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Well, first of all, I think that even before we consider what the prognosis was for Hasidism in the post-war period, we have to ask ourselves the more general question of what was the prognosis for Judaism in general in the post-war period. Because it had always been the assumption and the lesson that had been taught to every observant and Orthodox Jew over the course of their lifetimes, in the twentieth century, was that America was a place where Jews might survive, but Judaism would not. And here were people coming, and I'm talking particularly about those who still had their faith intact after the Holocaust, and even those were really shell shocked, and here they were coming to the place that they had been told was the triennia Medina, the unkosher state, the place where Judaism would die, and they had no choice. They'd been burned out, they'd been smoked out, they were survivors. They were orphans, they were widows, they were widowers coming into a place that was a void to them. So I think they, the general feeling was anxiety, 'we don't know what's going to be, we don't know if we're going to be.' And they had I think been so traumatized by the events of the war that they weren't even certain that they were ready to demonstrate and show that they were Orthodox.

I'll give you an example from my own life. I came with my own family January 1950. My parents were Holocaust survivors, an Orthodox Jewish family. We went to Boston after we had landed here in New York and at first, we didn't join an Orthodox Community. We just didn't even know that there was such a thing, didn't believe there was such a thing. Found one. But in those years, as I was growing up in the 1950's, in the early 50's as an Orthodox Jew, we learned to keep our yarmulkes hidden. We wore baseball hats, as if nobody would recognize that we were Orthodox Jews. We keep our fringes, our tzitzit hidden inside of our shirts. We went to public school. We didn't show the fact that we had these Jewish commitments in any kind of public way, not because we didn't have the

commitments but we weren't sure that it was possible in this kind of a melting pot America which meant being like a WASP. We didn't know that being there allowed you to be Jewish. And I have no doubt that Hasidim felt some of those same things although they probably got rid of their doubts a little earlier than we did out there in the extremes, in Boston.

I think the role of the Rebbes are important in explaining some of the resurgence of Hasidism in the Hasidic community. But, I think they are not the key at least, at the beginning. And that is that a Rebbe is after all a kind of collective representation, he symbolizes the group. A Rebbe becomes powerful because he has a large group of devoted followers. So I think what really happens is a kind of synergy between the Rebbe's rise to prominence and the growth of the group, people who coalesce around him. And I think both of those things happen together. Here were people who moved together, lived close to one another, had a sense of community and looked for person who could in a way articulate and express and embody their feeling of survival and of importance. And then of course once they're able to do that, the Rebbe grows as they grow. So an important Rebbe is a Rebbe who has many followers, young and old.

I think one of the things that became apparent to Hasidim after they got over the initial shocks of being in America was that America was very different from Europe where they had really been fashioned. It was open. It was filled with people who were different from them, not only religiously, but were different from them in such a vast cultural way. After all, Hasidim in Europe, as Jewish as they were, were also European. Their dress originally was a kind of carryover of what was European. Although they spoke Yiddish, it was chockfull of Polish, and Russian and Slovak expressions. They came to America it was really different. They felt as if they were surrounded by goyim, meaning somebody who was just not Jewish, of an altogether different sort and the question was, 'what do we have in common with them?. Do we belong with them at all?' And moreover as the 50's began to fade and 60's emerged, and you have to keep in mind that the 50's, that ten year period, I think many Hasidim were still pretty much in shell shock, they didn't know where to live. Some of them moved to Manhattan, I

mean the idea that Hasidim are in Brooklyn is sort of seems to be etched in stone, but it took them a while to get to Brooklyn and to realize that there were places in Brooklyn that were more comfortable than others.

So by the 60's, they're looking at this world around them in America. And not only is it gentile, but it seems to be going crazy. It's going crazy in that it is allowing the most base aspects of human character to emerge; sex, violence and perhaps, in many ways, what is most dangerous to Hasidism, and to any traditional way of life, the emphasis on youth. That the youth are more important than the aged. America was a place where the young people are the most important and the old people.... You know, nobody wants the 'old and tried' you want the 'new and young and improved'. And they look at this and they say, "excuse me, this is not for us, we are in America, we make use of what America has to give us, but we are not 'of America'."

And they begin to realize that if they're going to survive, not just as individual people, but as a community and as a way of life, they have to create an enclave in which they can take from America, but not become swept up and swallowed by America. And that I think begins the essential culture war that is Hasidism and to some extent, all Orthodox Judaism. That is that you could say in a way that in the 1960's, we in America were looking at one counter-culture which we thought was sort of the hippies and the young people of the universities, but the truth was that in the Jewish world, there was another counter-culture forming at exactly the same time. Reacting in fact to this Americanization, the hip and youth culture, and that counter-culture was the counter-culture of what we sometimes call Ultra-Orthodox, or Chareidi, or Hasidic Judaism. And it was saying 'there's a better way of life, there is an importance in the tradition, that America is a corrosive, that the West for that matter, is a corrosive influence, and if we're going to survive this and be around at the end of time, which we're sure will demonstrate that we've been right all along, we better create a separate and distinct and self-conscious and self-assured community.

And in that respect by the way, they were not different from other fundamentalist-like movements who also look at America of the 1960's and early 70's and say 'Whoa, somebody stole America from us. Somebody stole our

culture from us.' So there was this drawing back from the corrosive and what they viewed as the ultimately undermining efforts of American western civilization and tried to create their own world. I think like for example, Islamic fundamentalists who talk about 'west toxification' that the west is a toxin, and once it gets in you, it poisons you. I think that the Hasidim also felt that Western civilization was an intoxicant.

