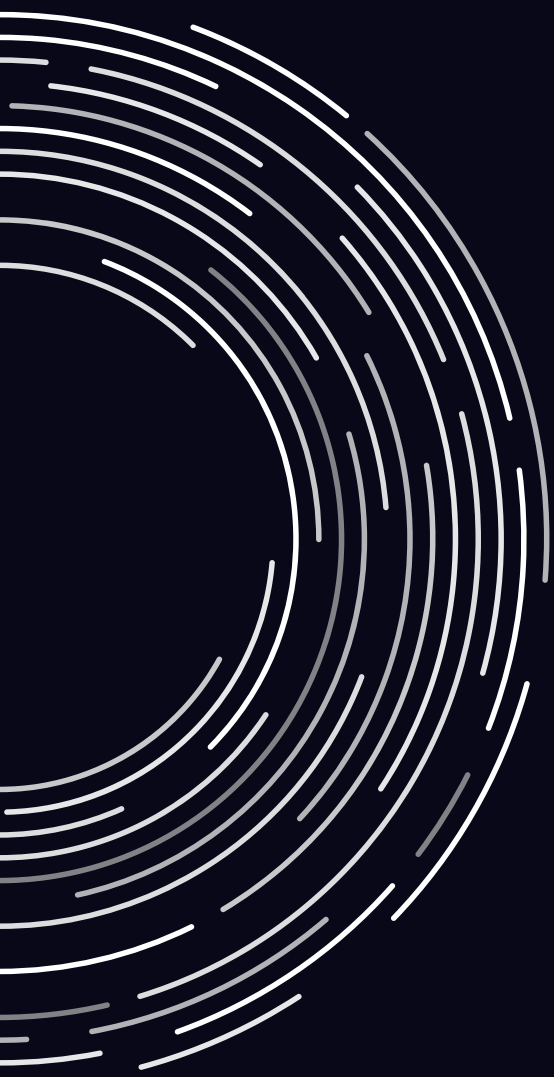
BOSTON JEWISH FILM

33RD BOSTON JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

VIRTUAL: NOVEMBER 7–21, 2021

BOSTONJFILM.ORG



VISIT

bostonjfilm.org for Festival program, additional films, guests, and event information.

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WELCOME

TO THE 33RD ANNUAL BOSTON JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL!

By now we are all experts at being together, apart, and accessing on screen content at home! Boston Jewish Film is proud to present a wonderful selection of films in our second virtual Festival. These films on-screen from around the world provide the opportunity for you to connect to Jewish heritage, be informed, enlightened, and experience a range of emotions. When you join us at this Festival you are an important part of preserving, maintaining, and expanding Jewish culture and storytelling through film.

We hope the images and film synopses in this brochure will inspire you to **plan your viewing over the two-week period, November 7–21, and visit bostonjfilm.org for detailed program schedules, and printable materials.**

You will be able to view films on-demand and join us for recorded and live-streamed conversations and Q&As. These films will transport you to destinations you may be seeing for the first time like Syria, Moldova, Brazil, Australia, and Taiwan. We are excited to present a number of Massachusetts premieres and share films with local connections.

We can't wait to experience these films and programs with you! Your attendance and support sustain us and ensure that we will continue to celebrate our community and culture and be together in person as soon as we can.

Thank you for being part of the Boston Jewish Film Festival audience as together **we go beyond the screen!**

Sincerely,
Susan Adler, *Executive Director*

BOSTON JEWISH FILM

SHORTS MADE IN QUARANTINE

SHORT FILM PROGRAM

When the world shut down people found themselves sheltering-in-place and quarantining, these filmmakers captured life at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

DIALOGUES & MONOLOGUES

Director Alex Fabry
Documentary, 2020, USA, 22 min
English
US Premiere

Jewish sisters Eva and Vera survived WW2 as refugees from Europe to NYC. See the impact that 80 years of sisterhood and survival have upon their bond.

LONG DISTANCE

Director Asaph Polonsky
Narrative, 2020, Israel, 16 min
Hebrew with subtitles
North America Premiere

Following a year-long long-distance relationship during COVID, Gil tells Nira during a Zoom session that he is coming to live with her in New York.

TANGLED UP IN JEWS

Director Billy Kent
Narrative, 2021, USA, 6 min
English
Massachusetts Premiere

The year 5781 is off to a rough start for Xander, as his mother and the family Rabbi have some news that won't make his Shabbat challah go down well.

