

Hadassah Blocker Transcript

Shayna Rhodes: First of all, I want to know your background. That would be, I think, where we'd start. First of all, on the tape – this is Shayna Rhodes.

Hadassah Blocker: This is Hadassah Blocker.

SR: So I'd like to start back a few years.

HB: Quite a few years ago.

SR: Now you told me that you came from an Orthodox background.

HB: I did, right. My father was an Orthodox rabbi, but he concentrated his efforts on education. He felt that not necessarily to reach the parents, but the children. It was important for him to reach the children. He was one great teacher, let me tell you – tough, but good. When I was in his class, I was sure that he was going to fail me. How do you give your own daughter a good mark? You can't do that. As a matter of fact, we had a test on – I think it was Yonah, one of the prophets. I've forgotten which one. There was a general question, an essay question, and then there were individual questions. On the essay question, my father had given me thirty points, and then the rest of it added up to a hundred. So he erased the thirty, and he didn't erase it well enough. I saw it. He gave me twenty-five. So I got ninety-five percent of a hundred. I said, "Why did you do that? Would you do that to anybody else?" "No, they would say that I was favoring you because you were my daughter." "You can't win," I said to him. "Your children who want to learn can't win because you keep pushing us down." He said he'd do it again.

SR: When you were growing up, women didn't read – nobody read from the Torah [inaudible].

HB: I started learning to read from the haftarah trope first. And then all the relatives brought their children to me to become b'not and b'nai mitzvah. There were some girls then, coming to [inaudible].

SR: How old were you then?

HB: Twenty, twenty-five. I was already married.

SR: And you were teaching.

HB: Oh, yeah. I was teaching anyway, but not necessarily for bat mitzvah.

SR: As a child, did you think women should read or could read from the haftarah in shul, or it just didn't occur to you?

HB: Yes. The haftarah did occur to me.

SR: It did?

HB: That's why he taught it to me because I insisted, and he was happy to do it.

SR: He didn't mind?

HB: No, he thought it was great. Then he came to camp – you know I ran a camp. He came to camp to visit as usual, and he came for Sabbath, and I was reading from the [inaudible]. He says, "Why don't you read from the Torah?" I said, "First of all, I don't have a Torah. Second of all, I don't know how." "Oh." The next week, I got a tape with all the tropes.

SR: You were reading [inaudible] with the camp?

HB: Yeah, for the girls.

SR: I see. That's so interesting. But not in front of the boys. Was it a separate camp just for girls?

HB: This was a camp for girls.

SR: I see.

HB: There were some boys. There were boys in the kitchen who used to come down to listen. It didn't occur to us that it was something different. I wanted them to hear it. We didn't do a whole parashah. [inaudible] spend a whole day doing a parashah. You have the whole hour maybe for services, but you always included a second from the Torah of the week, an explanation, and different ways of presenting the material so that it wasn't dull. For example, when Moshe was told he's not going to enter the land because he struck the rock – oh, we had a ball with that one. I [inaudible] the kids. I said, "I want you to get up and tell me that God was wrong; that wasn't fair. I want you to do that." "How can we do that?" I said, "Do it." We had a wonderful session. It was just wonderful. They got up, and they said, "It isn't fair. Moses did so much for the Jewish people. Why should this one little mistake be counted against him?" "Well," said the other one, "it was time for him to go anyway," which is what one of the rabbis said. "It was time for him to go." That was a very good service, and they enjoyed it. I tried not to make it too heavy for them because these are little girls. I guess that's when it got started. Then I knew how to read the Torah as well. Then I started to chant it for them, and they were very interested, the children were.

SR: How old were you at the time?

HB: I spent thirty-two years as the director of the camp. I don't know how old I was, maybe forty.

SR: When did you read for the first time in camp?

HB: The Torah?

SR: Yes.

HB: Yes, in camp.

SR: And the haftorah.

HB: Haftorah, I had done in my temple.

SR: Before camp or after?

HB: Before.

SR: Before.

HB: With Sisterhood Shabbat. They gave each of the arms an opportunity to run the Shabbat service. I was the only one who knew how to do the haftorah, and when the president of Sisterhood said, "Listen, I'm going to push you in. Will you do it?" I said, "All right. If he says I can do it, I'll do it." We came to Rabbi [Samuel] Chiel, God bless him – what a man – and she said to him, "Look, if we had men, you would let them read from the haftorah." "Yeah," he said. "What if we have a woman?" "Do you have one?" She points to me and says, "Yeah, she can do it." So I did a little for him, and he was very kind. He's just a wonderful man.

SR: How did she know that you knew how to read?

HB: I told her.

SR: You told her.

HB: And she believed me. They all believed me after that first Shabbat, believe me.

SR: Let's talk about it. So that first Shabbat that you read the haftorah, had you ever heard a woman read haftorah?

HB: No.

SR: Never before?

HB: I was scared stiff.

SR: What were you afraid of?

HB: Well, the rabbi said, "They may walk out on you. They may boo and hiss you. They may give you trouble afterward." I said, "All right. I'll take that chance." My husband was wonderful. He kept giving me supportive nods, "Keep going. It's okay. It's fine." My sister told me this afterward, that some men in front of her – "Oy vey." And then when I got through, [speaks Hebrew]. The same man. He was my friend forever after that. Then I was asked several times to do a haftorah. I said, at that point, "I would like to teach other women. I don't think it's right that I should be the only one to do it. It's nice. I love it. But I'd like to teach others who are willing to learn." That started our bat mitzvah program.

SR: Did you think of it as a bat mitzvah?

HB: Yeah, we did. Rabbi and I talked about it. When thirty people showed up the first time, he said, "You got to give them more than just haftorah. You got to give them a whole course," and that's what we arranged. He and I worked it out. Every two years, we sent out a letter because we figured it would take two years to learn the material, to learn the history. I don't know if they're doing it that way now. I'm really not as connected as I would like to be. But I'm infirmed, to say the least. We read the history

