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Book Review: Directed by God: Jewishness in Contemporary Israeli Film and Television

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Peleg, Yaron. **Directed by God: Jewishness in contemporary Israeli film and television.** Texas, 2016. 186p bibl
filmography index afp ISBN 9781477309506, \$85.00; ISBN 9781477309513 pbk, \$27.95; ISBN 9781477309520 ebook,
contact publisher for price.

This well-written, interdisciplinary book examines the nature of Zionism by analyzing the ways Israeli film and television mimetically reflect Judaism in Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, and national varieties. Also author of *Israeli Culture between the Two Intifadas* (CH, May'09, 46-4860) and *Orientalism and the Hebrew Imagination* (CH, Jul'06, 43-6359), Peleg (Hebrew Studies, Univ. of Cambridge, UK) is up-to-date on scholarship across academic disciplines, so the book will interest not only students of religious and film studies (Israeli and Jewish in particular) but also those studying media, aesthetics, anthropology, sociology, and popular culture. Peleg covers the period from the 1960s to the 2010s in order to gauge the changes in the politics of the representation of religion in Israeli culture. He notes that the religious are no longer represented in the negative, i.e., as flat stereotypical characters (Ashkenazi Jews in the so-called gefilte-fish genre, Mizrahi Jews in the *bourekas* genre). Rather, recent work renders Jews more sympathetically, as complex multidimensional characters, so one sees greater acceptance of Jewish religiosity on the screen. Peleg also reveals changes in representations of issues surrounding gender and masculinity—for instance, television's depictions of customs surrounding dating and courtship. Including an excellent introductory overview, the book has endnotes as well as the standard scholarly apparatus.

—D. B. Levy, *Touro College, Lander College for Women*

Summing Up: Highly recommended. Lower-division undergraduates through faculty; general readers.