VOICES FROM THE BALCONIES

Director Manya Lozovskaya
Documentary, 2020, Israel, 6 min
Russian with subtitles
US Premiere

A very poignant representation of the thousands of elderly Russian speakers in Israel who are unable to leave their room during COVID isolation.

YOM KIPPUR IN LOCKDOWN

Director Danny Ben-Moshe
Documentary, 2021, Australia, 27 min
English
North America Premiere

In-person Yom Kippur services were made impossible in 2020. This documentary looks at how Melbourne's Jewish community approached this new reality.

ALSO DON'T MISS...

SHMUES (page 12)
Screening with ***Who Will Remain? (Ver Vet Blaybn?)***

IN 32 MINUTES OR LESS!

SHORT FILM PROGRAM

An international collection of the best new Jewish short films.

BECOMING NAKUSET

Director Victoria Anderson-Gardner
Documentary, 2020, Canada, 13 min
English, **US Premiere**

A survivor of the Sixties Scoop, Nakuset was adopted by a Montreal Jewish family. Using personal archives, she shows her struggle to find her identity.

THE COLLECTION

Director Emmanuel Blanchard
Narrative, 2019, France, 13 min
French with subtitles
New England Premiere

During the Occupation of Paris in 1942, Victor Gence, an unscrupulous merchant, buys artworks belonging to Jewish collectors.

GOLDEN GYM

Directors Tamir Aharoni and Gil McNeil
Narrative, 2020, Israel, 6 min
Hebrew with subtitles
East Coast Premiere

In an upbeat claymation commentary on the loss of independence that comes with old age, an elderly car accident victim refuses to give up on life.

A JEW WALKS INTO A BAR

Director Jonathan Leo Miller
Documentary, 2018, USA, 24 min
English, **New England Premiere**

An ultra-Orthodox Brooklynite aspires to stand-up comedy in this refreshing and funny depiction of the dichotomy between religion and career.

MOM'S IN TOWN AND SHE DIDN'T TELL ME

Director Elina Margolin
Narrative, 2020, Israel, 16 min
Hebrew with subtitles
North American Premiere

A young loafer discovers that her mom is on a secret visit. She calls up her brother, and together they try to find out what their mom is hiding.

NEVER AGAIN/PARA NADIE

Director Anna Feder
Documentary, 2021, USA, 21 min
English, **New England Premiere**

On August 14, 2019, a peaceful demonstration against the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) contract with the Wyatt Detention Center in Providence, RI, turned violent when a correctional officer hit several protestors with a van.

ZAIDA

Director Sophie Parens
Documentary, 2021, USA, 32 min
English, **US Premiere**

Henri Parens' survival and legacy is celebrated by his granddaughter, and he pleads with her generation to continue his life's work to stop prejudice.

11TH ANNUAL FRESHFLIX SHORT FILM COMPETITION

Our 11th annual celebration of the next generation of Jewish filmmakers! Selected by a jury of young professionals, this year's program includes short films from Israel, Canada, and South Africa.

These films were selected by a prestigious jury: **Caleb Alemany, Bradley Babendir, Goldie Eder, Naomi Fireman, Sara Gardner, Olivia Grant, Samarjeet Wable,** and **Lani Weil.**

THE BINDING OF ITZIK

Director Anika Benkov
Narrative, 2020, USA, 18 min
English, Yiddish with subtitles

Searching for bookbinding materials, a Hasidic bookbinder comes across a "binding" Craigslist ad and quickly becomes tied up in a BDSM relationship.

♦ Film contains adult content.

DEVEK

Director Uriya Hertz
Narrative, 2021, Israel, 14 min
Hebrew with subtitles

Eliya takes his sick mother Naomi to visit a psychic medium who lives near the Dead Sea in order to do everything in his power to strengthen her.

GANEF

Director Mark Rosenblatt
Narrative, 2020, United Kingdom, 14 min
English

London 1962. A little girl, spooked by a dark tale from her mother's wartime past, starts to imagine their beloved family cleaner is a thief.

THE IMMERSION

Directpr Yula Bezugli
Animation/Documentary, 2021, Israel, 5 min, Hebrew with subtitles

An animated film that critiques the process of conversion to Judaism through personal experience.

THE MOHEL

Director Charles Wahl
Narrative, 2021, Canada, 14 min, English

Recent converts James and Lola live in a community without any Mohels. After the birth of their first son, they must fly one in to perform the bris.

