Elyse Winick Transcript

Elyse Winick: Rabbi Elyse Winick. I'm the Jewish Chaplain at Brandeis University.

Lynne Himelstein: We're going to go back. I would like you to share with us a Jewish memory from your youth.

EW: Probably among my earliest Jewish memories were very, very close family friends of ours who were more traditionally observant than we were. We would be invited to their home for Passover Seder every year, and it was a grand production. There was a program with parts assigned. As a small child, I had the honor and terror of being able to greet Elijah, the Prophet. The front door to their house was around the corner from the dining room. Imagine it was already pitch black by the time I went to open the front door for Elijah, and I was petrified. First of all, Elijah might be there; Elijah might not be there. Either way, it was a frightening prospect. Of course, there were all the strangers on the streets of Brooklyn who might be there. It was such a huge honor, and they never sent an adult with me. They always trusted me, even as a six or seven-year-old, to go by myself and do this. I thought it was huge. Many, many years later, they confessed to me that as they became more observant, they stopped inviting guests who were traveling to get to them on the holiday, and they continued to invite us because they felt that our family and me, in particular, got so much out of being with them, they couldn't imagine doing the holiday in any other way. That had an impact both in terms of what it was like to be part of their extended family as a child but also to look back and think, "What does it really mean to value the people you care about and how you include them even as your own sense of practices change?"

LH: That's a wonderful story. What was the Jewish upbringing that you experienced with your family?

EW: I grew up in a tradition-oriented household. My mother was born in Eastern Europe. My father was born in East New York in Brooklyn. They both grew up in traditionally observant homes and felt strongly when they married and were building their own home that they wanted to be able to eat lobster in their house. We had Friday night dinner every week. We were fairly consistent shul goers, and I was a Hebrew school junkie. I went to Hebrew school. I loved Hebrew school. I stayed extra hours so I could help out in the office and I could do projects for the rabbi. I always wanted to be in the synagogue; it's where I wanted to be whenever I had the opportunity. I imbibed what I learned there in a very powerful way so that in second grade, I convinced my parents to stop buying meat from a non-kosher butcher. By the time I was in fifth grade, I convinced them that we needed separate dishes for Passover. So we had one set of dishes for the rest of the year on which we ate all sorts of things. But we had two sets of dishes for Passover, one for meat and one for dairy. Because once we were going to do it, we were going to go all out. Over time, my parents incorporated more and more observance into their lives because of what I brought back to them because of my Hebrew experiences. I was always thirsting for more, and it was something that I wasn't even satisfied with what I was getting in Hebrew school. I wanted to do things outside of Hebrew school. I wanted to get more, and my parents were very patient and tolerant of it and, after a while, came to celebrate it, too.

LH: Were there second plates for the lobster?

EW: No, but the meat was coming from – the meat was coming from a kosher butcher, and the lobster was served on the same plate. I don't have a strong memory of meat and dairy being served together. But even for myself, as I took on obligations of keeping kosher, lobster was quite honestly the last thing I gave up.

LH: That's good to know. When did you know you wanted to become a rabbi? How did that happen?

