

Immersion Paper

Jennifer Hearne

Nyack College

### **Introduction**

With respect to the Hasidic Culture and my findings I learned that I could only interview by phone. Unfortunately, I was derailed by the global pandemic. I was able to interview Susan Schneider via telephone, a Hasidic Jew. I was surprised that I gained a wealth of information in order to complete this assignment. I was unable to visit in person or go to the synagogue. I requested a visit and was denied based on the aforementioned. As far as the history of the Hasidic Jews form in Turkey and the Ukraine they were seeking a response from God. They did this through prayer, and direction. The Rabbi had charming and charismatic leadership qualities. The hike of this movement was in the 19th Century, and occupied by Hasidics. The Holocaust decimated dozens of Hasidics that lived in Israel and New York State. I learned a lot of interesting information regarding this experience. For example men rock as they pray to symbolize a candle flame connected directly with God. The curls symbolize the Payot. It means man shall not “round the corner of his head.” Also females that are married must cover their heads in public with a wig, scarf or hat. In addition if a woman is to marry, the groom's parents must purchase a wig and is called a “sheitel” in Yiddish. It can be made of synthetic material, or of human hair. These wigs are expensive and they range from \$500.00 to \$1,500.00. The reason for this is modesty which requires a decrease in temptation. This is also true in exposing flesh or skin as it may make her attractive to other men. Only their husbands can see them without a wig or clothing. What I found interesting was that the marital union was arranged. Hasidic couples dated for marriage. They married for values and then love was born at a later time in their relationship. None of the Hasidic Jews ever watched televisions or have a cell phone. They taught their children that value isn't in things but from the heart. In addition Hasidic Jews sleep in separate beds. During the female menstrual cycle they are not allowed to be touched. Seven

days post menses and after the women complete a mikvah bath which is a spiritual cleansing and renewal. At this point the couple can sleep together and potentially appropriate. The Hasidic family functions as a strong family unit all members of the family are respected and appreciate life's natural gifts. They are humble and live a happy life without extraneous interference such as television and cell phones. The family unit remains happy with being together physically and emotionally. People who are not part of the orthodox community have preconceived notions and stereotypes of this community because of their continued actions, the way they seem to skirt legal discipline and their seeming political influence. For example, the enormous weddings that have taken place in Brooklyn's Hasidic communities the past few months. These have been attended by thousands and there were no tickets issued, arrests made, investigations carried out, etc. Had these been Black or Latino events, there would have been all of the above. Instead, we just see in the newspaper pictures and videos and are all left with jaws dropped asking why nothing was done. We see these neighborhoods being locked down but really they are still functioning with business as usual attitudes and again, no one stops them, not the police, not the politicians. Yes, there are those who obey the rules and are not part of the masses in their actions but because of the majority and how they conduct themselves, the remaining endure the same feelings from outsiders. The majority in this community feel they are above others, above the law, etc and this should not be. Why can they gather in the thousands for funerals, weddings, holiday traditions and nothing be done.

I experience no real fear or ambivalence in learning about the Hasidic population. Although I was limited I learned about the culture through interviewing Susan Scnieder, a Hasidic Jew. Having been unable to connect with the Hasidic culture I feel that I learned about many facets of the Hasidic community. As a woman of color and a Christian individual I never

count myself as being discriminated against. I am open to various cultures and diversity. I have a strong sense of privilege to practice my faith while respecting others as well. Having visited Israel in January of 2010 I was enlightened by the information that Susan provided. I was slightly apprehensive about how I would be treated amazingly by all Hasidics.

I vividly remember approaching the desk to check in at the Hotel in Jerusalem. The concierge who was Hasidic said to me “Jennifer I have been waiting for you.” Immediately any apprehension on my part was completely gone.

The Hasidics owned the hotel. They were pleasant, kind and helpful. This allowed me to learn about the Hasidic culture and embrace it without anxiety or hesitation. I was raised by my father not to be judgemental. I felt blessed to have the experience of celebrating my 50th birthday in Israel. I had an amazing experience. My group tour was overbooked to full capacity. I was excluded from the tour and was on my own. What I did not know was that this trip was going to be a blessing. What impressed me most was that I was treated as some sort of royalty. I was given gifts for my birthday which included a tapestry of the sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham’s son. In addition they brought me a cake and sang Happy Birthday in Hebrew, This was wonderful because as previously stated I had limited avenues to connect with the Hasidic culture. Having visited Israel in person allowed me to complete this assignment with first hand details and knowledge. In an attempt to communicate with the Hasidic Jews I found the best way was to open up and smile. Not a regular smile but I smiled with my body language and eyes. The Hasidic Jews responded easily and I felt connected to them right away. It did not take much and I was very impressed with their receptiveness. Through my research I was extremely surprised to learn that the women are powerful. Although they run the household and are highly educated in their academia some run businesses and whereas they flourish in success. Their public and

personal roles are different in the synagogue; their seating is vertical not horizontal with the men. In places of worship including weddings and holidays they do not sit with their husbands. This is an attempt to preserve their relationship and protect their families. The men study the Torah which is the old testament.