That's why for example, they opposed television, not because they were against technology, these are not Dutch Amish people who have a hard time with electricity or technology, they opposed television, because it was a window that was bringing in the outside culture into their living rooms, into their homes. And they didn't want it, they didn't want any part of that world. They didn't see any particular value in it. They were ready to use the technology. They were ready to use the freedom that America offered. They were ready to take full advantage of democracy. But they sure as hell were not ready to become Americanized.

So they decided we're not going to change our clothes. If America is in living color, we're going to be in black and white, we're going to speak our own language. If we used Yiddish sort of naturally as the language of Jewish life in Europe, because Jews were not given an opportunity to enter into the mainstreams of culture, we're going to use Yiddish here, because it's a way of keeping our children, who are the most fragile element and who promise our future, by keeping them inside. There's a saying in the Talmud that is repeated very often in the conversation in the Hasidic world which is 'when times are grave and it looks like your way of life is going to be undermined, then you don't even change a shoelace, you don't change a jot or tittle of what you're doing. And suddenly the black hats and the black coats became

So the Hasidim looked at the world around them and felt that it was dangerous and that it ran the risk of poisoning their future and their life. And in fact to them it seemed like a time when their religion was in danger, their future was in danger and they quoted in a way a line from the Talmud that says that at the times and on those occasions when it seems like the outside world wants you to forfeit you faith, it's at that time that everything that you do becomes enormously important even the color of your shoelaces should not be changed. And in a way we can say

Hasidim took that literally. They had shorn their beards after the war. Sometimes, they'd had those beards shorn by the Nazis and they hadn't grown them back at first. But now those beards began to grow, and they grew even longer than before. Because I think there was another element that was involved here and that is that Hasidim saw themselves as survivors but they saw themselves as survivors in a double sense. On the one hand, obviously, many of them were survivors of the Holocaust, and the reason that they were survivors of the Holocaust is because they had been the last to leave Europe. Their Rabbis had given them some very tough advice. Their Rabbis had said you shouldn't change the way you look, you shouldn't change where you live, you shouldn't change the way you speak, you shouldn't become assimilated in any kind of way, so they were very easy to pick out when the Nazis came. And I think proportionately, they took a far greater hit than any other single Jewish community in Europe. So they were survivors of the Holocaust when they came here. But they were also survivors of the great trends of assimilation and acculturation that had been going on in Europe. Even had the Holocaust not happened that world of the Ghetto that the Hasidim were nurtured in was dying, was going away. So here they felt in the 1960's I think that consciousness began to rise. 'We are survivors, we are the last Jews'. There was a sense in which that feeling I think was sustained in a paradoxical way by non-Hasidim, by non-observant Jews who looked at the Hasidim and sort of saw in them quaint reminders of their grandfathers and grandmothers, even though they're not that. And made it seem as if they really were the authentic Jews. 'We can't be like them, but they are the authentic Jews' And all of that I think came together to have them get a new confidence that 'we will survive if we can only remain aloof from and untouched by this enormously attractive American culture that beckons our children, that offers us all kinds of wealth.' And in fact economic wealth was becoming real for them as it was for everybody in post-war America. And the secret was how do we survive without being sucked up in all of this. And the answer that they came up with I think was 'we survive by turning our back on it and by creating a new Hasidic community that draws on and is built on our collective memory of the old one'.

But they did something extraordinary here you know, when you resurrect an image of something that is dead, you give it a far greater power than you ever, it

ever had in real life. A resurrected god is much more powerful than a god that is never died and brought back to life. They resurrected their version of Belz and of Bobov and of Ger and of all of these places that they knew in Europe and now they were sort of clothed in the rosy light of nostalgia and of memory and of the pain of slaughter. And all of this comes together and they're convinced. 'We have the truth, we are the keepers of the flame, the defenders of the faith. We have to keep hold of our children because if we lose our children, there is no future. We have to have lots of children. We have to give them the names, the same names that we gave to, that our forebears had. So we're not going to call them Scott and Bryan and Jimmy but we're going to call them Berel, and Shloimeh and Yisroel and names that are not going to be able to be used in America, they're not going to be able to look like Scott and Bryan and Jimmy and Jessica. They're going to look like us. They're going to talk like us. We're going to give them our own education. Public education is free and there's no quota but we don't want any part of it. We're going to have our own schools. We're going to stay in our own world. We don't want to marry these other people.'

And the biggest enemies of course are not America and the gentiles because they're so far beyond the pale that they don't really enter into our world. The real threat are those Jews around us who are suggesting you can be part of America and like America and make certain compromises in the way you practice Judaism. You can reform Judaism. They became the real goyim, the Reform Jews, the Conservative Jews and in some ways, perhaps the most dangerous of all were the so-called Modern Orthodox Jews who claimed that you could go to the university, and you could be part of America and you could also be an observant Jew. That was a real risk. Because if you could do that, by g-d, anything was possible. And the university of course became the greatest danger of all.

The debate between this view of the world that the Hasidim have which is that we are in America, but not of America, is a debate that is most powerful with Modern Orthodox Jews, like myself. In effect, what the Modern Orthodox Jew is saying is that you can be in America, and be of America, without forfeiting your attachment and your fidelity to Jewish life. You can go to the university, you can pursue a career, there's a value, an inherent value in secular learning that is equal

to, not greater than, but equal to Jewish learning and that you need to be both learned in Jewish life and tradition and in secular life and its wisdom. That debate is an ongoing debate with Hasidim. So on the one hand they look at us and they say 'you sold out'.