EW: The synagogue in which I grew up was a very traditional synagogue. Women were not allowed up on the bimah. Girls celebrated becoming bat mitzvah either on Friday night – primarily Friday night, occasionally on Saturday evening, but never on Shabbat morning, and this didn't bother me. The only thing that really frustrated me was when I would go to bar and bat mitzvah lessons with my classmates, and I would have to struggle listening to the boys learning how to lead Musaf. I would never have the opportunity to lead it, but if you woke me in the middle of the night any night, I could do it in its entirety. I was more bothered by my impatience with them than I was by the fact that there was no opportunity for me to do it. I was perfectly happy to accept the status quo. When I got to college, I was looking to become more traditional. I was leaning towards a more Orthoprax lifestyle, and I wasn't really looking for something that was egalitarian, and it kind of found me. We had a rabbinical student from the Jewish Theological Seminary [JTS] who came to visit on campus, and because it was my job as a member of the Hillel student board to host him, I ended up spending many a Shabbat morning, where just he and I sat and had conversations about important things in Jewish life. At the end of that year, I decided that I would spend the summer studying at JTS, but I would never become a rabbi. That was beyond the pale. That was not something that women did. I spent the summer learning at the seminary and my first exposure to Talmud. I found it wonderfully fascinating and thrilling. At the end of that, I said, "Well, I can understand why you could prove that it's all right for a woman to be a rabbi, but that's not something that I'm ever going to do." The following year, I transferred from one school to another and happened to be taking a course on the Jewish American family. Our group was assigned a project to do, and we decided we were looking at the careers of Jewish women, the impact of the careers of Jewish women on families. I said, totally oblivious to myself, "Why don't we do a case study on the impact of the lives of women rabbis on their families? Why don't we look at that?" Not really understanding at all why that was of such interest to me. This was in the mid-'80s. There were not nearly as many as there are today, and certainly in the conservative movement at that point. It was

just after Amy Eilberg had been ordained. There really wasn't a field of comparison at all. So we created this research study, and we wrote to rabbinic families and asked all sorts of questions. Still, I was oblivious to the fact that I was on a quest of my own. Then, one day walking up to campus, it just hit me like a flash that I was running toward something, not away from it, and that this was really the path that I wanted to travel. I wanted very much to work with college students. I had a very positive experience myself in a Hillel context on campus. I thought that the rabbinate would really be the best way for me to have the kind of impact I wanted to have on Jewish identity.

LH: That was a huge "aha" moment for you.

EW: The light bulb went off for me, that this is what I wanted to do. I'm pretty certain, as I try to remember, that the first person that I told that I had made that decision was the rabbi at my Hillel, who had when he first met me at the beginning of that year – since I was a transfer student – said, "Have you thought about going to rabbinical school?" I said, "No, I haven't. I'm not really interested in that." He was probably the second or third person to have said that to me, and I was starting to feel like it was something of a conspiracy that people kept asking me that question. So I went to him, and I told him that that's what I thought I wanted to do. Later that summer, there was an article in the "Hers" section of the New York Times about a woman rabbi talking about her choice to become a rabbi. I think the callout on the article was something like maybe, "An act of revenge." Her choice to become a rabbi was [to] take revenge on the traditional upbringing she had had. It was a litany of horror stories of this extraordinarily difficult life she had, growing up in a traditional environment. I thought, "That's not why I want to be a rabbi. I want to be a rabbi because I'm a Jew first. I want to be a women rabbi second. I want to be a rabbi because I love Judaism, and I want to have the right tools to share that with other people." So I wrote a letter to the editor of the New York Times, and to my great surprise, it was published. It told my version of the story as a not-yet rabbinical student, even from an affirmative direction. That summer, I was working in a community

development organization that was based in Borough Park, and some of the folks who worked in the office happened to see – I didn't tell them about it, but they happened to see this article in the Times. I remember being cornered by one man in particular who was screaming at me about how girls can't even study Talmud and what I was thinking. I just kind of shrugged my shoulders, and I said, "That's how it is in your community. It's not how it is in my community." That really affirmed for me, even before I had begun the application process, that I was on the right path.

LH: I find it so brave of this young rabbinic intern that you developed a relationship with – and it was in the early days of JTS admitting women into the program that he would suggest that to you. I think that's very brave. So what class were you in when you finally were admitted to JTS? How many years had they been ordaining women at that point?

EW: I started at JTS in the fall of 1986. That put me in the third entering class of women. Amy Eilberg had been so very well-prepared that she entered in '83 and was ordained in '84 in just a year's time because she had already done all of the coursework. The year after Amy, the class was very large. Many, many women. All of these women had been waiting for all this time for the seminary to begin to accept them. My class had seven women. Not even all of them finished at the same time, and not all of them serve as rabbis today. We were trailblazers in a different way from the women who were ahead of us. The women who were ahead of us were a group of women who had waited and prayed and rallied and done everything in their power to learn and be prepared for the moment that they were convinced was going to come, and it was a life aspiration for them. My class was made up of women who were like me, fairly fresh out of college and riding very much on the shoulders of the hard work that had come before us. I think we experienced it a little bit differently because we didn't have ten years of anticipation. It was neither an obvious choice for us but it also was not a difficult choice for us in the way that it had been for the women before us.