PARADISE

Director Asaf Saban
Narrative, 2021, Israel, 33 min
Arabic, Hebrew with subtitles

Ali, a young Palestinian, visits home after a long absence. He then seeks peace in the desert of Sinai but has an identity crisis after telling a lie.

SCUM BOY

Director Allison Swank
Documentary, 2020, South Africa, 17 min, English

From visionary artist Scum Boy, this documentary probes Gen Z, who, despite unique struggles, offers profundity, self-acceptance, and much-needed hope.

♦ Film contains adult content.

November 10th Join us for a conversation with the filmmakers! Don't forget to vote for the FreshFlix Audience Award—the winning filmmakers take home the audience award prize. For more information about the films and how to vote, visit **bostonjfilm.org**.

THE ADVENTURES OF SAUL BELLOW

Director Asaf Galay
Documentary, 2021, Israel/USA, 85 min
English
Massachusetts Premiere

Saul Bellow's chronicles of post-war American Jewish life have influenced generations of readers and writers. In the first documentary about Bellow's work, life, and legacy, Asaf Galay (*The Muses of Isaac Bashevis Singer*, BJFF 2015) presents previously restricted footage and interviews with Bellow's family, and writers Salman Rushdie, Philip Roth, and Martin Amis. This examination of Bellow's influence on American literature and his role as a public figure dealing with issues of race, gender, and the immigrant experience, makes this a must-see for any Bellow reader.

♦ Film contains adult content.

BUKRA FIL MISH MISH

Director Tal Michael
Documentary, 2019, Israel, 70 min
Arabic, English, French, Hebrew with subtitles
New England Premiere

In a basement near Paris, a treasure-trove of Egyptian animated films were discovered. The films show the work of the Arab world's pioneers in this genre, the Frenkel brothers—three exceptional Jewish filmmakers, creators of *Mish-Mish Effendi*, the Arabic equivalent of Mickey Mouse. These films disappeared from Egyptian screens when the State of Israel was created. Through their animated images, we uncover the history of the Frenkel family, marked by exile and trauma being repeated today.

TLV TV BINGE: THE CHEF

Season 1 (Episodes 1–3)
Directors Erez Kav-El and Orit Dabush
TV Series, 2020, Israel, 114 min
Hebrew with subtitles
East Coast Premiere

Nimrod, an unemployed high-tech worker, starts working in the kitchen of a prestigious restaurant run by a brilliant chef, Dori. Dori is struggling to stay relevant and keep his place at the top of the ultra-competitive gastronomic world. The series explores toxic masculinity and the fragility of the male ego through the juxtaposition of the two male characters. The new cook is a family man collapsing under the weight of his responsibilities and his humdrum experience, while the chef is single, hedonistic, and self-absorbed, seemingly at the top of his game.

Remaining episodes available on December 5–12, 2021 for those who watch during the Festival.

ISRAEL | The Consulate General of Israel to New England

IRMI

Directors Veronica Selver and Susan Fanshel
Documentary, 2020, US, 70 min
English
Massachusetts Premiere

In 1906, Irmi Selver was born in Chemnitz, Germany, where she grew up, married, and began her own family. Nothing prepared Irmi for the upheavals and tragedy that were in store for her, or for the many times she would have to start her life over in an unfamiliar place. *Irmi* is a deeply personal film made by a daughter inspired by her mother's story and spirit. It explores how unexpected events and chance encounters can shape a life and reveal its true nature. Using Irmi's memoir—beautifully read by the actress Hanna Schygulla and with a richly emotional score by composer, Todd Boekelheide, the film is a portrait of a woman whose strength, resilience, and joie de vivre could not be vanquished even in the face of unimaginable loss.

Boston Jewish Film is thrilled to honor Nancy Gossels for her outstanding commitment to elevating Jewish Arts and Culture. A special recorded award presentation will screen before the film.

LEAVING PARADISE

Director Ofer Freiman
Documentary, 2020, Israel, 90 min
English, Hebrew, Portuguese, Spanish with subtitles
Boston Premiere

Cleo had always dreamed of communal life in the great outdoors. His wife Anita and their fifteen children grew up knowing that they might be moving one day. Just before his older children leave home to pursue studies and careers, Cleo realized that it was now or never. He and Anita prepared the farm, and soon after, their children joined them at "Vila Barolo," as the family commune became a reality. When one daughter researches the family's roots, she discover their Jewish heritage. The children begin to dream of emigrating to Israel, putting the family's utopia in jeopardy.