I'll give you an example. I had in the work that I did before writing my book on Ultra-Orthodoxy, I had a long conversation with an Ultra-Orthodox Jew and he talked about the fact that people like me send our children to the university. And the university for them is the height of impurity because what does it do. First it fills your mind with all kinds of heretic ideas, secondly it puts men and women in close contact with one another at just the point in life when their hormones are working and it runs the risk of immodesty and heaven forefend the possibility that they'll engage in sexual activity outside of wedlock. And the university is just this awful place. And he says to me 'do you send your kids to the university?' And I said "Yes". 'And you believe that that's all right. I said "yes". Supposing your kids were going to the country and you knew that out of all the wells that there are to drink from there, nine out of ten of them, were fine, but one of them was filled with poison. You'd say to them 'don't drink from any of the wells', because we don't know which one is poison. You send your kids to the university and its more than a ten percent chance that they're going to lose their faith there. How can you do that?' Now you send your kids to the university and if they miss going to the synagogue for the afternoon prayer you don't think it's a tragedy, you don't think it's a matter of life or death. But we do.' And that debate about what is the right way to live your Jewish life and can you be in or of the surrounding society is the debate that goes on within the Orthodox world and within between us and the Hasidim.

There's a kind of ambivalence that the general community has towards Hasidim. On the one hand they see them as authentic and reminders of the past. These quaint Jews that they like to have pictures of on their wall. On the other hand, they find them really abhorrent and what drove this home to me once again was a call I had just the other day from a colleague of mine who's a real WASP and is teaching his section on Jews out in Bloomsburg, in western Pennsylvania. And he calls me up and he says, he leaves me a question on my voice mail 'quick, Sam, I got a question. One of my students asked 'how come those Hasidim smell so

bad?' What do I say to him? How come, home come, tell me, why do they smell so bad?' And of course, there's an answer. First the answer is they don't all smell so bad. But part of it has to do with the fact that they wear the same coat a lot of the time and they spend a lot of time in close quarters with one another. If you're part of the Hasidic community, you know that part of life there is being in the crowd, shtipping zach, pushing yourself up against the other. And naturally you sweat and it costs a lot of money to clean one of those coats. But they don't smell. What he's really referring to is the sense that we have that they are from another world and they smell different, they taste different. They taste different ?.

For the Hasidim the children are everything in a sense. First of all they place a great emphasis on the traditional Jewish requirement, observant mitzvah? if you will to have lots of children. They don't practice birth control. Or if they practice birth control, they practice a very primitive form of birth control. So they have lots of children. Why do they have those children. Well, I think there are symbolic, as well as religious reasons. One is, of course, that they're trying to reconstitute themselves, they're trying to bring back a generation that was lost, lost in the Holocaust and lost through assimilation and acculturation. After all almost every Jew can point to some Hasid in his background, including Jews who are no longer observant in any way or affiliated. So they have these children and the children are for them the heart and soul of who they are. The children have these capacities to first of all maintain an enthusiasm which the adults can't always maintain. Because for the children, everything is new.

Let me give you two illustrations of this. I was recently at the Bobover shtiebel for the putting in of a new Torah Scroll in the Bobover Rebbe's synagogue. And of course before the Rebbe danced in with the Torah, the whole crowd gathered up. And who were the most enthusiastic of the crowd, who were the one that climbed to the top rafters who are hanging literally from the shelves, and from the chandeliers? It's the kids. And although those kids seem as if they're marginal in some sense, because they don't count, they don't have an official role in what's going on. It's their eyes, it's their singing, it's their enthusiasm that makes the Hasidim feel, we are going to survive this America, we are going to survive into the end of time, until the Messiah comes. And so the children have to

be protected. They have to be protected in the schools. They have to be protected from the enclaves?. They're also the most vulnerable because they're attracted by everything from television to baseball cards. So instead of baseball cards, you give 'em Rebbe cards. Instead of television, you give them all the activities within the community. You create another world for them.

The other illustration I want to give you is that I was at, and I talk about this in my book, I was at the Breslover which is a group of very small, and very right wing, religiously right wing and mystical Hasidim, and as they prepared for the third meal on the Sabbath, the Shalosh Seudas, they moved and changed the space of the shul, they moved the bimah, the lectern to the side, where they read the Torah scroll and they set up the tables for the Shala Shudus. And the way they set it up was inside, surrounded by the adults, were the children. And I think in a way that illustrated in a very graphic way for me, where the children are. The children are surrounded by the adults. The adults protect them from the world outside, but they also look to those children for the fire. If the fire is still burning in the eyes and the hearts and the songs and the voices of the children, then you know, the future's intact. The most moving Hasidic tunes always have a point at which a young boys voice is heard. And that young boys singing makes everybody's goose bumps come up. Because that young boy is the voice of all young Jewish children and of course critical for a movement that senses itself to still be very marginal in Jewish life.

One of the issues, for Hasidim of course, as they maintain a discreet community and engage in this culture war. Saying 'we're not like the rest America, the rest of the West'. One of the problems for them is how do you do that and still make a living? Because going out to work forces you to come face to face with the real world and since much of the work that they do involves them in retail trade, or in some degree in trying to get money from that outside world, that place great strains upon them. I'll give you an illustration that for me, drove it home.

