

Interview with Serious Israel

Interviewer: Deborah Altus

September 6, 1996

Q: One of the things Love mentioned to me is that you guys have a morning meeting. Could you tell me a little bit about that?

A: Well, our meetings, really, are an essential part of keeping this community tight. Because we don't live, "communally" as such, we live in separate household units, and we don't have a common eating facility so we don't have an occasion to get together like some communities do over meals, which would be really nice to have, but we don't have it. So, we have to be a little more intentional about our meetings. And, we've managed to get as many of us together everyday as we can except for Sunday. Sunday's our day off. But, almost every other day, we have some form of meeting, at least one, and often two, a morning and an evening meeting. So, we may change it from time to time to what the exact format that meeting has. Over the years it's gone through lots of changes. I can tell you what it is currently. There's twice that we have a spiritual meeting, which is devoted just to being the adult population coming together, and the older kids, coming together, just to sit together, pray, meditate, sing, and talk over our spiritual foundations. And, that meeting usually occurs here in this big room. That's one of the functions of this room, is we move all the furniture back, and make room for us to all sit together here in a circle. And we start the work week and end the work week usually, with that meeting. Monday morning, and Friday morning, early, like lately we've been meeting at 6:00 for those meetings, sometimes it's earlier. Before the young children get up. So as many of the adults can come together as possible. On days we don't have those meetings, we have a little later meeting, which is a little more casual, we wear our work clothes. Ready to start the day together. That's 7:00 or 8:00, we come together every morning possibly we can, without the little children. But, you can bring your children too. And, that too has a spiritual focus to the meeting. We try to stay away from discussing too many nuts and bolts when everybody's present. It gets real tedious. So we try to keep our conversation at a pretty high level of focusing on attitude, Love's very good at keeping things in a very general kind of attitudinal therapy kind of session. Where he just tries to kind of keep us reminded of the things that are really fundamental to our being together, and to the approach that we need to keep remembering, to make it all work. So, that's those meetings. But, for nuts and bolts stuff, we tend to meet more in smaller groups, spontaneously, as needed. People who are working together on the school program may call a meeting for those organizers. Something like the big Garlic Festival that we do every year here, requires a lot of organization. This year, we met almost without exception, we met just as needed by the people that felt they needed to get together. They called for a specific meeting. At those general meetings, we can kind of organize our more small detail meetings from there. Saturday nights, we have a big all-family get together. That's the closest thing to like a church meeting that we have. Because, all the small children are invited, even the babies. And again, we meet up here, we dress up, again, it's mainly singing, we have a lot of music, that has been written here. We sing our own songs. A lot of people play instruments here. So, that's something that everybody can do. The children can learn the songs at that time, even though they have their own music gatherings, also. The kids get together everyday, as part of their school program, and practice singing.

Q: Is the school here on the land?

A: Yes, it is. For the early years. By the time the kids get to High School age they usually opt to go to the public schools. But we usually keep them in our home schooling program here, through, sometimes all the way through junior high school, and but lately it's been, they'll go, one year into junior high, before

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they enter high school, to kind of give them a year to get used to the public system, before their actual record starts being established in high school. It's going to effect their college potential. So we give them that one year of adjustment, in what would be the eighth grade. We have a Saturday morning meeting, and that's pretty much like our other weekday meetings except that Saturdays tend be our day that we work together on the land. We don't go off to work anywhere. We try to keep our Saturdays free from employment activities. To focus on maintaining the grounds here together. So we'll spend our mornings together, coming out of that meeting we'll get organized during that meeting, and we'll spend our mornings together, working together on beautifying that land. Then the afternoons, the people are free to work at home on their own scenes. So, those are our current routines that we're locked in to, it's a real way of life now. I think we'd all miss it if we didn't have it. On occasion, we'll call one off.

Occasionally something will come up, but it's pretty rare, we all feel that those meetings are now just a natural part of our life. It's like getting up and combing our hair, you get up, and get together with everybody, it's a part of your life, and see them first thing, we really notice if each other aren't there, and usually want to know why, it's sort of a way to keep track of each other, seeing if somebody's having difficulty with something, that'll show up. If you have to go to work early, or have a job to do, you can go ahead and do that, but as much as possible if we're on the land, we make those meetings. In the early days, that's all we did was meet, so this is toned down.

Q: That's what Love said, that in Seattle you had a two year meditation.

A: Yeah, that's what we did, we just sat around, we weren't trying to earn money or raise children, or anything. We didn't have any children. It was just us facing each other and coming to terms with each other.

Q: Did you join the group in Seattle?

A: I did, yeah.

Q: What drew you to it?

A: Well, I was on kind of a two fold path. I was on a God search and I was on a community search, and I really felt somehow that the two were entwined, but didn't realize how tightly they would come together in this conclusion. But, it started out, for me, kind of coming awake in the mid sixties to the counter culture that was happening. I was in L.A. at the time. That's where, I went to school in the Midwest then I came to California. California really began to be aware of the social phenomenon that was happening. People getting together in the parks, for love ins and I was kind of the straight kid looking in from the outside and finding it all very interesting and attractive in a way and feeling drawn to it, but not feeling really at home in it either. But, I sensed there was a quality of brotherhood that was being cultivated among these people that was very attractive to me, and felt like was a big void in my own life, so that's what was really attracting me. Was this sense of universal brotherhood that was emanating from these events. At the same time, I was becoming more awake to the kind of spiritual revival, that was happening at the time with, a growing interest in Eastern Religion and the books a lot of people were reading in those days, like "Be Here Now", or "Cidarta", or there was a number of "Autobiography of a Yoga", there were a number of things that were being circulated and talked about at the time that caught my eye. And that led to an exploration into a lot of spiritual organizations and