LH: Were there challenging times for you and your female cohort of seven while at JTS that you found challenging [or] unexpected?

EW: Over the years, I've heard so many stories of women who had difficult times while at JTS, where they didn't feel that they were treated equally, where they felt that they were discriminated against, and I feel almost a bit of embarrassment in saying that my five years at the seminary were nothing like that. I went to a seminary, and maybe I was just in my bubble, where if you worked hard and you were truly committed to what it meant to prepare yourself to be a rabbi and go out into the world, there was never a sense you were any different from your male counterparts. The distinction for me was more along the lines of those who were more traditional, even within the context of Conservative Judaism, and those who were less traditional. I'm very well aware that that was a unique experience and that I'm sandwiched in between a whole host of women who had very different experiences.

LH: Do you think the challenges for a rabbi today are different than challenges, say, fifty years ago? Give me a sense of the difference is for those challenges.

EW: The Jewish community today is so different, radically different from what it was fifty years ago. Community is not a given. People are looking for developing their own path in a way that doesn't necessarily bring them in conversation with other people on a comparable path. We live in an era that's very much of a DIY [do-it-yourself] Judaism more than it is about community, and that's something I think we've lost. It's a tremendous loss. To make people value community is much more difficult than it is to cultivate community among people who are seeking it. And I think that fifty years ago, people just took community for granted. People took community for granted, and there are many ways in which they took observance for granted. There were many ways in which they took Jewish identities for granted. Professor Jack Wertheimer, in a class I took while I was at the seminary, once said, "We live in an era in which we are all Jews

by choice." That's a term that's traditionally reserved for those who convert to Judaism, but really, our reality is that it's no longer a given that people are going to choose Jewish partners. It's no longer a given that people are going to choose to live somewhere where they can experience a rich and fulfilling Jewish life. Some of that is about the way that the context has changed and the world outside the Jewish community has changed, and some of that is about the way in which those outside influences have chipped away at the core of what we've had. That's not to say that it's all bad. There's a lot of creativity that's extraordinarily exciting, and there are opportunities for expression that never existed. Certainly, fifty years ago, no one was going to be asking a woman about her role as a rabbi; it wasn't even imaginable at the time. But as much as we have grown and creatively expanded what Judaism looks like, I think we've sacrificed a lot in the process as well.

LH: You talk about your professor who talks about [how] we're all Jews by choice. I joke about my brother, who married a Jew by chance. He was never looking to marry a Jew, but he happened to meet and fall and love. So ended up marrying a Jew. Because of her, their daughter goes to a Jewish day school and does all that that he never would have wanted. I want to hear about your work at Brandeis [and] what you're currently doing there now.

EW: So I serve as the Jewish chaplain at Brandeis University. I've been in that capacity for, I think, nearly eight years. It's a part-time role in which I have an extraordinary opportunity to accompany students on their Jewish journey to provide counsel, to expand their thinking, to do a lot of listening, and to help them frame the challenges of their emerging adulthood in Jewish terms. It's an extraordinary privilege and opportunity to be able to work with any college community, I think, but certainly with that one in particular.

HM: Would you please describe the difference between a Jewish chaplain and a Hillel rabbi? Just a brief – what is the difference?

