BERKSHIRE JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

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KNESSET ISRAEL

34 YEARS



Virtual BJFF 2020



BERKSHIRE JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL A lot has happened in the world since we last saw each

A lot has happened in the world since we last saw each other. Doesn't it seem like another era when we watched that last film, handed in our evaluation form, and drove out of the Lenox High School parking lot, the late summer Berkshire breeze bringing our thoughts to fall and the coming High Holidays?

While we're not able to offer you a Berkshire summer night, we are able to offer fourteen fabulous films that will make you smile and make you hopeful. We're presenting films about people learning to accept their differences, films with stories of strong women and girls, and of young children using their hearts and minds to make the world a better place.

We're grateful to be able to bring these films to you on a new platform without having to cancel the festival. With a huge amount of effort and dedication we are proud to present the BJFF as a virtual film festival. We want to thank our volunteers who've worked tirelessly this year toward that end.

We would also like to thank those businesses, professionals and donors who purchase ads to support our film festival. We are especially grateful to the Jessie and Bernard Wolfson Family Foundation, John Bergman Charitable Trust, Spitz-Tuchman Charitable Trust, the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, Berkshire Bank, and Greylock Federal Credit Union, for their underwriting and generous grants, enabling us to offer a rich variety of award-winning films and illuminating speakers. We also thank our generous donors whose belief in Jewish education helps us sustain and grow the Knesset Israel Hebrew School where we offer a dynamic, enriching program of Jewish education for our young people, K through 12.

Thank you all for your loyalty and support of the Berkshire Jewish Film Festival and the Hebrew School of Knesset Israel.

Stay safe and healthy, Judy Seaman Artistic Director BJFF

The Film Festival Committee

Our sincere appreciation to all of our committee members who work very hard throughout the year to bring you an exciting and successful festival!

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We are grateful to the Jewish Arts and Cultural Initiative of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation for supporting us in part over these many years. We would like to thank our loyal fans and supporters who return every year to enjoy our outstanding film offerings!

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Welcome.

Thank you for attending the Berkshire Jewish Film Festival, which in turn supports the Hebrew School of Knesset Israel.

Knesset Israel is an innovator in the rapidly changing world of American Judaism. We create authentic and meaningful points of connection and spiritual experiences for contemporary Jews, and cultivate a community to make a positive difference in the world. Our flourishing congregation is inclusive and supportive, and accepts a wide range of beliefs and Jewish practice. People of all ages, religious backgrounds, genders and orientations find a supportive community here.

Facing this challenging time of pandemic and social distancing, the leaders of Knesset Israel have worked tirelessly to continue our holy work of inspiration, connection and accompaniment of each other on life's journey. Informed by Torah and mitzvot, we have discovered new ways to daven, study and give tzedaka. Whether on Zoom or in person, we welcome broad participation in our classes, services and programming throughout the year. And we appreciate the generous support of every participant in the Berkshire Jewish Film Festival.

Our Synagogue website at www.knessetisrael.org is an up-to-date source for our schedule and information about Jewish life in the Berkshires.

L'shalom, Rabbi David Weiner rabbiweiner@outlook.com



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Oscar Best Actor

Helene Berger Bobbi and Mike Cohn Renee and Steven Finn Roselyn and Edwin Kolodny Patricia Lipman and John Huffaker Ellen and Stuart Masters

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KNESSET ISRAEL welcomes members and guests from a very wide range of backgrounds and points of view. We are highly participatory and fully egalitarian, extending equal participation to women and men. At the present time, we are holding Kabbalat Shabbat services, Havdalah, and Minyan on Tuesday and Thursday evenings at 7 pm, as well as on Sunday mornings at 8:45. These are all on Zoom. Please contact the Synagogue for more information.

Knesset Israel, founded in 1893, is a dynamic Conservative congregation affiliated with the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

For further information, please call the Synagogue office at (413) 445-4872 or visit our website at www.knessetisrael.org.