After I had come back from a year in Jerusalem during the time I was studying Hasidim and Chareidim there, I had occasion to go to one of the electronic stores in Midtown Manhattan that was really run by, and served by Hasidim, but where most of the clientele of course was not Hasidic. And I walked in there and at first I

saw all these Hasidim and I said "Ah, I'm home, these are the people, I've been studying all along, I know them, I can talk to them," But then I looked and I saw there's something wrong with this picture. There was a Satmar Hasid, standing behind the counter and he's talking to a customer, who is a woman wearing a very immodest dress, her head uncovered, the kind of woman he would never talk to face to face within his world and he's talking to her. And he says at the end "Will that be cash or change?" She answers the question. He fills out the slip, he hands it to her and says 'Take it to the cashier to pay, have a nice day.' I said to myself 'have a nice day?' This quintessential American expression, how could he say 'have a nice day'. That is already being swallowed up by America and I realized that that Hasid, every time he goes to work and says "have a nice day" to woman who are immodestly dressed, he is a way undermining that enclave culture, that culture war in which he is engaged in when he goes back home to Williamsburg. In Williamsburg he may walk with his head to the wall and shadowing his eyes from women and the women are all going to be dressed up and he's not going to say his fellow Hasidim 'have a nice day". He's going to say Shalom Aleichim or Vos Macht a Yid or whatever. Here is for me the real difficulty that the economic situation puts them in. How do you make a living and not get swallowed up by a life. Part of it of course is that they do need to make a living because more than any segment of the Jewish community, they have a very high Jewish bill They have the highest Jewish bill of all.

The real problem they have economically is that their Jewish bill as I call it is very high. How is it high? They have large families, they eat kosher food, and they don't eat any kosher food, they eat by and large glatt kosher food which means that there is more people involved in the preparation and the certification of that food. They don't send their kids to public schools, they have their kids in private schools that cost money. The places they live, they live in communities, they all want to live within walking distance of one another, so the property value in that community goes up, because it's a limited space. All of these things add up, plus there's a lot of money given in charity. In fact per capita, they give more charity, not in absolute terms, but in proportional terms, than any other segment of the Jewish community. They are really facing an enormous economic crisis. They spend a lot of years in school. The ideal is to have your son spend more time in school than his father did, but it's not the university that they want him to spend

it in, they want to spend time studying the Talmud and you don't make money studying the Talmud, not a lot of money. And when they do go into occupations, by and large, they are serving the Jewish community. They are the ones who are writing our Torah scrolls, they're the ones that are slaughtering our kosher meat. They're the ones who are selling us the diamonds in our wedding rings and some of our garments. And now also some of the electronics. But that places an enormous burden on them. And that economic burden has forced them in some cases to engage to in somewhat elicit behavior. For example, many of their yeshivas are dependent upon the fact that their students are getting food stamps. And I don't think that food stamps are necessarily aimed for that population, at least in the way that it was planned. Some of them are getting Pell grants. So there's a real problem for them, they want to be defined as a separate ethnic community and get aid and assistance under the kind of multi-cultural and ethnic acts of government that are there. So they have this real economic crisis, which on the one hand may force them to work and the work brings about compromises are you contact the outside world, or may force them to find sources of funding elsewhere, they are turning up at people's doorsteps asking for money from the very Jews that they castigate. And they realize that as those Jews who are becoming acculturated and assimilated give more to museums and symphony orchestras and their alma mater universities, there are not others who are taking their places to support the Jewish community. So they are on the precipice, the economic precipice and there isn't a lot of money coming in and that is their great great fear. That the entire structure of their life will be undermined, not just by the culture but also by the fact that they can't sustain it. It's a very expensive style of life.

One of the most vivid differences between Hasidic way of life and the contemporary American way of life is I think articulated in their attitudes towards marriage and sex and love. Part of this comes out of Jewish tradition, but I think what gives it a particular power and potency is that their attitude is so different from America. In America, the America that I live in and that most contemporary Americans live in, the relationship between love and marriage is such that you're first supposed to fall in love with someone and if you feel that that love is strong, then you get married. And I would say that you could even say that in some circles there sex, which leads to love, which leads to marriage. Love and sex can

sort of be exchanged, but the basic idea is that marriage is the end of all of this. For Hasidim, it's very different. First of all, all of their marriages are arranged. The idea is, the reason the marriages are arranged is not only because, that's different from America, but because love is after all a very disruptive element, romantic love can be very disruptive. You can fall in love with anybody g-d forbid, it's the wrong person. So they see marriage as a contract, as a relationship within the community. So first comes marriage. Now most of these young people who are about to, all of these young people who are about to get married haven't really talked about sex. That's a. They may have talked about it, but it's certainly not a legitimate topic of conversation. And they certainly haven't practiced it. Or if they have practiced it, they've done it in a very deviant way. Now I'm not saying that doesn't occur, but it certainly is not something that they talk among themselves about. And so the process is such that just before they get married, there's somebody in the community who acts as a kind of guide for them. This by the way makes it a lot easier to be a Hasidic parent. A non-Hasidic parent has to tell the facts of life to his children or her children. Hasidim don't have to worry about that. There's somebody set aside who does that job. And he does that job, or she does that job right before the marital night. And I remember when I was doing the research for my book, people telling me what it's like. The conversation, a typical conversation goes like this. The young man is brought in and the very thing that he has never been allowed to talk about he's suddenly talking about and he's talking about with a man who has a beard who is obviously a pious Jew and the man begins by saying 'I'm going to tell you something that you've never talked about before but don't worry, you're going to be all right. First thing when I'm going to tell you, Abraham, our father did it, Isaac did it, Jacob did it, your father did it, even the Rebbe did it. Then he proceeds to tell him about sex. And he tells him that that night to consummate the marriage, he's going to have to have sexual intercourse with the woman that's he's going to marry. Who he's likely met once perhaps or twice before, normally with a chaperone, there's no dating. After marriage come sex, and it doesn't come with love at first. It's very awkward, it's very frightening and after that comes love. And it emerges slowly.

