



Shared by Temple Emanu-El Dallas Cinema Emanu-El Films: 2003-Present Discussion Questions

Looking for something fresh and exciting to discuss with your TriBE? Check out this list of Jewish films that were shown by Temple Emanu-El in Dallas. Each page groups together movies by the year they were shown and includes discussion questions related to each film.

2003

Crossing Delancey

What comment is the movie trying to make about the culture of the characters in this story?

How does the film's setting, characters and the characters' lifestyles reflect the experience of many Jewish and immigrant families who came to the U.S. in 19th and 20th centuries?

How do you balance modernity with maintaining traditions and customs?

Focus

The movie is based on the 1945 novel by Arthur Miller, which he says was written during a period of disillusionment with the stage; angered by American anti-Semitism even during the war against Hitler, he wrote it in a white heat. It's a didactic warning that it can happen here.

Since the time the novel was written and when the movie was released in 2001, how has the experience of being a Jewish American changed? Since 2003, when the film was shown during Cinema Emanu-El, how has the political and social climate changed to make the film relevant or not?

Have you ever experienced anti-Semitism or prejudice? What happened and how did you handle it? How has it informed your response to discrimination and intolerance of any kind?

The purpose of the movie is to take a man who might be willing to go along with anti-Semitic values, and show him what it's like to be discriminated against as a Jew. Do you think that personally experiencing intolerance, even mistakenly like Newman, changes how a person responds to it?

Promises

The city of Jerusalem has been the center of controversy for centuries. Current differences involve the struggle between Israel and Palestine for control of the city and the areas known as the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Rather than explore the conflict politically, Promises introduces viewers to seven Israeli and Palestinian children ranging in age between 9 and 13 who live with this conflict daily, and who have formed definite opinions about the roles of its participants. Living within 20 minutes of each other, "each growing up in very separate worlds," these children had never met until filmmaker B.Z. Goldberg brought some of them together for a day. Through the course of the film, we learn that these disparate neighbors have things in common.

What ideas, opinions, and biases shaped by cultural, religious, and historical influences do the children share?

Typically, one side blames the other, but unlike adults, these children suggest that a resolution could be possible. What ideas do these children voice for peacefully resolving this conflict?

Various factors and influences shape our values, philosophies of life and opinions (including on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict). How does this film reinforce your current beliefs or make you reexamine how you view the situation?

Train of Life

For many people a Holocaust comedy is oxymoronic. Is it possible to find humor in the ultimate 20th-century horror?

Does the humor strike you as funny or appalling? Why?

With its tale of the village fool who returns from over the mountains to his shtetl bearing the alarming news of the Nazi final solution, "Train of Life" belongs to a time-honored Jewish storytelling tradition in which an idiot with special intuitive powers proves invaluable to the community.

What other similar Jewish stories or folktales can you think of?

How do they relate to Jewish textual tradition?

2004

Dad on the Run

Analyze the use of Klezmer music in the movie.

Did the music enhance the story that the filmmakers were trying to tell?

How would you have used music in this movie?

What do you think of the tradition of burying the foreskin? Does knowing that the tradition comes from Jewish law (that the foreskin, like any part of the human body, needs to be treated with respect) change your opinion? There is a custom that some parents perform in which they bury their son's foreskin in their yard and plant a small tree seedling at the site. Then, as their son grows, his tree grows with him. How might this influence your point-of-view on this ritual?

Like the father in this movie, have you ever found yourself scrambling to perform an unfamiliar ritual? What do you think drives us to do such things?

Left Luggage

In the film, Chaja, a Jewish woman so indifferent to her Jewish identity that one of her best friends doesn't even realize she is Jewish, gets a job as a nanny for a family of Hasidic Jews. Chaja finds the Hasidim, with their traditional black garments, strict observances and unyielding patriarchy, absurd throwbacks but takes the job because she needs the money. After starting work, she bonds with the wife and mother, Mrs. Kalman and one of the children.

Have you ever judge someone based on appearances and then after getting to know them found that you have more in common than previously thought or find that you misjudge the person? Explain.

Chaja's parents are dealing with the scares of the Holocaust in different ways. If a psychologist were to look at their actions, what do you think he or she would say about these characters? Describe specific statements or actions that you think the psychologist would be interested in and the conclusions that you think the psychologist would draw from those statements or actions. Can you empathize or relate to Chaja's parents' struggle with dealing with their past? How?

