of concern regarding the author's intent, his/her cultural bias, and/or the history and traditions of the text. While an advocate of objective interpretation would seek the interpretation intended by the author, an advocate of subjective interpretation endows the text with an existence which is detached from the author, granting it an independent status and thereby inviting the reader to give it his/her own phenomenological interpretation.

These contrasting points of view seem to be reflected in the 'debate' between Hirsch and Gadamer regarding legitimate hermeneutical interpretation. Hirsch, in his treatise 'Validity in Interpretation' (1967), argues strongly for the importance of method in interpretation. While both Hirsch and Gadamer have their antecedents in Husserlian phenomenology (Madison 1988) -- validating non-objective interpretation of texts -- Hirsch believes in the
utilization of scientific principles as advocated by positivist orientated philosophers of the natural sciences in the interpretation of texts. He maintains that a lack of scientific method leads to arbitrariness resulting in interpretation not being a respectable business (Madison 1988).

In his ‘Truth and Method’ (1978), Gadamer does not specifically negate the use of method in interpretation. He argues against the use of scientific method in hermeneutics, defending the humanities against the encroachment of science. Hirsch understands this to mean a total negation of the use of method by Gadamer and thus his concern for the ultimate respectable of interpretation. Madison and Palmer (1969) take issue with Hirsch’s understanding of Gadamer and maintain that while Gadamer opposes the use of scientific method in interpretation he does not totally reject method. Thus even Gadamer would be concerned at a totally subjective mode of interpretation which could not be subject to external critique.

Having identified subjective interpretation as being a predominant form of interpretation in the text interactive mode, can it be reconciled with traditional interpretation?

A Traditional Approach to Subjective Interpretation and Adult Jewish Learning

The use of subjective interpretation in the text centered interaction mode has important educational implications. Prior to this discussion, it is important to highlight the issue with a traditional approach to interpretation, that of Maimonides, whose approach to adult Jewish learning was quoted previously.
In the introductory essay to his commentary on the 10th chapter of Tractate Sanhedrin, Maimonides lists three approaches to interpretation.

a. The first approach, which is adopted by the majority, understands the text in its literal form. It does not believe in figurative interpretations; all that is literally written is believed to exist in reality.

Maimonides scorns the followers of this approach who, as a result of their limitations, do not understand the words of the Sages. Furthermore, as a result of this simplistic understanding and teaching of texts they cause the words of the Torah to be ridiculed both by the ignorant and knowledgable alike. This approach has detrimental educational implications, causing people to associate those who abide by the Torah with small mindedness and stupidity rather than with wisdom and understanding.

b. The second approach is similar to the first in its literal understanding of the texts. Also like the first, this approach is widely followed. The difference between this approach and the previous is that the followers of the first approach are 'believers' and as a result of their simplistic beliefs they cause the Torah to be ridiculed, while the followers of the second approach, whom Maimonides also scorns, ridicule the Torah themselves. Because they misunderstand the words of the Sages, they deride their ideas and point to the superior knowledge of the philosophers.

c. A third approach is that of a very small minority. The followers of this approach understand that the words of the Sages can be understood on a number of levels. Many writings are couched in obscure or figurative language, inviting the scholar to interpret the
text and uncover its meaning. They realize that a number of texts cannot be understood literally and that in order to understand the true wisdom of the Sages, tools of interpretation must be employed. Maimonides endorses this approach and believes it to be the approach for the understanding of Torah.

Having justified the use of figurative interpretation, a question must be posed regarding the validity of subjective interpretation according to Maimonides. In accepting Hirsch's point of view, which was adopted by the Elul group and requires method in interpretation, would Maimonides accept subjective interpretation?

On the basis of this, Maimonides' essay, it is difficult to reach a conclusion. However, the discussion may be enriched on the basis of an understanding of Maimonides by Simeon Rawidowicz.

In his essay 'On Interpretation,' Rawidowicz claims that Maimonides was the champion of 'interpretatio.' He explains 'interpretatio' as opposed to 'explicatio' and 'commentatio.'

'Commentatio' and 'explicatio' are tools for easing the burden of 'document,' reliving, bringing nearer the somewhat remote in it, paraphrasing an older statement, substantially repeating the 'gist' of the document thus explained. This activity is mainly dictated by an attitude of identification between the commentator (and his 'surroundings') and the commentated 'document,' its meaning and its purpose.

In contradistinction to 'explicatio' and 'commentatio,' I would understand by 'interpretatio,' with which I deal here, an attempt at reshaping either the 'document' interpreted or the world it came from. Here an act of transference is always involved. An act of invasion takes place. 'Interpretatio' lives by crisis in various degrees. The crisis that stimulates it will become its criterion. 'Interpretatio' can be characterized by a particular attitude of the interpreter who struggles between the preserving and rejecting some forms or content of the world at his interpretive 'mercy,' by a tension between continuation and rebellion, tradition and innovation. It drives its strength both from a deep attachment to the 'text' and an 'alienation' from it, a certain distance, a gap which has to be bridged. 'Interpretatio' is the 'way out' which man is compelled to 'take it' or 'break it' (Rawidowicz, 1979 p.47).
The participants of the Elul group and possibly Hadassah may strongly identify with Rawidowicz's 'interpretatio' and his understanding of Maimonides. They probably feel a loyalty to the text, on the one hand, and an alienation, on the other, due to their commitment to modernity. Both, however, may go further than Rawidowicz in their license to interpret, relying on personal intuition and creatively interpreting the text to align it with their personal life experiences. Thus their qualifications for 'interpretatio' may be on a level which is lower than that suggested by Rawidowicz.

Prior to giving these study circles' methods of interpretation Maimonides' endorsement, it is important to question Rawidowicz's understanding of Maimonides. Does Rawidowicz not take too much liberty in reading figuratively into Maimonides what he says literally? It could be claimed that Rawidowicz's use of 'interpretatio' is far reaching. In Maimonides' essay, the justification for figurative interpretation is that the Sages specifically used figurative language with the intention of their words being figuratively interpreted. To support his argument Maimonides cites the metaphorical language of Proverbs, Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes, which are all couched in figurative language. Rawidowicz disregards the original intention of the author and feels that the onus of 'interpretatio' is on contemporary man because of the gap between contemporary man and the text. Thus while a text could have originally been written literally with a specific intention, the change in knowledge and belief systems may 'outdate' the original text, requiring a figurative interpretation. This 'traditional' understanding of Maimonides which disagrees with Rawidowicz would probably require a far more defined system of interpretation than the ones which I observed, thus bringing into question the validity of subjective interpretation.
The text centered interaction mode, as reflected by its name, focuses on text study with interpretation being both classical and subjective. In their striving to understand the text, the participants of the study circle in this mode seem to attach a secondary value to the social interaction process of the group. This is in contrast to the participants of the social interaction mode which will be described in the next chapter.
The Study Circle as Social Interaction

A second mode of interaction which dominated the study groups was the social interaction mode. In this mode the study group takes the form of a social discussion group with the participants enjoying social interaction in a learning framework. The success of this group is reflected in its ability to involve as many participants in the discussion as possible, often at the expense of having a focused discussion. The tension between encouraging non-focused free discussion and the aspiration to maintain a semblance of focused study is one of the issues which will be discussed in this chapter.

The unique characteristics of this mode are as follows:

a. The primary function of the text is secondary: to serve as a background or trigger for a discussion.
b. The subject of discussion wanders tangentially and invites free associations.
c. The discussion is relaxed, without challenging or searching questions asked by the participants.
d. The general framework of the topic is maintained with the participants feeling a commitment to the topic.

The key concept in this mode of interaction is 'social interaction'. Indeed all the modes of interaction of the study group are characterized by social interaction since they all take place in a social framework i.e., the study group. The uniqueness of this mode of interaction is its accent on the social process. In contrast to the text centered interaction mode which utilizes the social interaction for the task of understanding the text, in this mode the act of coming together and interacting as a group is a goal which supersedes that of text study, and its success is determined by this process.
The study group which moved most consistently into the social interaction mode was Talpiot Mizrach and thus the dynamics of this mode will be illustrated by a description of a Talpiot Mizrach social interaction dominated study session.

The Talpiot Mizrach Group

The Talpiot Mizrach group is the youngest of all the study groups. This group was formed in September 1990 and thus my observations took place as it was going through the formation stage. Participants come from Talpiot Mizrach and Gilo, both relatively new suburbs of Jerusalem. Talpiot Mizrach lies at the southeast end and Gilo lies at the southern end of the city. These suburbs are in close proximity although not geographically connected. Their study groups were linked together as they both grew out of new branches of Hadassah which could not muster sufficient membership to survive independently.

Both Gilo and Talpiot Mizrach consist primarily of apartment buildings which have three- or four-room apartments. These are considered ‘middle class’ areas of Jerusalem and have attracted people who have recently immigrated to Israel. In the study group there are eight to 10 participants, the youngest being 50 year old and the oldest 70. These women meet socially outside of Hadassah and are attracted to the study group either because of their participation in a study group in America and/or as a result of the participation of their friends.

A Social Interaction Study Session

In this group the typical session commences at 10 a.m with tea. The participants straggle in to the host apartment and engage in relaxed small talk until 10.30. Tea and cake are laid out on the dinner table, which is placed at the side of a modest-sized living room. The participants do not sit around the table, but rather mingle with a
cup of tea or coffee in one hand and a piece of cake in the other. At about 10.30 they sit down in the living room. Three participants take out their Hadassah Jewish Ethics book, which is being studied.

The coordinator’s presence in this group is hardly felt. In a non-assertive manner she manages the administrative business of the group and carefully takes a back seat when the group goes into session. In her introduction, the coordinator informs all that R. has undergone a leg operation and is immobile. Those participants who have been to visit her describe R.’s situation in detail while those who have not, carefully note down the details of how to get to R.’s apartment. The coordinator then asks for a volunteer to make the presentation at the following meeting and M. volunteers immediately. F. volunteers to host the next meeting and the invitation cards are passed around for the participants to fill in their addresses.

The coordinator introduces the presenter and the topic of discussion which is ‘Just and Unjust Wars.’ The presenter is about 55 years old. She has notes in front of her as well as an open copy of the Hadassah Jewish Ethics study guide, which was compiled for the Hadassah study groups in America.

P: Had this discussion taken place as scheduled, I think the whole discussion would have been different and I know that I was filled with it since we are still talking about it, but since this is three months later I find a lot more meaning in our text and I would like to share some of it with you. I have chosen two topics for discussion that I hope that we can all discuss.

Typical of the social centered group the presenter calls the presentation a ‘discussion.’ The concept ‘learning’ is notably absent.

The subject, as we know, is ‘Just and Unjust Wars,’ page 47 of our texts. This is taken directly from the Bible, Deuteronomy 21:20, where the laws of warfare are stated clearly. Israel is bidden to display human kindness even in wartime and you get all kinds of different human kindnesses offered and you have to remember that this is in a time when the Syrians were not doing
things in a human way and they were slaughtering and destroying the people. Therefore we have the exemptions: If a new house been built, but not dedicated yet, the person is not called to the army. If a vineyard has been planted but not harvested, he is also exempted. If a man has spoken to a women in marriage, but not gotten married yet, he is also exempted. And they added on if someone is afraid of war, they should be exempted too, because it is like an illness -- to be afraid can be spread and can spoil the army. So the conduct of war is therefore to be guided by reason and mercy. One of the statements that they put into this section is that fruit trees are not to be destroyed and this is something to discuss later, because to me that is another kind of war. As I said, the Israelite Kings were famed for this kind of humanity and it was at a time when Syrian monarchs delighted in savagery and made it a rule to demonstrate force and complicated deals.

At this point the presentation resembles a text centered study group session. The presenter has developed a theme and quoted the relevant sources. All participants listen attentively without making any attempt to intervene. The mode almost changes dramatically as the presenter makes the following contemporary reference:

P: One of the things that was stated also is that peace was to be asked for before entering into war and part of the Gulf War...

This reference to the Gulf War provokes an immediate correction to the beginning of her statement.

P2: Offered

P: What did I say, asked? To be offered. President Bush in the Gulf War did negotiate and I felt this was right along with what we were talking about.

The presenter continues her original presentation and participants who were about to enter the discussion seem to be a little disappointed and restrain themselves from doing so.

P: If an offer of peace is accepted no-one is harmed in personal possession and the city becomes 1) subject to Israel, 2) they had to abandon adultery and 3) they had to adhere the seven commandments given to the descendants of Noah, and they were: to establish courts of justice, prohibition of blasphemy, idolatry,
incest, murder, robbery and unnatural cruelty. If they didn't accept the peace terms then, of course, war was held. And all the people had to be killed because otherwise we have remnants who are still idolaters and you didn't want to have that as a temptation to the Jewish women. When Joshua arrived at the walls to the Promised Land, before the Israelites entered it, he asked the people whoever wished could leave the country or whoever decided to make peace, this desire would be granted or who determined war...

The presenter continues with her presentation, explaining how Joshua has fulfilled the Divine command in his battles. She then moves on to the Biblical distinction between a voluntary war and an obligatory war.

The Bible talks about two different kinds of war, complete destruction of the inhabitants, as I mentioned before, or the war of aggression. The complete destruction was to those who inhabit the Land of Israel and nobody was to remain alive. That was when God took... to Canaan. The war of aggression and conquest had the offer of peace. Biblical law states that all wars are just, but that's not the way we look at it. Rabbinical law offers more. The Rabbinical position places legal conditions at different degrees which may impede embarking on war situations. Our Rabbis are uncomfortable with the Biblical decision of calling the wars just and they said there were two types of wars. The Rabbinical position is 'Milchemet Reshit,' which is involuntary war. If you remember 'Milchamah of Mitzvah' was the war against the seven nations. Against Amalek, the defense of Israel against... today we still hold true.

The presenter has touched upon issues of profound ethical curiosity, including the imperative to destroy all in the war against the 'seven nations.' The participants do not react, leaving the agenda to the prerogative of the presenter. In keeping with her own agenda she decides to raise the issues of ecology.

The first thing I would like to open the discussion to is the 'baal tashchit' (do not destroy): that you should not destroy the trees and in our book it's called the 'scorched earth policy.' The Rabbis extended the consequence of the 'baal tashchit' (the prohibition of destroying edible objects) to any act of unprincipled waste or destruction of things that can be... to man, reckless demolition... since everything is His creation.
She then links up the Rabbinical prohibition with the ecological destruction caused by the Iraqis during the Gulf War.

Saddam Hussein, I think one of the worst things that he did and made everybody the angriest, was spilling the oil and causing the terrible things that he did to the water system and the water animals, the birds.

The reference to the Gulf War raises an immediate reaction.

P3: Are the oil spills still burning?

Suddenly a discussion develops.

P4: Yes, we just don’t hear about it.

P6: I don’t think they’ve even kept one yet, but they are working on it.

P5: But we are so removed from it physically.

P: We are not physically removed from environmental problems.

P7: They said it’s even reached China.

P4: Aren’t we still suffering the effects of Chernobyl?

P5: Possibly.

This discussion is tangentially related to the presentation. There is no reference made to the Biblical injunctions nor is there reference made to the premise that Saddam Hussein’s actions should be governed by Rabbinical norms.

At this point, the presenter refers to an article which links war with ecological damage.

P: I’m not going to read this article to you. I’m just going to read the last paragraph because she goes on to say how many liters of fuel it takes to train one hour of flight of a Phantom. Preparation of war is a consumer of fuel, all of these things that are damaging to the environment. She says: "War wastes and war pollutes, we can no longer see.... All war is an assault on the environment. Just as we must constantly ask for
whom the bell tolls, so must we ask ourselves just who’s being
vanquished. The environment is every person’s affair and war is
an environmental issue."

My feeling is that this is another kind of war and that it is an
unjust war and therefore I think we should take some time to
discuss it. While we were in the U.S. recently we attended a
‘seder’ (Passover evening ritual which includes the telling of
the Exodus story and the eating of a symbol-rich meal) of a
group that I wanted to tell you about. In the area that we were
in, we were in the Washington area. Our children belong to a
group, Shomrei Adama (protectors of the environment) and this is
based on the ‘baal tashchit’ that we just talked about, shall
not destroy the trees. They had an environmental ‘seder’ on the
eightth night and it was a ‘seder’ dedicated to the environment
and I would like to read some things from here because I think
it’s very meaningful.

The presenter continues to read passages from the text used during
the evening, making a comparison between the plagues which struck
Egypt and contemporary destruction of the environment. She then
describes the different rituals and relates how enthused she became
about this issue upon her return to Israel. After this monologue she
tries to revive the discussion.

I wanted to ask you what you feel about the connection between
war and war against the environment, environmental abuse. Do you
feel that this fits in with our discussion?

This question leads to a response from P3

P3: I have a theory that the only way we will finish wars is if
we have something worse to contend with. Like I jokingly said,
what if we were invaded from Mars. Well we don’t have to be
invaded from Mars, we have an environment which we share
together and it may become so untenable that we’ll all have to
work together. Maybe if we have something so horrible facing us
that we’ll have to pull together, maybe we’ll have peace.
C: The anti-nuclear proliferation treaties, making this on a
worldwide basis... that’s a worldwide thing, it’s already
happening.
This response is only tangentially connected to the presenter’s question; no attempt is made to consider seriously the question which is posed.

P3: That’s what I said. If we found that the ozone layer had a big enough hole to kill the world, maybe we’ll really get together. We’ll have something bigger than our own little fights.

C: Nuclear power proliferation, which is a very big threat on a worldwide basis. Nuclear armaments -- there are still large storage facilities.

P4: Which need to be destroyed?

C: And there are efforts of treaties to make this possible.

P6: I really don’t see it really worldwide, I’m not sure that Iraq...

The session has drifted into a discussion about the threat of nuclear war with the presenter making no attempt to focus the discussion.

P5: Hold it, the US and Russia, up until five years ago, we were like this against each other and it was on the basis of defusing the nuclear power armaments that the opening began in Eastern Europe.

P4: I trust that the US and Russia and other countries are trying to end, but I don’t trust countries...

P3: (Interrupting) I don’t trust Iraq or Libya either or other such countries. And South Africa and there are some countries in South America. All the South American countries have subscribed to non-nuclear proliferation. I think that in time it may be possible to convince even those Arab countries. If it happened to the big powers, which seemed impossible -- it certainly seemed impossible five years ago -- there is hope.

P6: The stronger factor than nuclear proliferation is an economic factor. We’ve had visitors this past week from Portugal, from Poland. Let’s face it, you know why they are here. The United States twisted their arms: you want aid, Israel is our friend.

All participants are now drawn into the discussion. P2., who was silent until this point, is now motivated to make her contribution.
P2: That’s what caused Russia to pull back. She reached a point economically with no place to go and I feel in the end, in this area, in the Middle East, if we could pinch with Middle Eastern oil so that they become poor and don’t have money for arms and they have to turn for outside help, we would begin to see a..., maybe democracy, maybe the people in the countries would feel...

P2.’s comment emphasizes economic influences on war.

P3: That’s what Karl Marx said, economics is the basis for...

P5: He is right, except in the way...

P4: His direction was not necessarily the right direction but the basic premises.

P3: Economics is the bottom line.

P6: Does that mean that there’s nothing we can do now?

P3: We have to continue to keep this on the forefront of things that need attention.

P2. is apparently encouraged by the discussion precipitated by her comment, and describes a personal project.

P2: Speaking of little things, I know that there’s a market for heavy aluminum, a thing that covers the... so I wrote to the Post and I said, it’s not feasible for a family to save these little pieces because a kilo... but I said as a school project it might be wonderful. You have one day when everybody brings in the whole family, the whole neighborhood, all kinds of projects, you weigh it, things like that and towards the end of the year... First of all, she never answered me. The only thing that they would do, if you save enough it would go to the Post’s Fund, except where my daughter lives the school would get excited about the Post’s Fund, but they’d get excited about buying something for the school, but apparently they don’t want it enough to push it.

This reference is not at all related to the previous discussion about the threat of nuclear war, yet is related to the ecological issues which were raised by the presenter. This change in focus goes unchallenged and thus a discussion about recycling ensues.
P3: There aren't many companies in the business of recycling. I understand there are only two in the country and they are experimenting in two communities.

P4: It's a vicious circle, because what's the point of collecting if there's nobody going to buy it from you? But whose going to start up recycling machinery if they're not sure it's going to be collected? Where's the starting point? I don't know.

P5: I happened to catch a few minutes on TV yesterday. They were talking about recycling cans and it seems that the companies themselves got into it.

P: 95% of cans are recycled.

P4: There are so many cans here, that's also recyclable aluminum. When I think about it, if we get the kids involved, I was a teacher and I know what it could have meant to the children. You have competitions and things like that so they become involved.

The conversation once more reverts to the Gulf War, this time focusing on the recycling of the plastic which was removed from the sealed rooms in all homes. P2. once again takes the initiative.

P2: It could be done as an educational project. If you remember on Thursday, 20th February, it (the Gulf War) ended. At that time we were told we could take apart our (sealed) rooms and we were told not to do anything with the plastic, to keep it and an hour later they came out with a statement to take your plastic to the local schools. I don't know how many people did that. I would guess that most people didn't do that, because the job of taking off the masking tape was bigger than opening up the windows. Most people just threw it in the garbage.

P4: They asked you not to throw it in the garbage, that I remember distinctly, but they only brought it once to the schools and then if you were ready later...

P3: School was out Friday, we had Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, until Sunday, three days when people had these things around. It's an ideal that's very valuable and I think it's something that should be kept in mind.

Hadassah's role in the preservation of the environment is then referred to.
P3: I think we were talking whether at the Hadassah Convention they’d talked about environment and recycling.

P4: It was one of the resolutions. One of the resolutions was..., but I didn’t get the impression that they would initiate one.

The discussion then moves to ecology programs.

P3: I heard on the radio the other day, they’re having an ecology program at Binyanei Ha’Uma, all kinds of companies are going to be there. It’s today and tomorrow, lots of companies and government agencies. There should be someone to say let’s begin to do something. Especially the bins in the neighborhoods.

P4: Even the ‘Va’ad Lemaan Hahayal’ (Soldiers’ Welfare Committee) newspaper bins have been taken out of some areas.

The discussion reverts back to the Gulf War.

P5: ...Yet think of what President Bush did. Did it ever occur to us prior to his initiation of the coalition that anybody could have got these countries together to fight a common enemy? The fact is that for whatever cause, those people who want say we did it for oil, the fact is that I feel that we did it for a vicious enemy. The fact is that Bush, through strong leadership, and I don’t know if there is any hope in the world except for the ‘Mashiah,’ for anything but strong leadership. In the way they’re being decapitated and annihilated, it’s very dangerous to be a leader, but when something affects the world, we have to hope that only through strong leadership can something like this happen.

The presenter looks at her watch, apparently sensing that the session is entering its final stage. She tries to re-establish control without interrupting the discussion.

P: Can we go back to the reasons that we feel that Bush went into war? Last night at the Forum it was stated by Dr. Joel Steinberg, three reasons. One is the issue of oil, the whole world was concerned about it. Two, the stability of the region is very much a part of Bush’s thinking because he doesn’t want
to shake up any of the borders. He wants things to stay the way they are. Three, he is very concerned about nuclear weapons, because Iraq has such a supply of nuclear warfare that he was very concerned, especially because Saddam was threatening all the time.

C: Nuclear weapons in the hands of the wrong people.