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what they had to offer me, searching out what was there. Went to the Self-Realization fellowship, went to whatever I heard about that sounded interesting, I would check it out. I think it was just a search for, basically the truth. And a search for God, in my own life. I began to feel like I should detach myself from the materialistic society that was all around me, I had a house up in the Hollywood hills I had a job, a regular job. I felt more and more like I should really make searching for people and for God, the most important thing in my life. It seemed like everybody was so busy, they didn't have time to really stop and get deep with each other. I would attend things like encounter groups, once a week, and got a lot out of them and saw their potential, but realized how much more effective it would be if we didn't all go home afterwards, if we all just stayed together, and continued to encounter one another on a daily basis. But, people weren't ready for that, they were ready for it in small doses, and I wanted something more than that. So, that was part of my impetus to look for a community was I read about that one famous commune in Life Magazine that was written up in the sixties, up in Grant's Pass, Oregon. So I went up and visited there, and that was the first place that I'd ever saw people really trying to carve out a new life for themselves, from scratch. A very primitive conditions, wood, dirt floors, a big log lodge that they'd built themselves on logged over land, organic gardens, first time I saw people chanting together as a means of prayer, and unification of spirit, but I also saw, is that these people had a tremendous challenge of trying to work out their relationships with one another, they were so preoccupied with working out the dynamics of their relationships, that I was invisible as a visitor. They'd gotten so many visitors from that Life Magazine thing, that I was invisible to them. The only people I could relate to, were other visitors like me, that were there trying to look into their lives. They were open, I was welcome to eat their food, and no one said that I couldn't be there, but it was just like, no one had time to relate to me. Because I was one of, who knows, hundreds that had passed through their lives for a day or two. I could understand that, I didn't stay long. I felt like they had better get on with it. It wasn't my place, I didn't feel like I should stay there. So, throughout period, my interest in communities, paralleled the growing sense of God functioning in my life as a guide, and my life became more and more one of a pilgrimage. I really, shed all my possessions, got down to where, all I had was a sleeping bag basically, and a little pack of clothes, and no visible means of support, and just became a traveler, I stayed with people that I liked, and helped them out, tried to become a part of their family. Wherever I was, always felt a strong pull toward creating family and I was attracted toward any couples that were really working at expanding their sense of family to include more than themselves. Lived with a number of different families like that, along the West coast in California there, and the course of events, met a lady that was also kind of on the same path, we started living together. And we conceived a child together, so all of a sudden I had this new baby that really compelled me to get on with the act of finding a place, to raise this child. Because I knew, neither of us wanted to be, we were no longer a part of mainstream America, we had already gotten to far on the fringe to go back, in our minds, so we could only go on in search of a community, and we headed to Canada to find a community, cause we heard there was a lot of activity up there, and on the way, I stopped in Seattle, and the only man I knew in Seattle was, lived on Queen Anne Hill, and someone had mentioned to me in Oregon, that if I was passing through Seattle, I should check out this group called the Love family, and turned out, that my friend in Seattle lived just a few blocks away from where Love had started gathering people. My friends daughter, had been spending a lot of time there, in there house, just hanging out with him. So, that's how I made it to their door, through that series of coincidences. And, meeting Love was real traumatic

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for me, because, up until that time, I was really dealing with, I always retain my own authority within myself, I was still kind of on the outside looking in, and gleaning what I thought was valuable from my experiences, but never giving authority to anybody. And, all of a sudden, I was encountering somebody, who, just by his very presence, just kind of commanded an authority that I hadn't encountered in any other human beings up until that time. And, what he was saying, was basically, if you've seen that we're all one, then what are you going to do about it. What I'm going to do about it is I'm going to sit down here in this house and welcome anybody else that's seen it to come join me in redesigning life on that basis. It was like a challenge that no one had ever put out to me, in my travels, all the spiritual teachers, that I had encountered before, they wanted to give you their wisdom, but they weren't opening their lives to me. They weren't saying, come live with me and share the philosophy on a daily basis, in fact, share the space, and the food, and be a part of my life. Love was the first one that really was that adoptive. The friends I'd met along the way, and the families that I'd lived with, had been adoptive like that, but they were real unself-conscious about it. It was more like, we liked each other and I was a comfortable person to add to their little family group. But, they weren't, Love had such a much more grandiose scheme, that behind his gathering, he was planting a philosophical flag in the dirt, and saying "In the name of oneness, gather here." Which was a much broader message than was happening anywhere else that I'd encountered. It was the same energy though. It was that same adoptive kind of energy, and curiously enough some of those people that had adopted me into their lives along my path, later found me here, and got adopted into the bigger family. Now, they didn't all stay, permanently, but they're connected. The one couple I'm thinking of that really took me and my wife on when she was pregnant and needed a place to stay, and they already had, two or three other people living with them, she was pregnant at the same time, and they ended up coming to Seattle and finding me, and moving in with the family for a period of time, and they're living in Seattle now, and their kids are grown, but they come out every Passover. Which is our high holy day, here, our most holy celebration, and join us for that celebration, keeping their connection to us alive, and they'll come out for other visits to, but there is a very real continuity going on there between those people and this family. So, like I say, coming to terms with Love Israel was the next step in my evolution, because it meant coming to terms with Jesus Christ again. And, I wasn't really ready for that, I had been raised a Christian, as a child, had grown up in a very typical, neighborhood Presbyterian church, been in Bible School, Mother sang in the choir. You know, it was expected for me to go to church. And I basically, what to my mind, had outgrown when I got into college and got exposed to a lot of other philosophies and things. It wasn't a deeply seated belief that sustained me through my academic years. Like, I say, I was much more attracted to Eastern Philosophies, but Love, somehow, brought it all back together for me, to where what I was hearing in the Eastern Philosophies, all of a sudden he was helping me see that that was at the essence of Christianity. That the Ott Man of the Hindu, thought was that same I am that Jesus Christ talked about that we all share, and, so, it wasn't a major leap to join him in that, but it was a stretch for me to do it. And that's what I spent the next year or so, doing, was coming to terms with Jesus Christ in my life, what that term meant, and coming to terms with Love Israel's authority, and I spent a fair amount of time in and out of the family, sorting it all out, because what Love was asking, was really, for me, to not stop my search, until I'd arrived at the truth and was certain of the same things that he was certain of. He didn't want followers, he didn't want people joining him because he spoke a good talk, or had a nice scene together, and it was a nice scene, it was very attractive. He kept things really Zen, really beautiful, really

