

Tikkun

POLITICS+SPIRITUALITY+CULTURE

(tē-kūn) To mend, repair, and transform the world. SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2007

MOVIES THAT SEEK TO INSPIRE...

...are often dull and don't keep your attention. So what a pleasure to find something different in:

Praying with Lior

We might never have gone to see a film about a child with Down's Syndrome's Bar Mitzvah, but, because of our close relationship with and love for Lior's family, we went to the film's world premier at the San Francisco Jewish Film Festival. Filmmaker Ilana Trachtman has created a moving and dramatic portrayal of a family that discovers that their son's Down syndrome, far from being a burden, opens him to a spiritual sensitivity that both amazes and inspires everyone who meets him.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah" you might say, "all the political correctness that always accompanies any contemporary dealing with disability." We understand the skepticism, and shared it until we actually got to know Lior a bit through this movie. And honestly, he's an astounding being. So too is the family and religious community that provides him with support.

The film is unsentimental and doesn't pretend that Down syndrome is some wonderful state of being to be sought out. It portrays the pain, frustration, and disappointments that face Lior and his family. But it also raises questions in the minds of all those who, before seeing this film, were sure that abortion was the only possible response to a prenatal test that predicted a Down syndrome baby. Precisely because it avoids all this kind of preaching, the film becomes a powerful voice not only for disability rights (which in principle every progressive supports), but also for a greater spiritual attentiveness to all that can be learned from the Otherly-abled.