

Mark Freedman M.D.  
Narrator

Liz Spaide  
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Interviewer

Mark Freedman M.D.: MF  
Liz Spaide: LS

Interviewed 29 April 2022

**Abstract:** This is an oral history featuring Dr. Mark Freedman. The interview session took place at Dr. Freedman's home in Fox Point, Wisconsin. Dr. Freedman is a life-long congregant of Beth Israel Ner Tamid, a Conservative Jewish congregation in Glendale, WI and has held numerous leadership roles at CBINT. He continues to work on special projects for the congregation. One example of such a project is Mark's participation in the search and selection of Rabbis at CBINT. The content of this oral history covers Dr. Freedman's family background, the influence of his faith on how he lives his life, early memories of Congregation Beth Israel Ner Tamid, the congregation's role in the Milwaukee community as well as Dr. Freedman's hopes for the future of the congregation and the state of Israel. The interview also touches on CBINT's response to the synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Dr. Freedman also speaks about recent antisemitic incidents and feelings of otherness. The interview took place as part of the *Gathering Places* project at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. For more information, see <https://uwm.edu/gatheringplaces>.

Liz Spaide (LS): Hello, my name is Liz Spaide. Today I am interviewing Dr. Mark Freedman for the Gathering Place project with UWM. Today is Friday April 29, 2022. And we are doing this interview at Mark Freedman's home in Fox Point, Wisconsin. Dr. Freedman, could you please state your full name, and spell it for us?

Dr. Mark Freedman (MF): Sure, Mark Ian Freedman M-A-R-K I-A-N F-R-E-E-D-M-A-N

LS: Thank you, and what is your date and place of birth?

MF: I was born in Los Angeles, CA, September 15<sup>th</sup> 1956.

LS: Thank you. So, I'd like to start and ask you a little bit about your family history. Let's start with your mother's side first. Can you give us your mother's full name and spell it for us?

MF: Lila Mallin Freedman. Lila is L-I-L-A. Mallin is M-A-L-L-I-N. Freedman F-R-E-E-D-M-A-N.

LS: Thank you so much. And, what is her date and place of birth?

MF: Sure, she was born in Milwaukee, December 24, 1931.

LS: Wonderful. And how far back are you able to trace your mother's family?

MF: We actually have some individuals back to the 1820's in Russia. We actually have about 5000 individuals that we've collected in our family tree right now.

LS: That's quite a nice lineage there. Not many people have that. Would you be able to be able to tell me a little more about your mother's employment and community involvement?

MF: Sure, my mother was actually one of the first special education teachers in the state of Wisconsin. She got that degree from the predecessor to the UWM School of Education. I think it was called the Downer School at the time. And she received that degree in, I think, 1952 and taught as a special education teacher here in Milwaukee as well as other places in the country.

LS: Thank you so much. You mentioned some community involvement the last time I spoke with you. Would you mind talking a little bit about that?

MF: Well, both of my parents felt very strongly about civil rights, especially here in Milwaukee. My mother was, worked with Urban League in the 1950's and did special programming with the Urban League in the 1950's. My father had a number of restaurants throughout the Milwaukee area including in the central portion of Milwaukee and through actions he helped show that people of color could not only serve at the highest level of his company but, he gave great opportunities for employment and for advancement throughout his career in business.

LS: Wow. Thank you. And what was your father's name?

MF: Charles David Freedman. C-H-A-R-L-E-S David D-A-V-I-D Freedman F-R-E-E-D-M-A-N

LS: Thank you. And where was he born and what was his date of birth?

MF: Ah, he was born in Waukegan, Illinois on September 23<sup>rd</sup> 1930.

LS: Thank you so much. And can you trace any lineage back on your father's side?