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clean, focused, and it felt holy to me, it was actually when I walked into his living room for the first time I felt more holiness than I'd ever felt anywhere. In any church, or anywhere, and it was coming from the people and the atmosphere that they created. So I had to really just search my soul for the next few months there, and really decide if he was right or wrong, he was very unequivocal about it, he was speaking from a very absolute place. This is the truth, if you go all the way with your relationship with God you'll see that it's the truth, you'll know me, you'll understand me, you'll understand where I'm coming from, and then you'll have a basis for helping me, do what we need to do. And that's what I did, I pursued it, I made that the number one priority in my life. My wife, she was kind of threatened by the whole situation, she wanted community, but, she wasn't really ready for either for what this family represented. She wasn't ready for Christianity, she was not ready for the kind of authority that Love Israel emanated. Pretty freaked her out. But, she understood where I was at, and so she tried to make room for me to explore my relationship with this family. And she even tried living here off and on, but we were both very young as parents, and the group was already a lot more stable than we were, so they, essentially took over raising my infant son. And we continued our spiritual evolution, that took us in and out of the family for the period of time there, and, eventually, I had a series of revelations that showed me everything Love said I'd see. And, the final one that I had was completely convincing to me, that this was my calling in life to be here, and I came home, and I've never left since, and that was 20, 25 years ago or so....26 years ago.

Q: So, the family started before 1970, then?

A: Yes, 1968, Love started. There were about eight people living in a little two bedroom house when I met him. And he was just beginning to outgrow that house and looking for a second house to rent, in the neighborhood. And, it grew rather rapidly then, that was the beginning of our real growth spurt, between 1970 and 1980, there was a very popular movement, there was a lot of color and flair and beauty and talent. We did all kinds of things, and some of them were very romantic kinds of things, we were all young for the most part, I was the oldest person, ever to join the community. I was thirty when I joined. A lot of kids joined in their late teens, most of them hadn't had college education, I'd had a lot of college. But they were very sincere people for the most part, and like I say, very talented, and so the culture we created was very colorful, full of our own everything. Our own dress, our own music, our own special festivities, with their own peculiar flavor, We tried our hand at many, many different occupations, all real fundamental things, related to growing food, and making lye, and making wooden toys, and making wooden artifacts. Construction, everything that we needed. Plant propagation, we had several, as we grew in numbers, people came in with interests in other parts of the country too, they came in with land in other parts of the country, and we ended up moving onto those other pieces, and we kind of expanded our land base from Seattle out in that way. That's how we ended up in this area, a lady joined the family that had a little five-acre farm not too far from here. That's how we ended up in the Arlington area. She was burned out on it, so we took over, we sent a whole house full of people over there to run her farm, and she moved into the city with great relief. Somebody else joined with a beautiful 150 acre homestead in Alaska. So went sent a crew of people up there to take over. And we seriously considered all moving up there , cause we weren't set at the time. Someone else cam from Hawaii, and so the next thing you knew, we had a house in Hawaii, Eastern Washington, it was a big attraction, people came with land over there, we got over, involved int the vineyards, the fruit orchards

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over there. We got into building these portable [yurts?], and we'd take them over there and camp in the orchards, and have beautiful big encampments among the fruit, it was heavenly. It was really, really nice. So, that was a very, it was a time when people were willing to put up with a lot of simplicity and even austerity, for the sake of the culture that we were building. We lived primitively, like out here on the ranch, it was army tents, and it was army tents not just in the sunny summer days, it was army tents in the howling winter snow storms. With brand new babies, and no sanitation, but, the spirit was so, just so, enlivening at the time, that people were willing to kind of put up with those hardships for the sake of being a part of it. It was really only after we kind of moved back into the city from these more primitive encampments and started getting caught up in more the middle class values of the cities. You started working more within that environment, less the pioneers out here with our own culture, it was kind of pure in itself. It kind of got back into everything that we'd disentangled ourselves from originally, we'd given up TVs and Hi-fi systems, and everything to get down to a real simple focus, in our lives, and then as we moved back into the city, thinking we had already, had this solid thing to operate from, we got, dabbled back into everything. I think we had underestimated, the powers of the society, the values of the society around us to infiltrate our resolve and our commitment. And the next thing you know people were comparing themselves to people their age, they're moving into middle age with children growing up, and the cost of raising children, and it was no longer a bunch of young idealists, it was a bunch of middle aged parents. Who were looking at their lives and saying, Gee, is this really going to work. Are we really going to be able to do this, on into our adult years, our mature years here. That was a huge test for us all, and a lot of people fell away during that time. That was the same period when so many communities were going through that traumatic shake up. Most every community we knew went through that at the same time, Steve Gaskin, the Renaissance Church, the, what's the group in San Francisco? The Foundation of Revelation in San Francisco, these are some of the ones that we hobnobbed with, visited back and forth between, Sunburst Farms, from California, so many of them went through that, it seems just like a natural process in the evolution of a community, it's like a marriage, you start with your honeymoon experience, that might go on for years, then you go through your disillusionment and your doubt, and your questioning whether or not you really are as in love with each other as you thought you were at the beginning. Your partners start looking less attractive, their flaws start showing up more and more, and especially the leader, he's the real target for any kind of criticism or blame, he gets the brunt of it at that point. He gets all the glory in the glory years, and then he gets the brunt of the negativity when things start going sour, oh, the other group I was thinking of, really the more straight group there in the Midwest, in Chicago, the S.T.E.L., they pretty much kicked their leader out at the same time. This is the survival of that phenomenon. And now I think we're moving into another era, where the people that left, are much more seasoned in their experience in the world, they've grown beyond their bitterness, most of them, and have gained a lot more self confidence in themselves, so they no longer have to blame anybody for where they're at. Because they're not at a bad place. Now they're beginning to look at what they had as something worth renewing. So, there's a whole revival happening now of those relationships. This year has been wonderful for that, a lot of renewed relationships that have been broken for 12 years, and I'm sure we're going to see more and more of that over the next few years, not that people will immediately move back in here, but I think there will be a lot more interaction, a lot more visiting. If we get this place into a place physically, where people are able to come back in, in a secure way, then I think that will make a big difference in terms of