Now we might look askance at that. Because it seems so foreign to us. Well, that it is foreign to us is good. It's part of the culture war that they are fighting. We

are this way, you're colored, we're black and white. You're sex before marriage and love before marriage, we have it afterwards. Their marriages tend to be more stable. They view love as something that one learns to grow into but they do have a great deal of problems with this. I remember one Hasid saying to me that he was just overwhelmed by this news of what he had to do when he was about to get married. He said he felt like somebody cut off his legs. And he walked out and he said 'this is extraordinary, how can this be' And so he was told by the guide, 'but look your father did it' And he blurted back to the guide 'my father did it with my mother, I have to do it with some strange woman'.

The relationship that Hasidim have with their neighbors is part of the overall relationship that they have with America. First of all, we have to understand that in many cases, their neighbors, they live.. Hasidim continue to live in the inner city. One of the things, or most Hasidim, not all, but most Hasidim. One of the things that accounts for that is that they live as a community and therefore, they can't move one by one. So they have very often taken a stance, sometimes ideologically so, for example, Hasidim in Crown Heights that they don't want to move. They're not going to be chased anymore. They're not going to be chased by America, they're not going to be chased by the goyim. They're going to stay, they're going to survive. So part of it is their ideology. So what is their relationship to this surrounding community?

First of all, it is identical with their relationship to America. They are in the neighborhood, but not of the neighborhood. Because they're in the inner city, sometimes that neighborhood includes black people. And so it appear at least from the surface, that really what they're saying is we don't want to be integrated with blacks. But the truth is, they don't want to be integrated with Americans. They view these blacks as Americans, as much as they're black, in effect, they're saying, 'We don't question your Americanness, your African Americanness, we don't question it, we don't want to have anything to do with you, not because you're black although I'm sure there is a racist element that creeps into it like in the rest of America. But essentially we don't want to have anything to do with you because you're Americans. And all the things that are part of your way of life are so alien to us. Drugs perhaps, or sex, or freedom of movement, or all of the things that are, even the music. So they keep to themselves and when there are

tensions as perhaps in Crown Heights with the surrounding African American community or in Williamsburg with the surrounding African American community, these Hasidim say 'look we don't want to invite you to our house, because we don't want to be invited to your house. Not because we have anything against you. We don't eat the same food. We don't have anything against you personally, we have things against you culturally. We don't want to share in your way of life. We view it as threatening and dangerous. In return, these local people see the Hasidim as folks of privilege because after all they have very often a stable community. They have possessions which they value. They have way of life that is totally engrossing and it seems as if they're turning their back on them. So they are put off by them and they seem to have no visible means of support and yet they have money because in part they own property. Real estate is a very good thing if you want to be a Hasid because it doesn't require a great deal of investment in time. You can be leading your Hasidic life so there is this tension and strain which often looks like anti-black racist but in a way it's ' we don't want to be with you and you don't have to be with us. Leave us alone to practice our way of life.

For the Hasidim survival of course is essential and critical. And part of their survival of course is a hearkening back to their roots in Europe. For a long time they couldn't go back to Europe. Europe, the Europe that they were attached to was locked in behind the Iron Curtain. And in addition to which, they didn't really have the resources and they were still struggling with America. But since the fall of the Communists, and the crumbling of the iron Curtain, there has been a steady but slow return to those places. Not to live. They know that there is no living in Eastern Europe and in Russia. By and large they understand as most Jews do that much of Europe, both western and eastern Europe, is a Jewish graveyard. But for them in this graveyard, there are places to which they're still attached. After all though for example Chabad and Lubavitcher Hasidim have been living in Crown Heights for several generations already, they don't call themselves the Crown Heights Hasidim, they still themselves after the town in Russia, Lubavitch. And the Belzer Hasidim don't call themselves the Israeli Hasidim, they call themselves after Belz. And the Bobover Hasidim don't call themselves the Boro Park and the Satmar don't call themselves the Williamsburg. They still identify themselves with these villages. These villages however now are in nostalgia and

in the rosy light of memory. And they go back to these places. And when they go back to these places first of all, they do what every Jew who goes back, who survived the Holocaust and goes back to these places does and that is they say, we're still here. And they come to people who remember their fathers and their grandfathers and they say you're alive and they yes we're alive. Not only are we alive but we have American dollars and you're going to do our bidding now. And those people become their drivers and they become their hosts. And so the Breslover Hasidim go back to the little village in Uman where their Rebbe, their first Rebbe, Rebbe Nachman is buried. And the town of Uman lives off of Breslover Hasidim coming to pray at the grave because Hasidim always pray at the graves of their Rebbes.

So the Hasidim come back and they demonstrate that they're alive and that they've survived and that they aren't about to be pushed away again. And the most potent example of this is Chabad or Lubavitcher Hasidim and when they come back to Russia. Chabad Chassidus is born there and in a way its life was very much affected by Soviet history. The Rebbes were imprisoned. Some of them were in effect handed over to the authorities by Jewish Socialists, the Yevsektzia, Jewish Communists and during all the years in the Soviet Union when religion had to go underground, Lubavitch was there, Chabad was there. Emissaries sent by the Rebbe who is now living in Crown Heights where the center of the community had moved. And when the Communists fell and when the Iron Curtain crumbled, Lubavitch rose again, came out from the underground. And when many of the Soviet, former Soviet Jews were looking for their identity and looking to once again to discover or rediscover that they were Jewish, Chabad was there and is there. And the remarkable thing about it is now that like so many of the other Hasidim they can come to the state authorities and say to them 'you thought we were gone? We're not gone, we're here, we're alive, more than ever. We'll show you we're alive, we're going to light candles in your public squares, we're going to open our synagogues, we're going to dress the way we've always dressed. We're going to sing in public Jewish songs. We are alive and we are going to redeem our people from this awful corrosive Communism just as we have redeemed them from American base values. We're going to save them, we're going to save Jews and we're going to be here when the Messiah comes and you're either going to be with us, or you're going to be gone.