MF: Um, not quite as far. We can trace it back to the late 1800's. Both sides in what is now known as Russia. His was Kishinev and my mother's family to Bilozirka, which actually is very important to Milwaukee history. There was a family back in the early mid-1800's who eventually sent many individuals to Milwaukee. Their name was Soiref and here in the United States people know it as Soref. Probably the most famous member of the Soref family are the members that founded Masterlock of Milwaukee. But from that Soref clan many Milwaukee families that are here today can trace their roots.

LS: That's just fascinating. Thank you. So, your father was a restaurateur?

MF: ah yeah, my father was originally in show business, which is why I was born in Los Angeles. But, when he went into the military, they decided that they, needed somebody to run the commissary in Japan during the Korean war. He got elected and he did a fantastic job. He received awards for it. And when he came back, after he abandoned his attempt in California, and came back to Milwaukee, he went into the restaurant business starting with George Webb's here in Milwaukee. And I actually knew George Webb and I knew his son. George Webb was a real person.

LS: I did not realize that. Wow! Excellent. So, he was a pillar of the community.

MF: I think emotionally and spiritually, he certainly was the pillar of our life. In later years, he opened up a restaurant in Thiensville called Chuck's Place. And my father was very active in the business and social community. In fact, the Lion's Club event for the Fourth of July, my father was an integral part of planning all the food and activities for many years.

LS: Wonderful. So, kind of moving into, your history with Congregation Beth Israel. How long has your family been part of that congregation?

MF: Essentially my entire life. Beth Israel went through a period where it was dormant when the Teutonia Street synagogue closed. And then they started a building project on Greenbay Avenue in Glendale about 1960 or 61. There were probably 30 original founding families. And we were fortunate to be one of those. And so – I really - I was four years old at the time so I really don't know a time when I was not a member of Beth Israel.

LS: Thank you so much. I also did want to ask about your siblings and where they might be located.

MF: I have two siblings, my sister Rhonda who is married to Dr. Larry Dubin. They have resided here in Mequon for many years. Rhonda was a professor of education at Cardinal Stritch and now is retired. And my brother-in-law Larry is a neuro-radiologist with the Aurora Healthcare system. Then, I have another sibling, her name is Michelle Byrd and um, Michelle or Shelly as we call her, is actually my cousin, but her parents passed away very young. And so, she moved in with us when we were young. And basically, has always been like – has been my sister. We refer to each other as brother and sister even though technically we're cousins.

LS: Love that. Great. So, tell me a little bit about your wife Linda. Her name, spelling of her name and how you all met.

MF: So, Linda Sue Sonin Freedman. Sonin is her middle name. Linda is L-I-N-D-A. Middle name S-U-E and she uses often Sonin S-O-N-I-N now Freedman. Um, While I always grew up at Congregation Beth Israel, my wife family first was very active in the Orthodox Jewish community on the west side of Milwaukee. And even to this day my wife and I have connections with that community and hold it with great respect and affection. When my wife's family moved to the east side, eventually they joined congregation Beth El and as you know currently, our current synagogue

represents a merger between Congregation Beth El and Beth Israel Ner Tamid. My wife's family was certainly a pillar of that community. My wife's father, my father-in-law, was the primary Torah reader, which is a very sacred and special position. He also taught younger people how to read. And they were very active and that synagogue. How did we meet? Interestingly, I had gone, away to school and I came home for our Jewish High Holidays, which are in the fall. And I needed, I wanted a place to go because I no longer was in Milwaukee. My future brother-in-law's family who was also a member of Beth El said we have extra tickets, come sit with us. So, I went to Beth El for services and as I was walking in the door, my wife, Linda Sonin, was walking out of the main sanctuary and we bumped into each other. We knew each other well in high school but were just friends. And we said hello and uh, said maybe we should see, you know catch up and see what's gone on in the last few years. And about two weeks later we went out on a date. And about two weeks later I told my classmates over a body in anatomy class [LS Laughs] that I thought that she was going to be the woman I would marry. We did, when we did get married. We were one of last couples to be married at the Beth El synagogue on Sherman Boulevard. Linda's parents were perhaps the first in that synagogue and her grandmother had been married at the synagogue on Teutonia Avenue. So, from both of our sides, we really have a very deep and long-lasting connection, over a hundred years I guess, with what is now known as Congregation Beth Israel Ner Tamid.