P: There were three main reasons according to this lecturer last night for why Bush was so strong.

P2: So what we can do about it is encourage and strengthen leadership, because only through leadership, you back up your candidates, you start with your small area, graduate to large areas, to government.

The group participants offer opinions regarding possible areas of involvement without coming to any consensus. Following this brief interchange, the presenter makes an attempt to steer the discussion back to the issues with which she opened.

P: We still have another issue and that is: How do the rules in the Biblical passages that I read to you before refer to the Israeli army today and what is going on today?

The participants do not express interest in discussing the issue and continue talking about the environment.

P3: One last thing. You had an environmental ‘seder,’ (ceremonious meal) about 10 years ago already. There was a Tu Bishvat (a name of a festival) ‘seder’ in Jewish schools in the States and that was environmental and that was a way of having Tu Bishvat become a holiday that had meaning for children who didn’t live in Israel.

P4: This Shomrei Adama is a new organization. It was started in a chapter in the Washington area and it became national in a very short time. This was the fifth ‘seder’ that we attended. We went to five ‘seders,’ but this was interesting, it was different.

P6: I just heard on the BBC; Kenya has plans for planting trees and they think it’s so wonderful. Why didn’t they mention Israel? We’ve planting since 1901.

P3: I stood at the bus station plenty of days collecting money.
P2: I’ll never forgetting pulling out of Piraeus after visiting the Acropolis and looking at the barren land of Greece and then coming into Israel, into Haifa.

C: Tree planting is done in Jordan, too.

The presenter’s attempts to finally focus the discussion on wars seem to bear fruit when P2. makes a connection between religious wars and the elements.

P2: Talking about religious war and the elements. Rabbi Riskin wrote in Friday’s paper on Suicide as Murder. He called Israel’s army a just army...

P: That’s what I would like to talk about now. The excerpt of a message that was given only at the Peace for Galilee Campaign. I was surprised, because my kids have been in the army. I’ve never discussed this with them. I know they all got Bibles when they went in. We never talked about the things they were taught. They always came home to tired. Here it says some of the things that I was wondered if our boys were being taught. This is what I wanted to discuss, what you feel the Israeli army should have as a religious army. Rabbi Riskin stated they should be...

This focus does not last long as the discussion moves associatively. After talking about the army, the discussion moves to the contemporary political situation. Once again the presenter tries to rescue her point of discussion and once again encounters little support.

Finally the session ends with formal announcements regarding the time, date and address of the next study group session.

Analysis of Social Interaction Study Session

The study session opens in a manner which resembles the text centered study group. There is a formal topic which has a defined curriculum. The group has chosen to use a textbook which is brought to the session by some participants and to which the presenter refers. The presenter opens with a presentation which defines the topic and the
area of discussion. Participants are invited to participate in the discussion based on questions formulated by the presenter. This transfer of authority by the presenter to the group is interpreted by the group to signify a change in mode. The attention which the group pays to the presenter in her presentation is reflected by the associative manner in which it refers to the topic without even attempting to answer the 'official' discussion questions.

This process reveals the dual agenda of the study session. The first agenda consists of study, while the second consists of social discussion. These agendas sometimes complement each other, sometimes run parallel and are seldom in tension. Despite the potential conflict between these agendas, the session functions harmoniously for the following reasons:

a. The presenter guards her role of gatekeeper of the formal study agenda judiciously, yet encourages the group to enjoy themselves socially and engage in tangential social discussion.

b. The group respects the authority of the presenter. The participants encourage her to make her prepared presentation and patiently wait for her permission before commencing with their social discussion.

c. The group is careful to ensure that the discussion remains within defined boundaries and thus is careful not to undermine the topic presented by the presenter.

Conditions which Precipitate the Social Interaction Mode

Utilizing Schwab's (1965) four common places (variables): the milieu, the students (participants), the teacher (the functionaries) and the subject matter, I will examine the Talpiot Mizrach study group, showing why it was conducive for social interaction. Two of the four
variables are constant: the milieu and the participants. The functionaries and the subject matter are dynamic, changing from session to session.

1. The Milieu and Participants
The Talpiot Mizrach group was established by a group of friends whose social ties preceded the founding of the study group. A norm of social interaction was thus inculcated and continued by those who joined the group at a later stage. The size of the group is small, eight to ten participants, maintaining an intimacy. This group size, coupled with the relaxed atmosphere, ensures that participants feel free to enter the discussion without feeling self-conscious and without having to raise their hands.

2. The Subject Matter
In this group there is allegiance to the general topic, even though the discussion is associative. The role of the subject matter is to be of substance and to stimulate social discussion. Taking this into account, any subject which is both of substance and has contemporary relevance is suitable. As is demonstrated by this session and other sessions observed, most topics shared these two characteristics, making the study session successful.

3. The Functionaries
In the social interaction discussion group the coordinator is relaxed and plays a passive role in the group dynamic. The only first of all equals is the presenter who knows that it is her responsibility to both provide a prepared presentation and to stimulate social interaction. Without a formal gatekeeper the participants feel free to enter into social discussion without feeling a need to discuss seriously the issues which the presenter has put forward.
Activity Oriented Participants

The participants of the social interaction study groups seem to fit into the activity oriented category which Houle (1961) found to be one of the three principal categories of adult learners. In his seminal research conducted in Chicago, he found that adult learners may be divided into three categories of learners: those who are goal oriented, those who are activity oriented and those who are learning oriented. In his category of activity oriented, he found the seeking of social companionship to be a major factor. According to Houle:

The adult education institution... is an open and socially acceptable place for meeting people and making friends (Houle 1961, p.19).

In the social interaction study group there seems to be an important stress on social companionship. The social casual talk is relaxed. All participants are encouraged to feel comfortable and participate and there is a general feeling of friendship.

Adult Learning and Social Interaction: Needs and Wants

In this group, as with the other Hadassah study groups, many of the participants are retired and some are over the age of 65. Therefore, in examining the interaction within the group I found it useful to consult the literature on educational gerontology in order to gain insights into the interactions I observed.

Peterson (1983), in relating to the older learner, stresses the importance of distinguishing between 'needs' and 'wants' in educational programming. He defines educational needs as those areas of weakness in knowledge, attitudes and skills which older people have as perceived by outside agencies. Educational wants are the desires articulated by the participants themselves. These may differ from the perceived needs and must be met for successful programming.
Mcclusky (n.d.) list five educational needs of older learners of which there are two that are pertinent to our study group:

a. **Expressive needs.** These are needs for participation that is engaged for its own sake. The gratification of expressive needs should be immediate with the educational session judged on its ability to satisfy these needs. The recognition of expressive needs in all educational settings is important and particularly in those of older adults. While an older adult may register for a course with defined cognitive outcomes the benefit of the course must be seen beyond its success in conveying a set of cognitive facts. An example of expressive needs is social relations among the participants. Older adults who do not live within a family or community structure may look for the fulfillment of their social needs within the confines of a group educational activity. The "Development of personal friendships and contacts and maintenance of these relationships through shared activities and collegial undertakings provide great satisfaction and comfort to older persons" (Peterson 1983, p.136).

In our group there are participants who are widowed and live alone thus this study session is an important social outlet. As well those who are retired may not have access to an outside social framework which enables them to socially interact. Thus the study group by legitimizing social talk gives recognition to this need and promotes its fulfillment.

b. **Influence needs.** Many people of different ages have the need to influence society and bring about a social change. For some this requires affirmative action while for others the mere discussion of the issues and the contemplation of action suffices. In this study session, at least twice, the discussion related to ways of bringing about social change. During the discussion on ecology P4 made some practical suggestions.

P4: There are so many cans here, that's also recyclable aluminum. When I think about it, if we get the kids involved, I
was a teacher and I know what it could have meant to the children. You have competitions and things like that so they become involved.

As well in referring to the threat of nuclear war P2 calls for more assertive leadership.

P2: So what we can do about it is encourage and strengthen leadership, because only through leadership, you back up your candidates, you start with your small area, graduates to large areas, to government.

The participants are all Western immigrants who have come to Israel for ideological reasons. Therefore it is reasonable to expect that the ideological fervor will continue to fuel their interests in social change and improvement.

A Misapplied System?

On the basis of the above discussion it is important to ask whether the social interaction study session is a misapplied system of adult education. Houle (1972) proposes a systems analysis of adult education in order to understand the way in which adult education programs are or should be designed. In his introductory chapter he warns against adult education being subordinate or identical to some related function "and a way of work which is appropriate to it is accepted as being the fundamental system to be used to guide learning or teaching" (Houle 1972, p.25). In this framework the related function dictates the type of learning its methodologies and the desired outcomes. Thus the learning process becomes devoid of its primary functions.

Within this category there are frameworks which stress fraternization and for whom successful conviviality is the determining factor in the success of an educational program. Houle in referring to fraternization mentions residential conferences whose participants give it a high rating because of social enjoyment, as being an
example of a misapplied system. From their perspective the enjoyment of being with one another is the determining measure of educational success.

Given the social agenda of the social interaction study group, does this agenda make this study group a misapplied system? An evaluation of this question entails weighing up the relationship between the learning and social agendas. Is this comparable with a club which meets ostensibly for social reasons and the organizing committee requires them to hear a lecture or is this comparable with a lecture series whose ongoing existence has built a fellowship among the participants, a fellowship which dictates the small talk in the session and after the session. In the first situation the social agenda is obviously paramount while in the second it is the learning agenda. The study session falls midway between these polls. The transcript shows that both the presentation and the social talk carry equal weight. This is certainly not a lecture forced upon a social club and as well the social discussion is far more than small talk and is accorded an official part in the session. If the general topic were to be discarded and the social discussion would follow its own course, there is no doubt that this could be called a misapplied system. However, given the adherence to the general topic and the deference accorded to the presentation, this type of session is difficult to label as misapplied.

Cognitive Outcomes of the Social Interaction Mode.

If the study group in the social interaction mode is not a misapplied system, a careful analysis should be made of the possible cognitive outcomes relating to the learning which takes place in this mode. At first glance the learning which takes place in the social interaction study group seems to be of a limited nature. The prime learning beneficiary seems to is the presenter who is forced to do background reading and preparation of the material. However the group participants listen attentively to the presentation and even if they
do not contribute to the development of the topic it is difficult to state that they do not internalize some aspects of the presentation. Furthermore while the discussion may not follow the route intended by the presenter perhaps there are unintended cognitive outcomes.

According to Brookfield (1985, pp.59-60) the following three cognitive outcomes are claimed to result from the use of the discussion method and thus could be viewed as possible outcomes of the social interaction mode:

a. The development of analytical clarity. Through discussion non-defined issues may be mutually scrutinized leading to an understanding of these issues which could be far more clear and comprehensive than an understanding of issues using a frontal method.

b. The appreciation of the complexity of the topic. By the participants listening to different points of view that become aware of a problem’s possible complexity and multi-dimensional nature.

c. It increases the participants identification with the subject matter. The active participation which is demanded of the participants should stimulate interest in the subject matter and increase their identification with the topic.

The first two cognitive outcomes are difficult to associate with the social interaction mode. The discussions seldom led to the defining of issues resulting in their clarification. As well the complexity of the issues did not emerge as a result of these discussions. The third outcome, that of identification is an open question and requires careful consideration. Since this issue was not researched it is difficult to determine whether by engaging in these topics the participants felt more strongly about them. It is possible that there was an increase of identification leading to a positive cognitive outcome.
Cognitive outcomes is but one aspect of learning and thus on the basis of this brief discussion conclusions should not be drawn regarding the learning which takes place in the social interaction mode. An in-depth discussion of the learning which takes place in the study circle follows in Chapter Thirteen. In that chapter a discussion will ensue regarding the learning in the social interaction mode.

The Social Advantages of Participation in a Study Group

While the cognitive outcomes of the social interaction mode are questionable and thus could possibly defer participants who seek a learning environment, the study circle in this mode seems to successfully facilitate social interaction and probably attracts those seeking this form of interaction. The question must be raised why the study group is advantageous for social interaction given the other available opportunities for this type of interaction. The following properties of the study circle probably play an important role in attracting those who seek social interaction:

a. The prestige associated with belonging to a learning framework.
   In a number of social circles, learning frameworks carry an element of prestige and attract a certain type of person. There are those who participate in order to be associated with these frameworks and there are those who join in order to meet people who attend these frameworks.

b. The study group allows for defined loose social commitment.
   A social group may be inhibiting if it has excessive demands of commitment. The demands may involve mutual care, regular participation in group activities and the hosting of social activities in one's home. In the study group the official social commitments are well defined, limited to the attendance of a monthly study session and the hosting a session once or twice a year. The
unofficial commitments which are voluntary, involve participation in Hadassah activities and visiting sick and bereaved members of the study group.

c. The study group has an open door policy
The study group encourages all members of the target group i.e. English speaking women to join. It is thus socially accessible and does not require a formal invitation.

d. The study sessions usually comprise interesting discussions.
The discussions which are precipitated by religious texts are interesting. They touch upon areas which are meaningful and therefore stimulate participation and interest. As well the rotating presentation ensures a unique presentation every session.

e. All participants have an opportunity to host a session
In the study group all participants have an opportunity to host sessions without any future commitment. The study session does not demand a lavish spread and therefore the hosting is simple and economical.

f. The study group has a rotating leader
In the study group all participants have an opportunity to lead sessions and chair the discussions sessions. This provides an opportunity for individual creativity and prevents power in the group from being monopolized by a single individual, giving all participants a chance to lead.

Emerging from this chapter is the radical difference between the social interaction mode and the text interaction mode. In the former the emphasis is on social intercourse within the framework of study, while in the latter the emphasis is on study with social interaction being of secondary importance. A third mode of interaction with different emphasis is the self-help therapy group mode which is described in the following chapter.
Chapter Eleven

The Study Group as Self-Help Therapy Interaction

The self-help therapy mode of interaction in the study circle resembles the interaction which one could expect to take place in a self-help therapy group. In this mode a participant or a number of participants utilize the intimacy of the study circle in order to raise problematic issues in the hope that the support of the group will enable them to lighten their psychological burden. The group discussion precipitates a cathartic process which has therapeutic effects for the troubled participants. In the course of my research, three of the twenty sessions which I observed moved into the therapy mode. In two of these, the therapy mode was primary while in one it was secondary. In this chapter I will discuss the self-help therapy group interaction by focusing on the following three issues:

a. The self-help therapy group
b. An ethnographic account of a study circle in the self-help therapy mode
c. An analysis of the self-help therapy mode

A. The Self-Help Therapy Group

In the literature 'self-help' and 'therapy' groups are not considered mutually inclusive. Self-help groups form together with the purpose of mutual support and are egalitarian in structure, while therapy groups are formed for the purpose of therapy and are usually guided by professional therapists. A self-help therapy group is thus a therapy group which is egalitarian in structure and guided by the participants themselves. Following is a more detailed analysis of these concepts with a focus on their relevance to the study circle.
The Self-Help Group

According to Katz and Bender a self-help group is defined as follows:

Self-help groups are voluntary, small group structures for mutual aid and the accomplishment of a special purpose. They are usually formed by peers who have usually come together for mutual assistance in satisfying a common need, overcoming a common handicap or life-disrupting problem and bringing about desired and or personal change. The initiators and members of such groups perceive that their needs are not, or cannot be met by or through existing social institutions. Self-help groups emphasize face to face social interactions and the assumption of personal responsibility by members. They often provide material existence as well as emotional support; they are frequently 'cause' oriented and promulgate an ideology or values through which members may attain an enhanced sense of personal identity (Katz and Bender 1976a, p.9).

Structurally, the Hadassah study group closely resembles the self-help group. They are both small groups which are formed by peers and emphasize face to face social interaction. There is, as well, an assumption of personal responsibility by members. However, there are two major differences. The study group comes together with the primary purpose of studying with the desire for mutual assistance being of secondary nature. Furthermore while the study group commences as cause oriented (i.e., to fulfill the aims of the Hadassah organization and become inward looking and group supportive) the self-help group is formed for the purpose of being group supportive and thereafter takes upon itself an external cause or challenge for which the members are mobilized. This difference is highlighted by Lieberman and Borman’s perception of the process of the self-help group.

Many groups begin with a total concern for providing support for their members and gradually, for one reason or another, become involved in legislative, interorganizational or similar issues (Lieberman and Borman 1976, p.263).
This similarity between the Hadassah study group and the self-help group is limited only to a specific type of self-help group as is reflected in the following typology.

**Types of Self-Help Groups**

Katz and Bender (1976) characterize the different types of self-help groups as follows:

a. Therapeutic and personal change groups. These include traditional treatment groups, growth groups and learning groups.

b. Social change and advocacy groups composed of same-sex or same-race persons (e.g., consciousness-raising groups). In addition to providing support, these groups serve the purpose of socio-political agitation and the passage of legislation favorable to their members.

c. Alternative life-style and relationship pattern groups (e.g., communal living groups, homosexual groups and religious cults).

d. 'Rock-bottom' groups. These groups provide their members with sheltered environments and close supervision by persons who have successfully grappled with similar problems (e.g., addicts or ex-addicts).

e. 'Mixed' types that arise because of different problems (e.g., bereavement, divorce, disadvantaged status, Vietnam veterans or widows).

The Hadassah Study Groups could be classified according to the first type of group (i.e., personal change and therapeutic) or according to the second type (i.e., social change and advocacy). While formally the Hadassah study group as a study group of the Hadassah Women's Zionist Organization fits into the second type, the loose dynamic allows for participants to address their own agendas and channel the discussion accordingly.
The Therapy Group

The therapy group is a group which comes together for curative purposes. They are usually formed by psychiatrists and psychologists who believe that the group dynamic has a positive therapeutic affect. Prior to discussing the concept of group therapy, it is important to note its connection to adult education, a connection which becomes apparent when the study group enters the self-help therapy mode.

The Therapy Group and the Learning Group

According to Yalom (1975), group therapy for normal patients has its roots in the field of education. The initial groups that utilized methodologies associated with therapy groups originated in T-groups, started by Kurt Lewin in 1946 to ease intergroup tensions in Connecticut. At a workshop held in New Britain, Lewin organized groups of 10 under the leadership of Bradford, Benne and Lippit who were all later to become leaders in this growing field of human relations. These small discussion groups were repeated by this team the following year at the Gould Academy in Bethel, Maine, in the form of a three-week laboratory. These discussion groups were known as 'basic skill training groups' (Yalom 1975, p.462) and were shortened to become popularly known as T-groups. While dealing with human relations, the T-groups were perceived to be rooted in the field of adult education and their success led to the formation of further laboratories in 1948 and 1949, culminating in the establishment of the National Training Laboratory (NTL) as a year-round organization within the framework of the National Education Association (NEA). The link between the NTL and adult education was confirmed with the appointment of Leland Bradford, head of the NEA division of adult education, as the first executive director of the NTL.
In the early 1960s a regional branch of the NTL in Southern California developed a T-group as 'group therapy for normals,' moving away from the traditional T-group, which put an emphasis on group dynamics and the development of interpersonal skills, to a greater concern with personal growth. This change led to the development of 'encounter groups' which concentrated on personal development (perceived by humanist educators as the focus of adult education). Consequently, these techniques were adopted by therapists who utilize them both for normal and abnormal patients.

Professional Attitudes to Group Therapy

According to Lakin (1985), attitudes to group therapy have been ambivalent among psychoanalytical theorists and practitioners. A trend in psychology that has endorsed group therapy is the Adlerian trend, which follows Alfred Adler's doctrine embedded in a social theory of man. Adlerians believe that "human beings are social creatures who need corrective and supportive attention from others; and that their psychological illnesses are due to excessive self-absorption to the neglect of the 'social interest.' Groups are regarded as natural therapeutic contexts in which to provide a corrective social experience" (Lakin 1985, p.25). Adlerians are of the opinion that the individual learns from the reactions of others how to express his/her innate social interest which is achieved by helping others. "The social commitment of a successfully treated individual replaces self-defeating asocial and antisocial modes of being in the world" (Lakin 1985, p.25).

Adlerians believe in the utilization of group therapy to cure dysfunctions that have their roots in a social context. Group analysts and psychoanalysts, including Foulkes and Slavson (Kaplan and Sadock 1971), took group therapy a step further and believed in its utilization for the cure of other psychological disabilities as well.
The extensive use of group therapy has produced theories regarding its curative functions. A major theorist and practitioner is Yalom (1975), who in the course of his research developed a theory regarding group therapy’s curative factors.

The Curative Factors of Group Therapy

Yalom acknowledges that therapeutic change is an enormously complex process which occurs through an intricate interplay of various factors. There are times when therapists feel they are successful and cannot explain their success. At other times success is achieved through factors which are totally unplanned despite these guided human experiences, which he refers to as "curative factors" (1). These factors he divides into 11 primary categories:

1. Instillation of hope. The belief that life can improve and that the therapy group can bring about this change is an important factor in the curative process. This is particularly true of faith healing therapy where faith on behalf of the patient becomes a cornerstone of the process.

2. Universality. The perception that one’s problem is unique is an alienating factor which could cause feelings of personal guilt and a poor self-image. In sharing experiences with the group, the

(1) Yalom admits the limitations of research in his formulation of this list of factors. He obtained them by relying on the experiences of other therapists, testimony of patients successfully cured by therapy and a systematic research approach. Given the highly personalized and unique experience of every patient, this list is tentative.
participant realizes that the problem could be far more universal and therefore, since the cause of the problem is beyond his/her control, s/he feels less guilty. Furthermore the sharing of reactions and experiences could validate guilt laden reactions if the participant realizes that his/her reaction is similar to those of others in the group.

3. Imparting of information. In the therapy group the patient is exposed to knowledge about the condition which could explode troublesome myths about the situation. Understanding one’s condition also gives one a sense of added control in a situation which could seem to be totally out of control, causing added tension.

4. Altruism. The ability to give to others leads to a greater sense of self-worth among the patients. In the therapy group one has the opportunity to help others by sharing one’s wisdom, which is often acquired through painful experience.

5. The corrective recapitulation of the primary family group. In the therapy group, group leaders tend to take on roles which resemble those of parents. The warm and accepting family relationship of the group has a corrective effect upon participants who have suffered negative family experiences.

6. Development of socialization techniques. By interacting in the group, the participant develops socialization techniques which may have been previously deficient. The group also develops as a microcosm of a supportive society, encouraging the participant to play a positive role which could resemble his/her role in a society which may prove to be less supportive.
7. Imitative behavior. In his/her authoritative role the therapist evokes imitative behavior from the patients. This is an opportunity for positive role modelling, encouraging the participant to acquire socially desired habits and mannerisms.

Yalom attaches greater importance to the following two factors and deals with them in detail:

8. Interpersonal learning. This factor involves a sequel of interactive sequences including the following:

a. The group members, through consensual validation and self-observation, become aware of significant aspects of their interpersonal behavior

b. A regular interpersonal sequence occurs as follows:
   1. The member displays his/her behavior.
   2. Through feedback and self-observation, s/he:
      a) appreciates the impact of others
      b) appreciates the impact that others have on him/her
      c) appreciates the opinion he has of him/herself

c. Awareness leads to personal responsibility. S/he becomes the author of his/her interpersonal world.

d. Once in a situation of responsibility the person realizes that since he created his/her world s/he is the only one who can and must alter it.

e. The more real and emotional the experience, the more potent its impact. The more objectified and intellectualized the experience, the less effective the learning.

f. This awareness could lead to change and the risking of new modes of behavior and expression. This will occur as a function of:
   1) The patient’s motivation for change
   2) The patient’s involvement in the group
   3) The rigidity of the patient’s character structure and interpersonal style.

g. The change in behavior may generate a new cycle of interpersonal learning via self-observation and feedback from other members.

h. Behavior manifested in the group becomes adapted to the outside environment as well.
i. Finally, an adaptive spiral is set in motion, first inside and then outside the group, which re-enforces self-esteem and greater acceptance from others. These positive factors culminate in personal autonomy, making further professional therapy no longer necessary.