EW: So, Jewish chaplain is a university administrative title. Universities hire chaplains across the board, across denominational lines, across faith traditions. There is a notion in the role of Jewish chaplain that you're playing a role in framing the spiritual side of campus life. That's sometimes even seen in contrast with what academic pursuit is about. But my vision of it is that it is a grand support to academic pursuit. Many campuses have a rabbi who serves their Hillel, who isn't necessarily serving the university as well or serving the university in that capacity. Our Hillel at Brandeis doesn't have a formal Hillel rabbi. I serve in that capacity in many ways for them, even though that is more by default than by design. You will often find that a Rabbi who is working in a Hillel context is more in the trenches with students, whereas a Jewish chaplain might not necessarily be in the trenches in quite the same way. But Brandeis is a very unique institution. It would be very difficult to be part of the Jewish life of the campus and not do your utmost to serve students on the ground, both within the community of the committed and in the larger community of seekers. It would be the only thing that makes sense.

LH: That's interesting. Would you share with us a story about your decision or coming to be a rabbi that works with college students? Was that always your intention? How did that evolve?

EW: I went to rabbinical school because I wanted to serve college students first and be a rabbi second. Being a Rabbi was, for me – and there were plenty of professionals out there for whom it wasn't a necessity, but for me, it felt like the way I could fulfill that role best was gonna be defined by doing it as a Rabbi and that had a lot to do with two disparate campus experiences that I had since I had been a transfer student. The school where I started had five thousand Jewish students, a large state school, and was unable to bring together enough students to participate in a minyan on Shabbat morning. I left there to go to Brandeis, where I felt that I would be in a more immersive Jewish community. There were other factors as well, but the Jewish pull was very strong in terms of what I was seeking. I saw the way in which the Hillel rabbi there, Rabbi Al

Axelrad, who had been there the entirety of his career there, some thirty-three years, how deeply he influenced both the culture of the university and the students with whom he came in contact, how he was teacher and pastor and caregiver and inspirer. There was a comprehensive way in which he helped them. He, in his way, was a midwife of sorts to help them fulfill their Jewish potential and to discover what journey they themselves were meant to be on, not to dictate but to shepherd. That was a powerful experience for me, and I thought, “What a gift to me it would be if I had the opportunity to play that kind of role in the lives of other young people.”

LH: Tell us a personal experience you had with a student where you really felt you made a deep impact on their life.

EW: Students pass through their four years on campus in varying states of disarray. What they are looking for and what they discover are not necessarily aligned, and then there are moments in time in which they suddenly realize that they’ve been thrown a curveball and they don’t know how to process it. So I have two separate students who, in the same year, came to me for things that had nothing to do with their professional desires. One student came to me very interested in pursuing a career in the sciences. That was what she was studying, and she was very devoted to it. And each time we met to talk about her responsibilities in the Jewish community, we also talked about the things that she was doing in the sciences, what she’d be doing in the summer, what she'd be doing over break. And one day, I said, "Just tell me one thing. Have you thought about going to rabbinical school? I know you've wanted to do the sciences since you were ten, eleven years old. But did you ever think about it?” She started to cry, and I felt awful because I wasn’t trying to destroy her dreams; I was trying to draw her out to make sure that she was on a path where she’d be completely and wholly fulfilled. We talked about it. Why was she crying? Because she had been asking herself the very same questions and that someone kind of heard the debate inside her head and was trying to draw it out from her, [it] came in an unexpected way for her. In the end, she changed fields, and

yes, she's going to be studying to be a rabbi. I didn't make that happen, but I gave her the permission for it to happen. By contrast, that very same year, I had another student whose dream since the time she had been twelve was to be a rabbi. This in itself to me was a fascinating idea because I couldn't imagine growing up, as girls can now, dreaming of becoming a rabbi. Because I heard in her description of what she wanted, something that was so simple and obvious, I would push her and challenge her and say, "You're eighteen now. You're not twelve. Is that who your eighteen-year-old self wants to be, or is that just about what your twelve-year-old self wanted to be?" She said, "No, no, I'm convinced this is really what I want to do." I supported her, helped her go through the process. I've heard recently that she's decided not to become a rabbi, and this is probably five years, maybe even six years, since she and I had that conversation. I don't think that the conversation that I had with her is what made the change. Otherwise, she would've made the change on the spot. But, again, to free herself up to ask those questions, "Who am I?" and "who am I becoming?" That's what those four years on campus are really about, making that discovery, casting off the preconceived notions that you held to like they were gospel when you walked through the door, and taking all of the new experiences that you gathered and just the developmental changes of being on campus as your sense of knowledge and sense of self begins to crystalize, and what do you do with it then? Now that doesn't even begin to address the types of conversations where a student has come to me because they were experiencing a loss and they needed to find the way to mourn that was right for them and helping them learn both what the tradition has to offer about how one mourns, but how they could personalize it and make the mourning experience something that would be really resonant for them and help them to heal. Well, those things, unfortunately, happen all the time. But it's a gift to be able to be there when someone is in need and to say, "Here, first of all, I will hold you" figuratively and maybe not so figuratively, "to get through this, and you're not alone, and here's what your tradition has to offer for how you get through it, and here's what I have to offer, and here's the whole network of friends you've created for yourself here on

