



A WIDER BRIDGE

BUILDING LGBTQ CONNECTIONS WITH ISRAEL

Yossi and Jagger



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.]

- **What do you think was going through Yossi's head at the house of mourning?**

[Encourage people to share their thoughts in the first-person, as if they were Yossi himself: "I feel left out." "I miss Jagger", etc]

- **What would you say is the film's key theme?**

[Another way of tackling this might be to ask what would the subtitle of the film be? "A love story"? "The tragedy of a life in hiding"? "Make Love Not War"?]

- **Having seen the movie, what is your "question mark" about Israel, and what is your "exclamation mark" about Israel?**

[As in, what question about Israel are you left with after the screening, and what did you learn about Israel that leaves you surprised ?]





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- How do you understand the extrovert, almost extreme sexuality of Goldie, as opposed to the sexual restraint of Yossi and Jagger? Do you think the director is trying to send a message to the Israeli straights in the audience? And if so, what is the message?



- While explicitly distancing itself from "American movies", *Yossi and Jagger* does seem to follow some Hollywood norms: the sympathetic gay characters are engaged in established masculine pastimes, they are both performed by straight actors, and the character who wants to leave the closet is killed before doing so...

Do you think this observation is important? Why?

[Tom O'Neill on Gold Derby, when writing about Sean Penn's portrayal of Harvey Milk: "Gay roles that win Academy Awards for actors almost always must suffer ghastly deaths. No star has ever won an Oscar for portraying a gay, lesbian or transgender person who lives happily ever after. The character of Truman Capote (Philip Seymour Hoffman) gets to live, yes, at the end of "Capote," but we know that he'll end up croaking from booze and pills someday while stumbling around Joanne Carson's house in Beverly Hills. The five other roles that paid off with Oscars have horrible ends on screen: Tom Hanks dies of AIDS in "Philadelphia," Hilary Swank gets beaten to death in "Boys Don't Cry," Nicole Kidman commits suicide in "The Hours," Charlize Theron is executed in "Monster," and William Hurt gets shot — much like Sean Penn — in "Kiss of the Spider Woman."

...The fact that Sean Penn is heterosexual in real life hikes his Oscar hopes significantly. No gay person has ever won an Academy Award for playing gay, and only two openly homosexual actors have been nominated for portraying someone with a lavender lilt: James Coco and Ian McKellen.]

- An American film critic wrote: "Yossi & Jagger is decidedly not a message film propagating the acceptance of gay soldiers in the military. Nor is it a problem film about the need to come out. Rather, in subtle, natural ways, the tale assumes that its two appealing protags have normal, healthy identities... The couple's challenge is how to maintain and express a loving relationship in one of the most conservative contexts: the Israeli army." (Emanuel Levy)

To what extent do you agree with this opinion?

[Is the film not calling for the acceptance of gay soldiers? Does it not touch on the need to come out? How healthy are the protagonists' identities? Is the Israeli army the greatest "problem" in this movie? Addressing the above quotation should allow for a wide embrace of its main themes.]



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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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