9. **Group cohesiveness.** The cohesiveness of the group is a determining factor in the therapy process. It is important that the group be open, supportive and warm, allowing participants to feel at ease during the interaction and willing to share their experiences with the group.

Finally, Yalom lists catharsis and existential factors.

10. **Catharsis.** This process of self-purging within the group is dependent on interpersonal learning and group cohesiveness. This process is not only one of self-ventilation, but also entails acquiring skills for dealing with the future.

11. **Existential factors:**
   a. Recognizing that sometimes life is unfair and unjust.
   b. Recognizing that ultimately there is no escape from some of life’s pain and death.
   c. Recognizing the fact that ultimately one faces life alone, no matter how close one may be to others.
   d. Facing the basic issues of life and death and not being caught by trivialities.
   e. Learning that one is ultimately responsible for one’s life no matter how much support one gets from others.

(Yalom 1975, p.3)

It is evident from this list of factors that Yalom’s research took place in therapist-led therapy groups. In a self-help therapy group, those factors which are closely connected to the role of the professional leader (i.e., the corrective recapitulation of the primary family group and imitative behavior) will be missing. The
detrimental effect to the curative process caused by the lack of these factors requires research which has ramifications for the study circle in the therapeutic mode as well.

In conclusion of this introduction it is important to note that there are major differences between the study circle in the self-help therapy mode and the self-help therapy group. These differences will become evident in following analysis of a self-help therapy session.

B. The Study Circle in the Self-help Therapy Mode

Criteria of the Self-help Therapy Mode

Having discussed the key concepts, I will now list the criteria for determining the classification of a study group interaction as self-help therapeutic.

a. The presenter presents a topic which opens or leads to a personal, sensitive or painful issue. This topic may, as well, relate to another participant who would, in turn, become the focus of the discussion.

b. The topic relates directly to a text. This text may be introduced into the discussion directly or may remain as a background point of reference.

c. The presenter or participant turns to the group for support and encouragement.

d. The group is attentive and supportive.
The following is a description of a study session of the Ramot Eshkol study group which moved through the self-help therapy mode. It must be noted, as with other sessions, that this session, while being primarily in this mode, moved later on into the social mode as well.

The Ramot Eshkol Study Group

The Ramot Eshkol group takes place in the Jerusalem suburb of Ramot Eshkol. It draws its members from this suburb of apartment buildings as well as the neighboring suburb of Ma'alot Daphna.

The Ramot Eshkol group is a small group consisting of a pool of about 15 women, attracting about seven participants each month. Most of them are retired and over 55 years old. The coordinator is the youngest member of the group and is a lecturer at the Hebrew University. The group has a warm, intimate atmosphere and proved to be the most receptive of all the study groups to my presence, personally contacting me each month to notify me regarding the forthcoming meetings.

A Typical Opening to the Ramot Eshkol Study Group

The Ramot Eshkol group meets on the first Tuesday of the month at 10 a.m. As with all the Hadassah Study Groups, it meets in a private home. This suburb consists of modest apartment buildings, many of which have a small, compact living room divided into a dining area and a comfortable social area. On entering the home one steps into the living room and is greeted by the hostess, who is excited that an additional participant has arrived. As each of the six participants, who arrive individually enter, the hostess invites them to sit around the dining table which is set for a morning tea. (The cups and saucers and cake on the table may lead one to think for a fleeting second that one has come for a morning coffee rather than for a study
session). The proceedings begin with the serving of coffee and tea. The hostess is complimented on her outstanding cake and requests are made for the recipe. The small talk around the table generates around personal family events, preparations for the forthcoming festive season and recent political developments. Participants are offered a second cup of coffee. The participants try to involve me in the discussion, asking my opinion on relevant issues, and take care to include me in the circle. At about 10.30 a.m., having ensured that no other participants are expected and having accounted for the regulars who are missing, the coordinator commences the proceedings.

The formal announcements relate to official Hadassah business; forthcoming events are advertised and details regarding registration and transportation are provided. Then follow issues relating to the study group. First the date of the forthcoming study group meeting is confirmed. If a festival falls on the first Tuesday of the month a discussion ensues regarding an alternative Tuesday. Having reached a consensus the coordinator asks for a volunteer to present the next session. This opens the issue of a syllabus. The women complain that the syllabus is not suitable and that it is very difficult to prepare a presentation. The coordinator pacifies the participants, promising to acquire all the curriculum materials from Hadassah to provide the presenter with maximum help in her research. She also promises that the regional coordinator will visit the group in order to discuss curriculum options. One again a presenter is solicited. The previous and current presenters naturally excuse themselves. A participant who has not presented for some time is gently cajoled into presenting. This successful deliberation usually is accompanied by a modification of the topic to suit the interests of the presenter. If a stalemate persists the coordinator takes it upon herself to present the following week. Thereafter a hostess is called for, a solicitation which usually brings immediate results. This procedure is ended with the passing around of invitation cards for the next meeting. All
participants are asked to write their names and addresses and to return them to the coordinator who will fill out the time and place of the next meeting and dispatch the cards by post.

The coordinator commences the study session by introducing the topic and explaining its rationale. The presenter is then called upon to commence her presentation. The presenter takes out her notes and reading glasses, where applicable, and commences her presentation. The participants push their tea/coffee cups forward and listen attentively. I am the only individual with a pen in my hand and with a notebook in front of me. The participants do not have texts in front of them. Neither does the presenter, who uses only her hand written notes.

The Self-help Therapy Study Session

This particular session takes place at J.'s home. Like other apartments in the area, J's apartment is modest with a compact dining area on one side of the living room.

Our session commences in the usual fashion. Seven regular members come in one by one and are welcomed by J. to sit around the table for coffee and cake. The coordinator starts the formal proceedings with the regular announcements and arrangements for the forthcoming meeting. She introduces the presenter, G., who will talk about medical ethics. This presentation is part of the Jewish Ethics series which the group has been following for the past few months. (At this session there is no reading of text or direct reference to text. There is however a 'taken for granted text' which provides the built-in tension of the discussion. This is the Biblical imperative of "Thou shalt not murder" (Exodus 20), which according to Rabbinic interpretation only allows for euthanasia in extreme cases and usually by passive means only).
The Study Group Session Makes an Immediate Entry into the Self-Help Therapy Mode

G. is a woman in her late 60s and from her attire it is evident that she is a devout and religious woman. G. holds no notes in her hands. She commences her presentation by apologizing for her lack of mastery of the subject.

G.: I don’t know much about Halachah (Jewish Law) and medicine. Except that I do know that euthanasia...

P1: If you start digging, you won’t get out of it.

G.: I can’t begin to because I am not that good. I’m not learned enough. I don’t know enough. I do know that I have had a change of mind about euthanasia since I’ve been reading and reading and also from my own personal experience because I had seven years of it.

P2: Of what?

G.: Of Alzheimer’s. My husband had it. It’s like I always said, it is the cruelest disease that I’ve ever heard about or read about or known about. Cruel is the word. That’s the only word. I’ve gathered a number of articles about this whole thing and one time there was no such thing as Alzheimer’s because this man, Alzheimer, didn’t start this business until 1906 when he found something that had to do with cerebral activity, nerve fibers of the brain.

All of the participants give G. their immediate attention. The moving of coffee cups comes to an immediate halt.

G. commences by describing Alzheimer’s research, after which she proceeds to tell her personal story

My personal story commences when my husband began to do strange things. I didn’t know anything about it when I first started or at least, some of the things were very peculiar, like leaving me on a train one time, forgetting all about me. He got off the train. He had with him my bag, which had our money in it. I was in the next compartment of the train and he gets off and I follow through and I didn’t get off with him. He never turned back to see whether I was coming or not. At that junction we had to take another train, and since I hadn’t been able to get off,
I went to the next station. I wanted to make a call. I didn’t have any money. I went over to a woman and asked her for a dime and she thought I was panhandling her. She wouldn’t even look at me. I was ready to cry. Finally, a man said to me, "Go back the one or two stations to get the train to wherever you want." I wanted to go to Newark, New Jersey. When I got to Newark, there he was standing and waiting and he said to me, "I knew you’d get here." I was stunned.

At this point all around the table are hanging on to each of G.’s words. (Even I, who usually remained detached during these presentations, suddenly found myself transfixed.)

P3: Where did it start? How did you become aware?

G.: I still didn’t know that he had Alzheimer’s.

P4: I’m not asking about Alzheimer’s. When he was not functioning normally.

G.: Well, one of the things was that some things he said were very peculiar. One afternoon he comes in and he says, "I want a divorce. You go your way and I’ll go mine." For a minute, gee whiz, I was really stunned and then I started to cry. I kept asking him, what is he saying? What is he saying? What does he mean? I got no answer. He was never a very talkative man except on the pulpit and when he addressed an audience, he was a very good speaker. But ordinarily quite shy and not talkative. Maybe with other people, I don’t know. At any rate, he didn’t say a word. That’s one of the things he used to do to me, too. It was at least two years, but then again the things that happened afterwards were something that I had to sort of go back to realize that was one of the factors that was part of the disease, where he used to put money in books. We found money in books. I found a hundred dollar bill in a National Geographic.

G. then proceeds to explain how finally she discovered that her husband had Alzheimer’s disease

I finally found out that he had Alzheimer’s and I had been taking him to a psychiatrist whose name was Auerbach, an old man, but bright. He kept giving me the certain medication for memory, when I went to the drugstore. It was from the Sequoia tree, from California. This medication, nothing helped really. I kept him at home and I watched him continuously. I had to, otherwise he’d wander off. One night when I’d taken him to ‘Shul’ (synagogue) and I asked the men all the time when I used to take him, please take care that he doesn’t wander off, well
didn’t watch him and he wandered. He walked out, nobody saw him go, they didn’t know where he went. That night we had everybody, including the police department, we had everybody out, friends with cars, and nobody could find him and we were sitting at home with the police and at 12 o’clock midnight the doorbell rings and there he is with these people. They had found him in Mevasseret (a name of a town). How he got there I’ll never know. They found him there and they asked him, "Where you going Rabbi?" and he said he was going to New York. They brought him out. This was pretty horrible. That’s what I used to do for him. I had to keep watching him all the time.

P3: May I ask you something? When you say he was talking in peculiar ways sometimes, not all the times, but sometimes, was it in a mean way sometimes? Was it cruel? Not kind? Unkind to hurt your feelings, let’s say?

G.: Yes, he did. Later on, it was very bad because it became a business of violence, not too much, but enough to cause me a visit to the hospital. One day he got violent and he was going to strike me with a, we had this small vacuum machine. I tried to get it away from him, I twisted something, I fell to the ground, I got up, I was alright, at least I thought so. That was the day we were going to take him to Ezrath Nashim, that’s the first place we took him to. For a whole week, I went to see him every day. I don’t know what they did to him, they gave him some terrible medication. When I came one day I saw him strapped to the bed. They had to give him adrenalin because something happened, I still don’t know exactly, and the doctor at the time said he doesn’t belong here. So I said where will I put him? I didn’t have the means. I didn’t know anything about these nursing homes. I knew they were expensive. The result of that fall put me in hospital with a broken hip and I had three pins put in. That’s after a week of going there every day, I was still working and I didn’t realize I’d broken anything. The Friday of that week I finally got terrible pain, my neighbour took me to the emergency ward they operated on me then and there.

G.’s account can be compared to Lakin’s description of a self-help group for spouses and families of victims of Alzheimer’s disease.

Those present at a typical session I observed included husbands and wives of afflicted individuals as well as a sprinkling of health professionals who served as consultants when called upon to provide information. Other than this ‘background’ influence, the meeting was entirely in the hands of family members.
The session opened with a narrative by a woman who has managed her husband at home over the past six years. She described technical details of her caretaking, such as the chairs she purchased for him, the precise type of lock she put on her door so as to prevent him from leaving the house, and the TV programs she encouraged him to watch... As the woman continued to speak she described the difficulties and frustrations with her senile husband who was often childlike in his emotional outbursts. The other participants were noticeably affected by her account and even more by her original poem at the conclusion of her narrative. It was about pain, love, and religious faith that supported her in the belief of a beautiful afterlife with this now disabled spouse (Lakin 1985, p.35).

G.'s description encourages J. to tell her story. She, too, suffered the death of a husband from Alzheimer's. J. is a short, intelligent woman in her late 60s. Her responses in the sessions are generally well thought out and she always appears weary of the social talk. She is very much an aristocrat. As confirmed in an interview, J.'s attendance is motivated primarily by her will to learn and if she were granted the power to determine the future course of the group she would engage an external speaker for most sessions. Until this session, J. has never made a presentation, claiming that she is not sufficiently knowledgeable.

J.: In my situation, the deterioration of my husband’s condition was more gradual. After 40 years, it takes time to understand that the person you’re talking to is not the person that you knew. It comes on gradually,

P4: At what point did you discover that your husband was ill?

J.: I don’t know. B. (her husband) was a very sweet tempered person and we’d been married more than 40 years and all of a sudden he started accusing me of sex offences and he could see it right there.

P2: How long ago was this, J.?

J.: He’s been gone six years and the real difficult situation was a few years actually. Before then forgetful, a little philosophical, a little difficult. He was a good man, I think it was hard for him to become difficult, but he actually could see what I was doing and I should be ashamed of myself.
P2: So how does one react in those situations?
J.: I didn't know how to react.
G.: I know I started to cry when he said that.
J.: But it continued for some time.

J. then relates to a major change in their personal lives: their living in separate rooms. Apparently the ethics of this decision continue to bother her.

J.: I have a friend who's a doctor. She said to me, "There's one thing I want to tell you. I've seen them become violent in no time at all. I suggest you sleep in a different room, because he sees things that make him get angry." So I hired a young man, a Yeshiva (Torah Academy) student to sleep in my room. B. objected. He said married men should sleep in a room together. But I was afraid. I couldn't sleep because I was afraid.

From one guilt-laden issue, J. quickly moves to another: her problem with her brother-in-law, which had been a bone of contention when her husband was healthy and acutely surfaced when he became ill.

Then he got another obsession. He had a brother. His brother was a difficult case and he had wanted him to come and live with us and I objected and so forth. He thought he saw his brother here. He'd get up in the morning, did I give him breakfast, has he gone to work? I said, "I didn't give him breakfast because he's not here." He'd go to the door and call his name, call him back so he should eat something. One day I picked up the phone and called the brother in America and I said to my husband speak to him and he did, he spoke to him normally. I said to him, "You see, he's not here." Of course with time he deteriorated physically.

The participants do not query these issues. They push J. to continue with her narrative about her ailing husband.

P4: Did you keep him at home?
This question obviously hits a 'raw nerve'. J. waits a second and then continues defensively.

J.: Keeping them at home is, I imagine, better for them. I really wasn't going to put him in a place, but they said register now and in a year from now you'd get a place. I registered. They sent a social worker. She took a look at him and she got him in right away. He knew. He said, "Take me home." He was in the home for a short time.

G. then interrupts, bringing in her story.

G.: I couldn't have managed. He was getting $300 Social Security a month. I was getting much more. They took two-thirds of the money at the time. Ezrath Nashim, I don't remember what they took. They got him into Neve Simcha (a religious aged home). They took two-thirds of the check I used to get for him.

P3: He was a Rabbi. I didn't have that privilege.

G.: I used to work for Neve Simcha, typing their English letter, bills, and I saw some of the Rabbis they had there. They charged them very little. There were bills there for $1,500 a month. It's a very nice place, and they took care of him very well and I was fortunate enough to have kids who took care of him.

The preceding discussion corresponds to the discussion which Lakin observed in the self-help group.

The ensuing discussion included many allusions to the difficulties of caring for relatives with this disorder. The atmosphere was cordial, supportive and many turned to their neighbours after each individual's comment or question with comments of their own.... What impressed me were the many instances of humor. These unself-conscious bursts of laughter occurred whenever someone described a particular frustration that was familiar to others present (Lakin 1985, p.36).

In the Ramot Eshkol group as well, participants had their fare share of humor when J. described, using her hands, how B. got dressed.
J.: I had the experience with my husband, he'd start dressing in the morning. He'd put his shoes on his head, he'd put his shirt on his feet and I'd say, "B., are you making fun again?" He'd start giggling. He didn't know where his clothes belong. In the home he was in there was a man with the same thing and he was trying to get his slippers on and he was so annoyed he couldn't get his slippers on.

G. takes advantage of this light moment to recount a humorous occurrence with her husband.

G.: One time we were walking to the AACI for something and all of a sudden I take a look and I see something coming out of his pants and I said, "What's underneath?" It was his pyjamas.

J.: But he put his pants on.

After these lighthearted anecdotes, G. changes the atmosphere by asserting her opinion on the issue of euthanasia.

G.: This is the thing I wanted to bring out about euthanasia. You know, now I feel very strongly about euthanasia. I would do something about these people. I would end their misery, our misery, shall we say. Our misery because it is miserable. J. and I know. But I would end it. Look what happened to him. First of all, he got all these diseases that go with age, like Parkinson's, like diabetes, like whatever.

The other participants are a little unsettled by this categorical statement.

P4: That's not too bad.

G.: All right.

P2: Let's stick to one thing.

G.: But the thing is, they gave him all these numerous pills for all these different diseases. What for?
The Self-Help Therapy Mode is Challenged

Until this point, the group interaction has been rooted firmly in the therapy mode. The participants are sympathetic and supportive and have not challenged any of G.’s assumptions. P5, the group coordinator, who is in her early 50s and is much younger than the other participants, feels a little uncomfortable about this mode of interaction. As coordinator, she probably has group study in mind, which invites critique, and not group therapy, which invites support. Until this point she has not entered the discussion. Her entry on a moral issue heralds the beginning of a struggle as to which direction the interaction will go.

P5: It is not only Alzheimer’s disease that is terminal. There are other diseases. Cancer.

P2: And others.

G.: I guess so.

P5: There’s a great moral question. The human being what he is, as we see every day from the newspapers, is not a perfect machine. He goes more by emotion than by thinking. What happens if we permit euthanasia in one case, where it may be perfectly permitted, I mean, where we think it should be permitted and then you have...

G.’s decision to take a stand on the ethical issue of euthanasia has proven to be a gamble. Will the group continue to be supportive? For her, this is apparently an issue for which she seeks support from the group and, given the groundwork which she has laid (her moral judgement being a direct result of her personal experience), there is a chance that the group will continue to be supportive.

G.: I’m beginning to believe in it (in euthanasia). That’s all I can say.

P5: The question is, who gets the authority to... To whom do you give this authority?

G.: I would say the closest, the dearest.
P2: Do you think a person could do it?

G.: I think I could. Frankly, I think I could. The way I look at it now, I think I could.

P4: Now!

P5: You have to live with yourself.

P2: Whoever does it or did it in the past, it was a father, a son.

G.: It was somebody very close.

J.: They saw it was the end for them and they went ahead and they took the decision.

P4: They wanted to cut the suffering.

P2: Our hearts are with them.

P5.'s challenge, up to this point, has not disturbed the therapeutic mode as G. is still in safe territory for the following reasons:

a. The moral issue is a safe issue as far as G. is concerned. Its hypothetical nature puts the issue in neutral territory. If G. had taken a decision of euthanasia in her husband's situation the attitude of the group may have been different.

b. G. herself had never withheld treatment from her husband and therefore, by disagreeing with her, the participants are supporting her past actions.

Furthermore, perhaps P5. feels some discomfort among the group since for some participants this issue may be personally problematic. Having faced situations of the suffering of their loved ones, and having decided not to withhold life-prolonging medication, these participants would have had great difficulty accepting G.'s ethical judgement even if only for the preservation of their own personal moral equilibrium. Her intercession, therefore, could have been interpreted as a supportive act.
P5., however, now seems determined to move the interaction out of the therapy mode and makes an all-out assault on G.

P5: But to make it legal?

P2: That's a different story.

P4: Legal is something else.

P5: But if you do it, it's murder. If you perform it, it's murder.

G. tries to take the sting out of this attack by referring to euthanasia as an accepted norm.

G.: We know that they pull plugs in hospital. We know that they overdose. We know that there are certain situations that it is not the person himself who died but the mechanics were removed.

P2: If they took all the medication away from him, then what?

P5: Then that's what is.

J.: Quietly.

G.: You know R.?

P4: Yes.

G.: Her friend S. What she told me is that he refused to take the medication.

J.: That's the problem. He was not senile if he refused to take it.

G.: He wasn't. He had cancer.

J.: Admirable.

J. moves the discussion to the personal level and introduces euthanasia as a personal hypothetical problem.

J.: I am worried for myself when I won't be able to be competent and I don't want to live and what will happen. I don't have the guts to take my own life now, for instance, because I feel I can still function. I don't know what I'm going to be doing two years from now.
P3: Don't they speak of a will that a person makes?

J.: But somebody has to do it.

P4: A living will.

P3: The will has to be done by the person.

G.: He would not perform euthanasia.

P2: The children won't do it.

J.: That's a very big question.

P5: It's killing me. Many of us are reaching the point of life where we feel that our future is limited, let's put it that way. We don't have 29 years ahead of us.

G.: All of us who have ever been in a geriatric situation or we have seen people who were competent and alert and alive, and your heart breaks. You know they don't want to be there.

P5: You don't know.

P3: Because you know them before.

G.: I will guarantee that none of us want to be there.

P5. continues to be bothered by G.'s support for mercy killing and is intent in moving the interaction out of the supportive mode. Having tried unsuccessfully to convince the group that it's defined as murder, she questions the assumption that the victim wants to die.

P5: You're thinking of it now in your present situation. You haven't been within the situation where you think that they feel like that. You don't know. He may want to live despite of it all, but he has no way of saying it. I want to go back to you G.

G.: I don't want to live like that.

P5: Because you're thinking now. You don't know what you'll think in that situation.

G.: When I'm thinking of what I've seen in that situation, I don't believe these people want to be there.

P3: But they don't want to die either. It is a natural thing not to want to die.
P5. seems to be determined to convince the group that euthanasia should be negated. Sensing that the group thus far has not been swayed by her arguments, she raises the possibilities of scientific advancement.

P5: I want to go back to G. because she said I could have pulled the plug. That’s what she said.


P5: When you look back you say that you could have done it.

G.: I think so.

P5: So I want to ask you a question. Let’s say you did it and you felt like you did the right thing, you ceased the suffering. Let’s say five years afterwards, you are alive and there is something new coming up in the medical world and there is a lot of hope but you pulled the plug. Maybe if he would have continued in the situation that he was, maybe he could have been exposed to the new medicine. How would you feel?

G. refuses to budge. Her husband’s situation, which precipitated the discussion, remains vivid and she does not allow herself to be influenced by this remote possibility.

G.: No, he wouldn’t have been because it was too late. It was too late. All his senses were gone. He was a nothing. Absolutely nothing.

