

Shekinah – The Intimate Life of Hasidic Women

By **Lori Bosworth** - May 13, 2014

By Diana Condolo

Toronto is such a wonderfully multicultural city and we can see this diversity every day. While we have all crossed the paths of people of different cultures, have we all had a chance to talk to people of all cultures? I have seen Hasidic Jews walking throughout Toronto, but have never had the chance to talk to them. Even if I were to sit down to have tea with a member of this group, I would probably be too shy to ask questions about their way of living. The documentary, *Shekinah æThe Intimate Life of Hasidic Women*, opening at the Carlton and Elgin Mills Cinemas, bridged the path for me to another culture, another way of thinking.

This inviting film, directed by Abbey Jack Neidik, took me into the rarely seen lives of young Hasidic women, witnessing intimate details of how they live and what they believe. There is an enlightening exchange of perspectives when French Canadian public school girls ask the seminary girls provocative questions: they touch on topics that are not easy to broach.

The women featured in *Shekinah* are Chabad Lubavitch, a sect of Orthodox Hasidim, one of the more conservative branches of Judaism today. Their lives are structured with rules, which may seem constraining, but their lives are actually filled with such passion and joy. While many Westerners think not having intercourse before marriage is strange, Hasidic women believe 'kosher' sex (sex within marriage) is blissful and sacred, on par with Eastern Tantric philosophy. The women say Chabad Lubavitch is a liberating religion, which takes humans beyond their animal instincts and encourages them to attain their higher selves. For example, they believe prior to being born, the souls of man and women were one and later in marriage, the two souls reunite to become one. When reunited with its other half, the soul is complete and feels at peace.

Neidik's documentary is a compelling portrait of Hasidic women, highlighting the importance of a rich and supportive community, which creates a strong sense of belonging.

Directed by Abbey Jack Neidik

Screening Monday, May 12, 2014 at the [Bloor Hot Docs Cinema](#) at 3:30 p.m. & 6:30 p.m.

May 16-22, 2014 at the Carlton and Elgin Mills Cinema.

70 minutes.