



FILM

Silicon Valley Jewish Film Festival leans heavily on Israeli picks

BY **EMMA GOSS** | SEPTEMBER 23, 2026



Retired Israeli general Noam Tibon is the subject of the documentary "The Road Between Us," which will screen at the 35th annual Silicon Valley Jewish Film Festival. (Courtesy SVJFF)

The 35th annual Silicon Valley Jewish Film Festival, which runs Oct. 10 to 25, will feature 31 films representing the breadth of Jewish cinema — with roughly half from Israel or produced by Israeli filmmakers.

Tzvia Shelef, executive director of the film festival, said showcasing Israeli films and talent has become a deeper part of the festival's mission in recent years.

“We have a huge community of Israelis here, and since October 7th, these Israeli movies get no exposure,” said Shelef, who is Israeli American.

There are nine in-person screenings at the Oshman Family JCC in Palo Alto and the AMC 14 San Jose. The remaining 22 films are available for streaming.

Shelef said she and the festival organizing committee watched more than 100 films to decide which ones would make the cut this year.

“This year in particular is shaping up to be one of the best yet,” she said.

“Once Upon a Mother,” the opening night film, will screen at the JCC. Inspired by a true story, the French film follows Esther Perez, a Moroccan Jewish immigrant living in France in the 1960s, who embarks on a decadeslong crusade to give her son, who was born with a clubfoot, every opportunity to follow his dreams. After the screening, Ken Scott, the film's director, and Vanessa Chalme, Perez's granddaughter, will participate in a Q&A followed by a reception.

Other must-see in-person films, according to Shelef, include “Reading Lolita in Tehran,” by director Eran Riklis, perhaps best known for his 2004 internationally acclaimed film, “A Syrian Bride,” and his 2008 film, “Lemon Tree.” His latest film, a 2024 adaptation of Azar Nafisi's memoir set in Iran, follows a former professor who brings together seven of her top female students to read forbidden Western classics. They soon begin to flout many of the oppressive patriarchal restrictions placed on women in Iranian society. Riklis will participate in a Q&A after the film.

“The Road Between Us: The Ultimate Rescue” is a documentary featuring retired Israeli general Noam Tibon who saved multiple lives on Oct. 7, 2023, as he raced to rescue his son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren hiding in their safe room as Hamas terrorists stormed Kibbutz Nahal Oz. Directed by acclaimed Canadian filmmaker Barry Avrich, the film retraces the horrors of the day.

“To Kill a Nazi,” available for streaming, is a documentary feature by award-winning filmmaker Boaz Dvir, about a French businessman who sets out to uncover the truth about his father's disappearance during WWII and ends up playing a crucial role in the 1976 rescue of more than 100 Israeli hostages in Entebbe, Uganda.

“David,” a family-friendly animated movie, is a musical biblical drama about King David, in the same vein as “The Prince of Egypt” and “Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat.”

The film festival closes with the feature drama **“Tell Me Everything,”** a film in Hebrew which Shelef describes as both funny and sad, with ’80s music throughout. The film is a coming-of-age story of a boy who discovers a painful secret about his father and grapples with the information over the course of his life. The film is Israel’s selection for the next Oscars in the Best International Feature category.

IF YOU’RE GOING

Silicon Valley Jewish Film Festival Oct. 10-25. Times vary. Streaming or in person at Oshman Family JCC, 3921 Fabian Way, Palo Alto, and AMC 14, 700 El Paseo de Saratoga, San Jose. \$20-\$40