so that they'd understand our place in the world, in the Jewish world, and in the world in general, in world history. We didn't spring out of nothing, and we were part of a culture. We wanted them to understand. So the Rabbi and I worked out a program where we used Max Dimont's *Jews, God, and History* because it's very easy to read. That's what I told them. When they started, they said, "Easy?" I said, "I could give you some harder books, but I figured this is more interesting to read." "But that's true." They were very faithful. They did their homework. We also gave them – what's his name? *Basic Judaism* – Milton Steinberg's. That's hard. So I had to fill in a lot with other readings, which we did. We kept our eyes peeled for articles in the newspapers and things. For example, not too long ago, they found in a dig in Jerusalem, the original – [speaks Hebrew]. One of my girls found it in the *New York Times*; I have that somewhere, but I don't know where it is right now. They found that this was the oldest inscription, the oldest biblical inscription. My women were really excited about that. That led them to do the same kinds of snipping of any newspaper, not just the *Jewish Advocate* because they expect it there, but any newspaper and any magazine, and they brought in wonderful articles. Now, there were times when I needed Rabbi Chiel to come in and take care of – or any of the rabbis – because I am not as well versed in mysticism as I would like to be. Though I read the material in the books, it didn't quite make it in my head. [laughter] But I wanted them to understand that this was a movement in Jewish life. There are still people who are very much involved in mysticism, in Hasidism, which came as a result of mysticism. So we learned it that way. And we sang songs. Let's see. What else did we do? They had to read, of course. If they didn't know how to read, then we taught them how. So sometimes we'd have to divide the group into two sections. Those that knew how to read Hebrew were taken by one of our women, and I took the beginners to teach them how to read so they could make that up. I said, "You're going to have to read from the Torah, and the Torah is not in English for us." Okay. Then we started to teach the trope.

SR: Haftorah trope?

HB: First haftorah, right. The Torah tropes are easy. Do you read Torah?

SR: Oh, yes.

HB: They're easy compared to haftorah.

SR: I think it's more melodic.

HB: Oh, yes. Of course, it is. It's not easy. So I went very slowly. Of course, Nancy Sargon was my star. Oh, was that a baby? [laughter]

SR: I'm taking (Sefer Shirim?) with her, and she was singing some of it in class.

HB: [Sings]

SR: Just a beautiful voice.

HB: Oh, beautiful. She does it with so much love. You can feel it. She was in a class. The last class that I had of bat mitzvah was elderly ladies who couldn't sing, literally. We had to help them get that voice out, get something out. I told her, "You're going to have to be the strength in this group." First of all, I divided it up, so they didn't all have to do the whole haftorah, but I said, "You're going to have to do it because somebody's got to sing with all of them." They did very well, considering that at first, they thought they'd never do it. I used to hear that all the time – "I can't sing." That doesn't go. Everybody can sing. You're not going to be a famous Lily Pons or whoever, but you can sing. Believe me; you can. And they did.

SR: That's what's happened to me. When I started rabbinical school, I had never led services, never. I've been davening since I was six-year-old. I led [inaudible]; I was scared to death. Last week, I led for the first time [inaudible] all the time now. But I used to say, "I can't sing. I can't sing." My father was a singer. He taught everybody but me. So you led haftorah first. Could you feel a difference between reading haftorah and then

reading Torah?

HB: Well, what do you mean, the difference?

SR: Did it feel different to you reading from the Torah?

HB: Oh, I loved it. I just loved to be able to get those words to move and respond to what I was doing. Sometimes I didn't get there. I remember very often they would give me a chance to do the whole Torah portion. One of them was a tough one. It was in Vayikra – a dab here, the blood there. I just blanked out. Somebody standing there knew how to do it and didn't give me any help at all. I was so distressed – a man to take his venom out on me that way. So I simply kept going, shrugged my shoulders, and picked it up where I could. But it was a terrible moment. But blackouts happen to everybody. When I stand there with them, I help them.

SR: Well, that's the job of the gabbaim.

HB: Well, that's right. I thought so.

SR: That's why they're there.

HB: That's what I thought. But they wanted me to fail; they really did.

SR: A lot of them felt that way or just a few?

HB: No. The interesting thing, after we did the first service, was that the women were opposed. One of my friends said to me, "What are you trying to do?" I said, "I'm just trying to show that men and women can be involved in the Torah service." "We're going to drive the men away." "How can I drive them away?" "Well, they'll figure you'll take over the service; they don't have to come," I had never heard such cockeyed logic. I said, "I doubt that very much, thank you." I turned away because I didn't want to insult my friend. I thought she was being extremely reactionary. They haven't gone away; they

love it. I haven't seen them leaving, not for that reason. We taught them how to do the [inaudible], too. One of the women who does it does a wonderful job. She's thorough. She takes every – well, what do I call these people who have written books about the Torah reading? (Leibowitz?). The Reform one is good. Do you know it?

SR: No.

HB: Very good. The book is called Torah; it was done by (Klaus?). It's very good. I have what's-his-names? I can't remember his name – the man from Brandeis. We've taught them to use all the different sources and to try to figure out what the Torah's trying to say and see if they can relate it to their lives here and now. They do a good job, very good.

SR: So did you become gabbai at some times so that you could help the other women?

HB: Oh, yes. I certainly did. I did help. They need to be helped. What are you going to throw them to the wolves? Help them. Make it easy. Make it a pleasurable experience. It is pleasurable. It's a beautiful experience. Some of my women have it. They know it. I can tell when they get up to read from the Torah. Do you know (Sandy?) [inaudible] by any chance?

SR: No.

HB: She's one of them. It flows from her. She has a very sweet voice, so that helps, too. When she reads, you know; she goes right along. She never stops. It's wonderful. I love to hear her. I love to hear Nancy.

SR: When you were doing this, were there young girls having bat mitzvahs?

HB: Oh, by this time, yes. But I don't think they were doing – were they doing the haftorah? They started by letting the girls come on Friday night. They were called to the

Torah. We then took the Torah out on Friday night, but their father read the blessings. Now, I didn't go to many of those because I felt that was cuckoo. But then we started pressuring the ritual committee to let the girls become [inaudible]. Let them say the blessings. Let them read the haftorah. Let their father be there and bless them if he wants it that way. They didn't do it. Now the girls do a wonderful job, sometimes better than the boys. But our own temple trains the kids so well that they all do well. They all do very well.

SR: When you read from the haftorah for the first time, were there other women that you knew of at other synagogues doing this?

HB: No. Not that I knew.

SR: Interesting.

HB: I spread the word in the branch. I was involved in the branch; I was president at one time. We spread the word. We said, "Talk to your cantor. Go to the Hebrew teacher. Go to somebody who does know how. And if you don't have somebody, we'll give you the trope. We'll give you the notes." Several of them have become bat mitzvah.

SR: I'm trying to think about when it was first thought of as a bat mitzvah, especially for adults, because in my background, you are bat mitzvah when you turn twelve.

HB: Right.

SR: Of course, we did nothing to celebrate that. So the concept of reading haftorah as an adult as a bar mitzvah – you said that Rabbi Chiel thought of that?