P5: What I mean is, let’s say that in a situation of nothing, that’s what we speak of, a situation of nothing, some kind of a miracle, medical miracle. How would you personally feel that you did this?

G.: It would be a guilt feeling, I suppose, but you see I’ve been reading up on these things and every time I see an article about it I try to save it so I can... So far, they have come up with no cure.

J., who identifies with G’s position, comes to her aid, raising the economic burden of sustaining Alzheimer patients.

J.: There’s another factor and that’s the economic factor.

G.: Oh my. I forgot all about that.
J.: Those of us who have survived it know. It absolutely can break.

G.: It can break you. That's right. It can.

J.: To the point where those who are left competent, really can't imagine... It is a factor to consider that there is a tremendous amount of money being invested in what we think is a hopeless situation, barring the fact that eventually they are going to get some brain... mental stimulus.

P5. does not relent, apparently determined to sway the group in her favour.

P5: Let's put it into a different situation. A man is 95 years old. He has got an irreversible disease -- as we know it, irreversible. He needs constant care and attention. What do you do? I'm not talking about a terminal case of cancer.

G.: We're talking about a geriatric situation.

P5: Once you permit the euthanasia, there would...

J.: There is a geriatric situation which is different.

A Truce is Declared

P5. is unable to convince the group and diverts the discussion to a neutral issue, to the definition of the concept of euthanasia.

P5: What's the Webster dictionary meaning.

G.: It's to pull out the plug. But how did they get to that word, euthanasia?

P4: It's a Greek word. I'll tell you that much.

P2: Euthanasia. That reminds of amnesia.

J.: Amnesia is loss of memory. It is probably very close.

P5: This is why I'm asking the question. It has the root there.

G.: Euthanasia, from the Greek. A painless, happy death.
A lengthy discussion ensues regarding the definition of the word ‘euthanasia.’ This pause in the discussion gives P5. an opportunity to re-evaluate her position. She apparently senses that the group has rallied behind G. and that G. is keen to continue to talk about the subject. She seems to realize that the group is becoming agitated over her critical questioning and steers the discussion back to the personal issues.

P5: I want to go back to the first question you asked and I think this was a very important question. You asked about when you first detect that this is it?

G.: It moves in very gradually so that you don’t know where the boundary is between normal forgetfulness and where the other thing starts. Of course, as time goes on, it becomes more pronounced, so that you realize that it is not logical what the person is doing or saying but when does it start? You don’t really know.

P2: Is the person cooperative to go to a doctor? If you see something is wrong, you say, "Let’s go for a check up." Would he go?

P3: That’s still good.

J.: At the beginning, yes. Afterwards, he doesn’t know the difference.

G.: Whereas it was once thought that senility was part of getting older, it is now clear that Alzheimer’s disease is not a normal consequence of aging. That’s the difference. It has hit people of 55. Rita Hayworth. She died several years ago. I have something on her. She died when she was 68 years old.

The discussion then moves on to anecdotes about personalities whom the participants were acquainted with, who had contracted Alzheimer’s disease. G. continues to dominate the discussion, sharing her expert knowledge on the subject. When in doubt she turns to J., who is also acknowledged as an authority on the subject.
As the intensity of the discussion eases, the study group changes modes, moving into social discussion about the high cost of living in Israel. Prior to describing this change, I will analyze the study group in the self-help therapy mode.

C. An Analysis of the Self-help Therapy Mode

The above case study can help establish the circumstances which facilitate the moving of the study circle into the self-help interaction mode. While a theory of interaction cannot be built on the basis of this single case study, the data gathered could contribute to theory building.

Conditions Which Precipitate the Self-help Therapy Mode

Utilizing Schwab's (1965) four common places (variables) -- the milieu, the students (participants), the teacher (the functionaries) and the subject matter -- I will examine the Ramot Eshkol study group, showing why it was conducive for self-help therapy interaction. Two of the four variables are constant: the milieu and the participants. The functionaries and the subject matter are dynamic, changing from session to session.

1. The Milieu and Participants

a. A small group. The Ramot Eshkol group is the smallest of the Hadassah Study Groups, numbering six to eight regular members. This composition enables both group interaction and personal expression.

b. An intimate group. The intimacy of this group was enhanced by the manner in which the study sessions were conducted. Whereas the Central group met in a fairly large living room, the Ramot Eshkol group met in a small dining room around an intimate table. At this
particular session the table was circular, enhancing the egalitarian feeling.

c. A homogeneous group. This group, as with all the Hadassah Study Groups, comprises older women who immigrated to Israel from English speaking countries, predominantly from the United States.

d. A group which displays peer support. This study group has a camaraderie, with the sessions conducted in a very relaxed manner. This allows for honesty on the part of the participants and encourages confidential disclosure.

2. The Subject Matter

In this particular session, the topic is euthanasia, which could arouse tension in a Jewish setting. In this particular situation the issue was not only theoretical but practical as well. G. and J.'s personal experiences could not possibly have been divorced from the topic and no matter how the discussion would have been handled, these experiences would probably have surfaced.

3. The Functionaries

The functionaries refer to the presenter, the coordinator and the host, all who carry authority for the session. In this particular session, the presenter was intent in moving the presentation into the self-help therapy mode, seeking support from her peers. As presenter it was her prerogative to steer the discussion in the direction of her choice and she remained faithful to her personal charter. The coordinator, however, apparently resented this mode of interaction and tried gallantly to move it out of this mode. While in this situation she was defeated, it is evident that her support is needed for the direction of the study group interaction dynamic.
In this particular session the role of the host, P4., was totally passive and thus had no bearing on the mode of interaction.

The Functioning of the Study Circle as a Self-help Therapy Group

In assessing the function of the study circle as a self-help therapy group, care must be taken not to overlook the differences between the two types of groups.

Functional differences. A functional difference between the two types of groups is that the prime purpose of the study group is study while the prime purpose of the therapy group is therapy. Therefore, when the therapy group moves into a therapy mode this is considered to be the official agenda. However, when the study session moves into the therapy mode it does so as a private initiative which may encounter legitimate resistance. A by-product of this functional difference is the difference in processes.

Process differences. In the therapy group the agenda is group therapy and therefore group support is expected for the peer 'patient.' In the study group the overt agenda is study and therefore the initiator of the therapy mode has to win over the group by convincing the participants that this mode is desirable. G. managed to do this by her powerful opening introduction which nobody wanted to disturb. G.'s presentation was so moving that it was only towards the end of the presentation that P5. launched her assault.

Structural differences. The self-help therapy group comprises participants who share a common disposition. Therefore they all participate in the therapy as a group and gain personally from the
proceedings. The study group has gathered together with the overt purpose of study. Therefore the therapy aspect of the group would be limited to an individual or perhaps two participants, as was seen in this session.

A second difference, as reflected in this description, is that in this session the 'therapy patient' chaired the proceedings. While in the therapy group this may prove to be the exception to the rule, in the study group this could prove to be the predominant situation, since the presenter is a domineering factor in steering the interaction into the therapy mode and would be inclined to do so for personal reasons.

The Therapeutic Effect of the Study Circle

There was no follow up on the effects of this session of the study group, making it impossible to draw direct conclusions. On the basis of Yalom's (1975) curative factors, it can be conjectured that certain aspects of therapy took place.

From the transcript of the discussion, it is evident that the following issues troubled G. and J. in their quest for group support:

a. G.'s decision to send her husband to hospital.
b. G.'s decision to leave New York and immigrate to Israel.
c. Were J.'s husband's accusations grounded?
d. G. and J.'s wish that their husbands' end should be hastened.

These issues are sensitive on the personal, moral and Jewish religious levels. This setting seemed to be ideal for seeking support on all these issues, as one could expect support on all levels, given the nature of the group.
Of all Yalom's curative factors, the most prevalent in this situation were:

a. Universality. G. seemed to gain lot of strength from her perception that her problem was not unique. J.'s support, which emanated from her personal experience, gave G. the confidence to speak from total conviction. She became more relaxed when other anecdotes about Alzheimer's patients were told and felt that she had the empathy of the group.

b. Imparting of information. Although G. herself was the prime source of information, her imparting information to others and their feedback enabled her to establish herself as an authority on the subject and hence to reassure herself that she had done all in her power to learn about the disease.

c. Interpersonal learning. This is perhaps the most powerful factor of the study group. In chairing the discussion and learning from the other participants, G. gained confidence as the discussion proceeded. The support which she gained from her peers enabled her to express, towards the end of the discussion, the most heretical ideas which perhaps she would not have expressed at the beginning of the discussion.

d. Group cohesiveness. The cohesiveness of the Ramot Eshkol study group has already been discussed. The small homogeneous group was potentially a conducive atmosphere for the therapy mode. As was pointed out, the group coordinator attempted to change the group mode but due to the cohesiveness of the group the therapy mode survived.

e. Catharsis. The emotional opening of the study session finally gave way to a relaxed discussion. G. became more relaxed as the discussion
proceeded, as did J. This was felt by all whom, while being totally supportive at the beginning, perhaps through empathy, allowed themselves to become more open and critical towards the end.

While the therapeutic value of this mode of interaction is undetermined, a direct consequence is its implications for adult Jewish education. What learning takes place in this mode? Was this session a positive learning experience from a traditional point of view? Should this type of interaction be encouraged? These important issues will be dealt with in the next section.
Having answered the primary research question what happens in the Hadassah study group, it is possible to discuss the implications of this case study for a wider universe of study circles. In the following chapter the question will be raised regarding whether this case study is one of a general nature with implications for a large universe of study circles, or whether this is a particular study circle, with limited implications for non-traditional Jewish religious study circles.

Thereafter in considering the implications of the case study the types of learning which take place in the study group as well as the social functions of the study group will be analysed on the basis of the observations and interviews with the participants. Finally the issue of the implications of the study circle for adult Jewish education will be discussed.

In discussing the implications of the case study for the larger universe of study circles a number of recommendations will be made in order to influence the interaction of the study circle towards a desired mode of interaction. Prior to considering these recommendations the question must be raised regarding the legitimate interference in the study circle process by outside educators. The study circle is characterized by the self-directedness of the group providing for an alternative to the authoritarian controlled environment. Would an attempt to influence this environment not be considered a breach of its ethos?

This consideration must be counterbalanced by the recognition that many study circles are institution sponsored. These institutions by their sponsorship of the study circles have a right to influence its educational outcomes. Their sponsorship of the study circles could
rarely be attributed to a spirit of total altruism and thus they have an interest in the educational outcomes.

A balance between these two positions is recommended. If the study circle process is to be influenced this must be done in a manner which does not infringe upon the democratic rights of the participants.

In drawing conclusions from a qualitative case study to the larger universe, it is important to note the limitations of qualitative research which focuses on each phenomenon as a unique phenomenon. This question was raised in the methodology section. In dealing with this issue, I adopted the concept of 'naturalistic generalizations' as coined by Robert Stake (1978), according to which a case study can provide anticipatory tendencies in similar situations. Thus I shall not delve in hypotheses but rather suggest anticipated outcomes in other similar study circles based on the case study.
Chapter Twelve

The Hadassah Study Group: A Typical Study Circle or a Particular Study Circle?

In the introduction to the thesis I posed the question whether the Hadassah Study Group is a general study circle or a particular study circle. This issue has ramifications regarding the findings. Are the observed categories symptomatic of general study circles or rather only of non-traditional Jewish study circles? This issue has implications for the relationship between the case study and a larger universe of study circles. If the findings of this case study are independent of its being a non-traditional Jewish religious study circle they may have applications for the large universe of general study circles. Alternatively, if this case study reflects the small universe of non-traditional Jewish religious study circles, its ramifications are limited to this small universe.

Ideally, this question could be highlighted by a parallel study of general study circles. However, since this is beyond the bounds of this research the matter remains open to speculation.

The Hadassah Study Group - a General Study Circle with Subject Matter of Jewish Content

On the basis of the findings it is possible to view the Hadassah Study Group as a general study circle. Its unique nature -- the specific religious subject matter -- would be of little consequence in affecting its interactions and could be seen in the context of the unique subject matter which characterizes every study circle. Support for this position comes from the following factors.
The Categories of Interaction and General Study Circle Models

The categories of interaction which I discovered in the Hadassah Study Groups seem to correlate with those which are to be expected in general study circles. The self-help therapy mode seems to be a type of interaction which one would find in a combined humanist and progressive model of the study circle, as was found in the literature. In this mode the self-development needs of the participants -- their experiences and problems -- are paramount, with the text playing a secondary role. In addition, the text centered mode of interaction seems to be compatible with the liberal study circle model. In this mode the text has a primary function, with the interaction being focused on the text with the self-development needs of the participants being secondary.

The Absence of Religious Experiences

Apart from the correlation of the categories of interaction with the prescriptive models of general study circles, reinforcement for this position comes from the lack of religious experience felt by the participants of the study group.

In an answer to a question which I submitted to the participants regarding their perception of the study group experience, as is reflected in Figure 12.1 (p.230), the overwhelming majority of participants ranked the intellectual experience as being the primary experience. Asked to rank the different experiences in descending order, seventeen respondents allocated an average of 3.4 (85%) out of a maximum of 4 to the intellectual experience. The self growth experience was the second highest preference attaining an average rating of 2.64 (66%). This was followed by the social experience with an average rating of 1.76 (44%), with the religious experience averaging a mere 0.84 (21%).
These findings confirm the correlation between the amount of group text interaction and the individual pursuit of an intellectual experience. Self-growth was probably precipitated both in the text interaction mode and in the self-help group interaction mode. The social experience, which perhaps was primary in the social interaction mode yet could have been prevalent in all modes, is a notable third choice. This last response must be accepted with circumspection since the respondents may have felt awkward at legitimizing the social experience at an educational session even though in reality this experience may have been dominant.

The absence of a religious experience is not unexpected. For most of the participants, the study of religious texts has not been associated with religious experience. Most of the participants were raised with religious experiences which were centered around either home ritual or synagogue ritual. Therefore, learning has not had a religious association for these women. It must be noted that the lack of religious experience in the study group was reflected by observant
This issue raises a future research question as to whether these findings would be similar for women who do have a background in text study and for whom text study is part of their religious experience.

The Categories Correspond to Findings Among General Study Circles

Further support for this position comes from the similar findings of Bystrom (1976), whose research on general study circles remains the most comprehensive to date.

According to Bystrom, a study circle can deviate from its focus in the following three directions:

1. It can develop into a 'school class' with recipient pupils and an instructing teacher.

2. It can develop into a 'coffee party,' with emphasis on the camaraderie of the circle and discussions which have nothing to do with the studies of the members.

3. It can develop into a 'therapeutic group,' in which activities concentrate upon individual mental or social problems, and are likely to stifle the studies of the members.

All three directions may be matched with one of the categories of interaction as defined in my research. The 'school class' category may be an extreme form of the text centered interaction mode. In this mode there is a 'teacher' who prepares a text and who teaches that text to the group of recipient 'pupils.' The 'coffee party' category is strikingly similar to the social interaction mode. In both cases social interaction is paramount and studies are of lesser importance.
However, they do seem to differ in their connection to the subject matter. In the social interaction mode there is usually a contextual connection between the social discussion and the subject, a connection which Bystrom does not specify. The 'therapeutic group' is similar to the self-help therapeutic mode, with the concentration on individual or social problems.

Implications of the Research for General Study Circles

On the assumption that the case study is not only a case study of a particular study circle but has applications for general study circles as well, careful note must be taken of the different contributing factors which precipitated the different categories of interaction. These factors may be neutralized, controlled or enhanced, depending on the form of interaction desired by the educational sponsors of the study circle. Many of these factors were mentioned in the descriptions of the categories of interaction and are repeated here in anticipation of their effect on general study circles.

The Text Interaction Mode

The factors which served as a catalyst for moving the study group into the text interaction mode were as follows:

a. The ability of the participants to comprehend the text and to analyze it. The group which displayed the greatest ability in textual analysis was the Central group. This enabled this group to engage in focussed text study in most of their sessions. This may be contrasted with the Ramot Eshkol group, whose participants expressed their frustration at not being able to analyze the texts of the Psalms and thus entered other modes of interaction when the Psalms were studied.
b. Subject matter which is challenging and interesting. The careful selection of interesting and challenging subject matter ensured the attention of the participants, drawing them into the discussion and holding their focus.

c. Thorough preparation of the material by the presenter. This ensured a comprehension of the text and the issues by other participants and prevented the session from deviating into social interaction.

d. The group had a formal atmosphere. The Central group had a formal atmosphere which was reflected in the punctuality of the sessions, the serving of refreshments after rather than prior to the sessions (preventing them from serving as a social catalyst) and the raising of hands by participants who wanted to contribute to the discussion.

e. The size of the study group. The Central group was a large group, consisting of 35 members and 20 participants in each session. The largeness of the group attributed to the group not becoming too intimate and informal and thus the group dynamic was secondary to the study of the text.

f. Mutual regard for the participants. The Central study group members had a very high regard for their counterparts as reflected by the compliments conveyed to the presenters of the sessions at the tea following the sessions, and their responses. This regard ensured a thorough preparation of the material by the presenter who did not want to embarrass herself or insult her fellow learners.

All these factors have implications for those who would like to encourage study circles to follow a text interaction direction. Some could be dictated prior to the commencement of the study circle.
(i.e., its composition and expected norms for the preparation of study material). Others would be have to instituted in the course of the study circle process by an assertive coordinator (i.e., the formal atmosphere and the focus on the text).

It must be conceded that these factors are all contributory yet one cannot guarantee text interaction nor assume that text interaction could not exist without them. There were occasions where the Central group, which had these factors, ventured out of the text interaction mode. There were also occasions in which both the Ramot Eshkol and Talpiot Mizrach groups moved into the text interaction mode, despite these groups' lacking these factors. This comment applies equally to this mode and to the other modes as well. Therefore the ensuing discussions must be made with this concession in mind.

The Social Interaction Mode

The following factors were instrumental in moving the study circle into a social interaction mode.

a. The participants were motivated to participate in the study circle by a social bond and viewed the study session as a social forum. The Talpiot Mizrach group, which often moved into the social interaction mode, comprised women who had a strong social connection over and above their membership in Hadassah.

b. The text was neither challenging nor interesting. The participants would have liked to discuss the texts yet felt uninspired to do so and thus preferred to engage in social discussion which was related to the topic.
c. The atmosphere was informal. In the Talpiot Mizrach group the sessions were preceded by refreshments, which enabled the participants to engage in social talk before the session and perhaps encouraged a continuation of this social talk during the session.

d. A non-assertive coordinator. The coordinator of this group, as opposed to the Central group, was unassertive and thus gave institutional license to social discussion as part of the sessions. Her passive manner contributed as well to the relaxed atmosphere which prevailed.

These factors are important for both proponents and opponents of the social interaction mode. Proponents should ensure a positive social atmosphere and concentrate on social experiences in order to encourage social bonding. In addition, social interaction must be encouraged even if it has to be given official license. Opponents of the social interaction mode should take care to discourage the informal atmosphere and appoint an assertive coordinator to influence the focus on text rather than on the social interaction. Care should be taken regarding the selection of texts, with uninteresting texts to be avoided at all costs.

The Self-help Therapy Group Interaction Mode

The following factors were viewed as being significant in the group’s move into the self-help therapy group interaction mode.

a. A small group. The Ramot Eshkol group, which moved into the self-help therapy interaction mode, was the smallest of the Hadassah study groups, numbering six to eight regular members. This composition enabled both group interaction and personal expression.
b. An intimate group. The intimacy of this group was enhanced by the manner in which the study sessions were conducted. Whereas the Central group met in a fairly large living room, the Ramot Eshkol group met in a small dining room around an intimate table. At this particular session the table was circular, enhancing the egalitarian feeling.

c. A homogeneous group. This group, as with all the Hadassah Study Groups, comprised older women who emigrated to Israel from English speaking countries, mainly the United States.

d. A group which displayed peer support. This study group had a comraderie, with the sessions conducted in a very relaxed manner. This allowed for honesty on behalf of the participants and encouraged confidential disclosure.

e. Provocative subject matter. The subject matter provoked intense emotions among the participants, raising the level of tension in the group.

Proponents of the self-help therapy group may believe in the formation of study circles for the purpose of encouraging self-help therapy for certain target groups. While this format may bring education to the brink of psychotherapy, educators should be aware of the possibilities which this educational format offers. In encouraging this format, care must be taken in the formation of the group and in influencing its dynamic. In addition, appropriate subject matter must be chosen in order to arouse interest and trigger the desired emotions.

The classification of the Hadassah Study Group as a general study circle raises not only the possibility of this research benefitting a larger universe of study circles, it also raises the possibility of
the effects of future research into general study circles upon the non-traditional Jewish study circle. In addition, from a practical point of view this type of study circle may be encouraged to join other networks of study circles and to see itself as part of a large movement of study circles.

The Hadassah Study Group - a Non-Traditional Religious Study Circle.

It could be argued, however, that the modes of interaction of this case study are specifically grounded in a religious context and that the learning interaction which takes place has unique properties with particular ramifications for other non-traditional religious study circles. Whereas in the previous discussion I considered the subject matter to be of minor importance in influencing the modes of interaction, in this analysis I will claim that it is the religious nature of the subject matter which influences the modes of interaction.

As has been stated, the Hadassah Study Group comprises women with varied beliefs regarding the normative nature of religious texts. Therefore, a lack of harmony could be expected between many of the participants, whose lifestyles are secularly oriented, and the texts, which advocate a religious lifestyle. Furthermore this disjuncture may also encompass those devout participants whose life experiences have created a tension between themselves and the text (e.g., the devout woman in the self-help interaction group who endorsed euthanasia). It is my contention that this problematic relationship between the learners and the text is instrumental in precipitating the different modes of interaction which I encountered.
When the learner confronts a religious text the normative nature of these texts evoke one of the following three responses (1):

1. **Acceptance of the text.** According to this response the learner accepts the authority of the text and chooses the following forms of interpretation:
   
   a. **Literal interpretation.** The text is studied and interpreted in order to locate the intentions of the author. The learner lives in harmony with the text and seeks to uphold its values.
   
   b. **Subjective or metaphorical interpretation of the text.** Having accepted the authority of the text, the learner tries to reinterpret the text in order either to enable him/her to continue with his/her lifestyle, which may be in conflict with the literal interpretation of the text, or to endorse ideas which the literal interpretation of the text does not support.

2. **Ignoral of the text.** In order to maintain the text’s sanctity, the text is elevated and ignored. This enables the learner and the text to continue to exist harmoniously, with the learner acknowledging the sanctity of the text yet ignoring its authority.

3. **Rejection of the text.** In this situation the text is considered and rejected by the learner because its message is found to be unacceptable.

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1. After making this differentiation between the different responses, I found that Buber (1963 pp. 161-162) notes a similar relationship between national movements and tradition. He claims that these movements have either a positive relationship, a negative relationship or a fictitious relationship evoking responses similar to those observed in the different modes of interaction.
The first response entails a striving to accept both the sanctity of the text and the message of the text, precipitating a text interaction mode. When an acceptance of the text becomes problematic a method of interpretation is found whereby both the sanctity of the text and its message are kept intact. The second response distinguishes between the sanctity of the text and its message, accepting the former and rejecting the latter, precipitating a social interaction mode. In the third response both the sanctity and the message are rejected, causing psychological pressure and leading to a self-help interaction mode. This claim will now be discussed in greater detail with examples from the different sessions.