LS: And when you learned that the congregations were going to merge, how did that make you feel?

MF: It was excellent. Um, when we were earlier, earlier in time we had to choose. Did we want to be where I had always grown up or did we want to be with Linda's parents and her sister and brother-in-law who were still at Beth El. In the end it made things much easier.

LS: Very nice. Did your family, we were talking about the Orthodox Judaism, did your family ever, practice Orthodox Judaism?

MF: My side of the family did not. It was Linda's side.

LS: Okay. Thank you. Did you and Linda have children?

MF: We do. We are fortunate to have three wonderful daughters and six grandchildren and their names are Abby Freedman Seruya, Brynn Freedman Persky and Carly Freedman Schlafer.

LS: Do you mind spelling their married names?

MF: I am sorry?

LS: Do you mind spelling the the - your daughters married names? Just so I can

MF: So, Abby Seruya. Her last – it's A-B-B-Y S-E-R-U-Y-A. Brynn is B-R-Y-N-N B-R-Y-N-N Persky P-E-R-S-K-Y um Carly C-A-R-L-Y Schlafer is S-C-H-L-A-F-E-R.

LS: Thank you. And what is your occupation Dr. Freedman?

MF: I am an ophthalmologist. Which is an eye doctor, a medical eye doctor.

LS: Wonderful. And where did you receive your education?

MF: I went to undergrad at the University of Wisconsin Madison. Medical School, I graduated from the Medical College of Wisconsin. And I did my residency and associate and specialty training at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics.

LS: And how does your faith influence how you do your work as a doctor?

MF: I think it probably affects every part of my life, not just being a doctor. It's taught me to try to appreciate the diversity in all people, to be open minded about people. Try not to be judgmental and accepting where they are. I certainly think that multiple tenants of Judaism have taught me the value of serving and helping others and always treating people ethically. The guiding principle should always be what's best for the patient. And I think it served, it served me well to reinforce all of those feelings. They were not anything I ever had to think about it. It was how I was raised. And naturally how I would treat everybody.

LS: Wonderful. I know you have mentioned the pillars of Judaism. I wondered if you could tell us a little bit more about that and what it means to you.

MF: Sure. Well, Congregation Beth Israel Ner Tamid put a lot of thought into what should be the mission statement or what should be the basic pillars of the tent that we hope to create with Congregation Beth Israel Ner Tamid and really there are four. A house of prayer, a house of learning, a house of community and the term is "tikkun olam" which best translates as "repairing the world." And it's a combination of those four things plus being egalitarian and open that are the tenants of Beth Israel. Egalitarianism is something relatively new in the Conservative movement. By new I guess I mean twenty-five years. When I was a child, only men were able to read from the Torah, only men were able to lead um, most of the prayer service. And it was only about 25 years ago at Beth Israel where we moved forward and said no, women have the right and the ability and we welcome them to participate in all facets of Judaism. Before that at certain services that require the presence of ten people in order to move forward with certain portions of the service, only men would be counted. And after that everyone was counted.

LS: Thank you for that clarification. Is that – that's called Minyan is that correct?

MF: Minyan is a group of 10 or more people that are required in order to recite and do certain prayers in the synagogue – well anywhere – even if – Judaism does not have to be practiced in the synagogue. In fact, many of our holidays, many of our customs are in the home.

LS: Thank you so much. What is your earliest memory from Congregation Beth Israel?

MF: Uh, the earliest is um, some service in the basement of what's now the school education and this old linoleum floor with um, terribly uncomfortable and at that time for me over-sized folding chairs and finding it finding it absolutely impossible to sit in a chair very long and running around the room with a bunch of my, my similar aged children. That's my earliest recollection.