HB: No. This is how this happened. After I did that first haftorah at Sisterhood Shabbat, three women came on their own – they didn't come together – to talk to Rabbi Chiel. They said, "Do you have to be twelve or thirteen? What if I now at my age –?" One of

them was sixty, and the other one was in her early thirties, and the other one was twenty-five. Each one came individually and had not spoken to each other. "Can we bat mitzvah at our age?" "Of course you can," he said. "There's no reason why you can't." The age was set for the boys at thirteen, and we continued to set it that way for the girls. "But there's no reason why you can't become bat mitzvah at your age. I know the person who could teach you." That's exactly what he said to them. [He] called me, and he said, "You have a job, Hadassah." That's how that started.

SR: So Rabbi Chiel was very supportive.

HB: He was wonderful.

SR: Some men were, and some men were not.

HB: Yes, and a lot of women weren't. I was stunned when I heard them. That first Saturday – "You're going to drive the men out because you're going to make it hard for them." I said, "They can learn, too, for God's sakes. I'm willing to teach anybody."

SR: Now today, it's almost become routine.

HB: Yes. What about your orthodox synagogues?

SR: Not so routine.

HB: Not so routine. Josh is my nephew by marriage.

SR: Josh?

HB: Jacobson.

SR: He's my neighbor. I live on Park Lane. He lives on Garland.

HB: Garland. His wife, Rhonda, is my niece. He taught the women of his congregation how to read the Torah for Simchat Torah. He invited me to come and hear them. Since my niece was reading, I came down, and I heard them. I look around; he's not there. "Rhonda, where's your husband?" "Don't talk to me about that right now, Auntie. I'll tell you later." What happened? He wouldn't come and listen to [inaudible], but he would teach. How do you figure that? Look at the girls in his own youth group? I think he's changed his mind.

SR: You think?

HB: I don't know. Well, he's come to the family b'not mitzvah. I met him in the parking lot at one of them, and I had brought my tallit, but I was a little bit nervous about putting it on. He said, "Put it on. You wear it in your shul, don't you?" I said, "Yes, I do." "Put it on." He's been very supportive for a guy that was really quite rigid about his orthodoxy.

SR: So the women today read the haftorah in [Temple] Emanuel for their bat mitzvah?

HB: It's always a group bat mitzvah because you can't give them that kind of time – twelve of them at a time. So what I have done was, for example, they gave us two (Sabbath Torah?) for the bat mitzvah. One of them has a very long haftorah, so I divided it in half. They all learn how to sing the trope. They sang the haftorah together, six or seven of them together. So that's the extent that we have been able to allow them – it's a little bit awesome, that many women up there. They do other things. They do d'var Torah. The thing now that distresses me is that they don't all learn to do the haftorah or the Torah, and that distresses me because the women that I talk to know how. When I push them a little, they'll take on an aliyah to do [inaudible] Sabbath; they'll do that. I do push them. After all, if we've taught you, let them hear you.

SR: Have you done a d'var Torah at Emanuel?

HB: Yes. I like to sing more. [laughter]

SR: It's more fun. So why do you think women today want to have an adult bat mitzvah? Do you think the reasons are the same? Do you think it's different?

HB: Well, one of the women said it this way the first time: "My husband became bar mitzvah. My children are b'nei mitzvah. I feel left out. I want to be part of that community. I want to stand up with them as a bat mitzvah. I'd like to know what it is that they learned." The result is that this woman, who moved to New York, became the president of her congregation, and every Sukkot, they give her that haftorah. Nobody else can do it. It's the second day of Sukkot – [Ms. Blocker sings]. I can sing it faster than I can say it right now. And she does a great job, and she does not have a very good voice, but we taught her how to use her voice. She loves it. She loves everything Jewish anyway; she's that kind of a woman. She's a Nancy Sargon – devoted, loves everything she does and does it well. Nobody walked out on her.

SR: What lasting impact do you think having –? For example, when you read for the first time, did that have any lasting impact on you? Did it change your observance?

HB: Yes, it brought me to shul more often. I didn't use excuses not to go. I loved the services. I happen to love Rabbi – what's his last name?

SR: Gardenswartz.

HB: Gardenswartz. He's just a wonderful, wonderful man. So creative. He's brilliant. You don't come to our shul, do you?

SR: No. I'm either at the Newton Center Minyan, or the rabbinical school has services now once a month.

HB: Really?

SR: Yes.

HB: Do you know that the former president of our congregation is –? Are you the first class?

SR: He's a year behind me. Van Lanckton. He's a wonderful man.

HB: Oh, yes. He certainly is. He usually says, "Shalom. Shabbat shalom." I usually say, "Rabbi, how are you doing?" He gives me a report. He's enjoying it very much.

SR: He is. He's wonderful. He was one who was afraid to use his voice, and now he's getting more comfortable.

HB: He's a year behind you?

SR: Yes.

HB: Well, wasn't that the first year?

SR: The first year started with a first-year class, a Mekhinah class if you didn't have the Hebrew at a certain level. So he started a year behind me. The same year I was first year, he was Mekhinah. So now I'm second year, and he's first year.

HB: So, when do you get through?

SR: After this year, three more years. It's five years.

HB: Will you have to go to Israel for one of them?

SR: When they accepted me, it was either a year in Israel or two summers; you had the choice. Now they're changing it, but for me, that rule will still apply. Since I have five kids and a husband here, I'm not going to be able to leave for the year, but actually, I'm thinking maybe of a semester and then a summer and doing it that way. I lived in Israel for a year. My father was Israeli, and I've been there a bit. I'd still like to learn there if I can work it out with my family.

HB: How old are they?

SR: Twenty-two, twenty-one, nineteen, sixteen, and twelve.

HB: [laughter] And you're now going to class?

SR: Oh, yes. They are so supportive. They think it's fabulous. My husband doesn't think so. He's getting better. But my kids think it's wonderful.

HB: One of my sons is pushing me. "You've got all the background, mom." I said, "No, I haven't, darling. I really don't." I don't like Talmud; that was my bad – it was a good teacher at the Hebrew College at that time. What was her name? (Newman?). Why can't I remember that man's name? I can see his face. (Turoff?). Do those names mean anything to you?

SR: (Turoff?) does, yes.

HB: They were wonderful teachers, but somehow, just the kind of thinking that you have to do – I'll tell you what we used to do. At exam time, the whole class would come to my house, and my father would teach us. He was able to get a tutor. He was a wonderful teacher. It was not my favorite subject. Is it yours?

SR: Yes. In a word. Everybody knows that I love to study Talmud. I was not allowed to as a child. It was not for girls. In [inaudible], they wouldn't teach me Talmud, and my family in Israel wouldn't let women learn Talmud.

HB: Did they give you a reason?

SR: Well, Rambam/Maimonides says women don't have the intelligence for it.