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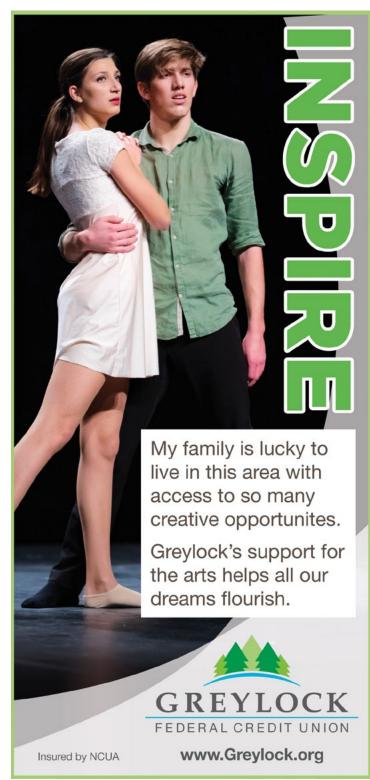
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Mrs. G

The incredible story of how one woman created the world's most famous swimsuit company. Mrs. Lea Gottlieb, known as 'Mrs. G,' started Gottex in her tiny Tel Aviv apartment. A Holocaust survivor with endless creativity, unbridled passion, and a dominant personality, Lea Gottleib was able to climb to the pinnacle of the glamorous fashion world. The film explores the challenges she faced navigating complex relationships with her two daughters, making complicated personal decisions, while trying to keep her business afloat.

Documentary, 54 minutes • Hebrew (English subtitles) Directed by Dalit Kimor

TALKBACK: 5 pm, Director Dalit Kimor

A Zoom link for talkbacks will be emailed to all ticket buyers 15 minutes before the start of the film.



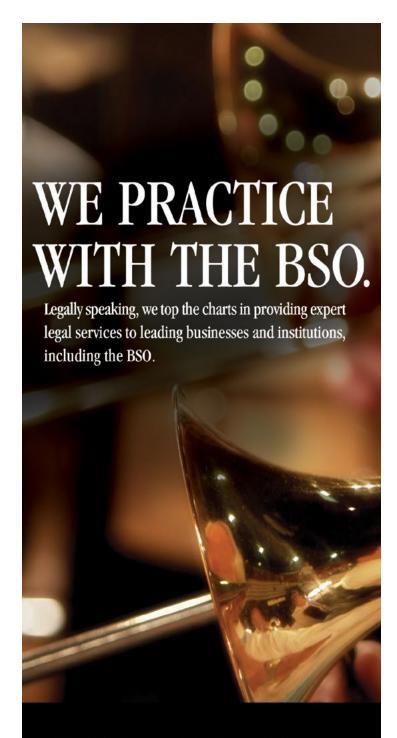
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Life Through a Lens

The story of Hollywood photographer, Robert Zuckerman, whose 'life through a lens' gets turned upside down after he is diagnosed with a rare, debilitating genetic disease, APBD.

Documentary, 11 minutes • Englisht
Directed by Jeff Levenson and Ronete Levenson

Zoom talkback July 7 at 7:30pm.

For link, email: info@berkshirejewishfilmfestival.org

Generously Supported by The John Bergman Charitable Fund, and Berkshire Bank



Golda

Shortly before her passing, Golda Meir was interviewed for Israeli television. After the filming ended, the cameras kept rolling, recording an intimate talk with the first and only woman to ever rule Israel. As she lit one cigarette after another, Golda spoke freely, pleading her case for her term as Prime Minister. The film offers that never-seen-before talk, testimonies of supporters and opponents, and rare archival footage.

Directed by Sagi Bornstein, Shani Rozanes, Udi Nir Documentary, 88 minutes • Hebrew (English subtitles)







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Give It Back!

New to Israel, Olivia is bullied by her classmates and ends the first day at her new school on a surprising note.

Directed by Ruchama Ehrenhalt Narrative, 14 minutes • Hebrew (English subtitles)

Generously Supported by Greylock Federal Credit Union



Ma'abarot

Jewish refugees from the Middle East and North Africa reveal the intrinsic bigotry and harsh conditions they found upon landfall in 1950s Israel. Arriving during a time of poverty and austerity, Jews seeking shelter in the Promised Land instead were forced into ma'abarot, remote shantytowns of tents and sheds. These transit camps were a controversial enterprise, housing hundreds of thousands of new immigrants from different parts of the world, transitioning them into becoming part of the Israeli cultural tapestry. The transit camps period (1948-1952), although affecting the Israeli society until today, has largely been forgotten. The film is the first documentary to tell the story thoroughly while also discovering surprising new details.