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people physically returning to the community, because, we've never recovered from the trauma of 1984, financially. It was devastating to us, when the community fell apart back then, we were very close to being a debt free community at that time, we had a huge land base that was almost all free and clear. The main headquarters of our community was even tax exempt. It was just like a free space we'd created, that was all lost, through the lawyers and the battles and the bickerings that went on in 1984. As people were scrambling, trying to take something away as they left. And, we were left, with basically, a lot of debt, and a very debilitated work force. Most of us that remained together, were not the main money making dynamos, I mean, I was in charge of the school, and I had no business experience at all, I had to totally change my role, we all had to shift our roles, and we had to retrain ourselves, most of the people that stayed together after the breakup had been more the groundskeepers and the care takers and the school teachers, and those kind of people that weren't out making money, so all of a sudden we had a community with no financial underpinnings, no income, we've been struggling with that ever since. But, that gets into a whole other area. But, I can see, how in the near future, the way things are going, we can, create a new model of a village that will make room for a lot more people to get involved again in our life and with living right here within the 300 acres that we have, we have not physically been able to grow here, because of a lot of legal and political obstacles that we have not been able to overcome.

Q: Like zoning restrictions?

A: Like zoning stuff, but there's light at the end of the tunnel, things have changed enough in the last few years, that we're no longer viewed as this undesirable element. As actually holding out a promise for everyone, as a viable lifestyle, so the government is looking to cooperate more instead of obstruct.

Q: Oh, good

A: And, you know, a typical thing, is there's a local talk show, pretty well known, well respected show called the Compton Report, here in the Seattle area, local TV, and he did a program recently of the history of communities in the Northwest. Using Charles [Laverne?] as a resource person for talking about the 19th century communities.

Q: Like home and equality, that sort of the Socialist colonies..

A: Right, those. So, the first part of the show, was about that, and the second part was about us and [Sungaya?]. Us being a remnant of the 60's that had survived and was making it, and Sungaya being sort of the new wave, of community movement, that we're more middle class and more from the point of view that it just makes sense to live together because it's cheaper and it's more fun, and it's, you know your neighbors, and it offers a sense of community that most people lack. He concluded the show by saying, Communities are no longer these oddities, they're a viable way of life in the 90's. And it was kind of the sum total of his observations, speaking in a way that TV tends to verify things, I felt it was a verification of the whole community idea in the 90's.

Q: That's wonderful.

A: Yeah, so it was very encouraging.

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Q: So, has there been any positive follow up since the Compton Report? That you've noticed.

A: People have visited, not a lot of stuff, it's interesting, we've had a lot of publicity through the years. And usually there's only two or three things that make it back to us directly. People are so inundated, you know stuff hits them for a day then it's lost in the wave of new stuff that's coming to them. You might get a visit or two from somebody that was really interested. Or one time, the first time one of these shows aired, outside of this area, one of the former members that had thought that the family had broken up, saw it on TV, and came back as a result, with her husband. He was the one watching TV, it was like "Hey, look at this, there they are." So it's an instrument of reunion too, that way.

Q: Do you guys have rules of conduct for living here?

A: It's more attitudes, we really see ourselves as a new Testament community in a real basic sense. In the sense that the Old Testament was a philosophy of law, the New Testament is a philosophy of attitude, you replace the rules with an emphasis on the right attitude, and the most essential attitudes being love, and forgiveness. So that you can continue in your relationships, it's all toward relationships, the heart of our religion, if we have a religion, and we don't really use that word much, is the fact that the whole sum of everything we've learned leads us to the conclusion that we are all that matters, that people and relationships with each other is what life's all about. That treating each other well, and learning how to live together is really the highest calling. So, there are things that tend to take on the flavor of rules over time, there are customs that build up over time that may seem like rules, but we have an inherent resistance, I think, to treating things, for instance, we don't have any written rules, we don't have anything that we write down that says, "This is the way you have to be if you're going to be here." That would be incompatible with our basic philosophy, because really what we're after is functioning in a very present mode with each other. Realizing that God is in the present, and that if we can maintain ourselves in a very loving present kind of mind set toward each other, that we will have the greatest success in our lives with each other. And it will be the most rewarding kind of a life that we could create together. So, we're reluctant to get things cast too rigidly, in rules or written things or "this is the way it has to be". Because we are the final authority on how it has to be, and we can change it, we can try something out, and then if we don't like it, we can change it. So, at the heart of that idea is the belief in the power of agreement, and in the necessity of trying to reach agreement on things, and I guess consensus is the term that other people would use. In other communities that maybe don't have the same religious basis that we have, the idea that we're much more, we'll be much more comfortable living together if we can actually take everything to a point of resolve, and agreement, and that's what we seek to do, starting the at the most fundamental level. OK, what are our first principles of agreement, well, we can agree that we should love each other, you can agree that we should forgive each other, now just applying that is a very challenging thing, and everybody is not succeeding at that all the time here. But, still, we agree that that's what we should be doing, we at least got that much agreement, we may not be up to it every moment of every day, but at least we can hold each other to it, we won't disagree. Even though, I don't believe in forgiveness, I'm not able to forgive that person yet, that's a more honest, that's an acceptable answer, it's unfortunate if you're not able to but at least that's honest, rather than feeling justified to hold a grudge. At least we are agreed that none of us are justified to do it, even though we have a hard time not doing it sometimes though, if somebody is really offended us or wounded us in some way. So, we take our guidelines from our meetings on a daily basis,