HB: [inaudible].

SR: Oh, yeah, right. [laughter] They're very clear about it. My female relatives in Israel will say, "Women don't have enough intelligence to study Talmud," and they're such bright women. Women can do math and run businesses, but they can't study Talmud, and they can't play chess.

HB: [laughter]

SR: They believe that.

HB: Well, I think I would be the person for them to prove that I can't, but I can learn it. I just didn't enjoy the process.

SR: It's not for everybody. Some of us like the Hasidic texts a lot more. We're split: those who like Talmud and those who prefer mysticism, Kabbalah. That's not for me. That doesn't appeal to me. I like the Talmud.

HB: Logic. These men could take a pin – you've heard that. It's true. They can. I saw my father do it. I said, "How did you know?" "[inaudible] how did I know?"

SR: It's amazing.

HB: It is. They gave us an easy text. [Speaks in Hebrew] – very easy text.

SR: That's where you start, [Speaks in Hebrew]?

HB: Where did you start?

SR: Well, they started us with brakhot, which is also an easier one. Now we're doing – every year, the rabbinical school has a theme. So, the first year was tefillah, and we did brakhot. The second year is moed, so we're doing Shabbat. Right now, we're doing Yoma; we're talking about Yom Kippur. We're going to go onto Hanukkah and Sukkot – Sukkot and then Hanukkah, and then we're going to do Pesach [inaudible] in the spring.

HB: You follow the calendar. That's good.

SR: For this year. Then, I think next year is Nashim. We're going to learn about laws about women. Every year is a different theme.

HB: How large is your class?

SR: Twelve. Twelve of us. Eight women and four men.

HB: [laughter] Isn't there another woman from Emanuel?

SR: Sonia Saltzman.

HB: Saltzman?

SR: Yes.

HB: Where is she?

SR: She's with me.

HB: Oh, she does know that much Hebrew.

SR: Did you teach her?

HB: This is really funny. She came to the class, and then she said she couldn't continue because she was working, and she joined the evening class. I think that's where she – it was because she became a bat mitzvah. When I saw her, I said to my buddy: "Sonia Saltzman? Didn't we have her in our class at one time?" "I think we did." So, I went up to her and said to her, "Sonia, are you the same one?" She was, of course. That was wonderful. I was glad to see her.

SR: She has a beautiful voice, too. She was telling me how much the group that she was bat mitzvahed with has meant to her. I think it's about six years later, and they still get together. She just met with them this past month. Do you find that's true, that a lot of women hold on to that –?

HB: Yes, I do. Yes, I do. You become very close. You study for two hours a week for two years, and your life stories become part of them. Babies were born. Somebody lost a husband. Somebody lost a father or a mother. You are a family. They do stay close together. I see it all the time. I'm sure that this bat mitzvah that I'm going to in December, they'll all be there. I think that Nancy will be invited, too. I think that's Nancy's cousin. This girl has a beautiful voice, but she doesn't believe me. She just didn't believe me. I said, "Ellen, you have so much love in there." "I can't sing." I had such a hard time getting them to open it up and let it come out. I think they'll all be there. They usually do invite – they don't like to invite them because they feel they're forcing them to buy a gift, and they don't want to do that to each other. We would give them a gift anyhow. This is going to be a [inaudible] bat mitzvah, which means that the child will [speaks Hebrew]. So she doesn't get to do haftorah. I think that's too bad. I don't know why they [inaudible] haftorah in [inaudible].

SR: Yom Kippur.

HB: [inaudible] is Yom Kippur?

SR: On [inaudible], they do a haftorah.

HB: Yes, I know they do.

SR: But not otherwise. On Shabbat, they don't.

HB: I went to a bar mitzvah, an aufruf that was held at [inaudible] on Shabbat, and he did the haftorah. I don't understand this. Why? You're not giving me an answer.

SR: No, I don't know one. It'd be nice to do another haftorah.

HB: Don't you question things like this? They won't like me because I ask questions.

SR: I ask questions. I ask a lot of questions.

HB: See if you can get an answer. Why not a haftorah at [inaudible]?

SR: I will ask. I'll ask at school, and I'll get back to you.

HB: Because you only have three aliyot.

SR: Right. And they're short.

HB: Yes, very short.

SR: Because it's really [inaudible] divided into three.

HB: That's right.

SR: On [inaudible] Shabbat, we often sing some of Shir HaShirim, but on [inaudible] Shabbat, we don't do anything.

HB: You don't say so long with a nice musical – that's too bad. It doesn't have to be haftorah, but something like Shir HaShirim – that would be nice. Well, we'll have to reform.

SR: I think that's a great change. I'm going to bring that up. My rabbinical school is non-denominational. It's not conservative or reform. So, we're full of creative, innovative ideas. I think that's a very good one.

HB: This is where?

SR: At the Hebrew College.

HB: That's your rabbinical – what do you call it?

SR: School. Rabbinical school.

HB: You have your own service?

SR: Yes, once a month.

HB: Is that obligatory?

SR: No. We meet twice a week in the morning to daven. That's more or less obligatory. But Saturday mornings, no. First of all, we don't all live within walking distance. So, it'd be hard to obligate people. But we never have a problem getting a minyan. People like to come and daven together. I think because it's not obligatory, people want to come.

HB: But there is another minyan that davens at the college.

SR: That's the Newton Center minyan. We actually have a beit midrash where we daven with our own Torah. It's actually part of [Andover Newton Theological School] campus.

HB: Really?

SR: There wasn't enough room in the Hebrew College building.

HB: Amazing. It really is amazing. The building is done, and it's not big enough.

SR: Oh, no. We're so squished, and we're only two years. Every year, we have another class. There will be ninety of us soon, and we really won't be able to fit it all into where we are now. It's great. I think it's a great problem.

HB: It's wonderful. It's wonderful. The neighbors must hate you.

SR: They do. The traffic, the noise, the lights.

HB: And the bumps in the road. When did that happen?

SR: First, they had these rough stretches, and then they changed them into bumps. I do them every day.

HB: Is there enough parking for all of you?

SR: No, not at all. They have people parking at the Omni. Do you know where the Omni is on Route 9? They have a shuttle. I'm not kidding. It's horrible. Parking is horrible. They want to do another whole building project, and they're going to include in that an underground garage.

HB: Yes, you really should have that.

SR: Yes.

HB: You don't have much handicapped parking either.

SR: Yes. But we have some. We have ramps.

HB: That ramp is wonderful. I'm going to take Josh's class next Sunday on synagogue music. I came last week for the first session with – what is his title? (Sanaa?)? Mister? Doctor? Rabbi?