Yidl in the Middle: Growing up Jewish in Iowa and Gefilte Fish

Can you relate to Marlene Booth's experience of growing up "different" in America? In what way?

How did religion, tradition, community and family affect Marlene Booth's development as a young woman? How have these things affected your development?

In what ways is Booth's story also her family's and community's story? How is your story your family's and community's?

The Producers

The Producers mocks Hitler. At a time when Americans are intent on eradicating Confederate imagery from public places, should the effort to remove all symbols of hatred (e.g. Hitler, swastikas) be expanded to artistic expression such as The Producers? Can comedy serve to convince people of the ridiculousness of a political point of view or leader? The Producers highlights and pokes fun of many Jewish stereotypes and experiences which is a common theme in Jewish humor used as both an "in-joke" and self-defense. Does the fact The Producers is written by a Jew who served in World War II make this kind of humor palatable? Does context matter?

2005

Divided We Fall

What makes a hero? If we reluctantly “do the right thing” or do it without enthusiasm or passion, does it make what we do any less heroic?

A *New York Times* review of the film says that the writer and director have constructed “a universe booby-trapped with impossible choices and ethical puzzles.” When have you been confronted with a difficult choice or ethical situation? How did you handle it? How do the filmmakers balance humor and gravity? In what ways does humor serve to explain the horrors of Naziism rather than sentimentalize or sugarcoat it?

The Nazi Officer’s Wife

There was a number of Germans/Nazis/Nazi Party members who helped Edith conceal her true identity and survive the war. What does that say about the humanity of those who were Nazi collaborators? Where do you think these people found the courage to take such risks?

Edith’s family did not strictly follow Jewish religious tradition when she was growing up. What role did her faith have in her will to survive in Nazi Germany?

Many people in Nazi Germany were hiding secrets of their own. What role did fear and trust play in Nazi Germany?

Quiz Show

What did Goodwin’s wife mean when she told him “You’re the Uncle Tom of the Jews.” Did Goodwin go too easy on Van Doren? Why do you think he reacted to Van Doren in the way that he did?

What did the success of Van Doren’s father have on the actions of his son? How have the success or failures of your parents affected your actions?

What harm was there in dishonest quiz shows? Why was the public so outraged when they found that the network had been feeding the answers to some of the contestants?

My Architect: A Son’s Journey

In your opinion, do we define ourselves more through our personal relationships or our professional accomplishments? Why?

Is there a particular person that you are curious about in your family who died when you were younger? What steps would you take to learn more about this person? Do you think the film director’s search to learn more about his father helped make up for his father’s lack of involvement in his life? If so, why? If not, why not?

At the time of his death, Louis Kahn was near bankruptcy. How do you define “success”?

2006

Walk on Water

Both Eyal and Axel broke out of the lifestyle that they had grown up with and lived for years. Describe what they broke out of and how they did it. In what way have you broken away from your parents or how you were raised?

Do you live in a right relation with the world? Describe the reasons for your answer and if you do not live in a right relation with the world, describe what you need to do to be able to “walk on water.”

How did the characters Axel and Eyal change over the course of the story and what caused those changes?

Watermarks

What role do sports play in the development of individuals, of a people as a whole, and to the human spirit? How have sports played in your own development?

Throughout the film we’re reminded that perhaps the fears and prejudice felt in 1930s Vienna was not totally gone.

Describe a scene that highlights the lingering or ingrained intolerance or prejudice. Share a time when you experienced something similar.

Facing Windows

Social and personal things often keep us apart, keep us from loving how and whom we really want and doing what we really want to do. Describe scenes from the film that highlight this. When have social and personal issues kept you from doing what you want or being with someone who you want?

One question the film asks is, “What is family?” What is family to you?

What comment does the film make about valuing and helping others without casting judgment?

Capturing the Friedmans

The film explores the role of repressed memory. For example, Arnold Friedman’s brother says he might have been molested as a child, but he honestly doesn’t remember. How reliable are our memories?

Have you ever held a strong belief or opinion about something, only to later discover that you were wrong? What factors have been most influential in shaping your definition of facts, or of reality?

Elaine and Arnold were married and had three sons together, yet he kept his darkest secrets from her. Is it ever possible to fully know another person?

Are the Friedmans a typical American family, or are they uniquely dysfunctional? Does every family have its own dysfunction if you dig deep enough? Did this film trigger questions you may have about your family?

