

Beyond Creative
Kan – Israeli Public Broadcasting Corp

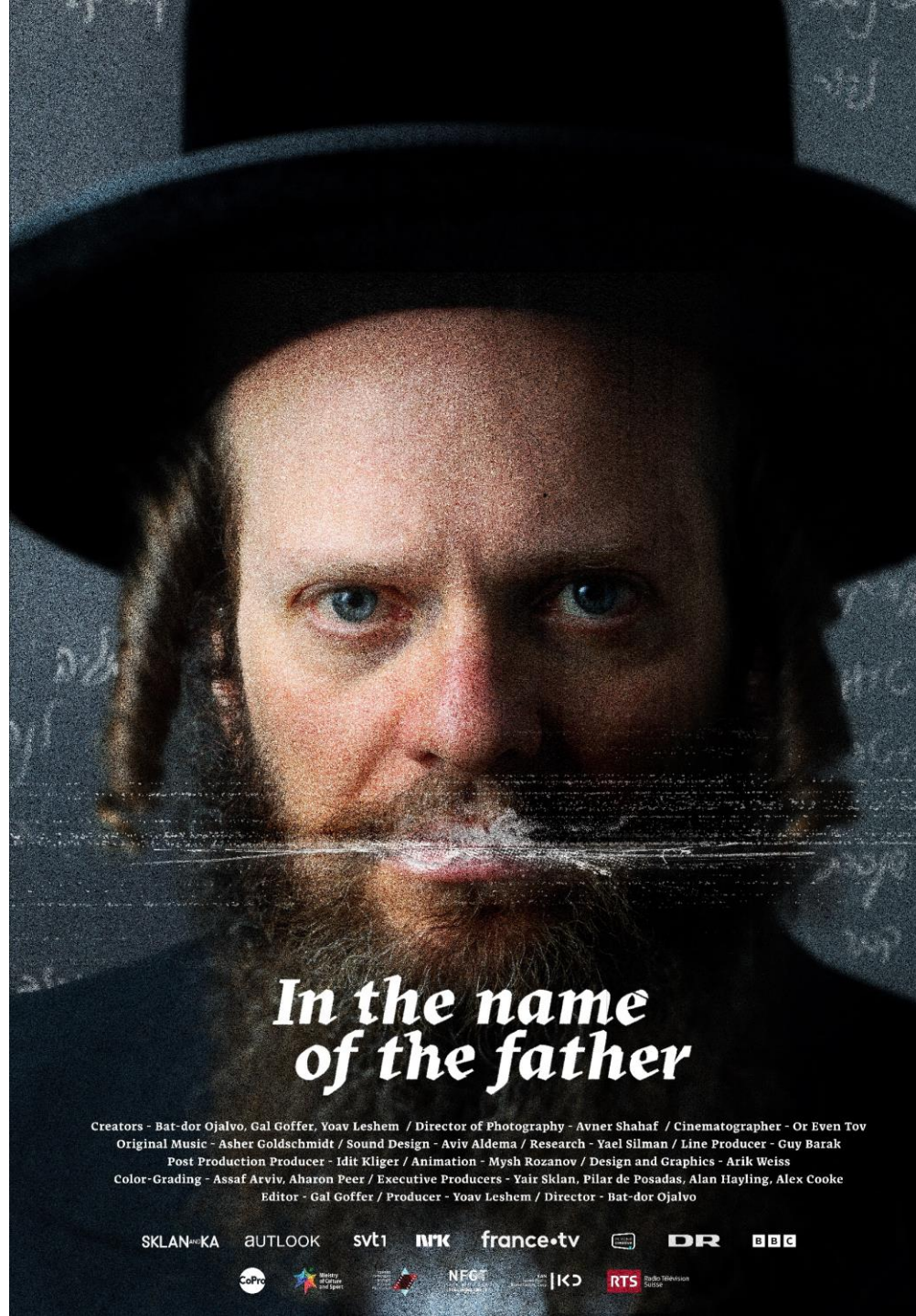
In association with BBC, NRK, DR

With the participation of France Télévisions,
SVT, RTS Radio Télévision Suisse

Executive Produced by KAM&KA

Co-Produced by Sklan&KA, Ministry of Culture
and Sport +The Israel Film Council, The new
fund for Cinema and TV, Copro The Israeli
Coproductio Market