Text Centered Interaction and Interpretation of the Text

In the text interaction mode, participants accepted the authority of the text. In a situation where they identified with its message, classical or literal interpretations were offered and accepted. This is demonstrated by the following extract:

P: Some of the Psalms reflect more than others. I want to look at some of the kinds of language that we see constantly in the Psalms, very strong words. Rock, right, salvation, source. In particular, if you look at Psalm 20, at verse eight and nine. I'm just stressing the language. "Of thee does my heart say, speak my faith. Hide not thy face from me." This is one of the stresses... Of this direct line to G-d. That is so basic to Judaism. We do not need intermediaries. We do not need Rabbis to give blessings for us. We can pick up the phone, so to speak, and call HaShem (G-d. lit. 'The Name') and speak to Him and this is what the Psalms say over and over and over again. "I call upon the Lord. Out of the depths, have I called you, Oh Lord. He will redeem Israel from all its iniquities."

This presenter understood and accepted the direct contact between mankind and the Creator as reflected in the Psalms. She was not perplexed by the consequences or theological ramifications of this contact -- a position accepted by the other group members as well.
In a Central Group text interaction session the presenter discussed Psalm 49 which is part of the funeral service. She subsequently dealt with Verse 21, the final verse of this Psalm which reads as follows:

Man that is in honour understandeth not: He is like the beasts that perish (Old JPS translation, p.1612).

After reading this verse aloud, P. commented reading from a translation which is different that quoted above:

Now when we do the first translation of that last verse, "do not attain insight"... that is such a key verse and that is what the Psalm basically says to me: We must look at our lives and see what we have made of them.
I think that the insight we have is that what man attains is not worth anything. It's really what G-d can give us. One of the reasons is that when my father died, and was a very religious man, and when we sat there, my brother sat against the radiator and my oldest brother sat... and... in any event we were all broken up and I recall... walked in and he said, "I hope that when I die, that I get the 'koved' (honor) that this simple man got at the funeral." There were over a 1,000 people at the funeral. I looked up at him, right after the funeral, and I thought... when he dies. However the following day in the newspaper there was an article that said that... (impossible to hear due to background noise). He was basically a very simple man, certainly not a Rabbi. And many things that he did I never knew about. When my father died people came not only to the funeral, but to the house. "When I was without milk and bread, your father gave me milk and bread and I never paid him back. I must give it to you now." I never had any idea. People called me and told me incredible things that he did during the war, when the husband was away, when the wife was alone with the children. We never knew these things. I know my mother never knew. He didn't talk about this.

In this session the presenter interpreted the verse in a manner that was distant from the literal interpretation. The literal interpretation of the text is that a person that basks in honor (and wealth) does not understand and is compared with an animal. The presenter understood the verse as follows:

I think that the insight we have is that what man attains is not worth anything. It's really what G-d can give us.
In this situation the presenter either misunderstood the verse or felt pressed to introduce her own subjective interpretation which also allowed her to introduce her personal story. Despite this interpretation, or maybe as a result of it, the presenter and the group were able to identify with the message of the text.

Social Interaction and Ignoral of the Text

In this mode the text was elevated, put on a pedestal, and the discussion moved into a social interaction mode. The social discussion focused on the topic yet ignored the text, preventing any tension between the participants and the text. This was evident from the following excerpt from the Ramot Eshkol group, which moved into the social interaction mode following this opening:

P: I started reading... A morning prayer in distress, the third Psalm. The Song of David when he fled from Avshalom, his son. "L-rd, how many are my... Many are they that rise up against me. Many there are, they say of my soul. There’s no salvation for him in G-d. Sela. But thou, O L-rd, are a shield above me, my glory and the lifter of my head. With my voice, I call out to thee unto the L-rd and he answereth me out of his holy mountain. I lay me down and I sleep. I awake for the Lord sustaineth me. I’m not afraid of 10,000 of people. They have set themselves against me round about. Arise, O L-rd, save me, oh my G-d for thou has smitten all my enemies upon the cheek. Thou has broken the teeth of the wicked. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord. The blessing be upon thy people."

PI: That’s beautiful.

PI’s comment channeled the group into social interaction without any reaction to the Psalm which had just been read. In her remark she paid the necessary respect to the Psalm, allowing the group to embark
on its other business. This reaction to the text may be the result of the following two factors:

a. The 'unacceptable' concepts of the text. In ignoring the texts, participants adopted an alternative strategy for dealing with a problematic text. In the above text the participants may have decided to sidestep the text because of its trust in G-d’s salvation, an issue which troubles many of the post-Nazi Holocaust generation.

b. The complexity of the text. The complex nature of the text made interpretation and discussion an almost formidable task. The group therefore entered the social interaction mode as an escape from having to unpack the ideas and issues in the text. In the above text it is important to understand the text both as a Psalm with an eternal message and in the context of the David-Absalom story. Perhaps the participants felt ill-equipped to cope with these two levels of discussion and therefore opted for social interaction.

Self-Help Group Interaction and Rejection of the Text

In this mode the participants used the study group for support in their personal problems. Sometimes the texts responded to their needs and they relied on them for comfort while at others the texts proved to be a cause of discomfort causing disjuncture. This disjuncture emanated from life experiences which mitigated against the texts being adhered to, resulting in rejection, as is evident from the following extract from a Ramot Eshkol self-help group interaction session.

Pl: I think you've pretty much answered it yourself. Number one, I think it gives you comfort for the people who are doing it and number two, I think in Judaism we are led to believe that prayer has a great deal of power. I think this was one of the reasons. The power of prayer. That it is great that we have these forces fighting and all of this but also...
P2: When I think of David's Psalms, I can't somehow connect it with prayers.

P3: It is very interesting.

P1: Prayers for somebody's soul or prayers for somebody's health.

P5: But you are not really praying for that. I think in a way you are praising G-d and you are hoping that he will intervene in this, through your prayers.

P2: When I am distressed, I am not praising G-d. I am looking for comfort.

P1: But then you have to look. Some of the most beautiful prayers that we say, I feel, are the ones that we do just before Tisha B'Av (commemoration of the destruction of the Temple) where there are comfort prayers. After all this destruction, when G-d is coming to you and he is going to comfort you.

P3: You don't buy it.

P2: I agree. I'm not a master on this.

P2: Sometimes it sounds almost cruel the way of G-d. For instance, people who went through the Shoah (Holocaust) and we had Rabbis coming to us and like they said it is the will of G-d. At times like that it sounds very cruel. And to this day, I don't accept it. I can't accept that Hashem (G-d), it was the will of G-d for us to have it. How can anybody accept it, anybody who suffers losses? Everybody who came out of the Shoah was completely changed. Later on, they started getting back to it because I was together with girls who came from very religious backgrounds and they said if that thing could happen to me, they were just completely washed.

P2. had trouble reconciling the text, which referred to G-d listening to a person's prayers, in the light of her understanding of the Holocaust. The group was troubled by her position and tried to influence her, however ultimately she rejected the text.

According to this position, the modes of interaction in the case study are particular to religious study circles. While the first two responses could be expected in traditional study circles, the third and fourth response as public responses would probably be limited to non-traditional religious study circles.
Implications for Non-Traditional Jewish Religious Study Circles

According to this position the determining factor in the interaction process is the subject matter. Accordingly, an attempt to influence the mode of interaction in other non-traditional Jewish religious study groups must take into account the preparation and selection of appropriate materials. The message of the texts must be thoroughly analyzed in the selection process and discarded if they could lead to a negative process. In order to alleviate the laborious nature of this process, non-traditional study circles should be encouraged to form international networks. Suitable materials and texts could be pooled, enabling those who are searching for texts with which they can identify to select suitable texts for their sessions.

Support for this position, which sees the text as being of primary influence, comes from the fact that all three groups passed through the three modes of interaction. Since the composition of these groups were constant, as were the group norms, the only variables which changed were the presenter and the subject matter. While the role of the presenter as affecting the general dynamic of the group should not be underestimated, her prime influence is her choice of the material and her presentation of the subject matter. Thus, this changing variable influences the nature of the subject matter, strengthening the position which views the subject matter as supreme.

In developing this position, it is possible to extend implications of this case study beyond the gambit of Jewish study circles and include other non-traditional study circles as well. In these study circles the participants may be faced by the same dilemmas as those identified in the case study and thus the findings could be applied to the larger universe of non-traditional study circles of other faiths as well.
In weighing the two positions i.e. whether the case study is a general study circle or a particular type it is difficult to make a clear decision. Further research is thus needed both among the limited sector of non-traditional study circles and among other general categories of study circles, taking into account the different influencing factors which have been suggested. However, in the following chapters I shall assume that the implications of the case study are limited to non-traditional study circles since it is this area of adult education upon which I have decided to focus and it is the interest in this domain which precipitated the research. Therefore in the following two chapters the implications of learning and social functions in the study circle will be limited to the universe of non-traditional adult Jewish religious education.
Chapter Thirteen

Learning in the Study Group

Perhaps the central issue of education is learning and its outcomes. This issue precipitated an analysis of learning in the study group, which takes place in the different modes of interaction. On the basis of this analysis the implications of the findings for non-traditional study circles will be discussed.

In my analysis of the learning which takes place in the study group, I shall adopt a holistic approach which combines experience, perception, cognition and behavior in contrast to the behaviorist and cognitive approaches, which are partial. Two holistic approaches which have recently dominated adult learning research are the approaches of Kolb (1984) and Jarvis (1987; 1992).

According to Kolb (1984, p.38), learning is "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience." This definition links learning to knowledge and thus defines the generation of knowledge as a fundamental aspect of learning. Jarvis (1987) accepts experience as a key concept in learning, yet disputes Kolb's limitation of outcomes to knowledge. Jarvis (1992, p.180) enlarges upon this definition and lists additional outcomes emanating from the transformation of experience. He defines learning as "the process of transforming experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, senses and emotions." In the context of this thesis, I prefer to accept Jarvis's definition because its wide definition of learning is far more suited to the traditional objectives of Jewish learning which strive towards emotional outcomes as well. Thus in focusing on a non-traditional study circle, I am interested in the possible transformation of experience into attitudes, values, senses and emotions, as well as the knowledge outcomes.
On the basis of these definitions, I shall pose the following questions regarding the study sessions which I observed.

a. Did a transforming experience take place?
b. What role did the study session have in this experience?
c. What were the outcomes?

In our dealing with these questions there are two sets of concepts which are pertinent and thus should be discussed: 'disjuncture' and 'primary and secondary experiences.'

**Disjuncture**

According to Jarvis (1992, p.83) disjuncture occurs "whenever there is a lack of accord between the external world experienced by human beings and their internal biographical interests or knowledge" and when there is a lack of accord between people and their environment. Disjuncture creates a psychological state of disharmony and challenges the person to re-establish the state of harmony through learning. Of course the person can decide to ignore this situation and choose not to exploit this learning opportunity.

Jarvis maintains that not only is learning a method of dealing with disjuncture, but disjuncture is a necessary condition for learning. This results in a paradox in human learning.

Interpersonal harmony is considered extremely desirable, and learning is considered a laudable goal. However to achieve the best conditions for learning, the ideal state of harmony has to be disturbed and disjuncture has to occur between the learners and the natural world or the sociocultural world, or both (Jarvis 1992, p.84).

In trying to establish the nature of learning in the study groups this paradox is even more acute than in the real world. In my interviews, I found the striving for social harmony among the group's
participants to be paramount among the participants' needs. G., a participant, noted the unique nature of the study group as a feeling of harmony and intimacy.

I like the intimacy. We get a chance to express our own feelings at each session. Not that we're limited. You can't say something because somebody else is waiting patiently to say something...
In the study group you are among friends, even though you're not really friends, you feel you are among friends and the free exchange of ideas and attitudes and opinions.

In addition, almost all of those interviewed stressed the importance of group participation and a positive group feeling as being the factor which determined a successful session. As S. put it:

A successful group is one where everybody really wants to participate and wants to be a part of it. They want to take part, whether it involves leading the discussion or being part of the discussion and agreeing on a topic, having a common interest and with everybody really wanting to grow intellectually.

Another factor which promotes harmony is the need to encourage participants to make a presentation. This is essential for the successful functioning of the study group. Since the study group is dependent on the goodwill of its participants to prepare and lead sessions, an effort must be made to encourage participants to volunteer for this role. Naturally, participants who feel inadequate in making a public presentation or who feel ill-equipped to master a topic in which they have little expertise will express an element of anxiety when called upon to make a presentation. This position was stressed both by J., a participant and by A., a group coordinator.

J. My personal opinion on my presenting a thing is that I should not be asked, because I don’t know enough about an item to just sit down and study it for a couple of hours or a day or so and then present it. My feeling is that it should be presented by someone with a greater depth of knowledge. I feel inadequate.

A. But most of these ladies you just have to (encourage). It has been the building up of self-confidence you know, that they are able to. And this takes a long time, you know, I mean, you have
to change your mind frames, sort of speak. And commit yourself into something that you can do. And I think that in our group this has been, you know, it's been a growing experience for a lot of these ladies. So, I think it's just because of the intimacy, you know, and getting to know one another and saying, "Hey, I could have done that too," you know, or maybe in my own mind, "I could have even done that better." So you know, so it's a building process, and where in the beginning a lot of these women were very much hesitant or refused outright to do any presentation at all, we are going into our third year now, so I think this is one of the rewards.

In light of this quest for group harmony, the nature of the learning which takes place in the study group is a pertinent issue and will be dealt with following a discussion on primary and secondary experiences.

Primary and Secondary Experiences

In following my holistic approach, the social process of learning must be taken into consideration. This social process, according to Jarvis, has two dimensions:

There is direct experience that occurs through action and is experienced through the senses; this will be called 'primary experience.' There is also a mediated or indirect form of experience that comes through communicative action; I will refer to this as secondary experience (Jarvis 1992, p.14).

Primary experience is practical and is tied to action, while secondary experience may be more theoretical, occurring through communicative interaction between people. Can secondary experience occur without primary experience? According to Jarvis it can, but very rarely. Primary experiences are therefore important conditions for learning situations when they create disjuncture.
This position has important ramifications for adult educators since it forces them to be cognizant of those social processes which have taken place prior to the adult student’s entering the classroom if they want to involve the student in learning. The adult educator is forced to ascertain if the learner has been engaged in primary experiences and which experiences these include. If s/he has not had a primary experience, the educator must induce an experience by means of a communicative interaction. This situation, of course, is only valid in a formal classroom setting where the adult educator has an element of control. In the study group, where there is a laissez-faire situation, this brings me back to my original question, does learning take place and in which modes?

Learning in the Self-help Therapy Group Mode

In my interviews I found that the self-help therapy group mode is the final stage of a learning process. The self-help therapy group mode arises as a result of raising a personal problem and striving to find support within the group. The problem is usually caused by the participant’s inability to come to terms with a situation as a result of a clash of values or in light of their previous biographical experiences. This creates a serious disjuncture which is resolved and overcome through learning. A typical disjuncture is described by L.

A memorable session for me was ‘Intermarriage and the Impact on the Family.’ One of the reasons I was interested was for very personal reasons, because my daughter was and still is very close to a young man who is not Jewish and they’re talking about getting married.

For a Jewish parent who is personally committed to Jewish continuity, it is important that his/her child marry a Jewish spouse. It is obvious that L. had been grappling with the question of how to relate
to her daughter, whom she loves and with whom she wants to continue a strong relationship, after her daughter has decided to choose a way of life with which she strongly disagrees. This agonizing issue created a serious disjuncture, since it was probably the first time she had to deal with this issue as a parent and felt ill-equipped to make a decision. This disjuncture had already begun a learning process, with L. looking at the problem in different ways. She turned to the study session to assist her in this deliberation and perhaps gain support from others who had faced similar situations. The role of communicative interaction in this study session therefore complemented an already existent learning process and perhaps provided new insights.

Contemplative Learning

Jarvis (1992) refers to two types of learning: 'non-reflective learning' and 'reflective learning.' Non-reflective learning consists of preconscious learning, skills learning and memorization. Reflective learning is a superior form of learning, consisting of contemplation, reflective skills learning and experimental learning. The type of learning which took place in the self-help therapy mode was contemplation.

Contemplation is "the process of thinking about an experience and reaching a conclusion about it without necessarily referring to the wider reality.... What distinguishes contemplative learning from the process of thinking itself is the fact that a conclusion is reached" (Jarvis 1990, p.77). This contemplation may lead to conclusions which relate not only to a narrow course of action but may lead to a change in perspective which could ultimately affect one's lifestyle. While reflective skills and experimental learning may be considered higher forms of learning because of their immediate applicability,
Degenhardt (1982) would consider contemplative learning to be the highest form. In his argument for basic curriculum on knowledge which would result in what I have termed ‘contemplation’ he writes as follows:

...It has been argued that we are right to believe that the great evolved bodies of knowledge and speculation have a value and educational importance that is independent of, and greater than, the value of usefulness. But it is wrong to conclude that their value must be as ends in themselves. Rather they are of value because they help us in the inescapably human enterprise of forming a ‘world view’ or ‘philosophy of life’ whereby we set ourselves ends in life. They help us to reflect on the kinds of questions that are involved in the questions of ‘the meaning of life.’ Thus a body of knowledge earns its place in the curriculum on grounds other than usefulness, and in so far as is likely to contribute to the working out of such a world view. (Degenhardt 1982, p.89).

The importance of contemplative learning should therefore not be underestimated.

In the self-help therapy group mode contemplative learning follows the following process. First there is a disjuncture which occurs prior to the study session. Then a period of self-reflection takes place. This is finally followed by communicative interaction in the study session. It is usually the presenter who suffers the disjuncture and it is she who arrives at a conclusion and solicits support from the group for her conclusion. In an interview with the presenter of the discussion on Alzheimer’s disease this became clearly evident.

Euthanasia? I almost feel that I would with somebody who has Alzheimer. Somebody said to me that they had asked a Rabbi about this and he told his congregation that if somebody was to pray for his death, if that’s what they say, pray for his death, then I would say that euthanasia is proper. Wouldn’t you?
The study session is not always the final stage in the process. The contemplative process may continue well after the conclusion of the session, in the same way as it has begun well before the session. An example of this is A., who attended the session as a step in her contemplation regarding the future of her daughter and who left the session without having made up her mind. Thus, this process of contemplation could continue well after the termination of the particular session.

I have dealt thus far with the learning which is experienced by the presenter who has undergone the disjunctive experience. What is the nature of learning among the participants? In this respect one must distinguish between those participants who were peers of the presenter and had been party to the disjunctive experience, making this a primary experience, and those participants who were hearing the details for the first time. It is my perception that based on the sessions which I observed, the presenter succeeded in communicating the disjunctive experience to the participants for whom it became a secondary experience. There was, however, a difference of response between those for whom it was a primary experience and those for whom it was a secondary experience. For both sets of participants the learning which was evoked was contemplative, with those undergoing the secondary experience perhaps reaching different conclusions from those for whom the disjuncture occurred with the primary experience.

Learning Outcomes

As mentioned, Jarvis (1990) defines learning as "the process of transforming experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, senses and emotions." In the self-help therapy mode, the learning outcomes which I observed were in the realm of attitudes and emotions. While my research design did not have an evaluative component, my observations and interviews showed that there may have been a change in attitude and emotions both on behalf of the
presenter and the participants. Since the learning process could well continue beyond a particular session, an evaluation of learning outcomes could necessitate a longitudinal study over a lengthy period of time.

Learning in the Text Centered Mode

Whereas in the self-help therapy group mode learning was precipitated by a primary experience, in the text centered mode learning was precipitated by a secondary experience. This secondary experience was stimulated by the communicative interaction in the study group. In the Central group, which studied Psalms in the text centered mode, it was a stimulating opening presentation that I did not observe which generated a disjuncture and a fresh look at the text and at life. This opening presentation was described as follows by B. the coordinator.

She spoke very short, in fact when she was finished I thought: What’s going to happen? There’s not enough. And then all the ideas started coming. She had done a lot of research and she showed how it wasn’t just... you had to look into what the commentaries said. She did some things with literature where she took quotations from Shakespeare and she had done some research on that. She made it understandable that they pervade our lives. I don’t know what happened. What’s happened this whole year with this group...

S., a member of the Central group, also referred to this opening session as being responsible for building the group’s interest in the Psalms.

The most fascinating speaker was H.’s sister F. I wish I could be in her class on a daily basis, because she must be a most fascinating teacher. She’s the only woman who I know who presented a written paper which absolutely... I sat there with my mouth open... I felt I was in a world just between her and
me. She was the most fascinating presenter. I was so sorry you weren’t there. She’s good. I’d never known the things about Esther that she gave us. She’s a historian. I came away from that session... I would say that out of all the sessions that were given, she spoke the longest. I didn’t want her to stop. Do you know what I’m saying?

The importance of the presentation in precipitating a learning process is echoed by S.

So a successful study group -- there are very many, you know, variables, there are many forelapses that can be successful and it’s very much dependent on the subject matter and how it’s presented, and how I feel that I am touched by it, and that I am able also to contribute to it, not just be a passive listener necessarily, and if it evokes things within me that makes me contribute.

In my interviews I found that it was not only the presentation which contributed to the disjuncture but there were other factors as well. An important factor which lead to the interest in Psalms was the security situation prevailing in Israel at the time. The study sessions at which the Psalms were studied took place during the Gulf War, which commenced in August 1990. In Israel there was a period of anxiety because of the threat of a missile/gas attack, a period which climaxed with the U.S. led land offensive on January 15 1991. In B.’s words:

It was the beginning of the period of tension. We were approaching January 15. I think people were beginning to be very fearful of what was coming and there was a feeling of being alone: People weren’t coming, the hotels were empty and so on. There was a feeling that we were being abandoned by the world and maybe we would be offered up for some kind of peace sacrifice and I think there was a bonding. There was something that happened at that meeting that was unusual.

In this context, learning in the text centered mode had therapeutic motivation as well. In approaching the Psalms the participants were seeking personal solace and support in the wake of a threat which
caused apprehension and disjuncture. B. described her perception of this phenomenon.

A couple of the comments of the women are the fact that they looked at the Psalms in a little different way during the war period. I don't think there was anyone who didn't say that they hadn't turned to the Psalms during that period of time...

Contemplative Learning

In this mode as well the learning which took place was the beginning of a contemplative process. Whereas in the self-help therapy mode the deliberations had preceded the study session, in the text centered mode the deliberations were precipitated by the study session and continued afterwards. The following comment by S. reflects this process and was typical of those who had learned in this mode:

Very often it triggers off something in me. For instance, I'm reading a book now that I would never have picked up if we hadn't touched on the subject of... not that I'm not aware of the problem, but I would not have thought of reading a novel on that particular subject.

My categorization of learning in this mode as contemplative is based on the assumption that ultimately the process will end in a conclusion. It is therefore important to be aware of the tentative nature of this learning and realize that as long as a conclusion has not been reached we cannot strictly talk about contemplative learning.

Learning Outcomes

It is difficult to discuss learning outcomes in the text centered mode since the study sessions merely commence the learning process.
It is plausible, however, to talk about changes in attitude to certain texts and their appreciation. This type of outcome is highlighted by B.

