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JECC Ratner Media & Technology Center

Recent DVDs Available at the RMC

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas. Burbank, CA: Miramax, 2009.

94 min. Rated PG-13. The film is based on the book of the same title by John Boyne. The story takes place at Auschwitz and is told through the innocent eyes of the commandant's eight-year-old son Bruno. Bruno adventures into the woods and meets a young Jewish boy who is a prisoner in the concentration camp. An unlikely friendship develops through the barbed wire surrounding the camp. A study guide is available. Recommended for grade 9 and above due to the shocking and disturbing ending.

The Case for Israel: Democracy's Outpost. Doc Emet Productions, 2008.

The Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz argues that real peace in the Middle East can only occur when the Palestinians, Arabs and their allies value the creation of a Palestinian homeland more than they oppose the presence of a Jewish state. Through incisive conversations with key judicial, political and academic leaders, Dershowitz refutes deeply entrenched misperceptions about Israel's history, Jewish claims to a homeland, and individual rights under Israel's democratic system of government, the security fence, and military conduct in the face of terrorist attacks. Directed by Gloria Z. Greenfield and Michael Yohay. (For grades 11 and above).

Children of the Sun. Israel: Lama Films, 2007.

70 min. Hebrew with English subtitles. A documentary about the first *kibbutzim* in Israel. It is collection of footage shot at the *kibbutzim* between 1930 and 1970. Adults share their experiences as children of the *kibbutzim*. It received the honor for the Best Documentary at the 2007 Jerusalem Film Festival. Directed by Ran Tal. (For grades 9 and above).

Defiance. Hollywood, CA: Paramount/Grovesnor Park, 2008.

136 min. Rated R. An outstanding film based on the true story of the Bielski brothers. During the Holocaust, the brothers escaped to the forests of Eastern Europe and organized the Jewish Partisan resistance fighters against the Nazis. Starring Daniel Craig and Liev Schreiber. (For adults).

Did Herzl Really Say That? Israel: Shula Spiegel Prod. (For grades 9 and above). 50 min. Hebrew with English subtitles. Two men, Oren and Yanay, interview people in Israel about thought-provoking topics in the following documentaries:

- ***And if I Forget Thee*** – 2006. Oren and Yanay meet with several young Jerusalemites, secular, ultra-Orthodox, and Arab to try and discover whether there is hope of revival for Jerusalem, fraught with crises of poverty, neglect and outright abandonment. Oren and Yanay, both Jerusalem natives who have nevertheless left the city they love for Tel Aviv, wish to find for opportunity, night life, friends, and most importantly, religious and cultural tolerance. They examine whether Jerusalem is really withering, and whether there is hope that young people like themselves will ever return.
- ***Israel-Our Home?*** - 2006. Immigrants from the former Soviet Union, are not forced to join and blend in the Israeli melting pot. The reason for that is their huge number, but also the process of privatization and de-collectiveness which the maturing Israel is going through. This documentary examines how "Russian-ness," affects Israeli identity, how it affects the "Israeliness" of all, and the impact of Russian cultural influence on the old Israeli society.
- ***The Transparent Kippa***. – 2005. Herzl envisioned an old-new state and planned every detail. Among other things, he spoke of what a religious leadership should do, how Jews and Arabs should get along, and voiced opinions about Jerusalem. Oren Harman and Yanay Ofran embark upon a personal journey to the heart of contemporary "Israeliness." This film explores the phenomenon of a growing number of Israelis who do not feel at home with observant Jews or the secular majority. Too worldly to lead a fully religious life, but too spiritually-minded to remain wholly secular, the people in this film revisit a dichotomy that has defined Jewish society in Israel for many years.
- ***We Will Return, Eventually***. - 2006
The narrators travel to NYC and interview people who have emigrated from Israel. They speak to the emigrants about living abroad and about their relationship to Israel.

God on Trial. Boston: PBS/Hat Trick Productions, 2009.

86 min. While awaiting the decision if they will be killed or put to work, prisoners at Auschwitz hold a rabbinical court putting God on trial for the atrocities of the Holocaust. They ask the question, "How can there be evil in a universe rule by an all-powerful, benevolent God?" (For grades 9 and above).

Here I Am (Hineini). Jamaica Plain: MA: Keshet, 2007.

60 min. Chronicles the story of one student's courageous fight to establish a gay-straight alliance at a Jewish high school in the Boston area and the transformative impact of her campaign on everyone involved. Beyond the struggle to create a supportive environment for gay and lesbian students and teachers at the school, this is a story of a community wrestling with the very definition of pluralism and diversity in a Jewish context. The RMC owns the curriculum that coincides with the film. Directed by Irena Fayngold. (For grades 9 and above).

Jellyfish (Meduzot). Israel: Zeitgist Films, 2007.

78 min. Hebrew with English subtitles. Stories of the struggles of three women in Tel Aviv. Batya, a lonely waitress, discovers a mysterious young girl in the sea. Keren is a newlywed who constantly complains. Joy is a Filipino migrant worker trying to support her son back home. (For grades 11 and above).