Women are often the breadwinners of the household. They have a great deal of power and sense of privilege. Their families function at a high level as a result of hard work. Also known as “the captain of the ship.” I was surprised to learn that women have power. Seemingly the women appeared to be homemakers and caregivers. What astounded me was learning that they are highly educated and often are head of household.

As a woman myself it empowered me to relate to them clearly. I was honored to be of the same gender although we have different faiths. The Hasidic women strive for greatness. Education, work and managing a family sounds similar to the ways in our culture. At first I assumed they were inferior to their husbands and basically took care of the house. Child rearing and following orders. It was refreshing to learn how powerful the Hasidic females were. My preconceived notions about this population were wrong. Naturally my thought process shifted when I identified their true roles as women. I realized that I had preconceived judgements on them without basis. Their education and humanity was paramount. It made me reflect on my immediate judgments which had no foundation of truth. This was a thriving community that functioned as a normal nuclear family. I would absolutely do this assignment again. I learned many facts pertaining to the Hasidic population that I never knew before this was an enlightening process. I would like to advocate for the women by offering counseling services as needed. They have a long list of duties to perform within the family structure at a high level. Just as the American family model women have many roles this can be stressful at times.

People can be mean in this world. Judgements are passed regarding skin color and religion. One needs to know who they are in Christ racism and prejudice were delivered by Satan. In Christ all were saved, fatih, Jew and Gentiles, black and white are equal in the sight of God. Counseling could help them to let their feelings out while inventing strategies to make everyday life more manageable. Social injustices can be overturned by education. Life and human equality pertained to all human beings. Regardless of race, color, LGBTQ, religion or creed. This means everyone on the planet whether disable practicing a different religion or culture we are all the same. Policies must work together and aid in social development all humans need to experience peace in the community and in their hearts.

Having been in Jerusalem experiencing the Hasidic culture first hand has given me an edge. There are many eye opening issues pertaining to their religion and family values. At first, I did not know what to expect. But I was pleasantly surprised. They treated me with respect and grace. As a result, I was able to uncover accurate details with respect to their livelihood. I admired the fact that they live simply without electronics and other forms of distractions. They rely on time as a family to connect which makes them cohesive. As a mental health care worker I would like to advocate for the Hasidic group in the future. It appears like their religion is prematurely judged with wrong information. There is plenty to learn from their family model and their ability to thrive as a unit. According to Kathryn S. Newton and Bradley T. Erford social classifications are common, if not universal, to human societies. Classifications may be used to assign social roles such as production, protection, child rearing, and spiritual stewardship (p. 188).

**Pictures of the Western Wall**

Women pray in a separate area away from the men. The City of David where the Hasidic Jews live and it looks like the Williamsburg area in Brooklyn. The tapestry picture that was given to me as a gift. At the Western Wall people write prayer lists and stick them inside the cracks of the wall. Picture of New Covenant Messianic Jewish Tallit Prayer Shawl, Yamaka, hebrew kippah or in Yiddish as a yarmulke and matching Tallit Bag. Most Jews cover their heads while they are praying at a religious, festival event or the synagogue.





