



Ima v'Abaz



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.]

- Which character did you most empathize with? Which character did you least empathize with? How do you understand the relationship these two characters have?

[Encourage people not to take the easy way out: we're not counting the secretary or the doctor...]



- Is this an episode that could only work in Israel?

[Several Israeli TV shows and films have been remade by American production companies recently. Can you imagine an English language version of this episode reaching a broad audience in the States? Quite apart from the circumcision, is "family" such a big deal in America?]

- What does this tell you about Israel?

[If the answer to the previous question is yes, then it's worth thinking what it does to a nation to have its traditions noted in popular culture? Think about the place of Christmas in TV series throughout the US. What is the nature of a modern country that lives "family" so deeply? And if the answer was no, that the episode could play just as easily in the States with no cultural translation, does it follow that American Jews are as comfortable and at home with their culture in the public sphere as are Israeli Jews in Israel?]



Brit Milah/Circumcision...

- How do you explain Sami's friends, who on the one hand defy convention to the extent that they speak Hebrew in the feminine, but on the other hand are deeply hurt they were not invited to one of the most conservative patriarchal tradition-bound rituals the Jewish religion has to offer?

[Is there an expectation for our behavior to be consistent? If we take radical choices in some areas of our lives, are we expected to be radical in all areas of our lives?]



- Do you sometimes find yourself surprising others with the seeming-inconsistency of your choices?
- Why do you think that naming his son after his father is dismissed as an empty gesture by Sami's mother ("And if your father had been called Zacharia would you have named the child that?"), while Erez' parents are delighted when Erez reluctantly acquiesces to what he calls the "cruel and primitive" circumcision of his son?
[Is the difference in response just due to character and culture, or do you believe there is a value difference between handing on a name, and handing on an embodied ritual?]

The word "Brit" in Hebrew is often translated as a covenant, a binding commitment. Hence circumcising one's son, giving him a Brit, literally means to bind yourself to him and him to you. The symbolism is one of commitment and continuity, a link connecting your son to you and to your near and ancient past. It is this symbolism that the psychologist is keen for Erez to face.

- Is there anything of his near and far past that you believe your father passed on and bound to you?
- Is there anything of your near and far past that you would like to pass on and bind to your children when the time comes?




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BUILDING LGBTQ CONNECTIONS WITH ISRAEL



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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