campus. We're all going to help carry you through this, and you're not going through it alone."

LH: These are beautiful stories. Thank you for sharing with us. Would you share with us a pivotal moment in your life, a personal crisis, and how Judaism helped you navigate through that?

EW: One of the challenges of my own college experience, which is probably an unexamined factor in why I felt so strongly about being present for college students, was that I lost my father at the beginning of my sophomore year of college. The presence of tradition and a formal language of mourning, and by that I don't mean the texts, but I mean the tools and the rituals, gave me so much strength and so much to hold on to, and it was delving deeper into the Jewish community that helped to give my life structure at a time when things felt so extraordinarily chaotic. There's beauty in the flexibility of Judaism. There's also a great deal of beauty in the structure and the organization of Judaism in the way in which Judaism is designed to help us manage the chaos of creation that's always teeming just below the surface. Relying on that structure and the stability helped me as a very young college student get through an extraordinary crisis, both on the levels of what I learned about tradition and what the tradition had to offer me, but also just the way I was able to subsume some of my grief in the warmth of community. That was something that – had that not been there for me, I don't know how I would have come through that crisis.

LH: Thank you for sharing that. What is your understanding of [God] [Recording paused.]

EW: As soon as we begin to think about God and to find language with which to describe God, we've lost God. My brother once said to me, and I used it in a paper for which I got terrific marks, and I went back to the professor, and I said, "But I said in the paper that this was my brother's idea. I shouldn't get credit for it." But it stays with me that God is

what we see out of the corner of the eye – elusive, just on the periphery, and when we turn to face head-on, we no longer see whatever was there. That doesn't mean that it was gone; it means that we were experiencing it in a way that is not according to the right brain/left brain structure of how we process things. So, God is creator, and we are God's partners in that creation. We work closely to bring our conception of the divine into the world, but all we have is our approximation of what's out of the corner of our eye. Our world and our lives are ever holier and even better if we're continually in pursuit of whatever that is, but as soon as we try to define it and to really wrap our hands around it, it's gonna slip away.

LH: That's great. Would you describe a sacred moment in your life?

EW: When I think about sanctity in life and in our world, I think about the degree to which it's always present for us, and we're not always open to experience. It is, as my friend Rabbi (Schild?) says, "It's a posture." It's a way of approaching the world. That sanctity is always there, and it's we who may or may not access it. One of the powerful memories that I have of experiencing that sanctity comes also in a college experience. It was a pivotal time for me. I was leading Kabbalat Shabbat service on a Friday night for a group of students. It was as if, in that moment, I could feel the heavens open. My prayer felt so extraordinarily interconnected with every other person who was chanting Kabbalat Shabbat anywhere in that moment, and it was extraordinary and it was elevating, and friends afterward said, "Wow, your davening was so incredible tonight." I thought, "Wow, it came through. People felt that energy that I was feeling." You have an experience like that once, and you crave it and quest after it forever. It comes in glimmers, and it comes in moments, but I would say that I felt that power equally standing on the national mall protesting for the freedom of Soviet Jews or support for Israel, where you see thousands upon thousands of people joined together for a common cause. That's an element of sanctity as well when you "pray with your legs," as Abraham Joshua Heschel said. That is extraordinarily holy. You can find those moments in things that are decidedly ritual and

Jewish. You can find those moments in things that are decidedly communal. You can find those moments just in the quiet of your own soul with something as simple as an experience in nature or just the reflection on your capacity to think intelligent thoughts. There's sanctity everywhere.

