

What is a film guide for?

A film can be screened '*lo lishma* - not just for the sake of it'. In this sense, we understand the film to be a visual **text** for a subject that the presenter wishes the audience to encounter. At the other end of the spectrum, a film can also be allowed to stand alone, '*lishma*', operating as a moving **aesthetic experience**.

We believe that there is value in both of these approaches, and that care should be taken not to follow one at the expense of the other. At MAKOM we are searching for a film guide form that enables the facilitator to present an Israeli movie both as an **experience**, and as a **text** that can contribute to the Jewish identity of the viewers.

We are looking to enhance four elements of the film-going experience.

1. People-to-people

An Israeli movie offers the viewer the opportunity to 'meet', albeit fictionally, another Israeli human being. In particular for the film-viewer who has not yet visited Israel, this is a crucial hook on which to hang their Israel engagement. How many characters that we have seen in movies 'live on' in our minds and hearts long after the film has finished?

2. Going deeper

What does this Israeli film have to say about the human condition? How might it illuminate not just the viewer's relationship with Israel, but also the viewer's relationship with him or herself? Are there ways we can encourage viewers to see this piece of Israeli culture as enriching their lives?

3. The Israel Connection

How does the film deepen and broaden the viewers' connection to Israel? Our intention here is always to draw only on the film itself, making no assumptions about any further knowledge the viewer may have. The more the discussion is focussed on issues arising from the film just screened, the more chance we have to raise the dialogue beyond the 'pre-rehearsed' or the 'many-times-repeated'.

4. Binary Opposites

All stories can be seen to be composed of a series of underlying conflicts. Similarly, we can address our lives, and the lives of our communities as being driven by binary opposites. We have tried to offer a list of binary opposites that we see resonating throughout each film. We encourage you to try assess where these conflicts may find an echo in the lives of your participants or communities. This may offer an alternative means of connecting this 'foreign film' with their lives in North America.

The Practicalities:

Beforehand:

If you don't have access to a movie theater, invest in a projector and some good speakers - try not to play the movie on a TV screen. Try to give this event some excitement, and the feeling of going out to the cinema. Put together some popcorn and drinks, even. Make sure cell phones are turned off, and make sure the seating is comfortable.

Afterwards:

The movie packs an emotional punch. Your most important job is to allow the emotions their space, to allow people to feel the movie, before starting to analyse anything. So first of all, let people get themselves a coffee, or a glass of wine, go to the bathroom, breathe - before beginning the discussion.

Don't start with the questions we have prepared. Open things up with general questions about the emotional experience. Did they enjoy it? Did the movie make them sad? Happy? How did it make them feel? It is crucial to allow people to debrief on their emotional experience before we break the film down into its parts.

As for the questions we have provided, feel free to use as many or as few as you deem appropriate. There are no right answers - we are looking for people to summarise, clarify, and deepen their own responses to the movie. Every answer is interesting and valuable.

As facilitator you don't need to have an answer for everything. It's completely okay for someone to ask a question about Israel, and for you to say 'I don't know - I'll ask around and get back to you.' Or even better - 'I don't know - do you want to look into it, and tell us your answer next week?' Remember: If you've managed to get your participants to express curiosity about Israel beyond the movie - you've done a great job. The movie isn't there to teach them information - it's there to set fire to their questions about and their interest in Israel.

Finally

Please let us know how it goes! We are still exploring ideal forms for these film guides. Tell us what worked, what was amazing, what bombed...