We've all read those Psalms many times and we read them at different times for different purposes. Something has happened. I think there are some of the people in the group who've said they never quite looked at it in the same way.

In their study of the Psalms some women talked about finding new meaning. This meaning definitely had a carry over to their personal lives since for many the Psalms became a book for potential solace in time of need and praise in time of joy. This is illustrated by M.'s comment:

In Tehillim (Psalms) I know so very little about it, as I explained at one of the groups. To me I consider Tehillim like a dirge, a bemoaning, I can't think of the word right now, whereas I learnt that it's something completely different, because to me Tehillim was something that was said when somebody was at the cemetery, or somebody died or when somebody was very ill. I learnt that it's a song of praise at the same time.

Learning in the Social Interaction Mode

The difference in learning between the presenter and participants is most noticeable in the social interaction mode. In this mode the presenter prepares a text in a manner which resembles the text centered mode and in her situation there is contemplative learning. She tries to evoke disjuncture in her presentation, yet the participants ignore these challenges and prefer to engage in social conversation on topics related to the subject.
This non-learning situation was manifested in the following three forms:

a. Ignoring the Disjuncture

In this situation the participants ignore the contents of the presentation and the problems raised. This could be for a number of reasons:

1. The presenter or subject matter fail to create or communicate the intended disjuncture. This is evident from the following statement by G.:

   Psalms are a very beautiful thing, but as far as I am concerned it doesn't leave too much to be discussed. It's there to be admired and to pick up the meanings, but I'd like something to discuss, to find various opinions on the subject... the Jewish life today.

2. The issue is not relevant to the participants' personal lives. The participants therefore ignore the presentation and prefer to engage in social discussion which does not constitute learning yet is relevant.

3. An item of national media interest invites peer discussion, thereby giving the participants a 'legitimate' reason not to focus on nor interact with the text. This situation was prevalent during the Gulf War when Saddam Hussein attracted more interest than the presentations, which dealt with Jewish Ethics in one group and the Psalms in another.

b. The Study Session as Ritual

In his description of non-learning habituallized action, Jarvis (1992) lists ritual. Ritual generates a behavioral pattern which, because of its habitualized actions and reactions, may make the person oblivious to the possibility of learning from the actions. The
study group may become a ritualized endeavour for some participants and thereby may become a non-learning experience. It aims to foster commitment beyond the interest in a particular session or topic, resulting in attendance and participation based on commitment, which is ritualistic. S. and A. voiced this feeling when discussing their participation.

S: For me in a sense it's a commitment and I feel that I not only must come, but I want to come.

A: Now, in this, I think that the study group feels a need in me right now, because number one it's a commitment, and it's an ongoing commitment

c. A Gap Between the Text and the Participants' Backgrounds

Due to a lack of training in textual analysis, the participants are not able to understand the text and the issues which the text presents. Thus a gap is created and the learning experience is ineffective. Jarvis (1987, p.83) alludes to this situation in his discussion of non-learning experiences:

...but it is also possible for the discontinuity to be too great and the reflection that occurs does not result in learning or meaning but in the realization that the person cannot learn from the experience.

This problem was described by J. in reflecting upon her frustration as a participant at a session on Psalms which developed into social interaction, despite her personal desire to pursue text centered interaction.

We, as individuals in the study group are not authorities on what we're learning. In fact what we're doing now on the Psalms is very difficult and very hard to prepare because I don't think any of us have a proper background.
d. Informal Atmosphere

The informal hosting of the study group encourages social intercourse. In holding a study session in the relaxed atmosphere of the home, which is conducive to informal interaction, it may be difficult for the presenter to create a learning tension. In addition, the participants who are attracted to this setting may be seeking social interaction rather than a learning experience. E. described her feelings at the study group.

> It's like a friendship group. It's good when you come to a new country and a new city and you see the family pictures on the wall of the host. It gives one a nice feeling.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of Chapter Ten, the question was raised regarding possible cognitive outcomes resulting from the group discussions in the social interaction mode. Do the discussions lead to a sense of identification with the text? In contrast to the text centered mode in which participants expressed this feeling, in the social interaction mode this was not apparent. Notwithstanding this possibility, in the social interaction mode there seems to be almost no learning done by the participants and therefore it is difficult to talk about learning outcomes among the participants of the session. However, for the presenter the situation is potentially different. In preparing the text the she pursues a learning process similar to the presenter who follows a contemplative type of learning in the text centered interaction mode. As discussed previously, in this situation it is difficult to assess learning outcomes since this is the beginning of a learning process and not the end. The commencement of the process by the presenter is reflected in a comment made by M. who was a presenter in a social interaction mode session.
The study gives us time to think. The presentation which I gave on ‘Just and Unjust Wars’ made me give a lot of energy and thought. In a study group you have to give of yourself.

In this chapter we have seen that learning in the study group is generally contemplative. Communicative interaction may have a different role for the participants and the presenters and manifests itself differently in the different modes. Mention must also be made of the social interaction mode, which may be a non-learning situation for the participants yet could be a learning situation for the presenter. Taking this into account, is this learning process a normative one in adult religious Jewish education? This will be dealt with in the final chapter following the discussion on the social functions of the study group.
Jewish learning has for centuries not only been a private act but a social act as well. In the Mishna of Avot it is stated "Appoint for yourself a teacher and acquire a friend" (Avot 1:6). This friend could be understood to mean a fellow learner with the importance of learning being a social undertaking. In Chapter Four, I described the evolution and development of study circle-like groups of learners through the ages. These study groups were both part of the social system and affected the social system (Katz, 1969) performing important social functions. In this chapter the social functions of the study group will be discussed with implications for similar study circles.

Functions of a Social System

Jarvis (1985) differentiates between two approaches to the study of the 'functions' of a social system. A conservative approach, endorsed by Talcott Parsons (1951), views the term 'function' as "the contribution that the phenomenon makes to the coherence of the social system" (Jarvis 1985, p.133). This conservative approach assumes that the existence of every phenomenon contributes to the coherence of the social system and to its perpetuation. A radical approach, however, views the term 'function' as a consequence of a phenomenon's existence which has social consequences. Jarvis raises the possibility of viewing education according to the radical approach, seeing educational functions as consequences of education, an approach which I shall adopt in this chapter.
The adoption of the radical approach calls for a differentiation between the 'aims' and 'functions' of education (Jarvis 1985). The aims of education are articulated prior to the educational experience or process, with the educators (comprising philosophers, curriculum writers and teachers) specifying these aims and the desired outcomes (Tyler 1950). The functions of education, however, are only assessed following the educational process or experience on the basis of its consequences. The specification of aims and the aspiration for their fulfillment requires a degree of control over the educational process or experience in order to ensure that the desired variables are accented and that those which are counterproductive are neutralized. The consideration of functions, however, is possible both in controlled and un-controlled environments.

A substantive characteristic of the study circle is its fluid democratic nature. While in this thesis I have found fixed defined patterns of interaction, I am cognizant of this fluidity and lack of control and therefore feel that while it is inappropriate to discuss aims, it is appropriate to discuss functions.

**Functions of the Study Group**

Inkeles (1971) indicates that analysis of a system should take into account the multiplicity of systems which exist. These range from the personal system to the macro-societal system. There are some systems which overlap, while other systems may also have sub-systems. In a holistic analysis of the functions of education and, specifically, the study group, account must be taken of the conglomerate of systems which are affected.

In approaching this task I shall adopt Jarvis's (1985, pp.135-150) comprehensive categorization of the functions of continuing education, paying heed to those functions which are particular to the study group. Jarvis lists the following six sets of functions of
continuing education: maintenance of the social system and reproduction of existing social relations; transmission of knowledge and reproduction of culture; individual advancement and selection; second chance and legitimation; leisure time pursuit and institutional expansion to fill non-work time; development and liberation. I shall examine these functions as they were manifested in the Hadassah Study Groups and their consequences for study circles in other settings as well.

Maintenance of the Social System and Reproduction of Existing Social Relations

The study group which relies on internal expertise is a natural guardian of the existing Jewish social intellectual system. This system differentiates between those who are text literate and those who are text illiterate. Literacy indicates an ability to comprehend and analyze a traditional text in its original Hebrew or Aramaic. This ability can be attained after a number of years of intensive text study either at the secondary or post-secondary school level (Helmreich 1982). This ability is usually the monopoly of the Orthodox systems of education, which places emphasis on text literacy among males. Until recently women in these systems were not encouraged to attain this ability, therefore the participants of the Hadassah Study Groups, which comprised older women, were almost all text illiterate. This feeling of educational neglect is mentioned by S.

We were encouraged to go to college, to go out to the working world, but to say we were ever encouraged to study Judaism -- what for? Girls didn't need it. I didn't know an Aleph (first Hebrew letter) from a Beth (second Hebrew letter) until a year before I made Aliyah (immigrated to Israel). I had no knowledge until I came here.
Thus, in rejecting the participation of outside experts who could perhaps substantially raise the literacy level, the study group perpetuates the present situation.

A second factor which encourages maintenance of the status quo is the lack of rigor in the discussions. In their ability to make all participants feel comfortable, participants are not challenged in a serious manner and thus points of view which reflect the present system are legitimized.

Would these two factors be present in study circles in other settings as well? This, of course, would depend on the composition and dynamic of the study circles. If there were sufficient expertise among the study circle members it would be possible for those in a lower stratum to raise their level. This difference in level must be carefully considered as it may impinge on the democratic nature of the study circle by placing the power of decision making and curriculum planning in the hands of the experts.

While a study circle may strive to institute a dynamic of rigorous learning and challenging interaction, this may have a negative affect on future participation in the circle as members may feel intimidated. This concern was observed in the Elul group. In this study circle, which strove to inculcate a dynamic of intellectual rigor, the participants were very careful to restrain themselves from being intellectually aggressive, with the latent intention being that all contributions should be legitimized.

Transmission of Knowledge and Reproduction of Culture

This set of functions deals with two different educational processes. The first is a cognitive process with the outcome being the accumulation of knowledge. The second is a socialization process with the outcome being the acquisition of culture. On the basis of my
observations, this dual role is effectively facilitated by the study group. In the preparation of the presentation and in the text interaction mode there is an accumulation of knowledge and/or a curiosity is raised, encouraging the participants to continue to seek knowledge following the session. This is highlighted by A.’s comment:

I think that, yes, when I come across material that’s related to any of the topics that we studied in the study group, it rings a bell; it has a lot more meaning then. And there have been times when I have, you know, on my own as a result of something that we read, and not in preparation for the study group, done further research in it.

It is reasonable to assume, as was observed by Bystrom (1976), that in other settings the accumulation of knowledge could be an effective function of the study circle.

The acquisition of culture is primarily facilitated by the study group in the social interaction mode. This mode of interaction gives outsiders to the group or those who come from other cultures an opportunity to acquire cultural cues and mannerisms in a semi-formal manner. This process of socialization and acculturation is important for those participants who come from outside of the group’s culture and seek to be acculturated. In the context of adult Jewish education, where efforts are made to transmit Jewish culture to those who are not familiar with Jewish norms or customs (Cohen 1993), is it possible to expect the study circle to be a successful vehicle for the transmission of Jewish culture if most of the group is not part of the culture? This seems to depend on the number of acculturated participants in the circle. Since the process of cultural transmission seems to be facilitated by the imparting of cultural norms by fellow members, for cultural transmission to be successful it is necessary for there to be a significant number of acculturated participants who would interact with the non-acculturated.
Individual Advancement and Selection

This function, which views continuing education as a vehicle for social mobility and advancement, was not apparent in the study groups which I observed. Neither the religious subjects which were studied nor the senior composition of the study groups promoted or facilitated individual advancement. Would this be the situation in other settings as well? This function seems to be the antithesis of the first function, which viewed education as the preservation of the social system and a barrier towards social mobility. Thus in my evaluation of the study circle as an effective facilitator of the first function it is difficult to expect the study circle to facilitate this function as well.

Second Chance and Legitimation

Second chance adult education is an option for adults who did not have the opportunity to study at an earlier stage to supplement their education. For a number of members of the Hadassah Study Groups, participation was motivated by a desire to make up for the lack of Jewish education in their youth. M.'s comment reflects this approach:

Well I feel that my education was very inadequate and I would really very much like to go into deeper, whatever I study, to go deeper into it, because my background is very poor, but I feel whatever I gain, whatever I retain is worthwhile for me.

The relaxed atmosphere of a study group is conducive for those who are seeking a tension-free environment. A formal classroom with younger students may be threatening to an older returning student and thus a supportive environment is sought. This is echoed by G.

I think that at this stage people are looking for mental stimulation outside of formal setups, like a classroom, because, I'm not as old as some of the other ladies -- A. and I are the same age -- but I think it may be harder for them in a formal classroom situation to absorb and to learn. This makes it
easier, not being tested against younger people... In the study group you are among friends, even though you're not really friends you feel you are among friends and the free exchange of ideas and attitudes and opinions. In a lecture group you wouldn't have to answer questions, I'm sure, but it still is a formal setup.

The conducive nature of the study group for second chance learning is certainly applicable to other settings if these settings are supportive. Their possible lack of intellectual rigor, however, raises a question regarding the quality of this second chance learning. This will depend on the internal dynamic of these settings.

A second function, which is a by product of the institutionalization of second chance learning, is the granting of legitimacy to the system which creates this need. In providing this service there may be a dynamic which prolongs this phenomenon rather than deals with its cause. In relation to adult Jewish education this is an issue related to the macro system. Given the complexity of issues which have militated against a sound primary Jewish religious education -- a complexity which ranges from the problems of assimilation to an extremist religious conviction endorsing women's ignorance of Jewish sources -- it is difficult to perceive that the institutionalization of second chance education for adults will be the contributing factor to the legitimization of the system.

Leisure Time Pursuit and Institutional Expansion to Fill Non-work Time

In economies where there is a trend towards a shortened work week and early retirement, adult education is increasingly becoming a meaningful way to utilize the increasing amount of leisure time. Organizations such as Elderhostel have developed extensive adult learning programs which combine recreational and social activities with learning, giving the adult an opportunity to integrate learning into his/her leisure time.
How does the study circle fare as a leisure time pursuit? It could be suggested that the women’s study groups which we observed primarily came to fulfill this function. They are offered by an organization, Hadassah, which enables women to devote their leisure time to volunteer work, fundraising activities and learning. This phenomenon is described by Bergsten from the perspective of the participants:

The interest in adult education for the present job and in non-competence giving adult education, can be seen as part of a leisure style consisting of 'cultural' activities and active membership in organizations (Bergsten 1977, pp.134-136).

The utilization of the study circle for this function suggests that the study group has the following characteristics which are conducive for leisure time learning:

a. Non-demanding. The study groups which I observed are not too demanding. The participants are not required to do any preparatory readings or home assignments. There is no syllabus to be covered and the presentations are offered at a level which is not too demanding intellectually. In this respect the study group differs from the Great Books discussion groups (Davis 1961), which place an emphasis on preparatory readings and an understanding of complicated texts. This non-demanding aspect of the study group was cited by G. as motivation for her participation in the study group as opposed to a lecture.

I think you feel that automatically in a lecture, that you have to produce something, even your own notes, taking notes and paying strict attention. People’s minds tend to wander at this age.

b. Active participation. The study group enables the participant to be active either as a presenter, host or contributor to the discussion. This adds to the enjoyment of the experience, feeling of belonging and increase sense of self-worth.
c. **Interesting agenda.** In rotating presenters, the study group offers a different perspective and renewed interest in each session. The apprehension which the presenter displays in making the presentation adds a touch of drama, evoking empathy on the part of the participants. Interest is enhanced by the participants determining the syllabus of their choice, ensuring that their agenda is addressed.

d. **Informal atmosphere.** In their pursuit of leisure, the participants may be attracted by the informal setting which the study group offers. The study group takes place in a private living room or around a dining room table, giving the activity a social ambience. J. offered an interesting observation regarding the attractiveness of the setting.

> Having the study group in this setting is good since women like to get together, sit around the table and see what the other is wearing before she starts thinking.

I found that, in this context, the study group fulfilled this leisure time function. Its fulfillment of this function in other environments will depend on the willingness and ability of the organizers and participants to incorporate the above mentioned factors in their settings.

**Development and Liberation**

The development of adults is considered by humanist adult educators (Knowles 1980) to be an important function of adult education. According to Paterson (1979, p.17):

> Education is the development of persons as independent centers of value whose development is seen to be an intrinsically worthwhile undertaking.
This may be viewed both from objective and subjective perspectives. Objectively, education has the potential to enable adults to acquire skills and acumen in areas of importance which they have not mastered. Professional education, which seeks to enable adults to keep abreast of technological and professional developments, could be viewed from this perspective. Subjective development refers to personal growth in areas of self-confidence and self-image, enabling the adult to achieve self-fulfillment (Maslow 1970).

A bridge between these two views of development is the liberationist perspective offered by Freire (1972). According to this approach, for liberation to occur there has to be a symbiotic relationship between objective and subjective development. In their acquisition of new skills the oppressed improve their self-image. This leads to a belief in their ability to institute change in their environment, ultimately leading to their liberation.

The effectiveness of the study group as a framework which nurtures development and growth is more effective in the subjective, personal domain than it is in the skill-acquiring, objective domain. Since skill development requires technical training, expertise and rigor, the study group as I observed it in action is a limited framework for this type of growth. However, the study group is able to contribute to individual growth by encouraging participants to make presentations and by inviting all to contribute to the discussion -- a factor mentioned by a A., a coordinator.

It has been the building up of self-confidence you know, that they are able to. And this takes a long time, you know. I mean, you have to change your mind frames, sort of speak. And commit yourself into something that you can do. And I think that in our group this has been, you know, it's been a growing experience for a lot of these ladies. So, I think it's just because of the intimacy, you know, and getting to know one another and saying, "Hey, I could have done that too," you know, or maybe, in my own mind, "I could have even done that better." So you know, so it's
a building process, and where in the beginning a lot of these women were very much hesitant or refused outright to do any presentation at all, we are going into our third year now, so I think this is one of the rewards, I think that is now women feel free to go ahead and do a presentation.

In other settings, depending upon the dynamic, the study circle should thus be viewed as a framework which is suitable for personal development and if there are peers who are experts in the field, possibly for professional growth as well (Knowles et.al. 1984).

A function of adult education which is not mentioned by Jarvis, yet which I observed with the study group, may be termed 'a link with tradition.'

**Link with Tradition**

This function is particular to adult Jewish learning, in which the concept of tradition and Jewish continuity is central. A link with tradition may be expressed in a number of different forms. It may be expressed in the performance of several hallowed precepts and customs or in the speaking of Yiddish or Hebrew or in a commitment to the State of Israel. In my interviews I found that this link with tradition was an important motivation for studying traditional Jewish texts and served as a function of the study group as well. S.'s description of her study group experience expresses this function.

So, I enjoy with the women. It's a matter of a great deal of openness, that you're not just listening to one person lecturing to you, that you can participate, you know, questions and so forth... and this is very open. And there are some things that appeal to me more because of my emotional... like Pirkey Avot (Ethics of the Fathers), which I hope that they will do next year. I mean, this to me, I remember studying this as a child in Belfast, Northern Ireland. I remember my father, things from the Talmud, and so forth. And when I come across something that I can hear or remember my father saying it, this is the whole
link of emotional and traditional continuity which is a part of my very essence of my being Jewish. That's why it's so important being here in Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) praying here and studying here. I did it in Portland, Oregon, also but it didn't seem, it didn't have the same intensity that it does here.

In its encouragement of reflection upon experience, the study group may stimulate latent memories when a certain text is dealt with or a nostalgic topic is discussed. According to S.'s description, Jewish learning is not only a cognitive experience but can become an emotional experience as well. For her the act of Jewish learning arouses associations with a traditional world with which she strives to be linked.

Can this function of the study circle be expected in other Jewish settings as well or is it unique to this setting? It is our contention that this function is conducive to environments in which the participants have deep traditional roots and have accumulated meaningful traditional experiences similar to those of S. In settings where these personal experiences are absent, it is questionable whether this function would be manifested at all.

Community Fellowship

Another important function of adult Jewish learning which is not mentioned by Jarvis is the forging of community among groups of adult learners. In Chapter Four, mention was made of the Hevrot, which were guilds devoted to the study of text. Mention was also made of the Haburot at academies of higher Jewish learning and the contemporary Chavurot. All these concepts are rooted in the Hebrew word 'haver' -- a friend. Thus, all these concepts refer to closely knit groups which meet for study and other purposes as well. In meeting regularly for
study, bonds of friendship and mutual responsibility are forged which go beyond the time of study and the walls of the study locale. An example of this fellowship and community belonging is reflected in the feelings described by Heilman, who conducted an ethnographic study of Talmud circles in Jerusalem.

More and more I reflected on the special feelings of belonging that the study circle engendered in me and in other insiders. I suddenly realized that what drew me out in the evenings when I was tired, when the rain would make me want to stay home, when... was the sense of fellowship and community which I shared with others in my circles (Heilman 1983, p.211).

Within the intimacy of the group of fellow learners the Jewish adult is able to find support in time of need and to share happiness in times of bliss. The Talmud circles which Heilman attended met either weekly or daily. Heilman mentions the regularity of the study sessions as being an important contributor to the level of fellowship. In the Hadassah groups there were various degrees of intimacy and fellowship. The size and intimacy of the groups seemed to play a role in developing this fellowship. The Ramot Eshkol group seemed to display the greatest amount of fellowship. I was personally drawn into this 'community,' despite my attempts to remain an outsider, and was personally notified regarding forthcoming sessions. All participants lived in close proximity and it was obvious that they had social ties beyond the study group.

My encounter with the Talpiot Mizrach group was at its early stages of formation and therefore it was difficult to expect to notice signs of community. After the first six sessions a sense of community had been forged which was reflected in the mutual caring which took place during the Gulf War crisis. This sense of community was also reflected in the concern shown for a participant who underwent an emergency operation. Her absence was mentioned at the session and all announced either their intention to visit her or their already having visited her.
The group which displayed the least fellowship was the Central group, the largest of the groups. The atmosphere in this group was far more formal and the level of social interaction was far lower than in the other groups. This is reflected by a statement by S., a member of the Central group.

The only participant I have a social relationship with is B. Would I join another group instead of this group? It would depend on whom the women are. For me this type of group has to teach me something; if it doesn’t I’m not interested in being here.

Her participation in the group was limited to the cognitive benefits. She felt no commitment to the group, did not mix socially with the participants and considered alternative learning environments.

This study reveals a correlation between the intimacy of the group and the feeling of community. The larger the group, the less intimate and thus the lower level of fellowship. The implications for similar study circles are that if fellowship is an important social objective, attention should be given to the size of the group and its intimacy.

In this section I have described the social functions of the study group on the basis of Jarvis’ list of the social functions of continuing education. Their applicability in other settings has been mooted, subject to specific conditions. While perhaps there are educators are more concerned with the realization of educational objectives than they are with the social functions of education, the importance of the social functions should not be ignored. Thus in assessing the study circle as a framework for non-traditional adult Jewish education, the social functions discussed in this section, must be taken into account as well.
The Study Circle, a Framework for Non-Traditional Jewish Religious Education?

In the introduction to this thesis mention was made of the study circle as a framework for adult Jewish education. A motivation for this research was the interest in developing study circle networks which would serve as alternatives to the lecture style and authoritative teacher mode which dominate non-traditional adult Jewish education today. In this chapter I shall relate to this idea on the basis of the findings.