LS: That's a great, that's a great memory. Thank you. [LS Inaudible] Does your community have a signature ritual, event or service that you'd like to talk about?

MF: Well, I think the center of institutional congregational Judaism is probably Shabbat, which includes a service Friday night, relatively short at the synagogue and then a wonderful home customs and services that we do every Friday night. During Covid, we actually did it by Zoom with all of our family in Illinois and Denver, in Milwaukee, extended family here. And actually, even my nephew in Madison would join us. It's been so wonderful. Even though Covid might be relaxed a little bit, we still do it by Zoom every Friday night. It involves lighting Shabbat candles, saying prayers over the candles, challah the bread over wine and a blessing that we give to all of our children. It's usually preceded by about 45 minutes of just talking and sharing our week with each other. Um, on Saturday morning, traditionally there is a full service at Beth Israel. It usually starts, before Covid, about 9 AM would finish at Noon. And then a special Kiddush lunch is served where everybody sits down and has a meal together. It was - It's always a very warm communal type feel.

LS: That's very beautiful. So, your focus is on prayer and faith and community during that time?

MF: Yeah, and we read from the Torah three times a week. Um the - Most people hear it on Saturdays. And even though we read the same stories, the Torah, once a year, the whole thing once a year, and then we repeat it every single year. Every single year we can find new relevance into our modern life here today.

LS: That's beautiful. Do you have a most memorable event that you've experienced at the congregation? Or events?

MF: They are so numerous it would be hard to say. Whether it is the extreme joy of the weddings of my children. The brit milah of my grandsons, my bar mitzvah, just celebrating the festival of Purim. It also, I remember the um, [Inaudible, paused recording at request of the narrator]

MF: When I was a teenager on Friday night, we were supposed to be at services. There was a car accident and 1, 2, 3 three of our friends were killed. And coming together to get through that was part of the synagogue and that was a special part of my life.

LS: Thank you for sharing that Dr. Freedman

MF: One of my happiest memory was, I was fortunate enough to work on the renewal and rejuvenation of Beth Israel Ner Tamid. And it was such a pleasure to be a part of the chain that is now 140 years with our synagogue, to renew it and try to prepare it for this century. And it was not only a pleasure to feel a part of creating that future but the greatest joy was the people that I got

work with at our synagogue that came with such joy and spirit and generosity to make that happen. And it, it was the most wonderful experience.

LS: Just to clarify was that the renovation in 2006?

MF: Yeah, Yeah on we've had multiple ones over the years. That was the last really big one.

LS: Great. Okay – and I know you mentioned that you had been part of the process in selecting Rabbis for the congregation. Could you tell me a little bit about that process and what your role was?

MF: Sure. Every stream of Judaism has certain rules and regulations for selecting a head rabbi. For instance, if we are part of – and I am going to restrict this to our synagogue and the Conservative movement.

LS: Sure.

MF: We are a member of the Conservative Movement of America and the Jewish Theologic Seminary in New York and it has branches elsewhere is where our clergy are usually trained. A rabbi must have a certain amount of years of experience in order to accept a position at a synagogue of a certain size. For instance, if we were, I am going to make up a number, a synagogue of a thousand families, a rabbi would have to have been already, had a pulpit and experience for I think it's ten years. If you are a smaller size synagogue it's less. Okay. Most rabbis come in as an associate or assistant rabbi and then move on to a head rabbi some place. So, when it's time to bring a new rabbi into the synagogue, our by-laws call for the formation of a nominating a search committee, a search committee and I have been fortunate to be a part of multiple search committees. And it was a very interesting process because you not only want to find the best, most skilled, best orator, most inspiring teacher, the nicest guy you want to spend a day with type of person but you also want to find somebody who would be happy in Milwaukee and would feel that our synagogue and our city would be a good fit. And I really enjoyed that process and as a result have felt a closeness with the rabbis that I probably would not have had if I hadn't been part of that process. On the other hand,

LS: Okay.