For a Hasid to leave the community is an extreme action. Not to say that they don't. There's no question that they do as I have many times pointed out most Jews are the products of Hasidim who left their communities. So when we're talking about Hasidim leaving, the question is 'are Hasidim leaving today?' The fact is that there are only about 425,000 American Orthodox Jews of whom about a quarter are Hasidim and those numbers haven't been rising extraordinarily. So somebody's leaving somewhere. The problem is that we don't know exactly what happens to them when they leave. They in a sense blend in and disappear into the community. And what is it to leave. Why does one leave? I would say that there are probably as many reasons for leaving as there are people who leave. Some leave for intellectual reasons. They find it, it's just too difficult if they start reading things to look at the world through the narrow gauged perspective of Hasidus. Some of them leave because they want other adventures in life. If you're a Hasid, except for being a Chabad Hasid, where you're likely to be sent as far away as Katmandu or Madison, Wisconsin, if you're a regular Hasid, you know that your basically, the four cubits of your life are pretty much set out for you, you know where you're going to live. You know the kind of life you're going to lead and if you have spirit that is adventurous then, there's nothing there for you. Some leave because they are really not interested in this kind of life, they want a little bit more freedom to watch television, to go to a movie, to experiment sexually. So it's difficult. Although I have to say that I think it's easier to be a bit deviant and be in America than in Israel. In Israel a Hasid who isn't, they aren't able to keep him in the straight and narrow, the first thing they say is 'send him to America'. Because in America he can sort of do things that are not altogether kosher and still not be forced out of the world. Some of them leave for psychological reasons. But we don't know where or why.

Hasidim who leave first of all give up a community. I'll give you an example. I talked to Hasid a former Gerer Hasid. I talked to him about eight months after he'd left. And he said first of all 'he misses his parent'. He can't go home to be with his parents because in a way when he goes home to his parents all they do is try to convince him to come back. He misses his mother cholent on Shabbos. He misses the capacity to see his friends. He went for a walk with me in his Hasidic neighborhood and he walked right by his brother and his brother didn't recognize

him because he was wearing, this former Hasid was wearing dark glasses, he was shaved, he had an earring in one ear, he was like a non-person. So they lose a sense of community, they sometimes they lose funds, they don't know where to live. They lose an address. It's very difficult. And for women it becomes even more difficult because they're forced to suddenly take a responsibility for their lives that they aren't use to. So it is very frightening for a Hasid who thinks about leaving, it's not like a choice between 'well I live in Boro Park and I'm going to move to Manhattan' There Boro Park and then there's the end of the world. There's a corner and when you leave Boro Park, there's only darkness.

One of the questions that is often asked about Hasidim is what happens to the next generation? And I think there isn't a simple answer to this. Of course the next generation is crucial for Hasidim because of their promise. Because they are the hope for the future. But like all children, children need to find a way to separate from their parents. And they need to find a way of establishing their own identity. This is a generation of Hasidic young people who've grown up in an enclave in which the only world that is of any value is the Hasidic world. But in that Hasidic world there are lots more things to do. They have been exposed to books that their grandfathers and great grandfathers and mothers could never even dream of seeing. Most Hasidim today have a library that rivals the library of some of the greatest yeshivas in Europe, because of the affluence, because of the mass of this materials. And the young people spend a lot of their time reading these books. And when you go by the book you do things that are much more extreme than if you live on the street as it were. So you think, you find with these young people, in a way the mirror image of young people in a secular Jewish world. As young people among secular Jews or the non-Orthodox Jews have been more and more to the margins and doing less and less as Jews so the Hasidic young people have also been moving more and more to the margins, but doing more and more as Hasidim. And the paradox of here of course is that their parents like the parents in the outside non-Chareidei world, non-Hasidic world are proud of their children's' accomplishments in the university and careers which pulls them more and more to the extreme, so the Hasidic parents are proud of their children whose life in the yeshiva, whose life in books, whose life connected to tradition pushes them further and further to the side. Who are wearing white socks where there parents didn't wear white socks, whose beard is longer, whose

clothing is more modest. And yet in both cases, parents look at their children and understand that in that separation there is some element of rejection. So it is a bittersweet relationship that parents always have with children in a Hasidic world and of course in every world.

The Rebbe of course is at the heart of the Hasidic community. When a Hasid looks at his Rebbe he sees the embodiment and she I should say because for women it's no less important. The embodiment of the community. The Rebbe is the 'king', the collective representation, the flag, he's everything rolled up in one. The father, the intercessor with g-d. Sometimes, although a Rebbe, would be afraid to say it. I'm sorry, a Hasid would be afraid to say it, the Rebbes almost the face of g-d for him. As close as you can get. And of course for every Hasid it is crucial particularly at a gathering, at a tisch, to see the Rebbe, to share with the Rebbe to eat what he eats, to hear his words. I was at a Ger Rebbe, the Gerer Rebbe's Shala Shudus and this young boy, couldn't have been than eleven or twelve years old gets to me and he gave me a special spot where I could see the Rebbe and he's explaining to me. 'Of course, if you see the back of the Rebbe's head that's good, it's good, but it's not nearly as good as when you see his eyes, when you see his eyes this is a special segulah, it's a special feeling.' So you look at the Rebbe and when you see him he's always supposed to have an extraordinary face. A Hasid will always be happy to tell you. 'Doesn't he have a zissa punim, doesn't he have a sweet face, doesn't he, look at his eyes.' I mean the Rebbe is seen as somebody special. The real meaning of charisma, of somebody being super-ordinary not like other human beings and of course every Hasid sees in the Rebbe his future and his life and his promise.