SR: I'm sure he's a doctor. I'm sure that's a safe one. I don't know if he's a rabbi. I would bet he's a doctor.

HB: He's very good. He spoke about the historic point of view. I don't think he knows that part of history, as well as maybe someone like Josh would, but Josh is going to do it with music. He didn't do any music [inaudible]. It was an interesting lecture. I noticed the bumps on the road as we drove up. Wow. I don't know where my friend parked. He

dropped his wife and me off, and we walked our way up that wonderful ramp. Oh my god, is that a wonderful ramp. When you think of what we go through at Emanuel – it broke, and they rebuilt it with a sharp decline/incline. The people who take me don't mind doing it, but I sit there thinking, "My God, I'm going to fly out of here." It's a little scary. One of my friends puts her hand over here, and we go slow.

SR: The music itself that Josh is going to talk about, I think music does a lot to bring people out and relate to their Judaism through reading the haftorah, chanting. I think it's more than just music. It's more than just singing. I think it has an impact. The whole preparation and then – do you think it impacts on their lives and on your life other than coming to synagogue more often? Do you think it impacts their outlook or their Jewish identity?

HB: Oh, yes. I think it does. I can't say that that's what had an impact on my life because I always identified as a Jew and lived that way. [inaudible] for example, for some of them is a question. I don't know how they can relate to Judaism in any other way, why they've chosen that one aspect to ignore. Most of them are not kosher. It's hard to find a house that we can eat in. They say to me, "Why do you do it?" "Because," I say, "I believe it's important." Naturally, I was brought up that way, so I don't find it a burden. I'll tell you where it's a burden. Here. This is not a kosher place, but they will always make a piece of fish for me or an omelet, which I don't want to eat. They're really wonderful about it. What can I say? There are not many kosher places. The one at Chestnut Hill I wouldn't want to go to. Have you ever been there?

SR: No.

HB: I prefer to be – this is a nice place to be. People are very friendly, very warm. Do you know the (Glinots?)?

SR: Yes.

HB: Joan is our activities chairman. She is so funny. I don't know how much of that shows up in her life as the wife of a professor, but she is so funny and does a good job. I wasn't here on Monday when she gave them a Halloween party; that was a riot. I'm sorry I missed it. She's very observant. No question about that. When she has to come in on Friday, she leaves very early, so she can get home and make her dinner for Shabbat. Yontef was such a trial to her. She did come in, naturally, but it was hard because she had to arrange for programs. I help her as much as I can. I ran a Kol Nidre service for the first time in my life.

SR: When was that?

HB: This year.

SR: That's amazing.

HB: Ninety people came.

SR: In this building?

HB: Yes.

SR: Kol Hakavod. That's wonderful.

HB: It was wonderful. I felt exhilarated, a little nervous. I wasn't sure how they were going to respond.

SR: Why were you nervous? What were you afraid of? Why wouldn't they respond the right way?

HB: They might be bored. They're always bored when you speak in Hebrew to them. I run a Friday afternoon service also for Shabbat.

SR: Regularly? Here?

HB: Yes.

SR: I didn't know that. Women and men both come?

HB: There's only one man that comes, and women come. I have a congregation of about thirty, which I think is good for this place.

SR: I think that's awesome.

HB: Yes, it's wonderful. It's an abbreviated service. It has to be. [Not] any of them know any Hebrew, so I have to transliterate everything, but they're doing fine. They see the good [speaks Hebrew].

SR: That is so great.

HB: Yes, it's fun.

SR: So, how did you think of that idea? What made you start doing that?

HB: Well, I was missing it for myself.

SR: You were missing it [inaudible].

HB: I felt that they didn't know what they were missing, and I would like to give them a chance to find out. So, I had to go to the director of this place. They had to set aside funds, and the activities person was always very cooperative. Joan certainly is, and she doesn't have to do anything. I do it all, which is fine. I just have to know that if I need something, I can go to her. Somebody in Rhode Island, was it? Some congregation put out a very good service for Kol Nidre, and mine was following it. It was very good with highlights. I did as much explaining as I could. I involved as many women as I could – men, people to read, not just me, and they were very impressed. They thought it was wonderful.

SR: Now, is there a Saturday morning service of any kind?

HB: Oh, no.

SR: Nothing?

HB: Don't be silly.

SR: So, get going.

HB: No. I want to go to shul myself.

SR: So where do you go?

HB: Emanuel

SR: You go to Emanuel. I see. I see.

HB: I want to go to my shul.

SR: Of course. That's great.

HB: What?

SR: That's wonderful. You should start having adult bat mitzvahs here. You could do mincha, Saturday mincha. What do you think?

HB: I don't know. I'm thinking. [laughter] I'll have to talk to Joan about that. I don't know how many women would be involved. One of the women, who's a good friend of mine, says, "Listen, I've done all the thinking and all the [inaudible] I can when I was younger. I just want to vegetate." I said, "How can you enjoy being just a vegetable?" That's good. I like it.

SR: I think you should start a bat mitzvah program here.

HB: Well, I'll think about it. Another pile of books and stuff to add to this room. They want to know where I got all those books that I have out there. One of the women who came here – I have another library in the other – and I sold a lot. I sold my father's Mishnah. I hated to do it. He had a wonderful Talmud. If I ever decide to become a rabbi, I'll have to [inaudible]. Somebody who wanted that kind of material bought it from me, so I knew it would be in good hands. I had one brother who learned and wondered, but he had his own home library. When he passed away, I don't know what they did with it. His daughter took care of it. I don't know. He had his own, so there was no sense of my giving him. I said, "Do you want Pa's Talmud?" "No," he says, "I got my own."

SR: How did he feel when you had your bat mitzvah?

HB: He loved it.

SR: Did he?

HB: He didn't come because he didn't live in this part of the country. He lived in Florida, and he didn't come. But he thought it was wonderful. When I came to visit him, he made me daven Shacharit at his service, his Saturday service. He didn't ask me. He said, "Go."

SR: Were your parents alive when you read haftorah for the first time?

HB: My mother was.

SR: Your mother was. Did she come?

HB: Yes, she came to that first one. [speaks Hebrew] – an old-fashioned lady, but she was very proud.

SR: Did you have any siblings other than your brother?

HB: I had two sisters.

SR: Had two sisters?

HB: The youngest sister came to the service. She's the one that heard the man say [speaks Hebrew]. The other one was very active in her community. She lived in New Jersey. As a matter of fact, she has created material that can be used at [inaudible], and we've donated all of her wonderful, wonderful material, and they're using it. I'm so thrilled because it would be awful for it to just sit in somebody's basement and gather dust – beautifully created material. She's taught kids who were not teachable. That's what everybody told her. She taught them to daven and do a little Torah. Remarkable. Remarkable.