Presents:



In the name of the father

Creators - Bat-dor Ojalvo, Gal Goffer, Yoav Leshem / Director of Photography - Avner Shahaf / Cinematographer - Or Even Tov
Original Music - Asher Goldschmidt / Sound Design - Aviv Aldema / Research - Yael Silman / Line Producer - Guy Barak
Post Production Producer - Idit Kliger / Animation - Mysh Rozanov / Design and Graphics - Arik Weiss
Color-Grading - Assaf Arviv, Aharon Peer / Executive Producers - Yair Sklan, Pilar de Posadas, Alan Hayling, Alex Cooke
Editor - Gal Goffer / Producer - Yoav Leshem / Director - Bat-dor Ojalvo

SKLAN&KA AUTLOOK svt1 NRK france.tv DR 000



In the name of the father

A documentary by Bat-dor Ojalvo, Gal Goffer and Yoav Leshem

The son of Brooklyn's most-followed, admired and controversial Rabbi is excommunicated and he is out to clear his name. He and other runaway kids share their stories of the isolated cult his father established.

SYNOPSIS

Extraordinary film based in the Breslov Hasidic community in Yavniel, Israel. The community was founded in the 1980s and led by charismatic leader Rabbi Schik, also known as Mohorosh, who was based in Brooklyn, New York. A controversial figure, Mohorosh welcomed 'repentant' Jews who were seeking a sense of community in Yavniel. These could be Jewish people who had lost their faith, committed crimes or simply wanted to live a Breslov Hasidic life with Mohorosh as their spiritual leader.

With a school, a kindergarten, a synagogue, a huge kitchen where the community could eat together and houses built by the community themselves, it was funded by selling holy books and fundraising, and led spiritually by Mohorosh, who largely remained in Brooklyn. However, when Mohorosh died, it emerged that he had left two wills – one leaving leadership of the community and a huge fortune to his son Moishi, and the other benefiting a group of self-selected community leaders.

As a huge fight over his inheritance rages and the community is left without their spiritual leader, stories begin to emerge of a hidden criminal organization which was extorting millions of dollars, as well as violence, sexual abuse and underage marriages.

Moishi and a number of survivors decided to break the silence, to leave the community and to tell this extraordinary story to director Bat-dor Ojalvo, who spent years earning their trust. Uniquely, she also gained access to some of the community who continue to live according to Mohorosh's teachings.

With incredible archives and home movies from Yavniel, the film was shot in both Yavniel and Brooklyn.



BIOGRAPHY AND FILMOGRAPHY OF THE FILM CREATORS

DIRECTOR

Bat-Dor Ojalvo

Showrunner, director and developer of major envelop pushing documentary programs that have aired on Israeli broadcast channels.

Predominant shows:

The Dinner of a Lifetime, 6 episodes, Spanish docuseries format adaptation – Kan, Ch.11, public channel. Director, 2023.

Born On, 5 episodes, Nordic docuseries format adaptation – Kan, Ch.11, public channel. Director, 2021.

The Silence Connection, 7 episodes, activist docuseries – Reshet, Ch.13 – director & content editor, 2018

Blues, 6 episodes documentary. Keshet, Ch.12 – director & format creator, 2016. Purchased by Netflix.

Connected, factual series. Hot3 (Cables), 2012-13 – director & editor. Connected is an original Israeli tv format that was multi-territory adapted and also won the Israeli Academy Awards.



EDITOR

Gal Goffer

Gal is one of the leading editors in Israel.

A graduate of Tel Aviv University's Department of Film, Gal is responsible for some of the most successful and important docu-series made in Israel such as:

512 - The People Vs. Abergil, the most successful documentary of KAN Israeli Public Broadcasting Corp

Lebanon - Borders of Blood, a 5-episode docu-series, winner of Israel Best Documentary & Best Editor 2020

Shadow of Truth, a 4-episode true crime docu-series, Winner of Israel Best Documentary & Best Editor 2017, Purchased by Netflix.