★ Winner: Best Documentary, Haifa International Film Festival, 2020.

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In partnership with Schusterman Center for Israel Studies, Brandeis University.

NEIGHBORS

Director Mano Khalil
Narrative, 2021, Switzerland, 122 min
Kurdish, Swiss with subtitles
East Coast Premiere

In a Syrian border village in the early 1980's, little Sero's first school experience is colored by his teacher's zealous attitude. To enable paradise to come to earth, the teacher forbids the Kurdish language, orders the veneration of Assad, and preaches hate of the Zionist enemy—the Jews. These lessons confuse Sero because he has loving, positive relationships with his Jewish neighbors. Sero dreams of having a television so he can watch cartoons. But he also experiences how the adults in his midst are increasingly crushed by the despotism, violence, and nationalism surrounding them. Inspired by the director's personal experiences, the film connects the Syrian tragedy of his youth to the present situation in Syria.

In partnership with Facing History and Ourselves.

PERSIAN LESSONS

Director Vadim Perelman
Narrative, 2019, Belarus/Germany/Russia, 127 min, English, French, German, Italian with subtitles
Massachusetts Premiere

Gilles, a young Belgian man, is arrested by the SS alongside other Jews and sent to a concentration camp in Germany. He narrowly avoids execution by swearing to the guards that he is not Jewish, but Persian. This lie temporarily saves him, but Gilles is assigned a seemingly untenable mission: to teach Farsi to Koch, the officer in charge of the camp's kitchen, who dreams of opening a restaurant in Persia (Iran) once the war is over. Gilles finds himself having to invent a language he doesn't know, word by word. As the unusual relationship between the two men begins to incite jealousy and suspicion, Gilles becomes acutely aware that one false move could expose his deception.

Screening as part of the Cummings Social Justice Film Series.

★ Winner, Audience Award, Seville European Film Festival 2020.

GOETHE INSTITUT

PLAN A

Director Yoav Paz, Doron Paz
Narrative, 2021, Germany/Israel, 90 min English
East Coast Premiere

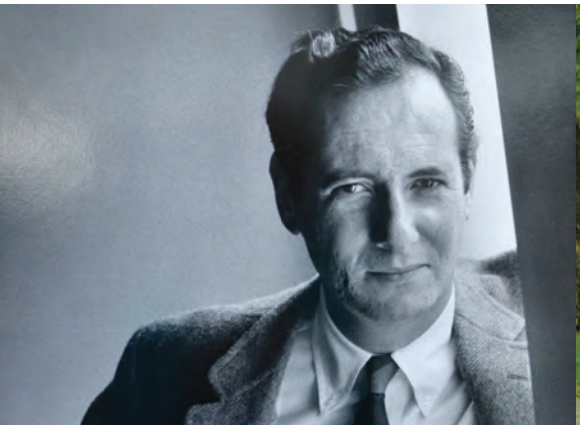
Max, a holocaust survivor, has lost all his family in the camps. Full of rage, he has nothing left to live for other than revenge. Led by charismatic leader Abba Kovner, Max and his fellow partisans formulate the most ambitious revenge operation in history—"Plan A." They infiltrate German water companies as undercover engineers with the singular goal: to poison the drinking water in Nuremberg, Munich, Cologne, Weimar, and Hamburg and "to kill six million Germans, one for every Jew slaughtered by the Germans."

Screening as part of the Cummings Social Justice Film Series.

In partnership with Facing History and Ourselves.

♦ Film contains adult content.

Nominee: Best Cinematography, Award of the Israeli Film Academy.



ROBERT BRUSTEIN: A CELEBRATION

Director Roger Lyons
Documentary, 2021, USA, 61 min
English
World Premiere

Robert Brustein: A Celebration is the official documentary tribute film that chronicles the ongoing indelible impact that Robert Brustein has had upon the world of theater, literature, dramatic criticism, and the arts—plus the film shares the devotion Brustein has to his family.

Boston Jewish Film is thrilled to honor Doreen Beinart and Robert Brustein for their their outstanding commitment to elevating Jewish Arts and Culture. A special recorded award presentation will screen before the film.

SECOND HALF

Director Rubens Rewald
Narrative, 2020, Brazil/Germany, 99 min
Portuguese with subtitles
North America Premiere

Carl and Ana are young siblings with a distant relationship and not much money. They don't know anything about their family. After their elderly German father's death, Carl and Ana are confronted with identity issues. They travel to Germany in search of their background and, while discovering facts about their family history, they end up finding each other.