MF: Okay. One of the unpleasant things that I no longer would like to do is be part of the rabbi review committee. Okay? Because I just don't want to walk into a sanctuary and have thoughts about whether I - what criticisms I should make or what negative things are going on. I want the sanctuary to be a true sanctuary when I enter it. So, I really enjoy the search committee and bringing the rabbi in. But after one maybe two experiences, I've fortunately not had to serve on any review committees anymore.

LS: Thank you for sharing that. Have there been any rabbis that have been particularly influential for you?

MF: Absolutely. Rabbi Panitch back in the 70's and 80's and I think into the 90's too, was really responsible for the tremendous growth of our synagogue. He was an incredible presence. He was a magnificent orator. He was extremely knowledgeable, and he really took upon his shoulders every facet of the synagogue and molded the synagogue into what he thought was the best Conservative synagogue in Milwaukee. He had many many passions. He was central to the movement to free Soviet Jewry and to bring Soviet Jewish refugees to Milwaukee and resettle them. In fact, after he retired, he took a very distinguished position in southern Florida helping Russian Jewish immigrants to settle in that area. He was an amazing person. Let me just think for a second.

LS: Dr. Freeman could you tell me a little bit more about the leadership roles that you have held in addition to Rabbi selection at the congregation?

MF: Sure, when I returned from the University of Iowa to Milwaukee to start practicing here, of course we immediately became active in the Synagogue and Rabbi Panitch came to me and said there is an idea to start a new program here in Milwaukee. It would be called the Passport to Israel program and its goal was to try to send as many of our kids to Israel for approximately a two-to-six-week program or a summer because many of the research articles on what can we do to increase the odds that our children and grandchildren will still be Jewish and it came back with two answers. One was get them involved early in Jewish camping experiences and get them a trip to Israel where they can see a whole country of people who are Jewish and break the stereotype of Judaism as only the very staid synagogue experience and instead see Jews who are strong and who are vibrant and who are farmers and who are soldiers and atomic scientists and jet pilots and world leaders and Nobel prize winners. And so, I thought that would just a wonderful thing so, I was part of the original steering committee that developed Passport to Israel and with a very fine man name Lloyd Levine, who at the time was the head of it. And Lloyd chaired Passport to Israel I think for almost a decade and then I took over. For the past 20 plus years I have been the Chairman of Passport to Israel for the Greater Milwaukee Area [Recording stopped due to battery issue]

LS: Dr. Freedman, how does Congregation Beth Israel fit into the Milwaukee story?

MF: Congregation Beth Israel is at the heart of the founding of Milwaukee since we trace our founding back to the 1880's and had almost a continuous presence until today. But congregation Beth Israel has provided many of the leaders for all of the Jewish communal entities that are in Milwaukee whether it is the Milwaukee Jewish Federation, Jewish Family Services, Milwaukee Jewish Day School, the Milwaukee Jewish Foundation. And our leaders have always taken a very active role and part of it is as I said one of the pillars of Beth Israel has always been tikkun olam and community.

LS: Wonderful. Wonderful. And was there a particular event that occurred in Milwaukee or in greater history that has impacted your congregation. How and why?

MF: Yeah, I think, let me just do the most recent. You may recall there was a horrible synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh. And soon after that the entire Milwaukee, Greater Milwaukee community came together for a memorial event at Beth Israel and I'll never forget the sight. I am going to



estimate that there were at least sixty clergy from across all religions standing together in solidarity at Beth Israel. If you been to see the synagogue. And you can see there is sanctuary and there was a social hall. For big events we open all the doors so that literally thousands of people can be seated. At that event every seat was taken and there was standing room everywhere flowing out in solidarity. And it was most magnificent demonstration that I can remember of solidarity and support and representing that we are one people. We are one human community and that this latest murder, act of terrorism, in a long string of terrorism can not be tolerated and we are not alone in facing it. So, that had a very big impact on me.