Directed by Dina Zvi Riklis Documentary, 84 minutes • Hebrew (English subtitles)

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Belle and Sebastian

A heartwarming story of the friendship and daring of a young boy and a stray dog against the backdrop of their village in the French Alps where residents secretly organize the passage of Jews into Switzerland.

Directed by Nicolas Vanier Narrative, 99 minutes • French (English subtitles)



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JULY 20, 4 PM





Hunting Elephants

Two shady Israelis living in an old people's home plan to rob a bank with the help of one of their precocious if estranged grandchildren and a penniless English lord in Reshef Levi's crowd-pleaser Hunting Elephants, a comedy caper full of incorrigible old geezers that's as broad as a barn door. (Courtesy Hollywood Reporter)

Writer-director Levi, also a stand-up comedian, supplies some terrific one-liners and lines up a stellar cast that includes local greats Sasson Gabai (The Band's Visit) and Moni Moshonov (Two Lovers, We Own the Night) as well as Patrick Stewart (the X-Men and Star Trek films) in an avuncular and stereotypically British role originally conceived for John Cleese.

Interestingly enough for a film with so many familiar names, the film's true protagonist has not a single gray hair on his head and is a total unknown: Gil Blank plays Jonathan, an intellectually gifted if socially awkward 12-year-old who witnesses his security-quard father, Daniel (Zvika Hadar), die at work after he's conveniently explained the bank's security system and codes to his son.

Directed by Reshef Levi Narrative, 107 minutes • Hebrew (English subtitles)

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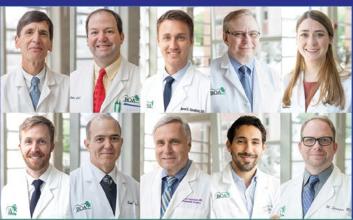
Broken Mirrors

From the outside, the Adler family lives an enviable life, but underneath Giora's great love for his family lays an obsession with his eldest daughter Ariella. This strict military disciplinarian follows his teenage daughter's every move, and he inflicts severe methods of punishment. When Ariella commits a grave error, her father won't punish her for it. Seeking a punishment of her own, Ariella embarks on a dark quest where she will discover a secret to her father's past that will lead them to confront one another.

Directed by Aviad Givon, Imri Matalon Narrative, 104 minutes • Hebrew (English) Award-winning performances happen every day at Berkshire Medical Center, the North Adams Campus of BMC and at Fairview Hospital, where our exceptional team of orthopaedic surgeons and rehabilitation specialists enable patients to reclaim their active, pain-free lives using the latest technology, surgical and non-surgical techniques.



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JULY 27, 4 PM





Latter Day Jew

This humorous and gratifying documentary follows H. Alan Scott, a gay, former-Mormon, cancer-survivor as he discovers his spiritual path in Judaism and embarks on his journey toward conversion. Known for his appearances on Ellen and Jimmy Kimmel Live!, this die-hard Golden Girls fan has had many ups and downs to contend with in his life. Determined to be the best Jew he can be before becoming a man in the eyes of Jewish law, Scott's adventure takes him to New York to meet with comedian Judy Gold, and to the Holy Land where he gathers the religious accoutrements necessary to attend his Bar Mitzvah as an observant and stylish Jew. While laughs are aplenty, Latter Day Jew is also filled with poignant moments that revolve around Scott's coming out as a Jewish convert to his mom and extended family in Missouri, and the effect his cancer diagnosis has had on his religious aspirations. A coming-of-age story about a person who literally finds his tribe and sets out to develop an authentic self, Latter Day Jew is a tender tale of selfdiscovery layered with comedy, pathos, and unadulterated iov.

Directed by Aliza Rosen
Documentary, 85 minutes • English

TALKBACK: 5:30 pm, Writer, Executive Producer H. Alan Scott and Director Aliza Rosen

A Zoom link for talkbacks will be emailed to all ticket buyers 15 minutes before the start of the film.



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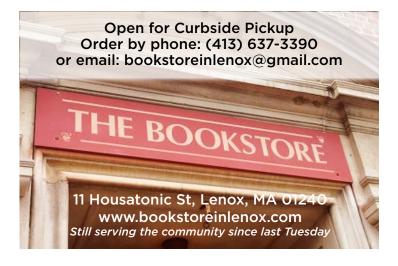


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The Rabbi from Hezbollah

Ibrahim Yassin was born in a small village in Lebanon and destined to follow in his father's footsteps as a farmer and shepherd, but fate had something else in store. As the course of his life turns against him, death becomes his only wish. But just when it seems as if the story's over, a new one begins that sounds like a work of suspense fiction, placing Yassin at the heart of some of the most daring, dangerous and secret operations Israel attempted in Lebanon in the 1980s and 1990s.