While the Hasidim who look at the Rebbe see the embodiment of all their promises and all their hopes and their life, of course when non-Hasidim look at the Rebbe, I suppose they see an older man usually with a beard, they can't quite understand what the attraction is, they can't quite understand why everybody should be so interested in seeing him, after all they see him all the time, what's the big deal? And I think that in a way we can say that one person's charisma is another person's curiosity. There's not much there. But what does it mean I think to be a Rebbe, how does a Rebbe perceive his position. And here I have to say that it's probably one of the most difficult jobs in the world. It's like being a

father to an entire neighborhood, an entire community. I find it difficult enough to make decisions about how I should live my life, perhaps offer guidance to my four children, deal with the realities of the vicissitudes of life. A Rebbe has to make those decisions for all of his Hasidim. Who they should marry or whether that's a good marriage. Whether they're going to get well or not. What is the meaning of their lives, how they should organize themselves, where they should live. He's asked to be an intermediary with g-d. He's asked to perform miracles. That's a very very heavy burden to lay on anyone. And that's why I think that we find that among some dynasties, there are just not always children willing to take on that mantle of being a Rebbe is in my sense the most difficult job in the world. And require charisma, sensitivity, love even for people who are sometimes not all that lovable.

The Hasidic world like all the rest of the Chareidei or Ultra-Orthodox world strictly separates boys and girls, men and women by sex obviously. And the reason for that is.

The Hasidic world separates men and women, boys and girls almost completely. Part of that is because they believe that they have different, very different identities and very different missions in life. But another part of it has to do with their conviction, I would say, perhaps more than anyone else except the Freudians, these Jews believe that sex is at the heart of all human concerns. And they are very much aware of the fact that the libido, that sexual appetite runs the risk of really shredding the fabric of society, and of pulling people after their basest instincts, lust. I'll give you an example, very striking example, I heard the story so many times that for me it is sort of a paradigm.

A Hasid tells me that he saw in a hospital, which is the place that Hasidim come in closest contact with non-Hasidim, in the OB/GYN ward, after they've had children. He said he saw a man with a woman who'd just come out of the delivery room or the operating room, perhaps she'd just delivered a child, perhaps she'd had a miscarriage or whatever. And he said and the man, this is not a Hasidic man, couldn't take his hands off her. He said, 'see, all they think about is sex, sex, sex,'. He couldn't imagine that it might be a show of tenderness. Because in their world, the only contact between men and women is often governed by these

sexual appetites, so they keep the world strictly segregated. Men have their mission in life, and their way of living. Women have their mission in life and their way of living. And it is only of course within the context of the family that they come together. But even there older brothers and older sisters don't have a lot in common, don't spend a lot of time with one another. And even the Hasidic man, he's always running off to be with the Rebbe and one could argue that he spends more time with the community than he spends with his wife. In America that's changed somewhat and I think that's an example of Americanization. America has seeped in here, in spite of everything else in this enclave. So women have, they work more, they look very much more a part of America, they in some ways are able to enter into America in a more camouflaged way than the Hasidim and because they dress so differently, they can become part of America. And affluence of course plays a role in this. There is, even though the Hasidim are hurting for money, they have greater affluence here. And America does effect this somewhat.

Although the Hasidim live in their own enclaves, they don't live on islands and that means that they are affected by the surrounding culture, they have become Americanized. Sometimes they don't recognize how American they are until they compare themselves with Hasidim from Israel for example. I remember asking a Belzer Hasid in Israel 'What's the difference between a Belzer Hasid in Jerusalem and a Belzer Hasid in New York?' And he said 'Well, it's obvious, he's an American, he's a New Yorker.' Now of course to New Yorkers a Belzer Hasid may look like something very foreign. But to a Belzer Hasid in Jerusalem his New Yorkness is very apparent and it became apparent to me. Let me give you an example.

In Israel, when I spent time studying Hasidim there, I was very much aware of their unwillingness to stay in line, their pushing, their shoving, their breaking the rules. When I came to America, came back to America, I happened to go to a museum that during the Chol Hamoed of Succos, during the interim days of Succot, they were going to this museum and they stood in line and my wife turned to me and said 'look how American these Hasidim are, they stay in line, they have become Protestantized.' And it is apparent that much of America is attractive to them and it seeps in. When the Marathon goes by Williamsburg or

their communities they're out there giving water to the runners. That is, they feel an attachment to America, it's not just that they see America only as evil. America after all has been very good to them. They're certainly very much involved in political life. And part of that is because we've allowed them. When any politician wants to get the Jewish vote, he doesn't have his picture taken with someone that looks like me. He has his picture taken with Hasidic Rebbe. Because the Hasidic Rebbe in a sense is the icon, the little image, that represents Jews. He either goes to an Israeli politician or to a Hasid. And the fact of it is, that for most American Jews neither Israeli politicians nor Hasidim really represent them, but they have been transformed into symbols of America, or of Jewry, and Hasidim recognize that. So there a kind of love-hate relationship with America. They have become Americanized. Part of it has to do with affluence. They live in many ways an American Hasidic lifestyle. They've taken English into their Yiddish. They're the quintessential New Yorkers in many ways. They really know how to navigate their way in New York. And perhaps the last point I would make here is that they are testing America's commitment to multi-culturalism. If in America you can be ethnic and multi-cultural, these Jews are saying 'will you accept as full-fledged citizens even if we don't assimilate, even if we don't disappear, even if we don't look like the rest of America, even if we don't look like WASPs, will you give us the same rights and responsibilities?' And if America says " yes, you can be full-fledged citizens, we'll take you to Washington, we'll give the Rebbe a medal of honor.' If you do that, then we say 'America you've passed the test.' The test of America's willingness to be all things to all people is in the Hasidic world. If Hasidim can be true Hasidim in America then anybody a true American and be ethnic and black and green and red and yellow and whatever. Maybe not green