With 20 years of experience, Gal specializes in documentary storytelling and most often co-writes the script from the early stages of production.

Gal also serves as editor and script consultant on various documentary projects.



PRODUCER

Yoav Leshem

Film and television producer. Founder of Beyond Creative prodco that focuses on documentary films and series, emphasizing social values and impact.

Prominent productions include:

King David Documentary film 60 min, HOT 8, Directors: Robby Elmaliah, Amir Ben David, 2023

Generation 1.5 Documentary series, 3 eps x 50 min, KAN Israeli Public Broadcasting Corp, Director: Roman Shumonov, 2022

The Last League Documentary series, 2 seasons, 10 eps x 40 min. KAN Israeli Public Broadcasting Corp, Director: Robi Elmaliach, 2019-2022

Honorable Man Documentary film 75 min, HOT 8, DocAviv Festival, Director: Roni Aboulafia, 2020

Rabenu (Our Rabbi) Documentary series, 4 eps x 50 min, KAN Israeli Public Broadcasting Corp, Director: Ori Gruder, 2020

Storiez Documentary series, 4 eps x 42 min, KAN Israeli Public Broadcasting Corp, Director: July Shlez, 2020

Hidden Face Documentary film 52 min, KAN Israeli Public Broadcasting Corp, Director: Eyal Datz, 2018



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

The film's story originated from another story I heard about. I met a little girl who shared her abuse story with me, I got the feeling that there was a bigger story hidden in there. I still had no idea to what depths I was going to dive. I felt called to the flag.

After seeing her pain something in me had to tell the story. From this girl I got to another one and another one and another one, and out of this sense of obligation towards those victims I started this whole path.

The story evolves in many layers and involves a variety of people from different sides of the fence, who despise each other, who speak against each other, it requires patience and sensibility to depict this complex image.

I made two rules for myself: 1. I am committed to the victims 2. I have to establish what is true and what's not

My presence with what it entails is also significant. I am a secular woman from a secular background. My entire world: childhood, agenda, choices are completely different to the people I came to document.

All the people I sat in front of are from ultra-orthodox background. When I got in front of them it was important to me that they knew my background, I did not pretend. I could wear a skirt to respect them but I did not pretend for a moment that this was my world view.

I had another agreement with all the collaborators in the film. I promised everyone I interviewed that I will bring all sides of the story, that they would not be alone. And secondly, that I will not edit them wrongly, taking them out of context. That is why when interviewees give their sometime illegal perception of reality, I kept their words verbatim. I believe there was something in this process and this honesty that allowed us to bring the story to its fullest.

I walked into their world with genuine curiosity to hear how they came to be, under the proposition they are not BAD people. They are people of faith; they have complete faith in their mentor and his judgments and I am there to listen to their convictions to the end.



THE PRODUCTION COMPANY:



Beyond Creative is an Israeli media production company with an explicit aim to promote effective and efficient social change. Our vision is to apply the visual communication medium to social policy challenges, thereby increasing public awareness of the issues and catalyzing change for the public good.

<https://www.beyondcreative-il.com/>

Credits and Crew

90 min film / 3 eps X 60 min, HD, Color

Israel / Brooklyn 2023

Languages: Hebrew, English, Yiddish

Creators: Bat-dor Ojalvo, Gal Goffer, Yoav Leshem

Director of Photography: Avner Shahaf

Cinematographer: Or Even Tov

Original Music: Asher Goldschmidt

Sound Design: Aviv Aldema

Research: Yael Silman

Line Producer: Guy Barak

Post Production Producer: Idit Kliger

Animation: Michael (Mysh) Rozanov

Title Design and Graphics: Arik Weiss

Color-Grading: Aharon Peer, Assaf Arviv

Executive Producers: Yair Sklan, Pilar de Posadas, Alan Hayling, Alex Cooke

Editor: Gal Goffer

Producer: Yoav Leshem

Director: Bat-dor Ojalvo

Rebekah Vardy: Jehovah's Witnesses and Me

Channel 4

★★★★☆

Storyville: In the Name of the Father

BBC4

★★★★★

...In the Name of the Father from the exemplary *Storyville* strand. Early scenes lulled you into thinking you were watching a charming memoir of life in a utopian Hasidic community in north Israel. Except, with it being a 90-minute film you kind of knew it was going to go to dark places.