LH: I want to ask you about your first experience in Israel.

EW: I went to Israel for the first time in the summer after my first year of college. I had been in Young Judaea, the youth movement, while in high school. I was one of two actively involved students in my high school who had wanted to go on their gap year program in Israel whose parents had said no. So I was approaching the experience of going to Israel with a tremendous amount of anticipation and intensity. It did not fail to satisfy. That was in 1983. I've been to Israel so many times since 1983. It has changed so dramatically since 1983. It's extraordinary. I wouldn't say that my experience in 1983 was a particularly religious one. I went on a secular trip sponsored through the American Zionist Youth Foundation, and I was one of a couple of students who were actually aware of and concerned with things regarding observance. I can remember breaking my fast at the end of Tisha B'av, the ninth of Av, after having done a hike with the group because that's what the group was doing and sitting on the side of the road eating a whole cucumber and a whole tomato as the breaking of my fast. The lunches that they serve and the meals that they serve on these organized Israel trips have not necessarily improved that much since that time. But I remember thinking, here I am, experiencing this tremendously powerful and significant sacred day in a totally non-religious environment, but I have brought my religious self with me. It was symbolic for me how much we live with our feet in two worlds when we live as contemporary Jews, and that there I was in that environment where I was explaining to other people on the trip what this fast was and why I had been fasting. They were fascinated, but it didn't resonate for them; it wasn't anything they were interested in. Eating my cucumber and tomato and feeling very proud of myself for having made it through the fast and not in the least bit

struck by the irony that here I had experienced this fast day in Israel but not in Jerusalem, where you can imagine the extraordinary passion with people experience the ninth of Av in Jerusalem. Here I was, sitting on the side of a road, eating my tomato. There was something very powerful in that moment about the confluence of things that looked like they shouldn't fit together that fit together so very well. Now I've been to Israel probably eighteen, nineteen times since then, and every time, the experience is different, and every time, I come away feeling more and more drawn to Israel, but having learned something new both about Israel and about myself.

LH: Have you led student missions to Israel?

EW: I've had the great privilege in my rabbinate to take a number of different kinds of groups to Israel, and one of the great joys of that is seeing Israel for the first time every time you go. That's an amazing, amazing experience. So I've had the opportunity to lead mainstream Birthright groups. I've led Birthright groups that had a specific focus on Conservative Judaism. One of the great pride and joy experiences of the past seven or eight years for me has been a Birthright group that is specifically designed for young people with Asperger's syndrome and on the autism spectrum. For them, there's this multi-layered experience, not only of going to Israel but of doing something that their friends and family members have done that they never expected that they themselves would be able to participate in because group dynamics are such a difficult problem for them, and helping them find a group of friends in ways that they don't necessarily have in the outside world, and in ways that, in many environments, the Jewish community has failed them in an extraordinarily painful sense. I can remember one young woman on one of these trips on the last night when we were going around and telling our stories of the experience, and she was very high functioning. She was a university student. She lived in the dorms. She was not necessarily someone who, to outside appearances, was struggling in the social environment. She said, "I spend most of my time interacting with people through a computer screen. I don't really have friendships. This trip not only