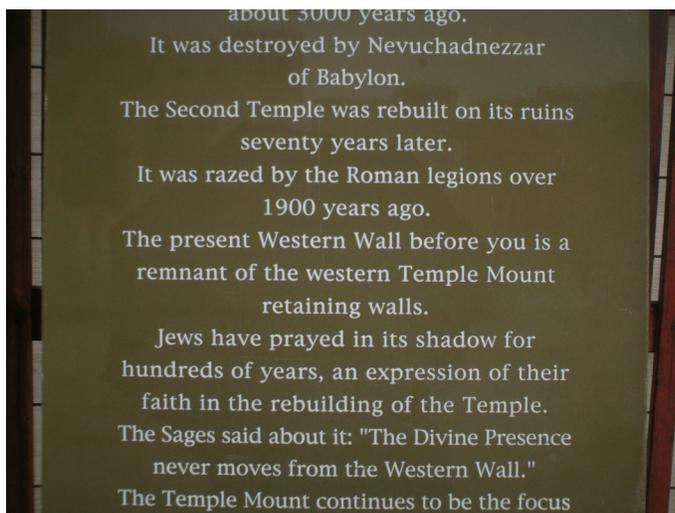
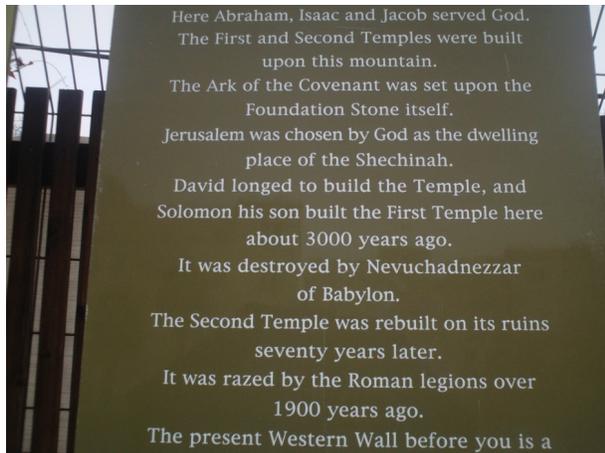




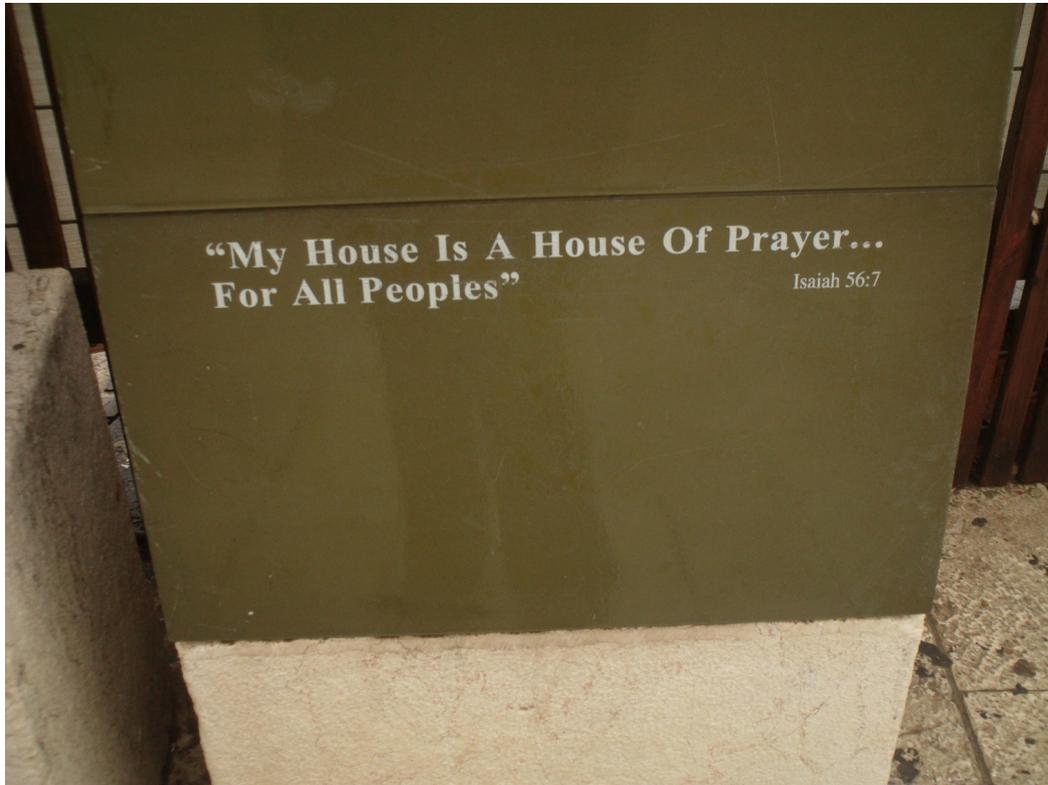




Jewish tradition teaches that the Temple Mount is the focal point of Creation. In the center of the mountain lies the "Foundation Stone" of the world. Here Adam came into being. Here Abraham, Isaac and Jacob served God. The First and Second Temples were built upon this mountain. The Ark of the Covenant was set upon the Foundation Stone itself. Jerusalem was chosen by God as the dwelling place of the Shechinah. David longed to build the Temple, and Solomon his son built the First Temple here







### References

Hays, D. G. & Erford, B. T. (2018). *Developing Multicultural Counseling Competence: A Systems Approach*, 3rd Edition. Pearson.