The place was essentially a cult, and when its beloved leader, Eliezer Shlomo Schick (known as Mohorosh), died in 2015, it created not just a vicious inheritance war between his son and the rest of the community, but an open door through

which emerged stories of sexual abuse. Apparently any such incidents were always the girls' fault for not being "modest enough". Underage marriages, with girls married off by 13, were common.

The difference with the Vardy film was that we heard from community members too. One explained the idea of underage marriage, that it was done "responsibly and successfully". So that's OK then.



HAARETZ > [Read online](#)

The Docuseries Uncovering a Homegrown Israeli Cult

In Kan's 'In the Name of the Father,' Bat Dor Ojalvo uses the platform of television to unmask the underage marriage, rape, excommunication and violence in a seemingly placid Hasidic community in northern Israel, which for decades was run from Brooklyn by Rabbi Eliezer Shlomo Schick

Nirit Anderman
Mar 30, 2023



He was a spiritual father to thousands of Hasidim. He brought tens of thousands of people closer to Judaism, and helped quite a few desperate, lost souls get back on their feet. The followers of Rabbi Eliezer Shlomo Schick, also known as the Mohorosh, considered him a righteous man and a great Torah scholar, and in the 1980s, when they heard that he had decided to establish a closed community in a small town in northern Israel, they followed him blindly. Hundreds of his believers looked to him to find a little holiness, but what they found was very far from it.

The closed community of Bratslav Hasidim has been living in the [small and tranquil town of Yavne'el](#) for almost four decades. They never wanted to let strangers into their lives; they preferred to keep the authorities out and air their dirty laundry privately. And yet, from time to time, a crack would emerge, a curtain would be pulled aside or a shocking piece of information would leak out about their harsh, cruel and sometimes extreme lifestyle. About five years ago, for example, filmmaker Bat Dor Ojalvo and actress Tzufit Grant went there as part of the documentary series "The Silence Connection."

Rumors of cruelty brought the program's research team to the town, where they eventually found a series of horrors. They [uncovered painful personal stories](#) of underage marriages, sexual assault, excommunication and various forms of violence. This was all occurring under the nose of – and sometimes

with the encouragement of – the revered rabbi, who controlled the community with an iron fist. "While we were there, I slowly started to understand the magnitude of this story. Suddenly, I realized that all this was just the tip of the iceberg," Ojalvo said in an interview with Haaretz.

At that same time, as fate would have it, Ojalvo logged on to Netflix for the first time, and the first series she saw was "[Wild Wild Country](#)," a documentary that became one of Netflix's biggest hits that year. It chronicles the rise and fall of a commune established in the 1980s in the United States by the controversial Indian guru Rajneesh, also known as Osho. What had unfolded in that [closed community in far-off Oregon](#) reminded Ojalvo of Yavne'el; in Osho, the object of so much admiration, she saw Schick. She thought of the scars the commune's members bore, and thought of the torn souls she had met in the isolated northern community.

Five years later, this month, the Kan public broadcaster began running the "In the Name of the Father," which Ojalvo made alongside Gal Goffer and Yoav Leshem. The series has already been sold to the BBC, France TV and additional broadcasters in Europe, and will be making the rounds of international festivals.

"In the Name of the Father" is a three-part series that sheds light on a phenomenon that is as intriguing as it is disturbing and dangerous: a closed community operating secretly in the heart of a functioning society, following laws set by a single charismatic leader. The series shows – if not screams – that the time has come for the authorities to wake up to the horrors that have been unfolding in Yavne'el for nearly four decades, and intervene.

Goodwill isn't enough

The most heartbreaking testimonies in the series are those of the women who have fled the community, and now dare to speak openly about the sexual assault they repeatedly experienced as young girls. They describe a place where victims are silenced, where girls are made sexually available to anyone who asks, where the demand not to sully the name of the community forces rape victims to choose between keeping their mouths closed forever or being

thrown out of the community, leaving them completely alone in the world. Without police and law enforcement, their assailants continue to live their lives as if nothing happened. It was a "city of rapists," a former member of the community, who was repeatedly raped, courageously tells Ojalvo's camera.