SR: We have a friend doing that. My daughter actually volunteered for [inaudible]. She worked with someone for two years. Now, do you know (Rina Fein?)?

HB: Yes, of course.

SR: She's my neighbor, too. She lives on [inaudible]. She works with [inaudible].

HB: Yes, she does. Doesn't she teach the bat mitzvah there?

SR: She does. She does.

HB: We have a lot of people that are involved in this now. When we first started, there was nobody doing it, and everyone was getting involved, realizing that no matter how many difficulties these people have, they want to learn. They're so thrilled. They had a bat mitzvah at Canton. I think they had it already, didn't they?

SR: [inaudible]

HB: My problem is traveling. It's hard for me to get up. When you say I should become part of that class, I would have an awfully hard time.

SR: I know.

HB: Everyone is very helpful, but they don't want to make it a habit. It's not easy to get me in and out of a car. It isn't. Not at all. Not for me and not for the people who do it. Think about that.

SR: We have one elderly man who comes to one of our classes. Someone brings him and takes him home.

HB: Who's the someone? Do you know?

SR: A woman who works with him, who helps him. I don't know her name.

HB: Well, as a matter of fact, I have two people working with me. This lady works until Friday, and the other one comes in Friday afternoon and stays with me until Monday. They both drive so that I could make that part of their responsibilities. You have to get up with me early. It's hard to get her up. I had a hard time this morning. The classes begin at what time?

SR: Nine.

HB: [laughter] Well, it would be hard. I don't know. It's certainly worth thinking about. Is it very expensive?

SR: About sixteen thousand a year.

HB: [inaudible] That takes care of it.

SR: It's a lot of money.

HB: For a widow on limited funds, yes. If Mr. [George W.] Bush has his way, [inaudible]. I don't know what his plans are with social security, but I don't think they're in our favor.

SR: I don't know. I'm afraid we're going to find out.

HB: I'm afraid you're right. I didn't think it would be this much of a sweep.

SR: Yes. It surprised me. I thought it would be much closer.

HB: Well, [John] Kerry hasn't given up yet.

SR: No, but I think he's going to have to.

HB: Has California come in?

SR: California was for Kerry.

HB: It was? Really?

SR: [inaudible] Yes. Kerry got most of –

HB: New England.

SR: He got all of New England, New York, and Pennsylvania.

HB: He did? So, where did he lose?

SR: The whole middle. He got Maryland, too. But otherwise, basically, the whole middle of the country is red. It's all Bush. Then Kerry got California, I think, and Washington. He got the West and the East.

HB: When did he get that?

SR: I went to sleep. I don't know what time they came in, but I woke up this morning, and most of the map was for Bush. He's got all the big states, everything that hits the Mississippi [inaudible] Bush.

HB: I went to sleep. I couldn't stay awake.

SR: Me too.

HB: Oh, my. The justices of the Supreme Court.

SR: That really bothers me.

HB: Roe [v.] Wade.

SR: A lot of issues. Women today, I think, take so much for granted. I'm doing this study on adult bat mitzvah, and I ask women, "Are you doing it because you think women have the right to be up there?" They'll say, "No, nothing to do with women's rights." They want to be part of the synagogue, which I think is great, but they don't realize that it wasn't so long ago [that] women didn't have these rights. Women have to stand up for themselves, and they take for granted all these things that were so hard-won that weren't ours.

HB: Right.

SR: People say, "Did you always want to be a rabbi?" I'll say, "When I was born, women weren't rabbis." It wasn't like I wanted to be, but I couldn't. I never even thought about it. It wasn't in the possibilities. It didn't occur to me that I should want to be one. When did it occur to you that you could read Torah or haftorah? You said even as a child, you thought about it.

HB: Reading the Torah and haftorah?

SR: Yes.

HB: It wasn't a burning issue when I was a child. I think it was when I realized that we women could do as good a job and maybe better if we were taught the material. When we advertised it for our temple, we didn't say that we wanted to do better than the men. We just want you to be able to do what your son does, what your husband does, to understand what they're doing. We didn't put it on that basis at all. Even this woman that I mentioned – she wrote a wonderful d'var Torah on this, that my husband can stand up and my son and my children, and I am left out. I want to be part of them. She didn't put it on the basis that she has to compete with them. She wants to be part of them, and I felt that was wonderful. We printed that whole d'var Torah. The twenty-five-year-old, of course, said, "I had to leave my home and come East while I was preparing to become a bat mitzvah, and I'm so glad that there was this opportunity now." She's only twenty-five years old, a kid.

SR: That's great.

HB: Her kids now are b'nai mitzvah. I taught one of them. I've taught many of the children of our women. It's fun. One of them said, when they came in to visit our class, "She's tough, but she's good." [laughter] Well, I said, "If you're going to do something, let's do it well." Let's not say, "It's alright. It's good enough." It's never good enough. Let's do it right. Let's make it sound good. You'll enjoy it more. Yes, I am tough, but I love them, and they know that. Nancy is an unusual woman, and she's transmitted it to her son, Isaac, who became bar mitzvah, who wrote me a note, thanking me for giving her the opportunity to teach him – she taught him herself – and to give some of that love – transmit some of that love from me to her to him. It was a beautiful note for a thirteen-year-old.

SR: That's impressive.

HB: If you ever saw him, you wouldn't believe he's only thirteen. He's a very tall, muscular kid. Her husband is too. Nice family.

SR: Did your sisters learn to read haftorah?

HB: I tried to teach my youngest sister, who has a lovely voice. She didn't want it. "Why?" "I don't want it." "Okay." The other one learned. We transmitted a lot over the phone because she lived so far [away]. She wasn't well, and she couldn't travel, and I couldn't travel. So we did a lot of telephoning.

SR: Your mother, did she ever have an aliyah?

HB: No. No, I don't think she would have taken it. Today maybe we could have persuaded her, but not then. I don't think it was ever offered to her. She lived in the Hebrew rehab for the last five years of her life. You know which one I mean. She used to go down to shul every Saturday. They had a service every Saturday there. Very often, I went with her. They wouldn't let us sit on the same size as the men. [laughter] I mean, at that stage of their lives. No, just wouldn't have an aliyah there. The rabbi who ran it was extremely observant Orthodox, so he ran an Orthodox service. I don't know what they do now. I'm sure they have a service there now, but I don't know what to do.

SR: Some of the rabbinical students work there.

HB: Do they?

SR: Yes.

HB: You mean, people in your classes do?

SR: Sonia.

HB: She does?