2007

51 Birch Street

51 Birch Street asks some primal human questions about how well we know our family and is it possible to form a meaningful relationship with our parents later in life. Do you think we can ever really know our parents? If you were suddenly given the chance to know all about them, would you take it? Is it ever too late to establish a deeper connection with them?

The filmmaker's parents were married just after World War II. As Mr. Block delves into his parents' marriage, he also opens a window onto the history of the postwar American middle class. What does the film tell us about the placid suburban idyll of the late 1940s and 1950s and the effect of the cultural upheavals of the '60s and '70s? How might the commentary relate to your experience or your parents' or grandparents' experience as a married couple? What happens or how does it feel to return to a house that was once our home? Can it ever be the same as the place we knew as children? Why or why not?

Gloomy Sunday

What role does the melody "Gloomy Sunday" play in the film?

What character did you like the most? What was it about the character that made you have that reaction?

What role does World War II and the Holocaust play in the film? How does it relate to the theme(s) of the main story?

Hiding and Seeking

Is it possible to heal wounds and bitterness passed down through generations? Why or why not? Can we stop hatred from being passed down from generation to generation?

In what ways did the Holocaust affect faith in God and faith in our fellow human beings?

How does religion shape the way the people in the film view their "universes of obligation"?

When Menachem confronts the Rabbi about his intolerant lecture, how does the Rabbi try to justify his actions? How might you respond to him?

Match Point

To what degree are we prepared to set aside our moral qualms in order to indulge in greed and selfishness?

The character Chris feels that luck plays a crucial role in human affairs. What role do you believe luck plays in life?

If a rabbi were to look at the plot, theme and characters in this film, what do you think he or she would say about them?

Describe specific elements of the film, statements or actions that you think the rabbi would be interested in and the conclusions that you think he or she would draw.

2008

Making Trouble

Who would you include in a film about American Jewish women who “made trouble”?

Is there anything particularly Jewish about the humor of these women? If so, please give examples.

Is there anything particularly female about their humor? For example, how do issues of physical appearance, money, ambition, marriage, childrearing, illness, and loss figure in their comedy?

Joan Rivers’ comedy style is more risqué than that of most of the other women in the film. What stereotypes has she challenged as a Jewish woman comedian?

One of the “Saturday Night Live” writers discusses the hate mail Gilda Radner received after she appeared in a mock ad for “Jewess Jeans.” Why were some viewers so upset? Do you find the sketch offensive? If so, why?

Six Days in June

Six Days in June received clashing reviews from critics when it was released. Some raved about the film’s narrative tension and rhetorical balance; others berated it for what they saw as historical revisionism. These reviews were based, for the most part, on Six Days’ director’s cut, released to mark the war’s 40th anniversary. The American edition was so distinct from the original that director Ilan Ziv tried to remove his name from its credits before the film’s U.S. release. In general, the American edition was more sympathetic to Israel than the other versions of the film. The American version frames Israel as the war’s underdog, the international editions generally paint a more critical picture of Israel’s role in the war, depicting the nascent country’s attacks on Egypt and Jordan as strategic attempts to win political validation through an exposition of military might. The American Six Days emphasizes the threat that a Soviet Union-backed Syria posed to Israel; the international versions play down that detail. The international version’s reference to the estimated 100,000 Palestinians displaced during the conflict is gone in the U.S. release. So are some individual narratives of loss—the international versions, for example, include scenes of Palestinian refugee Abdel Latif Sayid, at the site of his former home, recalling his family’s displacement. The American edition omits that footage. PBS’s executive producer said, the versions “are different, and they ought to be different. You have to take into account your audience. You have to tell the story in a way that will be interesting and relevant to them.”

How does learning that there are two versions of the film affect your reaction to the film? How does the point of view presented align or not with your own? Is it difficult to watch or read something that you perceive as critical of Israel? Can we love Israel and be critical of her at the same time?

What insights did you gain from their frank accounts of how events unfolded, news and home movies?

The documentary concludes with an epilogue on the aftermath of the Six Day War. How did it leave you feeling about the future and the prospect for a resolution?

Out of Sight

Leonard believes our personal moral code is what authenticates each of us. The character Jack is an unrepentant bank robber who’s walked away from chances to change because that would force him to alter something fundamental about his character; seeing him at different stages in his life reveals both how much the code he lives by matters to him and how unlikely it is he’ll ever change. How does your personal moral code authenticate you? Have you ever walked away from a making any kind of change because it would force you to alter something about your character? Describe.