According to the series, [girls are forced to illegally marry](#) at age 14 and give birth shortly thereafter. Police have difficulty prosecuting these marriages, because the community performs the ceremonies in remote locations in the middle of the night, and everything but the marriage itself is legal. Law enforcement is empathetic, Ojalvo says, but feel that there is little they can do to intervene in a closed community with its own rules – similar to its [approach to the Bedouin community](#), she notes.

Still, she says, she does not accept this apathy. She has taken the issue to the then-education minister, the public security minister and other government ministries. "They all told me, 'Yes, we're aware that there's a serious problem there.' They're all aware of the child marriages and the exposure of children to sexual abuse." She adds, "Goodwill and empathy aren't enough in this case. Only in the past two weeks, for the first time in 40 years, were two underage weddings stopped in Yavne'el. I really hope it continues and is also advanced to the prosecution."

The town also faces external threats, is rife with internal disputes and its leader leaves his followers for his base in Brooklyn, ruling the community through faxes and closed-circuit cameras.

As if that were not enough, one of the characters in the series is Schick's son, who ostensibly should have inherited the respect granted to his father. He tells the camera what it was like to grow up in the shadow of the charismatic rabbi, the price he paid for it, and how his father not only cheated him out of his inheritance, but made a recording on his deathbed accusing his son of causing his demise.

There was no lack of drama in Yavne'el, and Ojalvo arrived with the skills and ambition to break down the walls. Schick died in 2015, but the series reveals that his spirit still rules supreme, still dictates the rules, even though the community has now splintered into several groups with different leaders, who are involved in legal disputes against each other.

Ojalvo explains that it was important for her to show all of the perspectives in this complex story. She interviews those who left the community angry and hurt, but also those still loyal to it and living within it. "But at some point in the research, I realized that many of the things we're talking about are not in the past tense," she explains.

"That means they're still marrying off children, there are still sexual assaults that no one reports. From that moment, it became hard for me to talk to the side that continues to do this. I did present their perspective to the camera that it's wonderful to marry off children at age 14. But I can't ignore the fact that in my worldview, this is abusive and criminal. It is something that I, as a mother, as a human being, cannot accept at all. It's true that the reality is complex, but there is such a thing as evil. Exploitation, addiction to power, taking children's futures away from them – in my opinion, this is 100 percent evil. And if they have consistently been silenced, it's my role to give them a voice."

For Schick's followers in Yavne'el, there were also positive aspects of the community that enveloped them and the leader they admired, Ojalvo says, but that is not enough to make up for the damage that these frameworks do. "Where too much power is concentrated, there's a risk as well. And where women and children have no voice or rights, there is very likely exploitation," she says.

A story to tell

Ojalvo, 40, was born and raised in Haifa. During her time as a film student, she began to work in television. She climbed the ranks over the years until she became an editor and, eventually director, of reality and prime-time shows. While working with Tzufit Grant on "The Silence Connection," she realized that she can marry together her affinity for activism and the power of television to move people.



“I was in television for many years, and during that time I experienced quite a few crises. I asked myself fundamental and moral questions. I realized that I actually had a lot of power in my hands, the ability to tell a story as it should be told and speak to masses of people. And now what am I doing with that power? What values am I promoting in the world? I think that everyone should ask themselves: when I get up for work in the morning, am I promoting good in the world, or making it a worse place?”

The catalyst for “In the Name of the Father” was a phone call Ojalvo received about five years ago, while the episodes of “The Silence Connection” about Yavne'el were broadcast. On the line was Moishe Schick, the son of Rabbi Eliezer Shlomo Schick, who called her from New York. She was certain he was angry, and that he had called to threaten her because of how she had depicted his father's life's work on television. But she very quickly learned that Schick had called for completely different reasons: He wanted to know if Ojalvo would also be interested in hearing a story he wanted to tell.