SR: She worked there in the summer.

HB: No kidding.

SR: There's someone else working there now – Michael [inaudible]. (Haley?) works there. She's not in our class, but (Haley's?) a friend of mine. She worked at the Hebrew rehab.

HB: They run a service?

SR: She's in the chaplain's office. She's actually also studying to be a rabbi but not in our school.

HB: In which case, they have to let the women be involved and say, "These are women who are running it." [laughter]

SR: Times have changed a bit. It's amazing. Well, I'm going to let you go. It's been wonderful. I would like to come back sometime.

HB: Sure. I'm enjoying it.

SR: So maybe, from time to time, if you're having an interesting lecture, you could get someone to bring you over to the Hebrew College. We could give you a call?

HB: Yes.

SR: Not Talmud. I know not Talmud.

HB: It doesn't matter. Do they allow people to come in and listen?

SR: It would have to be a special – I mean, it doesn't happen very often, but once in a while.

HB: When are they opening for interviews again? [laughter]

SR: Now's a good time. I could put in a good word.

[Tape paused.]

HB: Do you know we have another scholar here, Edie Kling?

SR: You know Edie Kling? She was in our class with Judith Kates at [inaudible] Rabbinical School; I used to take a class with her in Tanakh.

HB: Are you in that class with Joyce (Bronin?)?

SR: Yes, I was. Then I went to rabbinical school, and so not anymore.

HB: I said to them, "I'd like to join you," They said they couldn't take me because they don't have enough room for another person.

SR: They don't. They have a waiting list.

HB: But my friend Joyce, she's made a tape of material that you've worked with, and she's giving it to me.

SR: That would be a nice class for you.

HB: I'd love it, but there you are. Edie came in after me, but she must have known about it before.

SR: She didn't start when she moved here. She'd been gone for a long time. She had been visiting either (Edina?) or (Alana?) in Needham – Rabbi Perkins. She'd been coming for years to the class. Then, she went home, closed up the house, and moved here officially. But she had been going for a long time. That's why she had a place for a year. She was there before me. That's where I met her.

HB: Wonderful lady. What she has done – the d'var Torah for me in the service so that I can stop using my voice for a few minutes. She does a wonderful job. Just wonderful. I'll have to do it myself. So, I tell them, "You're going to have to deal with me for a few weeks, kids. Edie isn't going to be able to be here." She goes; she stays with one of her girls. I don't blame her. For her, the Shabbat here is terrible. I at least get up and go to shul, and then I come back, and I read what I wanted to. But for her, I don't know where she does that. She doesn't complain. I don't know what she does. She probably reads and davens.

SR: She has a great sense of humor. She'll say something in class and make everybody laugh.

HB: I would love to [inaudible] class. What can I do? I didn't realize it was going that long. When did it start?

SR: I didn't come at the beginning. (Rina Fein?) was there before me, two years before me. It's been going on for a while. It moved days. I came in when it was on Thursday.

HB: That's when it was Thursday.

SR: That's what it is now still. But what I will do is – I will speak to people and at least see about putting your name down on the waiting list because [inaudible] I left, and someone took my spot. So people do move on. You would have someone who would be able to take you there? I will speak to people I know in the class and make sure you're on the waiting list.

HB: Thank you.

SR: It's great. Judith Kates is one – she teaches in the rabbinical school now.

HB: No kidding.

SR: She teaches B'reishit. She taught me Esther and Ruth and Shir HaShirim. I'm doing it again in rabbinical school – very different approaches, very different. She's a good teacher – Judith.

HB: Is she?

SR: She prepares very well. She's good. [inaudible]

HB: I remember hearing her when – they tried to start a rabbinical school or program for people who couldn't go to New York on a regular basis or if you didn't have enough background. Take Emily [inaudible], for example. She's a big product of one of those – I don't know what they called them. They tried to call it a school associated with something in New York. I went a couple of times because I was interested. But at that time, it meant studying from four to eight, and my husband had had enough. I couldn't ask him to do it anymore. Thirty-two years as a camp director took a lot of things away from him, and I said, "I can't do that."

SR: Which camp were you involved with?

HB: Pembroke. I can't do that to him.

SR: Do you know Jill (Schon?)? Her daughter went there. Jill goes to Emanuel.

HB: I probably do know her. Oh, sure I do. She's a very bright lady. That's the one. Her little girl went for the first time last year. Oh, did she do a d'var Torah for us. It was magnificent. She's lovely.

SR: She's my neighbor. She lives two doors down.

HB: I always get a hug and a kiss on Shabbat from her. When you said Jill (Schon?), it struck a bell. Oh, my. It's a different world now.

SR: How so?

HB: There are so many opportunities for women and for people to study and learn and become involved in a program. It's brilliant. There weren't that many when we were kids. I went to Hebrew College, and I had a very wonderful experience there. I loved it. It was tough. We went to two schools at once. Didn't you?

SR: I went to [inaudible] for parochial school.

HB: High school?

SR: I went from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Basically, it's a day school, yeshiva day school for girls only. Very orthodox.

HB: Did you enjoy it?

SR: I enjoyed it up until sixth grade. Up until sixth grade, I enjoyed it. They were very loving and warm. Then, in seventh grade, you couldn't ask questions anymore. They didn't want to hear questions. They said I had chutzpah. I asked a question. I found it very hard to study without asking questions.

HB: Yes. [laughter]

SR: So, it was difficult. Junior high and high school were difficult.

HB: Where did you go to college?

SR: I went to Barnard. It's a women's school.

HB: I know.

SR: That was okay. It was in New York, which was okay, but it was a huge adjustment –

HB: I can imagine.

SR: – from [inaudible] to Barnard. Barnard was very feminist. I thought, “Yes, of course, women have the same intelligence. We should get the same jobs and the same pay. But in shul, of course, we sit separately, and of course, we sit behind them at [inaudible] and of course, we don’t sing.” It took me a lot longer to change my religious [inaudible]. That took me a long time to say, “Well, how can I say they deserve the same pay for the same job, but they can’t sit there in shul and read the same way and have an aliyah.” Then, you start reading the Talmud, and the Talmud doesn’t say women cannot have an aliyah. The Talmud says in one place: women should not have all seven aliyot. That’s what the Talmud says. Well, that means that we can do one or two or three of the six. The reason why we couldn’t have all seven is because that would make the men look bad.

HB: [laughter] I remember that one.

SR: But they don’t say we can’t have aliyot.

HB: They don’t. So where does that –?

SR: The rabbis began saying it’s not [speaks Hebrew]; it’s not proper. But that was their –

HB: And women haven’t got the intelligence.

SR: They started saying that.