Directed by Itamar Chen Documentary, 64 minutes • Hebrew (English subtitles)



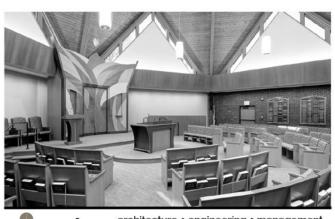


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AUGUST 3, 4 PM





Rewind

Sasha Joseph Neulinger's heroic and devastating autobiographical documentary opens with questions familiar to many people: Why are home movies always so haunting? What is it that tinges even the happiest footage with a touch of melancholy? What is it about them that makes someone's own life feel like a ghost story?

Early in the film, Neulinger's father says that people historically shot home movies to remember happy occasions, not to capture bad ones. But in his documentary, Neulinger "draws on an impressive cache of home videotapes to call attention to what lay beyond the frame: a pattern of sexual abuse by multiple members of his extended family." (Courtesy, The New York Times)

Directed by Sasha Joseph Neulinger Documentary, 86 minutes • English

TALKBACK: 5:30 pm, Director Sasha Joseph Neulinger A Zoom link for talkbacks will be emailed to all ticket buyers 15 minutes before the start of the film.







AUGUST 3, 8 PM





Holy Silence

The Catholic Church's response to the Holocaust is examined via historic film, rare documents and current interviews, revealing a failure of moral authority. Pope Pius XI overtly decried the anti-Semitism of 1938 Germany, but his successor took a starkly different stance. What more might the Church have done to halt the Final Solution and help Europe's Jews?

Directed by Steven Pressman Documentary, 72 minutes • English



TALKBACK: 9:15 pm, Director Steven Pressman A Zoom link for talkbacks will be emailed to all ticket buyers 15 minutes before the start of the film.

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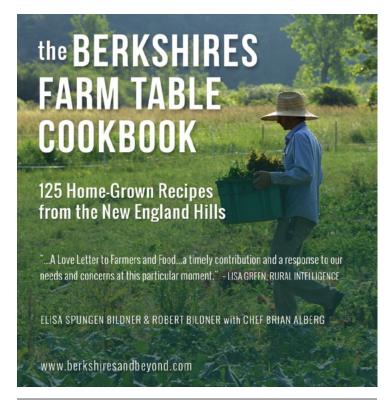
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AUGUST 10, 4 PM





Chasing Portraits

A granddaughter delves into her grandfather's life and art. Moshe Rynecki painted scenes of the Polish-Jewish community and was killed in the Shoah. His body of work reached close to eight hundred paintings and sculptures before his life came to a tragic end. Decades later, his great-granddaughter Elizabeth sought to rediscover his legacy, setting out on a journey to find what had been lost but never forgotten.

The everyday lives of the Polish-Jewish community depicted in Moshe Rynecki's paintings were a constant presence in Elizabeth Rynecki's home when she was growing up. But the art grew from familiar to extraordinary in her eyes after she discovered journals detailing the losses her family had endured during the Holocaust. After Moshe was killed in the Majdanek concentration camp, the art was dispersed all over the world. With the help of historians, curators, and admirers of Moshe's work, Elizabeth began the incredible and difficult task of rebuilding his collection.

Directed by Elizabeth Rynecki Documentary, 78 minutes • English

The distributor of Oliver Sacks: His Own Life has put a cap on the number of tickets we were allowed to sell for their film. We have now reached that point.

We are happy to announce that the documentary Chasing Portraits is available.

Generously Supported by the Jessie and Bernard Wolfson Family 36 Foundation, in memory of Bernard Wolfson, and the Spitz-Tuchman Charitable Trust



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AUGUST 10, 8 PM





Igor and the Crane's Journey

Igor and the Crane's Journey touches the core of the migration experience. A charming film about a young boy facing new challenges and finding his own voice and strength by connecting to the world of nature.

Directed by Evgeny Ruman Narrative, 90 minutes • Russian, Hebrew (English subtitles)





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