Karen Sisco is a strong, no-nonsense female in the male-dominated law enforcement industry. She can rack a pump-action shotgun or put down a sexual assault. She knows, when the crunch comes, not to give an inch. Discuss examples of similarly strong females in Jewish stories.

What values does Leonard bring to the forefront in the film?

2008 (continued)

The Harmonists

There is an ominous low-key, backstory in the film about the way that Nazism and anti-Semitism changed the fabric of German society even while many of the characters were busy denying it. How does the backstory advance the main plot?

An epilogue reveals what happened to all the Harmonists. One moved to California and eventually became the oldest active cantor in America. Were you surprised by this choice? Why or why not?

At the conclusion, the Jewish members of the group leave Germany. They have the money and they have their fame to win them their freedom. How does this make you feel? Is it a happy, if bittersweet ending? Does it trivialize the experience of those victims of the Nazis who were less privileged? Why or why not?

2009

Hineini

When Hineini was released in 2005, it opened a discussion about LGBT issues in Jewish schools. What has changed since then? From your perspective, what challenges remain?

The story Hineini tells is a coming out story, but the narrative can be seen in multiple ways. Besides coming out, what other narratives are part of the story? Share examples.

Izen had the courage to declare her sexual identity because her parents accepted her as she was. Many young (Jewish) gays and lesbians don't have that support, and struggle. Part of acceptance is being able to put oneself in another's shoes. When have you been challenged to imagine yourself as the other? What did you do?

My Father, My Lord

What does the film say about the nature of devotion to God? What happens when blind faith meets calamity?

The film is a drama about the rigors of Jewish Orthodox practice. What challenges does Orthodoxy pose to the natural curiosity of children and the unfolding of individualism?

Noodle

One review of Noodle said, "The film is a touching comic-drama of two human beings accompanying each other on a remarkable journey that takes them both back to a meaningful life." When have you experienced challenges or struggles and found that helping someone else has created an opportunity for you to deal with your own situation or come to a better place?

This film about grief and loss has been described as a "crowd pleaser" by critics. Why do you think that is? What did you like about the film? What didn't you like?

How are the major characters introduced? What does this tell us about what will happen in the story?

Live and Become

In what ways does the film explore the issues of racial and religious identity? Have you ever experienced an identity crisis? Explain.

The agony of exile is another theme explored in the movie. How is a Jewish filmmaker uniquely suited to explore this issue?

2010

For My Father

Do the main characters seem more at odds with their own cultures or with each other's? Why?

The filmmakers humanize a terrorist. What was your reaction to this humane portrayal of a suicide bomber? Is it possible to make friends out of an enemy? Why or why not?

Where you surprised by the ending? Why or why not?

Bruriah

What are some of the themes explored by the movie? Are they universal or particularistic?

What are the contemporary struggles of women, especially religious women, in Israel? Are these issues unique to Israel and/or religious communities? Explain.

How is sexual intimacy and the passing of knowledge linked in Bruriah?

Nora's Will

What does the filmmaker have to say about organized religion?

Does Nora's meticulous preparation for her death signify love or manipulation?

What is the best way to remember the dead? Should a human being's flaws be celebrated or swept under the rug?

Divan

What does the film or documentarian say about the value of religious artifacts? What do you think is the value of such objects? Would you take on a quest similar to Gluck's? Why?

What do you think about Gluck's personal journey? Is it possible to reclaim or hold onto traditions without sacrificing an independent mind? Explain. Can one be a part-time believer?

Discuss the power struggle between the filmmaker and her father.

2011

The Debt

In what ways does the film explore how the truth of the past can be shaded and illuminated by the imperatives of the present?

Heroic acts can be presented in a simplified way, but are often more complicated. How does the film probe the ethical and psychological complications that lie hidden beneath the story of simple heroism of the entrapment and killing of Nazi fugitive Dieter Vogel?

The film shows us how an airtight plan can be disrupted by chance, human fallibility and the messiness of experience. When have you had a “life” disrupt a well-planned event or trip, or plans for the present or future? How did you handle the disruption? What did you learn?

Brothers

What biblical sibling stories does the film’s storyline bring to mind? What are the parallel themes?

What does the film have to say about redemption and forgiveness?

In what ways is the relationship between Sam and Tommy similar to a relationship you have with a sibling? What ways is it different?