HB: That was their [inaudible]. So, we have them to thank for that. Oy, gevalt. So I really wonder how my father came – he just wanted to have somebody do it. He didn’t care whether it was a man or a woman. He taught my brother as well. No, my grandfather taught my brother. There was a slight difference in the Torah between the

way my father sang and his father sang. Very interesting.

SR: How do you sing? Like your father?

HB: My father.

SR: Can you sing a little bit for me?

HB: Wait a minute. I think I have –

SR: [inaudible] anywhere? I didn't bring one.

HB: I don't have a [inaudible], but I have a couple of sheets.

SR: [inaudible] right there. Yes. That'd be great. It's like Torah.

HB: Gosh, this is awful. [Hadassah Blocker sings.] That's where we differ – [inaudible].
[Hadassah Blocker sings.] That's the end of this page.

SR: That's beautiful. That's just what I was studying this very week. That's so funny. You know we're doing (Sefer Shemot?). So we were learning just those exact [inaudible] with Art Green this week.

HB: When you say you study, tell me what you do.

SR: Well, we do [inaudible], and then we'll do Rashi, Rambam – Rambam was very mystical. So Art likes to study Rambam a lot. Then he likes Midrash, too. So we'll do Midrash Shemot Rabbah. I grew up with basically c?umash-Rashi.

HB: I did, too.

SR: But now we do c?umash-Rashi, Rambam, Ibn Ezra sometimes for comparison and Midrash Rabbah. So we were learning just this very – that's so funny.

HB: He did say he was going to [speaks Hebrew].

SR: Yes.

HB: Every time I read it, I find something else that is just so interesting.

SR: So we were discussing God hardening –

HB: Yes. How can we [inaudible]? We talked about that, too, when I did the c?umash with my women. I said, “Why should we blame Pharaoh? God said it. He said he’s hardening his heart. So why is he to blame?” I’ve forgotten who it was that came up with the answer.

SR: I’d like to hear one.

HB: I don’t remember who. We used to call Rabbi Chiel in. Once a month, he would come in, and I saved a list of questions for him. He said to me once, “Did you make these up yourself?” I said, “Honestly, Rabbi, it came out of our discussion. That’s what’s so wonderful about this. We’re getting them to think. I don’t care how many questions they ask. It’s okay. It’s good.” It really was a wonderful experience. I loved it. Can you sing it?

SR: I can’t sing, but I’ll try. [Shayna Rhodes sings.]

HB: See, that’s the difference. My Zaide sang it that way, but my father didn’t. So, I took my father’s. The temple uses it. They don’t let me teach the kids because I use that. But I can learn it. It’s so easy.

SR: Right. Just go down. My husband has a different [inaudible]. He learned from a rabbi from London.

HB: Yes, that’s very different.

SR: He has a very different [inaudible], completely different.

HB: Unfortunately, he's in the last stages of Alzheimer's – [inaudible]. I don't know. You might know that name. He was a professor at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology], came first from Poland, then to London, and he occasionally would do Torah in the London trope, which we found very unpleasant; they're not pretty at all.

SR: I know. My husband thinks it's the best. He loves it. I agree with you. I don't see that it's so beautiful. It is unusual. You don't hear it that often, but I don't think it's so particularly pretty.

HB: Are they offering any scholarships at the rabbinical school?

SR: They do, actually. Well, they have government loans, but not so much scholarships. Our problem is we earn too much to get scholarships and not enough to pay all the bills because there are five – well, six tuitions we pay – three college, one high school, one middle school, and one rabbinical school.

HB: Where do the kids go?

SR: Two went to Cornell.

HB: The younger ones.

SR: One's at the New Jewish High School, and one's at the Jewish Community Day School.

HB: Wow. Lots of tuitions.

SR: My daughter just was bat mitzvah this past summer. I did hers on a Sunday Rosh Chodesh. So she davened Musaf, and she read the Rosh Chodesh; it's not very long, and she gave a d'var Torah.

HB: That's a lot of work.

SR: She was about as comfortable and poised – because, at that age, I would have been such a nervous wreck. She leads in school all the time.

HB: I was about to say they have so many experiences in the school that it's good for them.

SR: It's different.

HB: The (Schechter?) kids come to us for their bar or bat mitzvah, and our kids held up their own.

SR: They do.

HB: They do. They're really very good.

SR: I've been to several [inaudible] and then (Schechter?) kids.

HB: I'm talking about the kids that are not (Schechter?) kids, who are being taught by our people. They hold their own with the (Schechter?) kids, which is good.

SR: They do because I know when I go for – there's often multiple [inaudible]. You can't tell who went to (Schechter?). You can't. So, you're right.

HB: Well, when Harry Chiel had his bar mitzvah – wow. He did the entire Torah and, of course, the haftorah. Interestingly, he did not put on his tallit until he was going to read the Torah, and then he took it off right away. Can you tell me why?

SR: The Orthodox – boys get tallis when they get married; otherwise, they don't. It's more Conservative, where they have a more ceremonial – giving a tallit when you're bar mitzvah.

HB: You don't even have a ceremony. The kids come with a tallit. But he did not have a tallit until he went to read the Torah.

SR: Yes. Doesn't surprise me. My sons both read the whole parashah and the haftarah.

HB: A lot of work.

SR: Didn't bother them at all. What bothered them was the d'var Torah. They didn't mind preparing it. They were afraid – see, they had to face people then. Because in the Orthodox, you face away for the – so, that was okay. Although, for one of my sons, he was just very much afraid of being up in front of everybody.

HB: It's a very difficult experience.

SR: My daughters were more calm in a sense.

HB: See, we didn't have bar and bat mitzvahs – well, we had bar mitzvahs. But I know when I was going to Hebrew school – Beth-El Hebrew School in Dorchester – my father was the principal. We ran services, and we all had that experience of running the service, which was wonderful. [inaudible] when you're young, and it stays.

SR: So true. You think I'm young, but learning now – I'm forty-eight – doesn't come like it did when I was twenty.

HB: I know. I hate to tell you how old I am, and when I read a story or a [inaudible], I go back and read it again because I didn't get it the first time.

SR: Well, it looks like you're doing great. You should think about the minchah bat mitzvahs here.

HB: Thanks. I will. I'll talk to Joan and see what we can come up with.

SR: It would be wonderful.

HB: She's going to tell me I'm crazy.

SR: I'll bet you've heard that before.

HB: Of course, I have. [laughter] Of course, I have. As my sons say, "You've got to keep your mind busy, mom. You can't do anything too much physical, but you've got to keep your mind going." That's what I'm hope –

[END OF INTERVIEW]