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so our word means a lot to each other, it's like this morning, someone said right at the end of our meeting this morning, mentioned that we had a huge torrential rainstorm yesterday afternoon, it rained harder than I had ever seen it rain in all the years that I'd been here. And it was the end of the season so a lot of our ditches were not in shape to handle our water flow, so a couple of houses got flooded slightly, not terribly, but we're talking enough to bring mud in across the floor. Just because the ditches weren't clear. So, one man mentioned this morning, we really need to attend to our ditches, so Love said, hey yeah, let's all before we do anything else this morning, let's all go and work on the ditches. The fact that that word was put out like that, the fact that people took seriously, and actually didn't just say, well that doesn't mean me, they actually went and picked up a tool and went to the ditches. That's the kind of power to govern ourselves in the present that we're trying to cultivate here. Everything else tends to be pretty experimental in a lot of ways, whatever works is what we'll do, we don't feel bound by much of anything, and you can take that into almost every realm of life. We're primarily monogamous, if you look at us as a social, as the way we're organized socially here, but we have no rule against multiple relationships, and in the early days, when it all sounded very attractive and worth trying, a lot of us tried it. And found, fairly quickly, that we didn't know how to manage it, and we usually made a mess of it, so we got a little more conservative after that. But, we didn't make rules against it, we just admitted that we weren't up to it, and it wasn't worth the pain. So, now, we're mainly a monogamous community. We don't have prohibitions on things, on most things. There's no food laws, for example, here. There's no one telling you, you can't eat something.

Q: Do you have any laws regarding drug use?

A: Not really, it's a personal thing, but I think there's a tremendous peer pressure, if someone isn't handling something well, if someone's getting drunk off of our homemade wine, repeatedly, we're going to apply as much as we can toward getting that person to admit the problem that he's got. And maybe even agreeing together that, that person can't drink for now. Maybe not forever, but for now, we have taken it that far too say to someone, "you have proven again and again and again, that once you have one drink, you have no control and you don't know when to stop and then you create a problem for the rest of us, and therefore you cannot have one drink in this family anymore, now" and we've had to draw those kinds of lines, but you're reluctant to draw those lines, you only draw those to protect the whole community, so yes, we see the New Testament as basically a very liberal book, a very liberal philosophy, it's a positive philosophy, it's not a book of rules and laws and don'ts and thou shalt nots, it's a book of guiding you toward a Godly approach to life, and choosing the things that work in relationships, rather than being kept in check out of fear of a punishment for doing something abusive to somebody else. And, at the core of it is the basic acknowledgment that we're one, that we're the same person. That as one of our songs says, "Whatever laws I put on you, I surely put on me." And so, really at the heart of our effort here, is to apply oneness in our lives, and what is the law of my body. My body has many parts. The foot and the hand serve different function and the hand's not superior to the foot, and there is a consciousness that makes the hand and the foot both the same servant of the one body. And that's the way we want to see ourselves. We're not trying to be exactly equal. Obviously Love is in a much more luxurious lifestyle than some people here do, but then, what does he do with it? This is his living room, but what does he do with it? He has people using it everyday of his life almost constantly, and he has from the first day he started. So, this is the family living room, but it's not like I have a right to be

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here, because I also want Love to have as much dominion over his own home as I have over mine, he's not going to come into my home unannounced and uninvited and just assume that he can sit in my chairs and act as if he owns the place, because he respects the fact that I have a home, and I respect the fact that he has a home, it's just that his home is in a very real sense, the community's cultural center, and that's why all of these objects are here, and so much of what goes on here is designed to support our life as a community and not just himself.

Q: Do some of the objects and things in this room have special significance?

A: Almost everything, yeah, this is like our little museum, almost everything in here was handmade by people who live here. We didn't really make the looms, but the women use the looms here, and all the artwork and the tapestries and these are all things that have histories to them within the family.

Q: I've noticed that the star is on a lot of things. Does that mean anything in particular?

A: Yeah, basically we see ourselves, as the name implies, we all take the last name Israel, and when we become members of the family, so we see ourselves as a continuation of the spiritual family of Israel. So the Bible is our history. In a very real sense, we are a continuation of the tribes of Israel. And, we just feel that the tribes are being redefined, it's not Judaism that is perpetuating itself, it's the people of God that are perpetuating themselves, it includes Judaism, it includes every religion it includes all Godly people everywhere, no matter what cultural context or religious, [unintelligible], religious background, they might come to it. Any true devotee of God is going to come to the same conclusions ultimately, and the conclusion that we're all one and that love is the most important thing on the earth between us, that's got to be fundamental to every religion, every true religion. So, we just happen to see ourselves as translated through that medium, but, I'm just as happy to see our kind of close family community energy emerging from any culture, anywhere on the earth, it's the same thing really, it's why the other tribal people visiting us here, like the Mong tribe from Indonesia, or from wherever they were right next to Viet Nam there, a lot of them came to the Pacific Northwest, when they were kicked out of, driven out of their homes, after the Viet Nam war, and they were tribal hill people that were agricultural, and all of sudden they were living in apartments in Seattle and they were dying and they weren't making the adjustment, and we invited a bunch of them out here one day, and a bunch of the Mamasons were crying because it was so like their community, that we were living, the yurts, the close village and the farms right there and everything, it was just the same to them. And they didn't even know that it existed in America, that there was this same quality of tribal life, they were still trying to keep it together in the cities, and it was very hard for them to do it. So, you know, we feel a part of everything that's happening anywhere. The communal movement is one unique kind of flavor of something that's very fundamental throughout the world, and that's it's really, I think it's more an expression of the European culture getting back to its tribal roots. Having lost it, and feeling the void of having lost it, having lost it through all the effects of the industrial revolution, and the capitalist approach to and the capitalistic values, those thing stole our culture away from us and our sense of community away from us, and disrupted every community and continues to do so worldwide. It's almost like a terrible plague that is destroying indigenous cultures everywhere, and we're kind of coming out on the other end of it. We're the product of that culture, my parents were the last ones to live the American Dream, they managed to put their kids through college, so there's an irony there that me being the product of those parents turned around