Just an Ordinary Jew

The film’s main character, Emmanuel Goldfarb wants to be nothing more than “just an ordinary Jew” but he cannot escape the extraordinary circumstances of history. What emotions does the request to speak to a class about being a Jew in modern German spark in Goldfarb? Share a time when you just wanted to be an ordinary Jew or ordinary [fill in the blank].

If a rabbi were to look at Goldfarb what do you think the rabbi would say about him? Describe specific statements or actions that you think the rabbi would be interested in and the conclusions that you think he or she would draw from those statements or actions.

Depth of feeling is what makes a film worth watching. Of the many feelings expressed in the film, with which are you most familiar?

Wrong Side of the Bus

What is the price of being a bystander?

How does a man who lost fourteen relatives in the Holocaust become complicit with a racist system?

Flummoxed by the generosity of the black South Africans who say they have forgiven the Apartheid regime, Sid is himself unable to forgive the Afrikaners, who he always regarded as the enemy, akin to Nazis. In an unexpected encounter, he comes face to face with his own prejudice. Joining a ‘Facing The Past’ workshop, he feels for the first time a sense of belonging and is overwhelmed with emotion. Yet he still appears stuck in his dilemma as a bystander and his sense of guilt. Who is there to forgive him? How does he get to forgiveness?

In his quest to understand the past, Sid seeks out victims of Apartheid, former colleagues who stayed to make a difference and political activists such as Judge Albie Sachs, measuring his own stand against theirs. How do they regard him now? In what way could he have acted differently?

2012

La Rafle

How does the director use the opening of the film to foreshadow the Vel' d'Hiv Roundup of July 1942?

The film is about redefining a moment in history that went ignored for decades – the event went unacknowledged by the French government until the 1990s. In what ways is the film about the French speaking to themselves about their own story of extreme complicity and betrayal?

At times, the director closely links the Jewish families and the people making the decisions to oppress and exterminate them. How does this illustrate the power of xenophobia to drive action? How does it show how easily the unthinkable can be made routine by bureaucracy?

The Bubble

How does Ashraf turning up at Noam's apartment affect the characters' lives?

The Bubble is the story of a group of young people who live in Tel Aviv, Israel. How do the characters navigate living their life and the difficulties of living in Israel's reality?

What did you like and dislike about the film? What did you learn? What thoughts or response did the film provoke in you?

Anita

What happens when we lose the person who is our anchor, who links us to the world? If you experienced this kind of loss, share what it felt like and what you did to re-ground yourself.

What does the film say about resilience?

What was the strongest emotion that you felt when watching the film?

The Matchmaker

What comment is the filmmaker trying to make about the culture of the characters in this story? What does it say about Holocaust survivors and Israel's treatment of them?

The theme of a story is the general idea or insight about life expressed by the author. Theme is a universal and meaningful concept that emerges from the characters' actions and from the outcomes of conflicts described in the story. Theme is often thought of as the lesson that the author is trying to teach the reader or audience. More than one theme can be included in a work of fiction; however, there is usually one primary theme that ties together all of the elements of a story. Usually, a theme can be expressed in one sentence. What is the primary or central theme of this story?

How does Yankele change the life of Arik? How does Arik change the life of Yankele?

2013

A Bottle in the Gaza Sea

The filmmaker presents an apolitical view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It depicts the hardships that exist in Gaza and the fear and threat of random missiles and suicide bombers in Israel. How did this presentation of the situation make you feel? What was the strongest emotion that you felt when watching the film?

What is the message of this movie? Do you agree or disagree with it? Why?

The film, an international co-production with Canadian participation that was shot in French, Hebrew and Arabic, is based on the French book by Valérie Zenatti. How might a screenwriter and/or director from the United States have approached the story?

Jews in Baseball

Jews in Baseball explores important social or political issues through the lens of sport. Describe any specific social or political issues that the story highlights. What did you learn about these issues from the film?

Historians and two baseball-loving rabbis relate the stories of Jewish players to the turbulent history of the last century. What did they have to say? Describe specific statements that highlight their point-of-view.

One reviewer said the film “strikes out a stadium load of assumptions.” Do you agree? Why or why not?

Eichmann’s End

What did you learn about Eichmann’s capture?

What was the strongest emotion that you felt when watching the film?

What motivates the protagonist(s) in his/her struggle against Eichmann? What motivates Eichmann to resist?