Educational Objectives

In Chapter Four the following traditional objectives of Jewish adult learning were mentioned:

a. Knowledge of the principles of Judaism
b. Practice of the precepts
c. A feeling of closeness to G-d

The question which will now be posed on the basis of the case study is, how effective is the study group in attaining these objectives? Prior to making this evaluation, is it correct to judge this non-traditional study circle case study on the basis of traditional objectives? While this attempt is primarily due to the traditional bias of this thesis, it could be claimed that the Hadassah Organization endorses at least one of the traditional objectives i.e. 'knowledge of the principles of Judaism' and thus it is this objective which I will focus upon.
Hadassah's Educational Objectives and 'Knowledge of the Principles of Judaism'

In the Hadassah Manual (n.d.), the following educational objectives are outlined:

We must safeguard the cultural and religious treasures of our people by educating ourselves and our children. An enlightened understanding of who we are and what we stand for is not only an intellectual concern but our most effective weapon in the struggle for survival.

According to this statement the goal of education is to "safeguard the cultural and religious treasures". As well an "enlightened understanding" is an "intellectual concern" and an "effective weapon". These objectives do not specify how the process of "safeguarding" works and how it serves as an "effective weapon". However there is a belief that as a result of learning and "understanding who we are and what we stand for" there will be a process which will translate itself into "safeguarding" and into an "effective weapon".

This "understanding of who we are and what we stand for" could certainly be equated with the traditional objective of "knowledge of the principles of Judaism". Both concepts refer to the mastery of vast basic and general issues demand an intellectual effort for the objectives to be achieved. A difference between the two objectives may be that the traditional objective is not linked to the functional, and has objectives which are seemingly cognitive, whereas Hadassah's objective has a functional expectation. In my opinion there could be a complete symmetry between the two objectives based on R. Hayyim's cognitive understanding of 'knowledge for its own sake' which was linked in Chapter Three with 'knowledge of the principles of Judaism.'
According to Lamm (1989), R. Hayyim's aspiration for the knowledge of Torah should not be seen as an intellectual exercise which is detached from practical applications. As was explained in it is this which differentiates R. Hayyim's 'knowledge for its own sake' from that of Peters. R. Hayyim's position could thus coincide with that of Degenhardt for whom the value of knowledge lies in its ability to help form a "a world view or philosophy of life" (Degenhardt, 1982 p.89).

Having shown the possible symmetry between the traditional objective of 'knowledge of the principles of Judaism' and the educational objectives of Hadassah an argument can be made for the validity of learning from this case study about the attainment of this traditional objective.

**Necessary Factors for the Attainment of 'Knowledge of the Principles of Judaism.'**

Following are a list of factors necessary for the attainment of this traditional objective, as well an as analysis of the case study's facilitation of these factors.

**An Intellectually Critical Environment**

In Chapter Three reference was made to the advocacy of group study as mentioned in the traditional sources. This group interaction for the study of Torah was advocated because of the collaboration of minds which would sharpen one another leading to a clearer understanding of the text. These traditional sources assume that group study precipitates critical thinking with the participants questioning each other's assumptions and their logical reasoning. This type of collaborative critical study is an important educational process which should successfully lead to a deep knowledge of the principles of Judaism.
Did this process of mutual critique take place in the case study? In all three modes of interaction a supportive group atmosphere rather than a critical one was identified. In the text interaction mode, this manifested itself in the proliferation of subjective interpretation. In the social interaction mode, a supportive, relaxed environment became conducive to social interaction, and in the self-help therapy mode it was the support of the group which was sought by those with problems, rather than criticism. This supportive environment seems to have indeed hampered the achievement of this educational objective since a line was not drawn between social support and intellectual critique.

Is this problem symptomatic of the non-traditional study circle? My observations of the Elul study circle revealed a similar phenomenon which was partially explained by the non-traditional composition of the study circle, and the non willingness to antagonize the differing points of view. This raises an important issue regarding the suitability of the study circle for traditional Jewish adult education among non-traditional adults. Given the non-traditional nature of the participants and their aspirations to create a comfortable social environment, is it possible to create an environment which encourages critical thinking?

Contemplative Learning

At the end of Chapter Thirteen, the question was posed as to whether contemplative learning is normative from a traditional perspective. Having explained the importance of linking cognitive knowledge with contemplative action, this type of learning is indeed a type to which aspirations should be made. Having shown its predominance in Chapter Thirteen, it seems to be that this supportive study circle is highly conducive to contemplative learning. In the supportive atmosphere, the participants may have the courage to be open about change and may
contemplate it without the threat of criticism. Thus where critical thinking seemed to have suffered in the supportive environment, contemplative learning seems to have thrived.

Resources

An important factor for the attainment of the 'knowledge of the principles of Judaism' is resources. It is important that the study circle have internal resources who are able to share their knowledge with their fellow learners. Since external human resources are not used, the level of the discussions and the learning which takes place is dependent upon the knowledge level of the constituent members.

In the Hadassah study groups which I observed, the participants had little or no previous training in Jewish textual analysis. Many had only a rudimentary Jewish school education and most of their knowledge came through socialization, from their being involved in Jewish culture and a Jewish society. It could therefore be assumed that almost none of the participants had an in-depth knowledge of the principles of Judaism, and therefore this educational objective would be difficult to obtain merely by mutual enrichment. This problem was often evident to me as an observer and sometimes to the group as well. In one instance the Ramot Eshkol group became frustrated by their lack of understanding of the Psalms and turned to an outsider, a local Rabbi, to give them a background lesson on the topic.

The problem of internal resources not only manifested itself in the ability to understand texts. It also hampered the choice of syllabus, causing in some instances much study session time to be devoted to deciding what to study.

This problem could be alleviated to a certain degree, by suitable source material provided by the sponsoring institution. At Hadassah material was produced by the Hadassah Education Department in America
which gave important guidelines for textual analysis and discussion. The guidebook on the Psalms proved to be an important resource for the Central group and the guide book 'Jewish Ethics' proved invaluable for the Talpiot Mizrach group. These materials however did cause a certain amount of frustration. At times they assumed incorrectly that the participants had a basic understanding of the issues and in other instances they raised questions which the participants had no ability to grapple with without expert help. This situation, at times, lead to mis-information given by the more authoritative members of the group, or an internal debate which was not resolvable. The success of this process therefore depended upon the participants going beyond the study group for information and corroboration after the issues were raised at the sessions.

An alternative recommendation is the appointment of a local resource person who could be of assistance in the preparation of the curriculum and the presentations. S/he could assist as well with the selection of suitable materials enabling the groups to analyse texts which are on their level.

Preparation for the Session

Raising the level of discussion and learning depended as well upon the preparation of material prior to the session. At Hadassah this was the onus of the presenter. She therefore determined to a certain degree the scope and depth of 'new' knowledge which the group would have access to. A well prepared subject ensured both a challenging and knowledgeable discussion. Leaving this responsibility entirely to the presenter risked the outcome of the session, leading more often than not to the presenter gaining most from the preparation and the participants gaining minimally because of their being unprepared. It is highly recommended that for the knowledge base of the session to be increased, that all the participants engage in preparation. They will thus bring to the discussion well developed ideas, have an opportunity to check their information with outside experts, and be
able to critique the presentation from a position of knowledge. This method was employed successfully by the Elul group who met prior to the study circle in small groups to prepare the material. This practice was, in fact, religiously followed, often leading to the postponement of the study circle session until all participants felt suitably prepared.

Frequency of Sessions

A significant factor important for the raising of the level of knowledge is the frequency of the sessions. In order to study a topic in depth and maintain a level of continuity between the presentations, sessions should follow each other with a minimum lapse of time.

In the Hadassah groups the irregularity of the sessions proved to be problematic. The study sessions took place once a month, usually during the first week of each month. A month thus elapsed between sessions causing the participants to lose the intended chain of continuity between sessions. They often could not recall exactly which issues were dealt with in previous sessions and even though the sessions followed a certain topic it was difficult to assume an aggregate of knowledge from one session to the next.

Regular Membership

For a systematic examination of a topic to take place, a regular core of participants is necessary. This prevents issues from being repeated, and enables a theme to be developed. The core should be the focus of the session, and an attempt should be made to make this core as large a part of the group as possible.

In this area as well the case study proved to be problematic. At Hadassah the chain of learning was also hampered by the constant change in participants. The Hadassah Organization has an 'open door'
policy which encouraged newcomers to join the study group at any session without any further commitment. While all the groups had a steady committed nucleus there was always an assumption that an outsider had joined the session and that previously gained knowledge by the participants would not be the possession of all. This policy could translate itself to a situation where presenter addresses the new participants rather than the veteran members leading to a lowering of the level of discussion.

In order to ensure that the study circle focus upon its dedicated nucleus presentations should only be made by participants who participate in all the sessions. Since the presenters determine the depth of the topic and the issues, if they are regular participants they will have a keen sense of what level of preparation is needed.

The following two traditional objectives could not be considered to be common to this non-traditional case study, and therefore a direct evaluation of the case study regarding these objectives would be inappropriate. Mention will be made of them however because of the interest in the traditional objectives.

Practice of the Precepts

This educational objective was neither a declared nor latent goal of the Hadassah study group. In order to maintain a pluralist, non coercive stance, the discussions were 'understanding' of those who were non-practicing Jews, with the non observant made to feel as comfortable as possible. It was thus considered to be out of order or me to ask about home practice, and this question was not researched in my interviews.

This traditional educational objective however could have been achieved as the result of contemplative learning. As was discussed in
Chapter Thirteen, contemplative learning could lead to a change in direction resulting in the performance of the precepts. As was shown there were women who testified to their gaining new insights and a change of perspective. If this change ultimately lead to the performance of the precepts, is questionable.

If this is to be a goal of the non-traditional study circles it may have to be a goal endorsed by all participants. This would allow for group encouragement of the fulfillment of the precepts and perhaps group celebrations involving the fulfillment of these precepts. This goal became the objective of a number of Chavurot in the United States (Bubis 1983) who went from being a community of learners to a community of observers of the precepts.

A Feeling of Closeness to G-d.

In the case study this feeling was rarely felt. There were times when the Psalms were sung but for many this did not lead to spiritual upliftment. Here as well, care was taken to make all feel comfortable in a non threatening atmosphere. This objective could have been perceived to be 'missionary' and therefore was avoided.

As explained in Chapter Twelve, Jewish learning has not had a religious personal association for Jewish women. Traditionally this was not part of their ritual, and thus many who had been brought up in traditional homes were not exposed to extensive Jewish learning as part of their traditional Jewish heritage. Thus it would be difficult to expect there to be a 'religious' atmosphere.

This leaves an important challenge to traditional educators who would like to see the study circle as a framework for the implementation of traditional educational objectives. While this research does not
provide sufficient data in this area, further research should be done on the Chavurot and previous Chavurot related research should be consulted (Reisman 1977; Bubis 1982), as there are Chavurot who have aspired to and achieved spiritual moments in their study circle sessions.

A Non-Traditional Model of Adult Jewish Religious Education

This research in general and this analysis in particular was undertaken on the basis of traditional educational objectives. An attempt was made to align Hadassah's objectives with those of the tradition and this formed the basis for the analysis. This approach however should be challenged. It could be that the Hadassah group aspires to goals which are endorsed by a non-traditional model of religious adult education, which oppose the assumptions which underlie the traditional model.

An indication of the prevalence of alternative educational objectives is the supportive atmosphere which prevailed in the study group in contrast to the atmosphere of critical questioning as advocated by the traditional sources. This supportive atmosphere could be attributed to an ideological difference rather than to the dynamic of the group. This possibility was confirmed by the replies of three of the coordinators whom I interviewed with the question "What is a successful study group?" All three replied that it was a group in which there was maximum participation in the discussion by the participants. They stressed the importance of creating an environment of mutual support, involvement and belonging. Thus while my critique of the study group has been based on projected cognitive outcomes this is perceived to be secondary by the coordinators.

This alternative model of a religious study circle would consider the learning in the study circle secondary to its social functions. This model would suggest that the emphasis be on the group process, with
the aspiration being that the participants identify with their heritage or feel part of the community as a result of the learning in the study circle. In this vein it is possible to understand the objective of Hadassah which is "an enlightened understanding of who we are and what we stand for" as referring to intuitive understanding based on involvement with Jewish texts and fellow Jewish learners as opposed to cognitive knowledge.

A second possible indication of this ideological difference is the gravitation towards subjective interpretation which was observed in the Hadassah group to a limited extent and in the Elul study circle to a greater extent. In Chapter Nine an attempt was made to reconcile subjective interpretation with the tradition, an attempt which led to questionable results. Here too there may be an alternative model of adult Jewish religious education for which subjective interpretation is a cardinal concept rather than a possibility. Such a model is suggested by Mordechai Kaplan the founder of the Jewish Reconstructionist Movement in the United States. According to Kaplan

> It (Judaism) will avail itself to the full of the hitherto dormant implications of its own teachings, that man reflects the image of G-d. It will revaluate theocentrism in terms of anthropocentrism (Kaplan 1967, p.214).

He believes in an anthropocentric approach to Judaism in which the focus of Judaism would be the Jew and his civilization as a reflection of his creativity, rather than G-d and Torah as a reflection of Divine will. Thus subjective interpretation is recommended. Kaplan continues:

> The concept of a dynamic civilization enables us to view the ideas of the past as having arisen in conformity with the laws of human nature and social development, and suggests the method of revaluation by which our spiritual heritage can be brought into conformity with the social development of modern times (p.215).
From Subjective Textual Interpretation and Pluralism to Post Modernity?

Subjective interpretation may be connected as well to the pluralism which the Hadassah study groups and Elul strive for. This quest for pluralism and their respect for religious differences may be the forerunners of post modernity as perceived by Baumann (1991). Baumann views modernity as a quest for order in the wake of chaos. This quest involves a search for absolute truths and certainties which once attained, would deliver the modernist from ambivalence. Post modernity, on the other hand, is the coming to terms with contingency, with the futile search for the absolute truth. According to Baumann

The emancipation which contingency as destiny makes possible (one of those practically infinite possibilities) entails the acceptance that there are other places and other times that may with equal justification (or equal absence of good reason) preferred by other members of societies and that however different they are the choices cannot be disputed by reference to anything more solid than the preference and the determination to stick to the preferred (Baumann 1991, p.245).

The Hadassah and Elul groups by their encouragement of subjective interpretation could encourage participants to tolerate and encourage diverse interpretations, which if applied to life in general would mean the creation of a society for in which tolerance would lead to solidarity.

On the basis of these tentative remarks it is suggested that in addition to evaluating the Hadassah group as a case study of non-traditional Jewish religious education from a traditional perspective, an evaluation be made from a non-traditional perspective as well. This evaluation would require an alternative understanding of religious texts and their religious implications, perhaps
following the ideas of Kaplan and Baumann. Hopefully this thesis will inspire others to pursue research which explores this alternative and thus will contribute to this important field of Adult Jewish Education.
Conclusion

In this research I have explored the study circle as a framework for non-traditional adult Jewish religious education on the basis of a case study of Hadassah Israel Study Groups which took place between September 1990 and June 1991. This research was motivated by the search for alternative frameworks for adult Jewish education given the growth of non-traditional adult Jewish education and the dearth of suitable teachers and funding.

The Research Questions

The following research questions were posed:

1. What happens in the Hadassah study group, a non-traditional Jewish religious study circle? Are there distinct patterns of interaction in the group?
2. What are the implications of these findings for similar non-traditional Jewish religious study circles?
3. What types of learning take place in this study circle?
4. What are the social functions of the study circle?
5. What are the implications of the case study for adult Jewish education?

Methodology

The nature of the open-ended research questions necessitated a qualitative inquiry employing methods of observation and interviews. Twenty sessions of Hadassah study groups were observed and thirteen were recorded. A content analysis of the recorded observations was undertaken. In addition twelve open-ended interviews were conducted with the study group participants. Finally a background questionnaire was submitted to the participants.
In order to compare the all female senior Hadassah group with a male-female young adult group, six sessions of the Elul study group were observed and three of its members were interviewed.

Interaction in the Hadassah Study Group

On the basis of my observations of the Hadassah study group sessions, the following three primary categories of interaction emerged:

a. The Text Centered Interaction Mode

As is indicated by its name, the focus of the text centered interaction mode is the study of text and its interpretation. In this mode a minimum of time is spent on general and social discussion. The success of this mode is reflected in its ability to evoke and stimulate interest in the text among the participants.

b. The Social Interaction Mode

In the social interaction mode the study group takes the form of a social discussion group with the participants enjoying social interaction in a learning framework. The success of this group is reflected in its ability to involve as many participants in the discussion as possible, often at the expense of a focused discussion. The tension between encouraging non-focused free discussion and the attempt to maintain a semblance of focused study is one of the issues which characterizes this mode of interaction.

c. The Self-Help Therapy Group Mode

The self-help therapy group mode of interaction in the study circle resembles the type of interaction which one could expect to find in a
self-help therapy group. In this mode a participant or a number of participants use the intimacy of the study circle to raise troubling, personal issues in the hope that the support of the group will enable them to lighten their psychological burden. The group discussion precipitates a cathartic process which has therapeutic effects for the troubled, a process which ultimately determines the success of the study session.

While all three modes were isolated as primary modes in the Hadassah study groups they occurred as secondary modes as well, manifesting themselves in all three study groups.

A primary variable which could be responsible for the different modes of interaction is the subject matter. As was shown in Chapter Twelve each mode of interaction could be a reaction to the prevailing tension between the participants and the text. In the text centered mode the participants accepted the authority of the text. In the social interaction mode the participants ignored the text and in the therapeutic mode the participants denied the authority of the text. The change in subject matter could therefore directly related to the different modes of interaction and its choice should be carefully considered.

The Implications of these Findings for Similar Non-Traditional Jewish Religious Study Circles.

If indeed the choice of subject matter is decisive in determining the mode of interaction, non-traditional Jewish religious study circles should take into account the preparation and selection of appropriate materials. In determining educational objectives and prescribed modes of interaction, the suggested texts should be thoroughly analyzed and discarded if they could lead to a negative process. In order to alleviate this process, non-traditional study circles should be encouraged to form international networks. Suitable materials and
texts could be shared, enabling those who are searching for texts with which they can identify to select suitable texts for their sessions.

While the research question focused specifically on the implications of the findings for non-traditional Jewish religious study circles there may be implications for a wider universe of study circles as well. This depends on the unique nature of the study circle and its similarity to other settings. In Chapter Twelve this issue was contemplated and a correlation was found between Bystrom's (1976) findings and the findings in this research.

Learning Which Takes Place in the Study Circle

In the analysis of the learning which takes place in the study circle I adopted Jarvis' (1992, p.180) definition of learning which is "the process of transforming experience into knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, senses and emotions." According to this holistic approach, experience, perception, cognition and behavior are all important factors in the learning process and must be assessed in an analysis of the learning process.

Using Jarvis' categories of learning and non-learning (1987; 1992) according to which the experience is either transformed into learning or ignored, it is possible to isolate contemplative learning as the predominant type of learning in the text centered and self-help therapy group modes of interaction. Contemplative learning is "the process of thinking about an experience and reaching a conclusion about it without necessarily referring to the wider reality.... What distinguishes contemplative learning from the process of thinking itself is the fact that a conclusion is reached" (Jarvis 1990, p.77). This contemplation may lead to conclusions which would relate not only to a narrow course of action, but may also lead to a change in perspective which could ultimately affect one's lifestyle.
In the social interaction mode contemplative learning is limited to the presenter while the participants generally involve themselves in social non-learning interaction.

Social Functions of the Study Circle

In analyzing the social functions of the study circle, I adopted Jarvis’ (1985) radical approach which views the term ‘function’ as a consequence of a phenomenon’s existence which has social consequences. In the educational milieu this would mean the social consequences of the educational process.

The following social functions of the study circle which according to Jarvis (1985) are common to general adult education, were identified:

a. Maintenance of the social system and reproduction of existing social relations. Due to the limited educational resources of the Hadassah study group, this study circle does not succeed in increasing the Jewish literacy of its participants and therefore tends to maintain the social religious system which distinguishes between those who are literate in the reading of classical texts and those who are illiterate.

b. Transmission of knowledge and reproduction of culture. The Hadassah study group succeeds both in the transmission of knowledge and reproduction of culture. The primary beneficiaries are the presenters who do extensive preparations for the sessions.

c. Second chance learning. Many of the participants in the Hadassah study group did not have a formal Jewish education. The study group is therefore an important opportunity for them to engage in second chance learning, in the formal study of basic Jewish issues.
d. **Leisure time pursuit and institutional expansion to fill non-work time.** It is possible that this function is the predominant function of the Hadassah study group. Most of the participants are over sixty years old and retired, and seek leisure time pursuit. The study sessions are conducive to leisure activity as they are non-demanding, interesting, informal and require active participation.

The following two additional functions of the study group which are common to adult Jewish education were identified:

e. **Link with tradition.** In their studying of Jewish issues in a Jewish communal forum, the Hadassah participants feel a link to the chain of Jewish tradition. This is precipitated not only by the texts but by the act of learning which arouses nostalgia among some of the participants who have childhood memories of their parents and grandparents studying Jewish texts at home.

f. **Community Fellowship.** The act of communal study has social ramifications leading to a feeling of fellowship and community among the participants. This community spirit surfaces in times of stress when fellow participants require peer support.

**The Implications of the Case Study for Adult Jewish Education.**

In order to discuss the implications of the case study for adult Jewish education, it is important to mention briefly traditional objectives of study and to ascertain whether the Hadassah study group facilitated the realization of these objectives.
In Chapter Four, mention was made of the following three traditional objectives of Jewish learning:

a. Knowledge of the principles of Judaism  
b. Practice of the precepts  
c. A feeling of closeness to G-d  

These objectives are based on Maimonides' Laws of the Study of Torah and upon different interpretations of the precept of the study of Torah 'for its own sake'. From a traditional perspective, an ideal adult Jewish learning framework would facilitate all three objectives and such a framework should be sought. In evaluating the Hadassah study group with regard to its possible realization of these objectives, it must be asked whether Hadassah's formal educational objectives correlate with those of the tradition.

An analysis of Hadassah's objectives reveals that Hadassah strives only for the fulfillment of the first precept i.e. knowledge of the principles of Judaism. How effective was the study group in the realization of this objective?

Based upon the observations and interviews, this objective was only very partially achieved. While contemplative learning was evident and was shown to be an important traditional objective, the following factors proved to be a hindrance in the aspiration to acquire mastery of the principles of Judaism:

a. A supportive, intellectually non-critical environment  
b. A dearth of internal of resources  
c. Lack of learning preparation for the sessions  
d. The infrequency of sessions  
e. Irregular participation
If the study circle is to become an effective framework for the attainment of this important traditional objective it is important to ensure that these factors be taken into account.

On the basis of this study it is difficult to make an in-depth evaluation regarding the effectiveness of the study circle as framework which would facilitate the realization of the other two traditional educational objectives. This would require further research of frameworks which do endorse these objectives, i.e. the Chavurah in North America.