♦ Film contains adult content.

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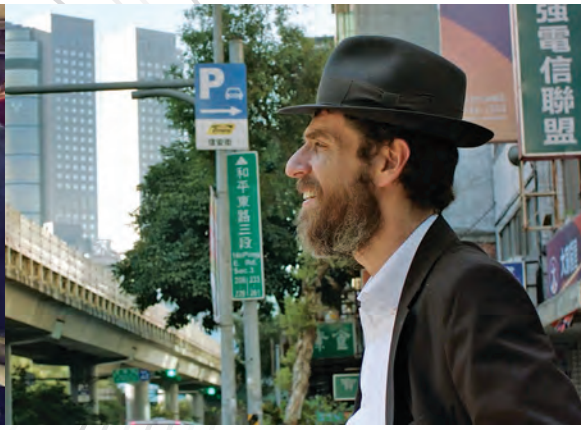

THE SEVEN BOXES

Directors Carles Canet Estrany and Dory Sontheimer
Documentary, 2020, Spain, 82 min
English, Spanish with subtitles

One day, Dory Sontheimer, a Barcelona native with German roots, discovers the terrifying past of her Jewish family, buried in the attic of her room. She finds a detailed account of the suffering her parents went through to escape the Nazi regime, all hidden away for decades in seven boxes. Accompanied by historians, writers, and journalists, she embarks upon a journey from Catalonia to the United States, passing through Germany, the Czech Republic, Argentina, and many other places to meet her unknown relatives and restore her history.

SHALOM TAIWAN

Director Walter Tejblum
Narrative, 2019, Argentina, 85 min
English and Spanish with subtitles
Boston Premiere

The financial problems of a Jewish Community Center in a small neighborhood in Buenos Aires are a nightmare for young Rabbi Aaron. Neither his industriousness nor optimism seem enough to repay the longstanding debt he owes. Threatened with the shutdown of his beloved Community Center, Rabbi Aaron embarks upon a humorous and heartwarming journey to the Far East to solicit donations. The charismatic Fabian Rosenthal is compelling as the Chaplinesque Rabbi on a transformational quest in Taiwan. A delightful dramatic comedy!

SHTETLERS

Director Katya Ustinova
Documentary, 2021, Russia, 80 min
Russian with subtitles
Massachusetts Premiere

Shtetlers tells the secret story of small Jewish towns in the former Soviet Union. Shtetls were once home to the largest Jewish population in the world. In these small and remote towns of the Soviet interior, hidden from the world outside of the Iron Curtain, traditional Jewish life continued for decades after it disappeared everywhere else. The tight-knit communities supported themselves by providing goods and services to their non-Jewish neighbors. The Jewish tradition, Yiddish language, folklore, and ritualized cooking were treasured and passed through the generations—until recently.

Screening as part of the Cummings Social Justice Film Series.

SPACE TORAH

Director Rob Cooper
Documentary, 2020, US, 25 min
English
Boston Premiere

Jeff Hoffman became a NASA Astronaut in 1978. On his five space missions, he chose to bring numerous Jewish objects, such as mezuzot dreidels and atarot from his sons' tallitot, into space. The most notable item was a small Torah scroll that he took on his last mission. Rabbi Shaul Osadchey, Jeff's spiritual leader, was instrumental in making it possible for Jeff to take a Torah scroll (the Space Torah) into space. Jeff saw the act of bringing religious objects into space not only as part of bringing his own tradition with him, but also as adding symbolic meaning to bringing the holiness of human life into space.

✿ Family friendly film.

Museum of Science.

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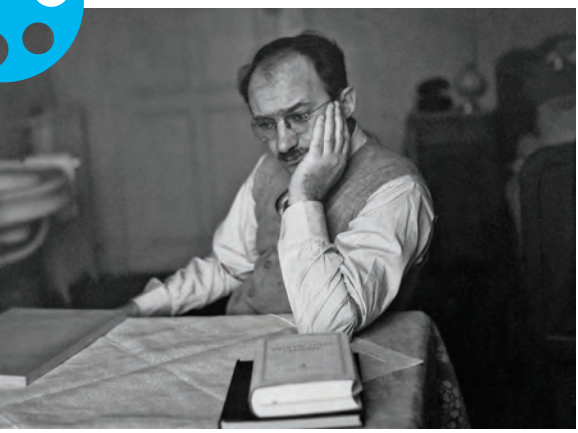

WHO WILL REMAIN? (VER VET BLAYBN?)