David

David is first and foremost a story of friendship between two boys, but the film raises other subjects. What questions does the film ask about the boundaries of our cultures and religions? Share specific examples. What makes these boundaries both static and fluid?

Two boys, both of conservative religious backgrounds, find commonality in each other. What does this show about the similarities in the positions of both the Arab and orthodox Jewish communities in America? How do they both strive to live modern lives while retaining their core religious and cultural virtues?

How does the struggle between assimilation and modernity and maintaining traditional religion and cultural practices in the film relate to the immigrant experience in America? How do the children of immigrants work or struggle to retain their religious or cultural identity while becoming a part of the fabric of America? Is this experience unique to immigrants? How have you had similar struggles?

2014

Zaytoun

How convincing is the storyline? Why or why not?

The film explores a liminal space. Describe how this in-between is explored in the story, between characters, in the setting of the film.

Zaytoun is a film about the potential for transcendence through friendship and the mutual initiation of two characters into their respective humanity. How realistic is it to find such beauty in the midst of a nightmare? Explain. Have you found joy or beauty in a difficult situation in your life?

My Australia

The film explores the struggle to form an identity in a new country, while trying to build a new life in a foreign country. When have you experienced something similar? Have you ever had to build a new life in "strange" land? What was it like?

Have you ever tried to conceal something in order to protect another? How does it feel to live with a secret?

What feelings did you share with any of the characters in the movie?

Putzel

What did you like best about the movie? Why?

Did anything that happened in this movie remind you of something that has occurred in your own life or that you have seen occur to others?

What part of the story told by the movie was the most powerful? Why?

Rafting to Bombay

The film expresses and causes viewers to feel many emotions. What emotions did you feel? What was the strongest emotion that you felt when watching the film? Of the many feelings expressed in the film, with which are you most familiar?

What were you thinking as you finished watching the film?

The significance of the story is determined by the power of its comment on the human condition. What comment is being made in this movie about what it is to be human? What comment is being made about what it is to be a Jew?

2015

Casino Jack

Abramoff was an observant member of his temple yet, somehow at his core, he had no principles and no honesty. Can you think of other examples of “religious” individuals who don’t seem to embrace the ethical foundations of their faith? Can the values and lessons of religion and religious observance be disconnected from ritual practice? When have you experienced a ritual or practice becoming so rote that it loses meaning for significance?

Abramoff used some of the stolen money for good works. What happens when a benefactor gets embroiled in a scandal after a donation has been made? How should a nonprofit react? What would and should prompt a nonprofit to return a donation from a “tainted” donor that has been accepted in good faith? Can charitable cleanse a corrupt individual? Why or why not?

When a scandal happens and the person or people involved are Jewish, the Jewish community often reacts, “Not good for the Jews.” Why do Jewish criminals make us nervous? What do we as Jews fear?

Ida

What was your reaction to the way the film was shot? How do you think the filmmaking enhanced or detracted from the story?

Ida has been strictly raised in a convent for most of her life. She has no recollection of her birth parents or aunt. What does Ida’s silence “say” when Wanda tells her that she is a Jewish nun?

When Wanda asks about Ida’s family or about any Jews for that matter, how do most people respond? What might their responses signify?

After viewing *Ida*, can you relate themes of the story to your own thoughts, feelings, or struggles? What themes interested you the most? Did the film raise any questions about issues facing society today?

Hava Nagila

It is instantly recognizable – musical shorthand for anything Jewish, a happy party tune that you dance to at weddings, bar mitzvahs and even at Major League Baseball games. It conjures up wistful smiles, memories of generations past...and no shortage of eye rolling. But as you discover in the movie, the song is much more than a tale of Jewish kitsch and bad bar mitzvah fashions. It carries with it an entire constellation of history, values and hopes for the future.

How does Hava Nagila encapsulate the Jewish journey over the past 150 years? How does it express and sustain identity, transmit lessons across generations, bridge cultural divides and connect us all on a universal level?

Hava Nagila entertains and makes us laugh; but it also reminds us of the power of melody to go deep and to bring a celebration or memory to life. What other songs trigger powerful memories for you or act as a similar catalyst to a joyous celebration?

Why do you sing and dance to Hava Nagila? What does the song mean to you?

Waltz With Bashir

What is the film’s message?

What were you thinking at the completion of the film? What emotion(s) were you feeling?

How might a director from the United States have approached the subject of the film?