Kedma. Israel: Kino, 2002.

100 min. A drama about a group of European Jewish refugees who arrive at Palestine in the critical year of 1948. Carried on the deck of the freighter *Kedma*, they come ashore to find not the Promised Land of milk and honey, but a war-torn desert in the bloody throes of transformation into the state of Israel. Rescued from a British army ambush at beachside by Palmach Jewish guerillas, the *Kedma*'s ragged refugees are remade into soldiers expected to offer their lives to defend a nation that does not yet exist in a land they've never known. Directed by Amos Gitai. (For grades 9 and above).

Let Us Affirm. (U'Netane Tokef). Israel: Israel Broadcasting Authority, n.d.

30 min. The *Kibbutz* Bet HaShita was attacked during the *Yom Kippur* War. The documentary interviews *kibbutzim* from Bet HaShita about what *Yom Kippur* means to them. (For grades 9 and above).

Live and Become. Israel: Memesha Films, 2008.

143 mins. Hebrew with English subtitles. During the 1984 Operation Moses airlift from Ethiopia, a Christian woman sneaks her son onto the plane with a Jewish woman. The Jewish woman dies in Israel. The boy is adopted by a Jewish couple, but encounters prejudice in Israel. His adopted mother helps him overcome the obstacles and "live and become" which was his natural mother's wish for him. Directed by Radu Mihaleanu. (For grades 9 and above).

Moments 2005: Jerusalem. Israel: Ruth Diskin, 2005.

60 min. 15 short films by prominent filmmakers in Israel who share different perspectives about Jerusalem. The shorts include: robots taking over the Temple Mount; an Australian zookeeper of predators at the zoo in Jerusalem; an Arab man who cheers for the Israeli team Beitar against the Arabs; two satirical cartoons; an Orthodox man who clashes with his neighbor who is a rapper; a kindergartner celebrating Yom Yerushalim; a man trying to fulfill his father's legacy of photographing Jews and Muslims getting along; a woman whose father has a stand in the market; a policeman in Jerusalem; a woman recalling visiting her grandparents in Jerusalem and Western Wall repairmen. Warning: contains foul language, but is a really great set of films. (For grades 11 and above).

My Father My Lord. Israel: Kino, 2008.

72 min. Hebrew with English sub-titles. Rabbi Eidelman is a pious, respected elder in a *Hasidic* community. He rarely speaks to his only son Menahem about anything other than prayer. His wife Esther feels that her husband is too focused on Torah and prayer. A vacation at the Dead Sea meant to reconnect the family brings the ideological rift between the boy and middle-aged man to a biblically and dramatically tragic climax. The film is a biblical parable of Abraham and the binding of his son Isaac. The story is based on an ultra-Orthodox community in which the director, David Volach, was raised. (For grades 9 and above).

Noodle. Israel: NMC United, 2007.

PAL, 90 min. Hebrew with English subtitles - can only be viewed on computers. At thirty-seven, Miri is a twice-widowed, El Al flight attendant. Her well-regulated existence is suddenly turned upside down by an abandoned Chinese boy whose migrant-worker mother has been summarily deported from Israel. The film is a touching comic-drama in which two human beings -- as different from each other as Tel Aviv is from Beijing -- accompany each other on a remarkable journey, one that takes them both back to a meaningful life. Directed by Ayelet Menahemi. (For grades 11 and above).

Praying with Lior: Faith Can be Simple. New York: First Run Features, 2007.

87 min. A moving documentary about Lior Liebling, a boy with Down syndrome. Lior always had the ability to pray with intensity. He was called the "Little *Rebbe*." Before his mother's death, she wrote that she wondered how his Bar Mitzvah would be. This story follows Lior through his Bar Mitzvah. Produced by Ilana Trachtman. (For grades 7 and above).

Tehilim. Israel: Kino, 2009.

95 min. Hebrew with English subtitles. In Jerusalem, a middle-aged father and husband, Eli unaccountably vanishes after a car accident. The legal and emotional crisis gradually immerses Eli's wife and two young sons in a real-life nightmare redefining the boundaries of everything they know, love and believe. While the wife, Alma, navigates a bureaucratic maze of social services and paperwork, the elder son Menachem, has his faith and adolescent peace of mind shaken. Directed by Raphael Nadjari. (For adults).

Waltz with Bashir. Culver City, CA: Sony Pictures Classics, 2009.

90 min. Hebrew with English subtitles. Rated R. An animated film in which Ari Folman, the director, confronts buried memories. Folman meets with an old friend with whom he served in the First Lebanon War in the 1980s. His friend is troubled by nightmares from the Conflict. However, Folman can not recall anything from the war. He, then, descends into the nightmare of the War. A teacher's guide is available. (For grades 11 and above).

West Bank Story. Israel: Ari Sandel, 2005.

22 min. A musical comedy set in the fast-paced, fast-food world of competing falafel stands in the West Bank. David, an Israeli soldier, falls in love with the beautiful Palestinian cashier, Fatima, despite the animosity between their families' dueling restaurants. A funny take-off of ***West Side Story***. (For grades 9 and above).