showed me that I can have friendships, but now I understand why people think life is worth living." The whole room is an intake of breath at that moment. I realized that in that group, in particular, facilitating the opportunity to be part of that experience; there's no holier work than that because it's the vehicle of the trip to Israel that makes that happen for them, and it's all of those layers at once. It's the specialness of Israel. It's the way in which they feel they are like everyone else by being able to go on a trip to Israel. It's a way in which that immersive quality brings them together in community in ways that they never anticipated was possible. [One] young woman said, on one trip, "I spent four years of high school sitting alone in the cafeteria. I didn't know that there were people who would want to be friends with me." That's an extraordinary gift to be able to give to someone. Then the most recent group that I took was a group of five African American students and five Jewish students from Brandeis. They created the experience themselves. They said, "Our communities don't interact enough on campus. There's no outright animosity. It's kind of like détente. "You do your thing. I'll do my thing." This core group of students said, "That's not enough. We have much to learn from one another and much to gain by being part of one another's lives, and let's use a trip to Israel as one of the starting points for that." That was an extraordinary opportunity to see Israel through a completely different lens and to help students from both sides of the trip come to understand both the experience of being in Israel, what role Israel plays in Jewish identity, and [inaudible] … So it gives them an opportunity to compare and contrast their own cultural heritage and to try to understand one another better through the things that they have in common and the ways in which they're different. That was a different kind of sanctity and a different kind of bringing holiness to the world.

LH: Great experience for you. What advice would you give to somebody who wants to begin their rabbinic studies?

EW: I look back at how I prepared myself for becoming a rabbi, and there are so many lessons that I learned from that, that given the opportunity – and I'm very lucky because I

really do get that opportunity – to talk to young people who are contemplating their avenues, their career, there are lots of moments that I reflect on and think, “This could’ve been done better.” I was a major in Near Eastern and Judaic Studies at Brandeis. Fantastic, fantastic department. I shouldn’t have majored in Jewish studies. I should’ve majored in something else. When you go out into the world, and you want to be conversant with people coming from a broad range of backgrounds, yes, you need expertise in what Judaism has to say and what Judaism has to teach; that’s what you’re there for. But you’re in a much better position to do that if you can speak their language well, as well. Solomon Schechter once said one of the most important things for an American rabbi to learn was about baseball, to be able to be conversant in baseball. I get that because we don’t live in a bubble and if we want to be able to translate the important concept and values and history, and text of Jewish tradition into accessible language for people who aren’t immersed in that world, we need to understand well the world in which they function. So I have a colleague who was a computer science major. It’s fantastic. Also, he’s done great things with technology and incorporating that into Judaism. I have colleagues who were psych majors and English literature majors. The world is a very big place, and if you want to use Judaism as the vehicle through which people can make their lives feel manageable, you need to be able to have a frame of reference for what their experience is about as well. So that’s one piece of advice that I’d give. I think it’s also very important for rabbis to learn how to give deeply and still save some for themselves, by which I mean the life of a Rabbi is 24/7. There’s an irony to that because we work on Shabbat. But it’s a 24/7 experience. We are not giving our best to the people we serve if we're giving all 24/7 to them. We may feel like we're giving them a great gift. We may feel like that role of personal sacrifice is – for some people, that may be a goal in and of itself, but that that must mean we’re giving them more. I think, in the end, we’re giving them less. The brain needs time to rest in order to generate creativity. Our souls need time to be restored in order to give our best selves and most loving selves to the people that we’re caring for. So the need to be able to carve out time that is

your own, I think, is extraordinarily valuable.

LH: Great answer. My final question for you – a hundred years from now, when all of these stories are up on the web, and we've been adding to them, and it'll be taken over by another generation, there will be a postscript added to yours. What would you like it to say about the impact your rabbinate has had [and] how you would like to be remembered?

EW: One thing that would be important to me when other people have an opportunity to reflect back on the contributions of women rabbis will be that women rabbis made contributions that were unique because women bring unique questions and ideas and visions to the table, but that by the time a hundred years passes, the distinctions about gender and religion will be irrelevant but for the gifts that they bring. Personally, my favorite movie is It's a Wonderful Life. If the postscript to my rabbinate is many, many, many young people out there who say, "My Jewish identity and my Jewish life was influenced for the better because of the encounters that I had when I knew Rabbi Winick," that would mean that my rabbinate had been a complete and utter success.

LH: Chills. That's a wonderful way to end. Thank you.

EW: It was my pleasure. That was wonderful. Thank you very much.

LH: You were wonderful.

EW: Thanks.

[END OF INTERVIEW]