2016

The Woman in Gold

Why do you think Randy risked so much to get Maria's painting back, even after she was ready to give up?

Why did the Nazi curator at the Austrian Gallery change the name of the painting?

What did you learn from the film? Have you ever fought hard to reclaim a family heirloom or something that belonged to you?

Above and Beyond

Would you risk everything—your future, your citizenship, even your life—to help a brother in need? Why or why not.

When was a time when you were heroic?

How does this historical documentary have relevance today? What insights and information in Above and Beyond help us understand current events in the Middle East?

What is a "decisive moment"? After watching these interviews, in what ways do you think the efforts of these young men in 1948 affected their entire lives? Have you or any of your family members ever experienced a "decisive" moment?

A Borrowed Identity

Have you ever had an identity crisis? When was a time when you adopted, borrowed or "tried on" an identity? How was this part of a personal transition?

How does society and cultural force identity choices on Eyad? How has society and cultural forces forced identity choices on you?

A Borrowed Identity, written by Sayed Kashua, an Arab-Israeli journalist, details Israel's treatment of its Arab citizens. In what ways does the predicament of families in the film reflect the conflicts of the state?

Deli Man

In what ways is the story of the American deli the story of Jews in America?

How is the Jewish deli the "succulent heart" of Jewish cultural life? In what ways does the story of the deli reflect the deterioration of the old, traditional urban block and neighborhood – the epic synagogues, Mom and Pop storefronts, etc.?

Ziggy says in the film, "I'll never forget. I looked around the room, it was all sixty and seventy year old people. I said to myself: 'Who is going to perpetuate our food if I don't do it?' That was my calling. The next day I went back to my dad and my uncle and I said, 'I've had enough of this fancy shmancy business, I'm going back into the delicatessen business.'" Have you ever had a similar moment? When was a time when you felt called to do something or felt a responsibility to make a certain choice or act?

2017

Toyland/Denial

What are your initial reactions to Toyland?

Have you ever made a split-second decision that had long-term effects?

At the end of Toyland, we see the old family pictures displayed on the piano. What role do you think those pictures played in helping David and Heinrich to remember? How does that relate to our remembering of the Holocaust today?

Why do you think these two films were chosen to be viewed together? What is your reaction to viewing them in one sitting?

As the defense team identified how they would present its case in Denial, several decisions were made with which Deborah Lipstadt did not initially agree, including not having her testify and not having survivors testify at the trial. What was the thinking behind these decisions? What do you think the team meant when it announced, "There is no strategy; we will box him in with the truth"?

What was your reaction to Justice Gray asking if someone can be honestly anti-Semitic or honestly hold anti-Semitic views and whether someone can be accused of lying if they believe what they are saying?

Lipstadt, while a strong believer in free speech, also stresses that not all opinions are equal. Consider your own thoughts about "free speech," and how, if at all, this case has caused you to think about whether deliberate falsification of facts should be protected by free speech. Do you agree or disagree with Lipstadt's premise that "not all opinions are equal"? Why or why not?

On The Map

The game between Maccabi Tel Aviv and the Russians in 1977 was about more than sports. What was going in the world at the time that made this match-up so dramatic?

How did the story of the Israeli team make you feel? Did you feel this way because you identify as Jewish or are part of a Jewish family? Would you have felt similarly if you weren't part of the Jewish people?

What does the interest of Israel's most important political leaders, including Moshe Dayan and Yitzhak Rabin, in the development and success of the Tel Aviv team reveal about the intimate relationship between the nation's cultural and political success?

In Search of Israeli Cuisine

In Search of Israeli Cuisine puts a face on the culture of Israel, profiling chefs, home cooks, vintners, and cheese-makers drawn from the more than one hundred cultures that make up Israel today – Jewish, Arab, Muslim, Christian, Druze.

What kind of portrait of the Israeli people emerges through the story of food?

Would you say that this is a film is just about food? Why or why not?

How can food serve as a change agent? Is it possible for enemies to break bread? How does the film deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict?

Barney's Version

Is Barney a strong or likeable character. What does he do to earn viewers' interest or admiration? What does he do wrong throughout his life? Does he learn anything? Do his mistakes make him more or less appealing?

Why do you think Barney and all his friends drink so much? What consequences does it have in their movie lives? What consequences might it have in real life?

Barney meets many women during his life. How does he know that Miriam is the one that he's truly in love with? What does he do to deserve her love?