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and looked for a whole nother set of values than what they were pursuing for me, or promoting for me, thinking that that was the best they could do. The best they could do for me was to give me an opportunity to become a good individual citizen in this big country. Regardless of where I lived, or the fact that I lost all connection in which I grew up in, and the neighborhood doesn't even exist anymore. The houses are still there, but the network of people is completely gone. So there is nothing to come back to. So, I had it as a child, growing up, because there was that sense of community and neighborhood where I grew up, but we were the last to have it. Now hardly anybody has it, some people still have it, but it's not the way for the world anymore, so we're trying to reverse the whole thing now before we completely lose our sanity through it all really, because you get your values so out of touch with what's really important and what's really fulfilling is lasting human relationships, and you just, what do you end up with? A world of people that are all, are not capable of maintaining long term relationships, marriages can't survive, it's hard enough in this community for marriages to survive, it's a wonder that they survive at all out there the way things are going spiritually, we're not immune from any of that stuff, what I've noticed is that you go through life every stage and every age of life presents a new set of challenges, kind of just designed into the clock of maturing as human beings. And community just gives you a better set of tools with which to deal with those challenges, it doesn't exempt you from dealing with them. You can survive when you're fifteen or twenty year old marriage is changing on you and your kids are grown up and your roles are different and you're no longer have some of the same vital interests that you had when you were younger, including your sexual life changes and you have all these things that you're dealing with in your marriage, but if you have the bigger community supporting you and giving you a purpose, and each of you has that, and each of you has that, both the man and the woman, then, even if it is difficult at home between you, your whole life isn't thrown into a mess because of that, you kind of got everybody else to relate to. The hardest relationships to maintain are the closest ones, the ones at home, the ones with your own wife and your own kids, but in a community you have a lot of close relationships that aren't that hard to maintain, you mostly can just enjoy everybody else's kids and everybody else's husbands and wives, and that's a huge cushion. I've just been really appreciating it lately, because you know, a lot of us are at that stage in our maturity where our kids are households are getting smaller and smaller, are kids are growing up, they've graduated from high school and going on to try out other things and there we are looking at each other and going through the changes of redefining our relationships to each other even. It's just so nice to have that bigger context that's not questioned. You can question your relationship with this woman, but you're neither of you are questioning your overall relationship with the community, and so there's some options in community even. Maybe you decide to move apart for awhile, but it's not such a traumatic thing, because you're still functioning in the same context. You see each other everyday, you just move over a little bit. There's room to experiment, things don't have to be so ultimate, or heavy, there's room to try something out, if it's not working this way, let's try it this way, and community somehow provides more options that way, and that's what I'm really appreciating lately about the long term effect of this kind of a commitment. Because you have so much, you have a bigger life that is constant through the changes that you're going through at the personal level. We're all in together, so it's not like, we know better than to side with either one partner, if you a couple is having trouble, nobody's going to jump in and gang up behind the woman against the man, or behind the man against the woman, because we all have been around enough to know that it's not that black and white. And who's to say how it's supposed

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to be between those two people or how it's supposed to continue. Whereas in the world, you might tend to, the woman might tend to just seek out those people that would totally support her against her husband, and you create factions, and those factions just make it worse, you know. But, I'm seeing the absence of that in our community. We kind of all accept the idea that, that's fine let them work it out, they'll work it out, let them work it out, let's not get into the middle of it, it's up to them to work it out. Meanwhile, we'll love them, both of them. If they need a break from each other for a little while, their welcome over at my house or something, you know. And that's a whole new wrinkle to this thing that I'm just waking up to in the last few years. Ten years from now there'll be another phase that we'll be going through that will give us another perspective from which to appreciate what we've built.

Q: You've mentioned some of the benefits, are there some downsides, some hard parts about living communally?

A: You know, it's hard for me to see the downsides, because, I'm, it's so much my life, that I can't even imagine living any other way, myself. To me, the biggest thing that I overcame in myself, through my life in community was my own personal loneliness. I lived with it, it was a chronic pain in my heart all my life, and it was an itch that I could never sufficiently scratch, I could never get close enough to people to end that loneliness. That was one of the revelations I had, and I had it sitting in front of Love Israel in a room one day, and God let me kind of experience the basic loneliness of humanity, in a real general way. It wasn't my personal, I got to experience it all, it was like my own loneliness went out into everybody, and I realized everyone, no matter how much they put on a front to the contrary shared in that basic loneliness, and it was almost more than I could handle, you know. I mean emotionally, physically, that experience was almost more than a human being could handle, and I broke down into just sobbing in front of everybody, it was a whole room full of people, and Love was right there and he knew what I was going through, because he'd had a similar revelation, and he identified even before I could put into words, he identified what it was I was going through, which is another thing that just bonded us really close. We'll never forget that, he and I have that in common, we both know that we've been given a revelation of man's basic loneliness, and no one can fool us to the contrary. And, we also know the answer, the answer is that we get close enough to each other that we reiterate our basic acceptance of each other so fully and so completely that we replace that loneliness with each other, we fill up our hearts with our love for each other. And that has happened in my life, and I wouldn't trade that for anything. That's what it would mean to give up on community at this point, would be, I would have to renew that terrible familiarity with loneliness that I had for so long in my life, and for that alone, it's worth it to me, I'll put up with anything to not have to have that feeling in my heart.

Q: It's unusual for a community to have lasted as long as the Love Family. Any sense of what, what's sort of the glue that keeps people together, and keeps the community?