Possible Shortcomings of This Research

The validity of this research could be questioned on the basis of the following three issues:

1. The Choice of the Hadassah Study Groups as a Case Study.

It could be argued that this study group is neither typical of non-traditional study groups in the United States nor of Israel. These groups of immigrants who conduct the sessions in their native language may have the unique qualities of 'landsmanschaft' immigrant cultural groups which have a primary role of preserving the 'home' identity in face of a foreign culture. Thus their interaction may be motivated by forces which are unique to immigrant environments. Another concern related to this choice is the age of the participants. Most of the participants are retired and over the age of 60. Their concerns which have been discussed may make them a unique category with limited implications for other age groups.

2. The Time Period which Elapsed between the Observations and the Writing of the Research Report.

The gap of three years which elapsed between the end of the
observations and the writing of this research report may have jeopardize the accuracy of the findings and interpretations, since qualitative research requires a holistic approach on behalf of the researcher which includes intuitive impressions. Since the formulation of the categories was completed close to the end of the observations however, the details of the report were delayed until the completion of this thesis.

3. The Biases.

This research has two biases both of which have been discussed. A male bias and a traditional bias. The first bias may have been detrimental to the interpretations of the observations and have adversely affected the observed environments while the second may have affected the evaluation of the study circle as a framework for non-traditional religious education.

In order to corroborate these findings it is recommended that similar non-traditional case studies be undertaken in which the above factors are neutralized. It is suggested that a different case study group be chosen, that the researcher be of the same gender as the researched, and that the research be carried out from a non-traditional perspective.

Future Areas of Research

If the findings of this research are valid, future research should examine the universe of its applicability. While the principle of naturalistic generalization allows the researcher to anticipate similar outcomes in comparable environments, future research should determine the boundaries of these comparable environments. Do these boundaries include non-traditional study circles of other faiths as well? Do they face similar challenges when they study traditional texts?
Finally in focusing on the study circle as a framework for Jewish religious adult education, traditional Jewish study circles should be researched as well. Are they all text centered or do they also move into social interaction modes or even self-help therapy modes? How do they deal with 'problematic' texts? How do they deal with prospective clashes between the texts and the values of the participants?

In the traditional text of Avot (2:21) it is written "You are not obligated to finish the work; as well you are not exempt from engaging in it". Hopefully these findings will prove to be a constructive starting point for future researchers.
Appendix

Content Analysis of Study Session

Ramot Eshkol 4

The session starts in the text centered interaction mode.

Presenter: Was my way of thinking wrong because to me saying Tehillim (Psalms) meant when the situation is really bad you say Tehillim. Now if it is Songs of Praise and it is David’s songs and love songs why...
P1: I think love for G-d and also a thankfulness. I think thanksgiving has a great deal with it. Also faith.
P2: Why did they recite Tehillim during the war now? We recite it every day and they told us what part of Tehillim we are supposed to recite and we recited it every day?
P3: Why?
P.: We were asked by different rabbis to recite Tehillim. Like they said Tehillim Neged Tillim (Psalms to prevent missiles). I recite it every day and for me it gives me an uplift and during this war, they decided to recite the Tehillim.
Coordinator: I think you’ve pretty much answered it yourself. Number one, I think it gives you comfort for the people who are doing it and number two, I think in Judaism we are led to believe that prayer has a great deal of power. I think this was one of the reasons. The power of prayer. That is it great that we have these forces fighting and all of this but also...
P1: But when I think of David’s Psalms, I can’t somehow connect it with prayers.
P4: It is very interesting.
P1: Prayers for somebody soul or prayers for somebody’s health.
P2: But you are not really praying for that. I think in a way you are praises G-d and you are hoping that he will intervene in this. Through your prayers.
P1: When I am distressed, I am not praising G-d. I am looking for comfort.
C.: But then you have to look. Some of the most beautiful prayers that we say, I feel, are the ones that we do just before Tisha B’Av where there are comfort prayers. After all this destruction when G-d is coming to you and he is going to comfort you.
P.: You don’t buy it.
P1: I agree. I’m not a master on this.
P3: I just realized how much I don’t know. How little I know.
The session is moving into a self-help therapy group mode. The session commenced with a deliberation regarding the importance of reciting the Psalms and has moved into a deliberation regarding the understanding of G-d’s actions.

P: I know when people are, for example, sitting shiva, that’s what they do. But I think in this case, the way that I have understood it is so that you can reconcile yourself to the fact that what happened is also the way of G-d, that he doesn’t send us just good things but he also sends us bad things.

P1: That’s Kaddish (A recital of praise recited amongst others by a mourner)

P: Look at the Kaddish, that’s right.

P1: Sometimes it sounds almost cruel the way of G-d. For instance, people who went through the shoah (holocaust) and we had rabbis coming to us and like they said it is the will of G-d. At times like that it sounds very cruel. And to this day, I don’t accept it. I can’t accept that Hashem, it was the will of G-d for us to have it. How can anybody accept it, anybody who suffers losses. Everybody who came out of the Shoah was completely changed. Later on, they started getting back to it because I was together with girls who came from very religious backgrounds and they said if that thing could happen to me, they were just completely washed out and slowly, slowly they started going back to it.

P4: I have a friend that each member of his family that came through, each one is different religiously. One is still a Hassid. One is in between.

The session moves back into the text interaction mode with the focus on the Psalms.

P: Getting back to Tehillim, as I said, maybe I should start from scratch.

C.: I think we are all going to do that. I think one of the things that we decided today and it is up to P., is that for each one of us to bring a Psalm that we could share with the group and say why we have chosen it.

P2: In order to share a Psalm, you have to know all the Psalms, which one to choose.

P: I had a little book and I lost it. I got this book from my daughter-in-law and I recite the daily ‘Tehillim.’ I started with the ‘Yehi Ratzon’ (An introductory prayer to the recitation of the Psalms). How do you say it in English?

P2: May it be your will.

P: I say it every day and I recite ‘Lechu Neranena’, ‘Hareni’, and then I go to the day of the month. Like today is Dalet (the fourth letter of the Hebrew Alphabet). So I go to Dalet and I
recite the day. That’s why I brought the English, so we can read it. It gives the exact explanation and then you can go to the day of the week. Like today is Yom Shlishi (Tuesday). You don’t have to read the whole thing. You go to Yom Shlishi and you can recite. They have different chapters. You can recite for Yom Shlishi, as many chapters as you want. I don’t recite all of them, maybe one or two. It depends what mood I’m in. I finish it up with the ‘Yehi Ratzon acharei HaTehillim’ (A closing prayer following the recitation of the Psalms). I always start at the beginning, I recite the day of the week and I finish it up with the Yehi Ratzon. I do it daily.

The session moves briefly into the social interaction mode following this personal introduction.

P3: How long have you been doing this?
P: For about two, three years. Maybe even longer.
P2: Why did you start?
C.: If you don’t want to answer...
P.: When we came here, it was a new start. It was difficult. It comforts me. My daughter-in-law, she is a ‘Chozeret Betshuvah’ (newly observant). She told me. She said why don’t you recite and she explained to me and it gives me comfort to recite it daily, the Tehillim.
P4: You understand?
P.: Most of it, yes.
P4: The Hebrew.
P.: I read it in English.

The session reverts to the text interaction mode.

P.: The Tehillim belongs to the Ketuvim, the writings. The Tehillim is divided into 150 chapters and it was written by King David as you know.
C.: Not all of them.
P3: You have the Song of Moses in there too. And Assaf.
P.: Most of the prayers in the Siddur are from the ‘Tehillim’. You know you find a lot of prayers from the ‘Tehillim’. Friday and Shabbat, you recite lots of ‘Tehillim’. Most of ‘Kabalat Shabbat’ (introductory service to Shabbat) comes from the ‘Tehillim’. David was persecuted by King Saul. King Saul’s son, Yonatan, was a very good friend of his but I thought I’d just mention it. A third of the ‘Tehillim’ are laments, misfortune or oppression. The Psalm 23, the Lord is my Shepard. If there is danger, we recite a ‘Tehillim’. If there is a war, we recite ‘Tehillim’.
The session re-enters the therapeutic mode with a discussion about the effects of reciting the Psalms.

P2: Stop there a minute. You asked the question why do we recite 'Tehillim'?
P.: Because we were told to recite. What are the things you recite in time of danger? Our lives were in danger, our country was in danger and we were told to recite Tehillim.
P2: To me that's not reason enough. When you're told.
P3: The question should be why were you told.
P.: Like I said, as a matter of fact, I don’t have my hair covered (out of religious motivation). I started reciting the 'minha' (afternoon service), the maariv (evening service) every day during this war. As a child, I recited the 'Kriyat Shma' (A passage from Deut.) and I stopped it. I remember many times my father, 'zichrono l'vracha' (of blessed memory) woke us up to recite the 'Kriyat Shma'. One time a year we didn’t recite this, the first day of Pesach, the first Seder. On many occasions the kids were woken up because we didn’t recite the 'Kriyat Shma'. This I am reciting every night too. The war brought me. It doesn’t mean I became more religious. It just gave me comfort.
P4: It strengthened you.
P3: Our son is now in miluim (military reserve duty). He serves on the Golan. He serves on the bottom, and on the top are the Syrians. For a month. That alone, also gives me comfort. I wake up many times and he is on 'shmirah' (guard duty). As mothers, all of you know the feeling. It does give me comfort. The other ones might feel differently about prayers.
P2: I'm just envious.
P3: Why envious?
P2: It depends if it will give me the same comfort as you.
P3: I had hard days too and for me, it is a comfort to me to read Tehillim. I'm just telling you about my feelings.
P2: It is very interesting.
P.: It is never too late to start and on your own. But for me it is a comfort. When I feel down which happens to all of us, I pick up the Tehillim book and it comforts me. That's all I have to say. We can recite the Tehillim of the day.
C.: I thought before we really get into... Any comments on what P.? Thank you very much P. Really beautiful.
P4: She's the right person for it.
P2: I just want to tell you that you did a beautiful presentation.
P4: Why I'm saying you're the right person because it gives you comfort and you're the one who is following every day and you certainly feel for it more than I do.
Following this opening presentation, the session moves into a social interaction mode.

P1: I had a little 'Tehillim book in my purse and I must have lost it somewhere.
P.: I have a little one in my purse too. But that’s for...
P1: 'Tefillat HaDerech' (prayer prior to travel)? That’s another thing, when you get in the bus...
P.: For the cemetery.
P1: We go to travel... Our son lives in Yehuda and Shomron and when I sit down I recite Tehillim and I pick up a 'Tefillat HaDerech'. Do you recite 'Tefillat HaDerech'?
P.: It’s in the car all the time.
P1: At the airport, once when I was coming back or going, the Lubavitcher (Hassidim who practice outreach) were there.

The session moves briefly into the text interaction mode.

C.: I was thinking of some of these Psalms from the point of view of literature and some of them are beautiful, very beautiful.
P2: I think so much of the Bible... They teach courses in colleges Bible as literature and the Psalms too.
P4: The first one I like very much.
P.: So read it to us.

This is followed by a move into the therapeutic mode.

C.: I just want to say one thing. Why did I come to the prayers? It is not that I became a 'Haredi' (Ultra Orthodox) or something. When I was in Auschwitz, I was working in the gas chambers. I had two more weeks to live. I knew that my time was limited. There was a woman standing next to me. I wanted to go because everybody of mine, my sister was gassed... She came to me one day and she said recite this prayer. When I do it I always think about it. That gave me sort of an uplift. When I am in stress and more so, I pick it up. I always remember that woman saying to me, "Shmoneh Esre" (the central prayer of a service). I happened to have a 'siddur' (prayer book) with me because the Polish men were working by the wagons as the transports were coming in and they handed 'siddurim' and had a little 'siddur' and this is the prayer that this woman told me to recite. "Al tira mipachad pitom, umeshoat reshaim ki tavo. Utze etza..." (Do not be in awe of sudden fear and catastrophe that comes from the wicked. They offer advice which will be abrogated ...). It gave me an uplift. I knew that my time was going to come and I couldn’t care less but I always remember
this woman standing next to me and she said recite it. It gave me something and I always remember. Like I said, at that time I couldn’t care less. Everybody was dead. I don’t know where she came from. I was looking at the fire coming out of the chimney and she just came to me and she said say this.
P2: You never saw that woman again?
C.: I don’t know where she came from. She was just standing behind me. I was standing looking at the fire coming out of the chimney. Maybe I was crying. I don’t remember. She said recite these lines. It will give you a good feeling. Each time I recite it, after each ‘Shmoneh Esre’, I remember that woman. I never saw her again.
P3: Did you continue reciting it afterwards? Then. Was it just the one time that you did it? 
C.: I did it in the camps. I got very sick and I don’t know what happened to my little siddur but now I remember it more. The prayers have a meaning. As a child, how much prayers did we do.
P2: My father always said girls don’t have to know. He was European born.
P3: I sent my daughter to day school and it was out of the area and a special bus and my mother said what do you want? She is going to be a ‘rebbeztzin’ (rabbi's wife)?
C.: Gratefully times have changed. Not far enough but somewhat. Okay, P4 go.

The sessions moves into the text centered mode.

P4: Happy is the man that has not walked in the council of the wicked, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the sea of the scornful but his delight is in the law of the Lord and in his law does he meditate day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by streams of water that bringeth forth its fruit in its season and whose leaf does not wither and whatsoever he doeth he shall prosper. Not so the wicked. They are like the chafe which the wind driveth away. Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous for the Lord regardeth the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked shall perish.
P2: Where is this from?
P4: The first Psalm.
C.: They say the wicked will not prosper but we do see often enough the wicked are rewarded, as we see it. ‘Olam Haba’(the world to come)? I don’t know. It’s a question.
P2: Nobody ever came back from there. What do we know about it?
P1: But the question of why the wicked are rewarded.
P4: How do we know that they are rewarded.
P2: As far as the worldly things. You have to weigh that.
P3: Eventually they are going to get what’s coming to them, talking about the wicked.
P1: If not in this lifetime, the next.
P2: I don’t know about the next lifetime. I don’t know.
C.: I always come back to this. Look how long the Jewish people have been in existence in this world while all of the other ones that are written up in the Bible have perished.  
P1: The Babylonians, the Syrians, the Romans, the Greeks.  
C.: And we are still plugging along. Maybe, not that we are not wicked ourselves but for some reason we have enough of the righteous that keeps us going.  
P1: G-d promised us. During the war, S. how do you cope with all this daily death. She said, P1, I just say the 'Shma and I believe. Nothing will happen to us. G-d promised us and there is something to it. All other people have disappeared and the Jewish people are under difficult conditions but they are still around. Great nations have disappeared. She said G-d promised us and we have to believe in it.  
C.: Why did you pick that one P4?  
P4: First of all I like the words and things. I'm a literary person so I liked that and also the idea itself. The good and the bad or the good and the evil. The sinner being paid off for his sin. Retribution. That's why I liked it. As a matter of fact, last night I went through most of them. I didn't read the whole of each one but some of them really are very nice.  
C.: I think it gives you a real appreciation for.. As I was looking through these last night also, it gave me a real appreciation of our literature and of our sources and of the wealth of material that we can turn to.  
P4: I never looked at the Hirsch. It is so different from the others.  
P3: He talks about the rich man and he says when he dieth, he carries nothing away. His wealth shall not be sent after him.  
P2: What do you think of this second statement here? Happy is the man that has not walked in the council of the wicked.  
P5: To avoid the possibility of being contaminated. The G-dly man avoids association with evil doers.  
P2: What do I think about it? I think you are definitely influenced by whoever you associate with.  
P5: Don't go around with him, he has a bad reputation.  
P4: Isn't there a saying, tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you who you are.

The session enters the social interaction mode, a side discussion sparked by the text study.

P2: That's not the Lubavitcher theory.  
P3: What is the Lubavitcher theory?  
P2: To go amongst the wicked.  
C.: But their idea is to try and change them.  
P2: Here it is to avoid them. How can you change them if you avoid them.  
P.: The Lubavitcher is a rabbi and his hassidim in general, they are out to missionarize Judaism so to speak.  
P4: Isn't that what the 'Haredim' (Ultra Orthodox) do and we
don’t like it?
C.: They ghettoize themselves.
P3: Which Haredim are you talking about?
P4: Mea Shearim.
P2: I mean to stay by themselves.
P4: If it were for those Haredim, we wouldn’t have an Israel today. I have no use for them.
P2: The Haredim are not allowed to learn secular subjects at all.
P4: But I think here you have two different things. The Haredim their purpose, I think, is to go out proselytize, to change.
P.: They are not out to change. They stay by themselves.
P4: Lubavitch, I made a mistake.
C.: When your purpose is not to change, when you are just associating with people, especially if you are among the minority, and peer pressure can be a tremendous force. So I think maybe this is the intention. That’s how I see it.

The session reverts to the text interaction mode.

C. P3 your turn.
P3: I like the King James translation of Psalms best of all, because that’s the one I’m most used to. The L-rd is my shepherd, I shall not want.
P5: The 21st Psalm.
P3: ...lie down in green pastures. ...restoring my soul. (inaudible) Nay though I walk through the Valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil. The rod and my staff will comfort me. He prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies, I anoint my head with oil... (inaudible) His goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord..
P2: It is so common.
P.: Different chapters are very inspiring.
P4: That’s the one they say mostly at Christian funerals.
P3: It is very soothing.
C.: You read it after ‘Yartzeit’ and ‘Yizkor’ (memorial) services.
P5: In the Orthodox they don’t read it out loud. I have the Birnbaum ‘Machzor’ (festival prayer book).
P3: This is the second Psalm. I will tell of the degree. "The L-rd said unto me. Thou art my son. This day have I forgotten thee". I have an idea that that’s how the Christians get to the ‘Father’ and the ‘Son’ and the ‘Holy Ghost’. I was really surprised when I saw that.
The following section caused a dilemma regarding its classification. There is justification in categorizing this section as text centered interaction since it deals with the topic i.e., the Psalms. However, since this section introduces a sharing of a private thought, it has been classified as therapeutic.

C.: Do you have a Psalm to share with us?
P5: No I really don’t. I just wanted to mention something I was thinking about. Prayers, how they effect me. It is not that they comfort me but that I must say them. You have a child and you must kiss the child. It’s in you to praise it. Or a spouse. Dear L-rd, I love you. I don’t even have to say the prayer. It has to come out and then I feel good. It is not that I affect the L-rd. He doesn’t need my praise. But I need to say it. That’s all I wanted to say. I didn’t read up on Psalms. I’m sorry. It has been a busy period.

The session then moves into social interaction relating to the syllabus and its organization.

C.: Hopefully we can continue with this for a while. It is fascinating and I think the more you get into it, the more we’ll get out of it.
P1: I’m very happy that you arranged for a rabbi to give his opinion on it.
C.: It was interesting for me to get the two different responses. One agreed immediately. Agreed with condition. They called me back and said it required too much time. At this period especially. The other, Rabbi S. said right away "I don’t have enough time to prepare for it". That already, all of a sudden you realize how much material there is to it. It is like when you read ‘Parshat Hashavua’ (The weekly Biblical Portion) and you just read it and then you go to the commentary. I think the Psalms is the same way.

The session then enters the text centered mode. While the section following the reading of the Psalm in Hebrew could be classified as therapeutic, it is classified as text centered because of its direct connection with the Psalm which is read.

P1 reads a Psalm in Hebrew

P1: You talk to ‘HaShem’ (The Name) and it comforts you.
P2: It is probably a natural response if people would realize. It comes from within. I don’t go to shul all the time. I don’t
prayer privately all the time but I love living. Dear Lord, you have given me something. I have to express it. That is just as much praying.
P.: We have different ways to express ourselves.
P5: Yes.
P4: That’s beautiful.
P1: As I said I know so little about it.
C. That’s why we are all in it together.
P1.: I started reading. A morning prayer in distress, the third Psalm. The Song of David when he fled from Avshalom, his son. Lord, how many are my... Many are they that rise up against me. Many there are, they say of my soul. There’s no salvation for him in G-d. Sela. But Thou, O L-rd, are a shield above me, my glory and the lifter of my head. With my voice, I call out to Thee onto the L-rd and he answereth me out of his holy mountain. I lay me down and I sleep. I awake for the L-rd sustaineth me. I’m not afraid of 10,000 of people. They have set themselves against me round about. Arise O L-rd, save me Oh my G-d for thou has smitten all my enemies upon the cheek. Thou has broken the teeth of the wicked. Salvation belongeth unto the L-rd. The blessing be upon thy people.
P4: That’s beautiful.
P1: When he fled from his son. I didn’t even try to utter any comments about it because I feel that I...
P3: What is the background of this?
C.: Avshalom rebelled and wanted to be the king while he was living.
P2: So David fled from him.
P3: Avshalom was strangled.
C.: I didn’t realize... I knew there was a rebellion but I thought that maybe... It is incredible that so many of the Psalms are attributed to David.
P1: There are 150 altogether but some of them are not written by David. For example, Psalm number two, according to this, the universal reign of the Messiah but it doesn’t attribute it to David.
C.: P., you want to say something?
P.: I had a hard time picking. I finally decided this morning. I chose Psalm 140 which is also a ‘Mizmor LeDavid’ (Psalm of David). I think the reason I picked this is because all of a sudden in this morning, it really struck me that even though these Psalms were written so many years ago, they are still as relevant today as they were then.
P. Oh L-rd, to you I call. Hearken to my voice when I call upon you. Deliver me, Oh L-rd, from evil men. Preserve me from violent men for those who devise evil in their hearts and stir up wars every day. They make their tongues sharp as those of serpents. The venom of asps is under their lips. Save me. oh L-rd from the hands of the wicked. Preserve me from violent men who plan to trick up my feet, the proud who have hidden a trap for me. They have spread cords for a net. By the wayside, they have laid snares for me. I say to the Lord, you are my G-d.
Hearken oh Lord to my voice and supplication. Oh G-d, my L-rd, my strength and my salvation. You are my helmet in the day of battle. Grant not, oh L-rd the desires of the wicked. Further not their plans. Those who surround me, lift up their heads. May the mischief which they threaten overwhelm them. May He rain burning coals upon them. May he caste them into the depths, never to rise. A man of wicked tongue shall not abide in the land. Evil shall abruptly entrap the violent man. I know that the Lord renders justice to the afflicted, judgement to the poor. Surely the just shall give thanks to your name. The upright shall dwell in your presence.

P1: This translation is much better, much nicer.
P2: Hirsch is such a complicated translation.
P4: The Soncino.
P4: The choice of words.
C.: Some of these translations, I think what they try to do is do away with some of the old fashioned expressions.
P4: I think the new ones are so cold.
C.: I thought this was very appropriate for the times we are living in.

The text centered interaction ends at this point. Thereafter the session moves into social discussion. This section is not categorized as social interaction since it is not related to the topic in any manner.

P3: Excuse me for breaking in, from the sublime to the ridiculous. I have a handyman who wants to do some work around the house.
P5: I had a young man who was cleaning my windows yesterday.
P2: With hammer and nails.
P4: Check in the AACI.
P1: Zvi the handyman. I put that aside.
P3: He very good. He came and fixed our 'triss' (shutters) for us. He is very nice young man.
P1: I'll call him up tonight.
C.: I saw his ad in the AACI bulletin.
P.: What's his name?
P3: You just ask for Zvi the handyman.
P4: You don't have the AACI bulletin?
P2: I thought they mentioned his name.
P3: He came right away. He wasn't there very long. He'll do almost anything.

..............

P.: P3, thank you for being with us.
P3: Thank you. This was very interesting. I hope you all feel the same way.
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