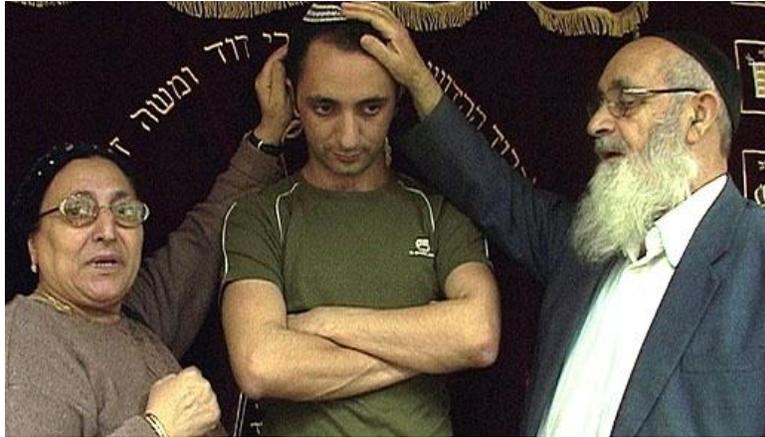




A WIDER BRIDGE
BUILDING LGBTQ CONNECTIONS WITH ISRAEL

Film Guide: Say Amen



Tech things:

Make sure that

- the DVD player can play the disc,
- that the projector works,
- that you have a screen (films never look good simply projected on to a wall),
- and that the speakers are powerful enough for everyone to hear (LCDs rarely have strong speakers built in),
- and that you have printed out copies of the hand-out for everyone to look at prior to the screening

But before doing anything...

Make sure you watch the film yourself, and run through the questions for yourself. This isn't the kind of activity where you need to remain detached and objective. You are allowed and even encouraged to have an opinion – not in order to force it on others, but in order to find your own commitment to the subject. Running through the activity first, will also allow you to make the appropriate decisions for your group about productive avenues of discussion.



Important: At the end of the film, let the credits roll right until the very end, before turning the lights on. There are two good reasons for this. First, it is always valuable to give credit to all the people involved in the creation of a piece of art. But more importantly, the credits allow time for the swirling emotions and opinions to begin to settle. It is good to allow people to sit alone with their responses to a piece of art, before inviting them to share their thoughts with others.

After the screening, the guided questions.

[Depending on the size of the audience and their familiarity with each other, you might choose to run the discussion with everyone, or split into groups, or even call out the questions and ask people to respond in pairs.]

1. Key "gathering" questions:

- **Do you think the film had a happy ending?**

[Here there is room to explore how David's sexuality has not been accepted by his parents, yet their relationship seems as close and warm as ever... Perhaps the film is pointing to a more complex reality than a simple happy/sad dichotomy?]



- **Would David be better off with a family that was not so close-knit?**

[Does he love his family? If they were less connected, they'd hassle him less. But...]

- **Did anything surprise you about the Israel and Israelis we meet in "Say Amen"? Did any aspects confirm an understanding of Israel and Israelis that you already had?**

- **When the film was screened for a group of Gay Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem, many of the viewers were troubled by the eponymous scene, when David refuses to say "Amen" to his mother's prayer that he be "cured". Why do you think he refused? Do you think he did the right thing?**

[Is he afraid her wish might come true? And if not, what would it have cost him to say amen?]

- **Were there aspects of this film that could "only have happened in Israel"? Were there aspects of the film that "could have happened anywhere"?**



Having concluded these three more general questions, you might choose to dig further into issues of speaking out or keeping quiet. These ideas might well parallel tensions in your audience's lives in the community, as Jews, as Jews connected to Israel... When do you say more, and when do you choose to say less?

2. Saying it...

It would seem that speaking out is very important in this film.

As far as David's mother is concerned, if he would but say "Amen", everything will be all right. Much of the film, David is trying to persuade his sisters to keep quiet, while they urge disclosure. His brothers push him to open up, but not to their father, while his father is upset that he does not pray the *Amida* prayer (The Standing Prayer) that is traditionally said in silence!

- Perhaps the film is trying to explore whether speaking out is always a virtue?
- What do you think is the answer the film reaches? Do you agree with this answer?

Saying it... The Nuclear Analogy

One of his brothers uses a remarkable metaphor. He suggests that just as Israel maintains ambiguity about the nature of its nuclear weaponry, so too David should refrain from revealing his sexuality to his parents.

[This is a reference to Israel's policy of "deliberate ambiguity" on its nuclear weapons program. The general assumption (well, Wikipedia, at least!) is that Israel maintains a large nuclear arsenal. But since Israel is one of the four countries suspected of having nuclear weapons that has not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, it has not been obliged to allow UN observers to affirm this. The other three countries - Pakistan, India, and North Korea - have, unlike Israel, all openly tested their nuclear weapons.

This is common knowledge in Israel, and especially in Yerucham, which is situated only ten miles away from the assumed site of Israel's nuclear program in Dimona.]

Bearing this in mind, what are your thoughts about the use of this metaphor in relation to David coming out to his parents?



3. Bringing things to a close - Blessings

David's mother gives him a full and heart-felt blessing:

"I wish you health and a good income and a good wife who will bring you back to religion and be wise, and look after your money – don't waste it. Make good friends. Be picky with who you choose to be friends with."



- What value do you place on what she wishes for her son?
- Would you be happy to receive a blessing like this?

Write down the blessing you wish you might receive from your loved ones.

If different, write down the blessing you yourself would offer your children.

[If this is a close group, you may even close by asking for people's blessings they wish on the group itself...]

A Wider Bridge works to bring the LGBTQ communities of Israel and North America closer together. Our programs include educational and cultural activities here in the U.S., including this film series, LGBTQ trips to Israel, and our online magazine, www.awiderbridge.org.

A Wider Bridge commissioned these study guides from Makom, and consulted fully in their development. Makom is the think-and-do tank for adult Israel engagement. You can find Makom at www.makomisrael.org and at facebook.com/makomisrael.

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