A: Well, it is those kind of revelations, without that, we couldn't probably have stayed together, and we remind each other of it daily, and this is our foundation book here. We wrote this years ago, it's the book of our beliefs, it says it right at the beginning, we don't use this name much but it is a name that God gave us years ago, it means the gathering place, not what people think it means. To us it means the time of gathering, The Church of Armageddon, the time of the gathering of the body, is founded upon the revelation of Jesus Christ, and then it says here The Church of Armageddon was directed by God our

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Father through the Lord Jesus Christ to fulfill the New Testament as revealed to Love Israel in the form of visions, dreams, and revelations, as received by the members of the church. The members of this church have all had heavenly visions, without which we would never understand our purpose on this earth, or our relationship with each other. We have been directed together by our Lord Jesus Christ, with full authority on all matters concerning the church. The church doesn't expect to explain in words our authority or our purpose we only plan to gather together with those chosen of God, we realize that all members of this body will recognize each other at their appointed time, we expect no confusion. But the fact that we're founded personal revelation, we not here following one man's revelation, we're here because we've had the same revelations, and in summer we can call it the revelation of Jesus Christ, but if I had, most people would immediately know what I mean by that, what I mean by that is that I've seen we're all one, and I've seen that love is the answer. Now that's the basic message of Jesus Christ, if you read the new testament and if you read what Christ says, he's basically saying that very thing, and he's saying the reason he came was so that we would realize that. So, us realizing that now, in the 20th Century, more and more people realizing that and coming to terms with it is the fulfillment of what Christ came to do. He already did it, he already came so that that experience would be available to us, up until now it wasn't available to us. But now it's becoming to the human being, to human beings to realize the oneness that he talked about two thousand years ago but nobody could quite grasp. It was all a conception. you have to really experience it to really let it, it's so elusive. But, once you experience it, then at least you've got a reference point. You say, did you experience it? Yes, Did I experience it? Yes. OK, let's remember it now, right now something is trying to get between us, something is trying to divide us. But let's remember that the truth is, we're the same person, and the energy that's trying to divide us, is the enemy, you're not the enemy, I'm not the enemy, the divisive energy that makes us seem separate that makes us turn against each other that makes us give up on each other, that makes us angry with each other, that's the enemy, that's what we have to overcome. So, let's hold on to the fact that we're one, that's the truth, the fact that we're one, that's what we worship, we wanted to translate God into any simple terms for us, is the fact that we're one. That's what we worship, and we worship it in our life, by living together and becoming parts of one another on a very practical day to day basis. I want to come indispensable to the people around me, I'm like their thought. And, that's how we see our names, I'm everyone's thought of seriousness, and that woman over there is my thought of charity, we represent different aspect of the same big personality that we call Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is all of us together in one big personality split up into many parts so that we have life between us. And that's the gift, one into many, and that's his whole message. I and my Father are one, and I pray that you guys will realize that you are one with us. And so, that prayer has been fulfilled. I've seen we're one, I've seen the face of Jesus Christ in my brother and he's seen it in me, he's not somewhere else, I'm not Jesus Christ, but I'm not separate from Jesus Christ. I'm not the Jesus Christ, but I'm a part of Him. I'm not waiting for him, because I already understand that the love that is in me, is what he is. I just have to exercise it more, and polish it, and improve it, and if we're all doing that, then the next thing you know, Jesus Christ has a big body on this earth. And, the division and the pain is over, and the loneliness, and it's over. And that's what it's all about. That's the goal, the end goal. We don't see ourselves as a little faction of something, we see ourselves a very concentrated expression of a huge movement that is eventually going to transform this earth back into what it was meant to be. We're just some of the front line troops. I don't know why, we're an unlikely bunch to get chosen, I know it's odd to say the the

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chosen, we don't mean it like we're the elite, we just meant that we can't get out of it. We can't pretend like we weren't chosen. It's not like everybody else isn't also going to be chosen, a lot of people don't want to be chosen yet, I'm not ready, I've got things to do, things I want, goals I want to achieve. I don't want to see we're one yet, I don't want the responsibility of it yet. I'd rather just allow myself to be me, do my thing. That's where most people still are at, that's O.K., but that doesn't change my responsibility, somehow I got shown too much to pretend that I don't know. I do know, I'm not confused, I do know the truth, I'm not ashamed to say it, I know it's not a haughty thing to say it, I just do know the truth. I have to live my life on it, or I live a lie, for me. I can't do anything else. And, that's the level of commitment I think most people in this community have. It's not based on love, it's based on their own relationship to God. And that's what I would tell people who come here, you can't be here, you can't really live here, no matter how attractive this is to you, no matter how much you want, you can't ultimately be here, unless you are convinced in your own mind and heart that this is right. You know it from God. You have to have it clear between you and God in order to be a strong member of our community. And we have people here that have been here for years, that I don't believe are fully realized people, on these fundamental things. Or else, something's gotten in between their revelation and their conscious mind, they're not able to get back in touch with that revelation. So, I'm not sure, it's confusing to me sometimes, how some people can appear to be fully realized, then somewhere down the line, it's like they totally lose touch with it, forget it. Maybe it's kind of like that parable, it says some seeds fall on good ground, and some fall on thorny ground, and some take deep roots, some take shallow root and die and wither. Just having the revelation isn't enough, somehow you gotta take it to heart enough to let it be your life. Then it has power. We're still sorting that out, even among this little handful of folks. But, we're still refining. It doesn't matter how few of us there are, we have to get it down to core group that totally know each other, that is totally solid all the way through, that are not capable of turning away from each other. Then, you've got a pattern that can grow. It's like getting the seed crystal. I see Love as starting that crystal years ago. But, that crystal can't, it's more than one, it's many, but it has to grow one at a time, and at some point in time, that critical mass will be reached and everyone in the world will start waking up to the same ideas, and we've been shown that in many visions. Is that's the way it would happen. So it makes each one of us very important, cause we don't know what we might be the next most important number in reaching that critical mass. Like the hundred monkey principle. You know that story?

Q: Yes.