LS: Thank you so much. So, what is your hope for the future of Congregation Beth Israel Ner Tamid?

MF: I am hoping that two and three generations from now it will be strong and people will be coming together not just to pray but to be together, to learn and to find ways no only to strengthen their own lives but the lives of the entire Milwaukee community. We, like all religions, face similar challenges. Many people decided to go in a different direction. Many of our kids go away to school and don't come back, which leads to a drain in the population. And in the short term, I've been worried in the last two and a half years with Covid, we've not been able to gather. And in it's vacuum, we have found other things to do. Right? And so, the real challenge, I think, that we face as well as other organizations is how do we make ourselves relevant enough that that people say "I want to come back and I want to be there and I want to be a part of this community." I am hoping that we have the creativity to answer that challenge and to also realize that is also a tremendous opportunity, while respecting tradition and Jewish law, which is Halakha, to think of ways that we can bring more people in and welcome more people so that they want to be there. I think that is a real challenge right now, not just for us, but for all religious communities.

LS: Indeed. Can you think of a great opportunity you have right now at the congregation?

MF: I think that there is an opportunity here to help incorporate some of the technology that we were forced to us because of the pandemic to reach people that we weren't able to reach. The most obvious is people who because of health reasons are not able to make it into synagogue. In the past Conservative Judaism has had some rules that make it difficult to livestream much of, or parts of, for instance, the Shabbat service, certainly parts of most high holy days and I think that our clergy and our board struggled with how can we do this during the pandemic. And I hope that everyone will see this as an opportunity to move forward and say let's continue to reach out to people, but also at the same time to recognize that the key to synagogue life is in person and being together and think of creative ways to say that modern life challenges one spiritually. We're here. We've always been here. Let's find a way that you want come back and explore things together now again.

LS: So, how did Congregation Beth Israel handle Covid with regard to the Sabbath and the Sabbath service?

MF: Yeah, so for a long time we had absolutely no in person activities in the entire synagogue, which was very difficult. And I'll get to the part about Shabbat service. But even things like when a

person passes away, attending a funeral service. Jewish custom is to be with the family and to say prayers nightly in the family's home for seven straight days and that was not really acceptable or allowed. But in particular, for Shabbat services, I think they did a really wonderful job of balancing the traditional rules with continuing an experience. Certain parts of the service were deemed not appropriate to do streaming. I believe it was a very thoughtful and considerate deliberation on how best we could serve our synagogue community while respecting tradition.

LS: Thank you so much. Is there anything else you would like to talk about regarding your experience at Congregation Beth Israel before I ask you about your work outside of the congregation?

MF: Oh Sure. Well, I think one of the things that I am really very appreciative of is it was a wonderful place to raise our family. My wife and I, when we got married, decided that we wanted to raise, have a Jewish home, and raise kids who would appreciate Judaism. And we prayed to carry on the traditions that we would share with them with the next generation. Beth Israel gave us the ability to do that. So did Beth El. And very grateful that we were able to find a group of friends, mentors and leaders that helped us to develop a way of life customs so that that Judaism was just a part of the rhythm of our natural life. It wasn't something that was added on. It was part of the way we chose to eat. It was part of the way we chose to rest. It was a part of the way we gathered with friends and family and certainly it provided a framework of education of for not only my wife and I, but for our children to instill in them an appreciation for education of all types, but including a sound Jewish education, ability to speak Hebrew, to pray in Hebrew comfortably. Very, very proud to say that, to watch our children pass that on to now my grandchildren.

LS: Where did your children receive their Jewish education. Through the congregation or -

MF: It was a comb – Actually a combination. They attended the Milwaukee Jewish Day School as well as all of the educational opportunities at Congregation Beth Israel Ner Tamid.

LS: And children are very important at the congregation I gather?

MF: I think the best way to say how important they are is the first brick that built in the synagogue was an education building. It wasn't until many years later that the sanctuary was actually built.

