

Chicago YIVO

invites you to a **FREE** screening of the Israeli documentary film

Ha Ashkenazim

When: Wednesday, June 17, 2009 (6:30 to 8:30 PM)

Where: Harold Washington Library Center
400 South State Street; Chicago, IL 60605
Pritzker Auditorium

6:30 PM—Film Screening (runtime ~ 50 min)

7:30 PM—Panel Reaction/Audience Q&A/Discussion

Meet Our Panel Members from The University of Chicago

Orit Bashkin
Assistant Professor

Modern Middle Eastern History

Professor Bashkin received her B.A. and M.A. degrees from Tel Aviv University, and her Ph.D. from Princeton University. Her publications include articles on the history of Arab-Jews in Iraq, and she has recently published a book dealing with intellectuals in Hashemite Iraq titled *The Other Iraq: Intellectuals, Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq, 1921-1958*.

Na'ama Rokem
Assistant Professor

Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations

Professor Rokem received her B.A. degree from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and her Ph.D. from Stanford University. Her academic specialties include Modern Hebrew and German-Jewish literature, and she has published papers on the law and legal imagination in Herzl and Kafka, and on prose and history in Herzl and Bialik.

CO-SPONSORED BY CFIC & THE CHICAGO PUBLIC LIBRARY



Directions & Parking

The **Harold Washington Library Center** is located on the northwest corner of State Street & Congress Boulevard. Many buses stop on this corner, & all CTA trains stop within two blocks of the Library as well. For complete details, visit www.transitchicago.com. Parking garages are also located nearby, but convenient on-street parking is unlikely.

Ha Ashkenazim (The Ashkenazim)

Ha Ashkenazim (The Ashkenazim) is a humorous and moving film about young Israelis in search of their Ashkenazi roots. These women and men seek to reconnect with their Jewish European heritage which they feel was suppressed in order for their ancestors to acclimate to their new Israeli and Middle Eastern environment.

The *Ashkenazim* follows the lives of a group of young women and men as they reconnect to their Ashkenazi roots. Assaf Galay forms "Ashkenazi Identity" to promote a cultural revolution in Israel. Tammy Ben-Tor creates an electro- Yiddish sexy cabaret. Itamar Handelman Ben Canaan, always ashamed of his Ashkenazi roots, falls in love with Olga, a new immigrant from Russia, and with her returns to the life style of his European ancestors. What makes these Israelis look back with longing at their Ashkenazi history and can they bring some of their forefather's lost Jewish European culture to the Middle East?

Written, Produced & Directed by Dani Dotan & Dalia Mevorach
Distributed by Go2Films (www.go2films.com)
Original Languages: Hebrew & Yiddish (with English subtitles)



From "Tzivi's Guide to the 2007 Chicago Festival of Israeli Cinema"

By JUF News Columnist Jan Lisa Huttner

"The Holocaust has never been a big theme for Israeli filmmakers. Thus I was surprised to see Holocaust-themed films in each of this year's three categories: *Dear Mr. Waldman* (in the feature category), *Pesya's Necklace* (in the shorts category), and *The Ashkenazim* (in the documentary category). I called Dani Dothan in Tel Aviv to learn more. Dani is co-director of *The Ashkenazim* along with his wife and partner, Dalia Mevorach, and he gave me two compelling answers: self-reflection in response to Mizrahi demands for greater political participation, and the integration of more Russian immigrants into mainstream Israeli society...

To become Israelis, the children of Holocaust survivors had to bury their own fears and support their parents' attempts to build new lives. Emotions were suppressed along with Diaspora languages, habits, and customs. As we learn from watching *Dear Mr. Waldman*, neighbors did not want to hear the woes of Holocaust survivors, and talking about the past was taken to be symptomatic of mental illness.

In *The Ashkenazim*, Dothan and Mevorach focus on a new generation. These 30-somethings feel empowered to ask their grandparents questions that their own parents never dared to ask. Israelis in this "third generation" (the second generation to be born in Israel) are now reaching back to reclaim Eastern European culture; they're cooking old foods and singing old songs, all of which are new to them.

Is this symptomatic of "post-Zionism"? In a way, yes. As Yosefa Loshitzky says in her insightful book, *Identity Politics on the Israeli Screen*, Zionist ideology assumed that everyone had "come to Israel voluntarily driven by ideological (Zionist) motives." Today many Israelis are acknowledging that "the Jewish state of Israel is basically a multicultural society of immigrants dominated by ethnic diversity and social polarization." Because most Jewish Americans are Ashkenazim, this film can be our entryway into fascinating and uniquely Israeli issues."

For more information, visit: www.chicagoyivo.org