A: Well, that's exactly the story. God has shown us that story as it relates to this phenomenon of people coming together. He's shown it to us several times through our children in our dreams. Our kids came to us with these beautiful dreams about the way the world would be transformed. And it was always this same pattern, it would start really tiny, like in the Bible says, a mustard seed, start really tiny, and you wouldn't really hardly see it grow for a long time. Then just as you started seeing it getting larger, and when the growth started being perceptible then all of a sudden it would just reach this critical point where, then it would just take over everything. And, we're still at that place where you can hardly see it growing, but it is growing, but you can hardly tell. You only know it, because the people are continuing. We haven't broken up. It may seem stagnant, but it's not really stagnant. Because all the while they're getting stronger, getting stronger, and they're building that

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[unintelligible]. And, hopefully, there's many such little groups of people, doing that, it's the same thing wherever they are and whatever terms they're using, this is basically the same thing, it's people coming to terms with their basic oneness.

Q: Do you feel like you've encountered other groups like that?

A: Yeah, well, I've encountered some people that have reflected certain aspects of it, I've never encountered any group quite as articulate about it as we are. I hope there are some, and there's some that I'd like to visit, that I think might be really close to us, and one of them is Padanaram in Southern Indiana, I've had a little correspondence with them and I read their materials, and they might be fairly close to us in consciousness. You haven't visited them, have you?

Q: No, but I know Rachel Summerton, and I've met Daniel Wright as well, so I've heard some of what they have to say.

A: How do you know Rachel?

Q: Because she's come to quite a few conferences.

A: Yeah, she's more their outreach person, isn't she? She and I have communicated a little bit through letters. What do you think? Just from what you've seen?

Q: I don't know enough about Padanaram to say, really. Since I haven't visited there.

A: They're not far from you, you should...

Q: Yeah I had planned to, but then it fell apart, but, I would like to go there.

A: You know, there's different groups that have different pieces of it, you know you hear of a group that you think "god they're probably just like us." And then you meet them, and there's something in the way. Like when we heard about the farm in Tennessee, man we were so exciting. This was years ago back in the 70's. And we sent people down there, hitchhiked all the way across the country, to visit our brothers in Tenn. that we'd heard about right? And we didn't even get in the gate, they wouldn't, some redneck characters on the gate decided that we were playing some kind of game with our names, and they treated us like police treat us. Unless we give them our real names, they weren't going to let us in the community, so we turned around and came all the way back. Hitchhiked back across the country. Well, since then, we've gotten to know Steve and he's visited here, I don't think any of us have visited there since then. But we're just surprised by things like that sometimes. We probably had a lot in common with those people. More than almost anyone else, or I heard about a group, that's kind Masonic Jews, a whole group of people, they have several communities back East.

Q: Yeah, there's one in Island Pond, and in Vermont. They call themselves like the Community Inn. They're Masonic Christians.

A: And some of their people were there at the communities meeting, in Olympia.

Q: Yeah, and the men wore their hair long, and the women wore dresses.

A: Yeah, but they were totally suspicious of me. I went out and greeted them with open arms and was so

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excited because the Dad of one of their members had visited us and talked about the similarities so much, but, I expected kind of instant brotherhood with them, and what I got was suspicion. Because we were close to them, but not exactly, so they were too right. They were so right, that we couldn't also be right, you know. There was one of the group that I made the heart connection with, but the rest of them were almost protective of him, they didn't, they were so challenged by my presence somehow that they wouldn't even let him relate to me, and it just became this uncomfortable confrontation, that was so stupid. Too me it's just immaturity, it's just, I understand, it's young where young believers are at, when they're so protective of their new belief, they have to be right. We went through that, you mature out of that eventually. So, it's just a young stage, so I don't know whose around that's got that kind of maturity yet, to really accept us as themselves.

Q: Have you ever talked with the Jesus People?

A: Yeah, I know, we had dealings with them in the early days, they had a house on Queen Anne, and they were very threatened of us to. They were very wary of us. But I know one of their head guys there that have stayed involved with the movement. What's his name? You'd probably know him.

Q: Well the guy I interviewed was John Trott, does that ring a bell? He edits their magazine, lives in Chicago.

A: There's a man out here that's living down near Tacoma somewhere....

Q: You don't mean Joe Peterson..

A: Yeah, Joe.

Q: Yeah, he was part of Shiloh and the House of Elijah.

A: I feel real close to Joe, after everything he's been through, he kind of was in on those early years with us, but the Children of God, they've gone through lots of evolution it looks like, we get their literature and it's impressive what they're doing worldwide. I don't know what their lives are like, but it looks pretty good from what they're saying.

Q: Have you ever heard of House of David?

A: Yeah.

Q: Do you see any similarities with them?

A: I don't know, I mean, we never met any of those people.

Q: They're all pretty old now. Most of them are in their eighties, but they have one younger member whose like 50, and I think he's their youngest member, which is kind of sad, you know, because they're kind of dying off.

A: Now, are they widespread?

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Q: No, they're just in Michigan now, they used to be like around the world, they had communities in Australia and England and stuff but now they're just in Benton Harbor, Michigan. They sound like they might have some similarities with you guys.

A: See, it could come from anywhere though, I don't know, a lot of times, groups that are religious, claim a religious basis for their gathering, they may be harder for us to relate to, we have a hard time being accepted by most Christians, people who call themselves Christians, the churches and so on. People are afraid of us, they don't know what to make of us, we're too different, and they're afraid of anybody with authority, like Love Israel has ... Jesus Christ is often times quite different. And maybe we'll find it a lot easier time relating to a biker gang, than a gospel church. A lot easier. The biker gang understand us, they have a heart level, and a brotherhood level. And we've had them come out and say, you guys have any trouble, we'll be right there backing you up, we're keeping our eye out. They feel an affinity for our level of brotherhood. Or like I say, a tribal group, we've had a lot of close connections with the more spiritual side of different indigenous people. I've been very connected to the sovereignty movement in Hawaii. Among the indigenous Hawaiian people, I've been over there and visited their communities and felt very connected to what they're trying to accomplish, in terms of restoring their culture. So, we never know, in terms of where we're going to find these affinities. It's often in very unexpected places.

Q: I noticed there's a place down the road called Prague Tree Farm? Does that have any relationship to Prague House in Seattle?