LS: Well, um so there is such a rich, rich history and I thank you for detailing your memories and your religious beliefs. As I understand you are also in community organizations external to Congregation Beth Israel Ner Tamid. Could you tell me a little bit more about those groups and maybe some of the work that you are doing?

MF: As far as the Jewish communal activities, I am really privileged to sit on the board of directors at the Milwaukee Jewish Day School. I am really happy to try to help ensure that the next generation and even the generation after that are able to receive the magnificent education that my children did both academically as well as spiritually and Judaically. All three of my kids went on to postgraduate training and have always valued education. I sit on the board of the Milwaukee Jewish Foundation.

And the Milwaukee Jewish Foundation is one of the largest providers of charitable funds in the city of Milwaukee per year. And I am very proud of the work they do to support our entire community. And last, I am chairman of Israel Bonds of Wisconsin. And have enjoyed my experiences connecting to something outside of Wisconsin and supporting the state of Israel, which is very important to me.

LS: Wonderful. Now you had mentioned you are going on a trip to the middle east upcoming. Would you mind telling us more about the mission of that trip?

MF: Sure, actually my wife and I just got off a recorded webinar about it so we're actually even more excited about it now that we know the details a little bit more. So, about a year and half ago Israel signed a warm peace treaty with multiple countries including United Arab Emirate and Bahrain and Israel Bonds is leading a delegation of leaders from the United States to Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Jerusalem. And we just got more detail. We'll be meeting and dining and spending time talking with the ministers of Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Bahrain. We'll be at the presidential palace in Abu Dhabi. We will be dining and meeting with the President of Israel, the Secretary of Defense, Benny Gantz, who is in the coalition for being Prime Minister. And while we are in the United Arab Emirates, we will be meeting with very distinguished business leaders. They just announced that we will be having a sit down with the chairman of the central bank of the United Arab Emirates, which I believe is the largest sovereign fund in the world. Either that or Saudi Arabia. And the hope is that this peace will be a warm peace not a colder peace, perhaps like Israel and Egypt have, but a warm peace where people will not only travel back and forth but greater understanding will occur and will be a start for a spread of peace throughout the middle east. And we hope to make connections with leaders in those countries as we go as representatives of leader of communal organizations here in the United States.

LS: That's wonderful. What a great opportunity.

MF: We didn't know – I didn't know we were going to meet with the ministers of the country or – I didn't know we were going to meet with Prime Minister in Israel. That will be very nice. There is only – I think there are 70 of us. It will be very warm nice meeting. It will be great.

LS: Wow, that's very amazing. Well, we've talked about a lot. Is there anything we've missed that you'd like to discuss?

MF: I think that one of most difficult things being Jewish whether it's in Milwaukee or it's in Warsaw is how to be a very good citizen of the city and the country that you are in and that you have great loyalty to and at the same relish and hold dear my Jewish tradition, our Jewish customs, and the balance between living a Jewish life whilst not being viewed as an "Other" or a foreigner is a difficult balance. I have a very very close friend who is an Evangelical Christian, and we go on long bike rides together and talking to each other about where we are both coming from and I discovered that outside the Jewish community, I don't think people realize how "other" members of the Jewish community can sometimes feel. It's certainly made worse by horrible antisemitic incidents. We have to have a police guard at our sanctuary in our synagogue. And there are just horrible deeds and horrible words being said even in 2022 America. My friend isn't - it isn't on his radar. And so, as

somebody who is really really involved in the Jewish community, who is out there, whose face is out there, I am cognizant of the fact that there is an element of danger or “other.” And it’s a very fine balance when here we are one of the tenants of our synagogue, of our faith is to help others outside of our synagogue. Yet at the same time, people are marching in Charleston [meant Charlottesville] saying the Jews will not own us. It’s a very difficult thing.

LS: It certainly is. Thank you for sharing that. Anything else.

MF: No that’s good. Maybe I shouldn’t have even said that.