



Directed by God: Jewishness in Contemporary Israeli Film and Television

By Yaron Peleg



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As part of its effort to forge a new secular Jewish nation, the nascent Israeli state tried to limit Jewish religiosity. However, with the steady growth of the ultraorthodox community and the expansion of the settler community, Israeli society is becoming increasingly religious. Although the arrival of religious discourse in Israeli politics has long been noticed, its cultural development has rarely been addressed. *Directed by God* explores how the country's popular media, principally film and television, reflect this transformation. In doing so, it examines the changing nature of Zionism and the place of Judaism within it.

Once the purview of secular culture, Israel's media initially promoted alternatives to traditional religious expression; however, using films such as *Kadosh*, *Waltz with Bashir*, and *Eyes Wide Open*, Yaron Peleg shows how Israel's contemporary film and television programs have been shaped by new religious trends and how secular Israeli culture has processed and reflected on its religious heritage. He investigates how shifting cinematic visions of Jewish masculinity and gender track transformations in the nation's religious discourse. Moving beyond the secular/religious divide, *Directed by God* explores changing film and television representations of different Jewish religious groups, assessing what these representations may mean for the future of Israeli society.



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Editorial Review

Review

"This volume contributes greatly to various fields of scholarship—cinema studies, Israel studies and Israeli cinema, and religious studies—and could be extremely useful for teaching. It will also be very useful to the general public, increasingly attracted to the vitality, beauty, and rigorous standards of Israeli cinema." (Marcella Simoni, Ca' Foscari University, Venice, author of *A Healthy Nation: Zionist Health Policies in British Palestine 1930–1939* and *At the Margins of Conflict: Social Perspectives on Arabs and Jews in British Palestine 1922–1948*)

About the Author

Yaron Peleg is the Kennedy-Leigh Lecturer in modern Hebrew studies at the University of Cambridge, where he teaches modern Hebrew literature and Israeli culture. He is the author of *Israeli Culture between the Two Intifadas: A Brief Romance* and coeditor of *Israeli Cinema: Identities in Motion*.

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