There is of course a difference in a way that young Hasidim and their elders see America. Their parents, in some cases now already their grandparents, came to America thinking ' this is a place where Judaism might not survive. Anxious about the future of Judaism in this country and particularly Hasidism. But the young people have grown up in an environment where they know that Hasidism can not only survive in America, but thrive in America. There is a self-confidence among the young. A willingness among them to challenge America, to demand of America that it make room for them. Their parents are proud of that. Their

grandparents weren't certain that it could happen. But the fact is that Hasidim today can gather by the thousands, they can take over Madison Square Garden, as sometimes they have. They can march down the streets of New York. They can have an impact in government, because they're certain that America will make room for them. It's a salad bowl where you can be all sorts of different things, no longer just a melting pot.

For Hasidim, music is critical, because in many ways, music is their link to the past. The songs call up all sorts of images and music becomes a kind of portable community. You can bring the sounds, the songs, the words that the ancients, as far as you're concerned, that your forebears, have sung and bring them into the present. And now of course with technology you just slip that cassette into your car radio and your car becomes an outpost of Belz, or of Vizhnitz. You can slip it into your cassette at home, in suburbia, and suddenly you're back in Eastern Europe or in Jerusalem or wherever your Hasidic center is. And music has this capacity to call out all those memories. The other thing that I think is important about Hasidic music is that it is always choral singing. It's always group singing. It always reminds you that there are many of you. You may be alone, but when you start singing, your voice joins with all the other people and you're not alone any more. The loneliness of, the lonely man of faith, the lonely Jew out there in the Diaspora, when he hears these other voices, that sort of overcomes loneliness and of course finally the music of Hasidus blocks out the noise, the cacophony, of the outside world, with its slogan earring and its' huckersterism and its violence and you hear the Rebbe singing and you see or hear his Hasidim singing then you can close your eyes and see a whole other world. The best way to learn, I'm sorry, the best way to listen to Hasidic music is with your eyes closed. Because when you close your eyes, you see a lot more of what you want to see than when your eyes are open. So you hear that music and it is transporting.

When you hear the Russian Army Band playing Jewish music, Hasidic music, you're essentially saying 'we have taken our soul and replaced theirs with ours. After all, you know, in Hebrew the word for blowing is 'linshome' which is also the same word as 'to breathe' which is also the same as the root for spirit. When the Red Army Band, is playing, blowing, Jewish tunes out of its' trumpets. It has in effect turned the trumpet into the Shofar and turned its' non-belief into Jewish

belief and we have taken over their souls and their spirit and faith comes out of the mouth of the people who had lost their faith.

The nastiest things that I've heard about Hasidim and maybe I've said some of them myself is 'they're close-minded, they're clannish, they smell, they have no concern for the rest of the world, they think they are the most and the only authentic Jews. They think the rest of us are lost. They demean us. They sometimes demonize us. They want us to pay their bills, but they don't think that there's anything legitimate about what we do. They want us to cure their illnesses, because we've gone to medical school, but they don't want to be doctors.

There's a wonderful story a Hasid once told me about a doctor who had become a Chozar Betshuva, who'd become observant and he lived in, we'll say he lived in Natanya in Israel and he asked his Rebbe, who was in Jerusalem, now that I've become a Hasid, should I move to Jerusalem? And the Rebbe said to him 'No, stay in Natanya because this way the people in Natanya, which is not a Hasidic community, will see that a doctor can be a Hasid and that's fine. But I don't want my Hasidim to see that a Hasid can be a doctor.'

Hasidic stories of course are another aspect of the portable culture. When you tell stories, or myths, like when you sing songs, you are essentially creating a world. Singing and telling stories are world building activities. So when these Hasidim tell the stories, they are in effect connecting themselves and their audience with a long tradition. There are so many Hasidic stories it's hard to pick one that is a favorite. But in one of the ones in which I end a book of mine was a Hasid asked a young man if he studied Talmud. And the young man said 'Oh yes, I've gone through the whole Talmud'. And the Rebbe asked or responded by saying, it's not have you gone through the whole Talmud, but has the Talmud gone through you. That's the way Hasidim talk, that is the experience is always to be internalized. You have to bring the world into you, you have to bring Jewish life into you, you have to breathe it in so that you can exude it as well.

I'd say the core of Hasidism is an attachment to a Rebbe and to his followers and disciples who are Hasidim. The essence of Hasidism is to be a member of a

Hasidic group and that means sharing its' way of understanding Judaism, which is that Judaism is a full-time occupation. It is one that requires spirituality, understanding, attachment to a fellow Jew and a conviction that no matter what, at the end of time, Judaism will survive and their particular brand of Judaism will guarantee their survival.

I think the revolutionary idea of the Baal Shem Tov was that you didn't have to be a scholar and that you didn't have to go by every jot and tittle of the law in order to be close to G-d and to be a good Jew. That piety, that spirituality, that a sense of attachment to G-d was sufficient.