Director Emily Felder and Christa Whitney
Documentary, 2020, USA, 60 min
English, Hebrew, Yiddish with subtitles
Massachusetts Premiere

Attempting to better understand her grandfather Avrom Sutzkever, Israeli actress Hadas Kalderon travels to Lithuania, using her grandfather's diary to trace his early life in Vilna and his survival of the Holocaust. Sutzkever was an acclaimed Yiddish poet whose verse drew upon his youth in Siberia and Vilna, his spiritual and material resistance during World War II, and his post-war life in the State of Israel. Kalderon, whose native language is Hebrew and had to rely on translations of her grandfather's work, is nevertheless determined to connect with what remains of the poet's bygone world and confront the personal responsibility of preserving her grandfather's literary legacy.

✺ Screening with: ***Shmues***

Director Kemelia Pebdani
Documentary, 2020, Sweden, 5 min
Yiddish, Swedish with subtitles

Somewhere in southern Sweden, two young people have found their Yiddish teacher in the pediatrician, psychiatrist, and author Salomon Schulman.

WHAT IS A VIRTUAL FESTIVAL?

Take in a film with your morning coffee or enjoy a midnight binge. You can watch the films anytime between November 7–21, but we recommend watching the films you are interested in before the scheduled Q&As so you can log on and join the conversations!

This year's Festival includes conversations with filmmakers, actors, special guests, master classes, and more! Your film ticket grants you access to the corresponding events and conversations. Want to see it all? Purchase an All-Access Pass!

For tickets and a complete lineup of Festival films, and special guests, visit **bostonjfilm.org**. Join us and ***go beyond the screen!***

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For more information about becoming a Boston Jewish Film Sustainer please visit **bostonjfilm.org**.

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Thanks to a $100k for 100 Grant from the Cummings Foundation, we are able to present films about anti-Semitism and social justice with the hope of eliminating prejudice and preventing future genocide.

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Lynne Krasker Shultz

Mass. Cultural Council

Modulus

Museum of Science Boston: James Monroe

Laura Pinsky

Jonathan Ross

Roxbury International Film Festival: Lisa Simmons

Schusterman Center for Israel Studies, Brandeis University: Shayna Weiss

Vilna Shul: Dalit Ballen Horn, Stephanie Davis, Christen Hazel

West Newton Cinema: David Bramante

Wicked Queer Film Festival: Shawn Cotter, Giuseppe Di Caprio

TICKETING

TICKETS

Tickets are only available online at **bostonjfilm.org** (with credit card only). No refunds or exchanges. For customer service, contact info@bostonjfilm.org.

Watching with your family and friends? Please consider donating for companion viewing.

General Admission: $15 ($13 + $2 processing fee per ticket).

Group Sales (10 Ticket minimum): $13 ($11 + $2 processing fee per ticket). Contact info@bostonjfilm.org to coordinate group tickets.

All-Access Festival Pass: $360 Access all Boston Jewish Film Festival virtual screenings and events November 7–21. Easily view all films from home in Boston Jewish Film Festival's digital screening room. Films may be viewed anytime during the Festival. All-Access Passes are non-transferable and are valid for only one user login. There is a $4.00 processing fee per pass.

VIEWING FILMS

Your All-Access pass or online ticket allows you to watch the film at any time during the Festival, November 7–21. Once you begin to watch, you have 48 hours to complete viewing. Most films are available to United States residents. For more information on how to view films or streaming options, go to bostonjfilm.org.

FILM CONVERSATIONS & PROGRAMS

Individual tickets purchased include access to the corresponding live-streamed programs. All-Access Passholders have access to all live-streamed programs. Conversations and programs will take place on specific dates and times throughout the Festival. There are no refunds for any missed programs.

Please note: The in-person program, *Space Torah*, at the Museum of Science and the online Animation workshop are free with registration (All-Access Passholders will only need to register for the in-person screening).

COMMUNITY STANDARDS

The small but mighty Boston Jewish Film team is committed to providing a pleasant festival experience for our patrons. Please be patient if there are delays in responses to any questions or comments, and know that we will respond as soon as we are able.

MORE TO COME IN 2022!

Boston Jewish Film is your home for great Jewish films throughout the year. Join us for events, screenings, and more festivals including the 4th Annual Boston Israeli Film Festival and our Boston Jewish Film Summer Cinematheque film series.

For more info, visit: **bostonjfilm.org**

BOSTON JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

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