Many meetings and conversations with Schick, who became one of the key figures in the new series, revealed a new angle of the story: What it was like to grow up as the only son of “the righteous man of Yavne'el,” a close-up look at the life of the revered rabbi with thousands of disciples and how a guru from Brooklyn managed an entire community in a tiny locale in Israel with remote control. Schick also told her how he – the spoiled prince, the rabbi's son – quarreled with his father to the point that the latter accused him of bringing about his early death. According to him, the rabbi had good intentions, but was psychologically disturbed – and that is what led to the establishment of the distorted community he headed.

If up until that moment Ojalvo had encountered two extreme approaches – one that painted Rabbi Schick as a flawless saint, and another that saw him as a demeaning and rapacious dictator – Moishe Schick's entry into the picture enabled her, she says, to reconcile these images for the first time.

“In the most basic way, I could suddenly understand what happens when a family of American Haredi nobility encounters a disadvantaged Israeli population,” she says, explaining that the community that began to coalesce

around the rabbi in the 1980s consisted mostly of newly religious penitents of Mizrahi origin.

How and where did he first meet them?

“The story I know is that he came to Israel and gave Torah lessons in Safed and in prisons in the north, particularly to people who had not had easy lives, the least glamorous population. And he would say that when someone brought him to Yavne'el, he felt that it was the most beautiful place in the world, which is why he decided to establish his community there. But my hypothesis is that he didn't choose an isolated place by chance, somewhere in the middle of nowhere, where you can do everything far away from the public eye. He chose to bring a Haredi group to a secular place and establish an autonomy there, a kingdom. Here, incidentally, is where the resemblance between him and Osho rang true for me.

But unlike Osho, Schick ran his community remotely, from Brooklyn. He only visited occasionally.

“That astonished me. People told me, 'We sent him faxes, we asked him questions and he would respond by fax.' And when I met Moishe, he described to me how it all looked from America. He described the rabbi's room with the fax machine that never stopped working and spilling questions for the rabbi, with [closed circuit] cameras broadcasting to him non-stop what was happening in Yavne'el. This suddenly painted the whole picture for me – and I felt that Moishe was a unique figure.”

On the other hand, it's unclear how credible he is. After all, he too has a personal interest in this whole story – he was deeply hurt by his father, and now he's fighting to restore his honor and his part of the inheritance.

“When Moishe first told me the story, I was suspicious of a lot of the things he said, and I was very unsure about him, especially after I heard there was a legal dispute between him and one of the non-profits in the community. I was suspicious of him, and I told him so. And at a certain stage I told him, look, I want to make a pact with you: I'm going to check everything you tell me. I will film you, I will hear you, but this is not your series. I am going to talk with





everyone who is prepared to talk to me. And he replied: Not only do you have my blessing for the project, I am dying for people to talk to you. I still didn't know if that was manipulation on his part, but I went with it."

Ojalvo says that over the course of her work, she was threatened "more than once, directly and indirectly." She recounts that one researcher for the series who spent a lot of time in Yavne'el, Yael Silman, "found out one day that her car had been torched. They accidentally torched the wrong car, because a white Hyundai identical to hers was parked two meters away from hers, but this was intended as a direct threat to her. Besides that, I received quite a few threats on Facebook. They warned me not to mess with god-fearing people. They wrote to me that I was messing with the wrong people, they threatened to sue me.

"Look, this is a population in which, for 40 years, many were taught that when someone is wrong, it's legitimate to hurt them physically. For example, there was someone who left the community – it makes no difference why – and in the middle of the night a truck pulled up, he packed up the whole house and the man disappeared with his family. But several community members followed him to the settlement in the south he had fled to, and while he was saying his morning prayers, four masked Haredim came up to him and cut off his beard. It shows that violence and humiliation are not a new phenomenon in this place."

Point of contact to the Creator

Not much splendor or grandeur was to be found in the community in Yavne'el, or in other closed, isolated, mostly non-productive communities, whose inhabitants – except for its leader – live in relative poverty. Its families of many children were fed by a local soup kitchen.

Nevertheless, in order for the community to survive and for its leader to buy himself fancy clothes and travel between Israel and the United States, it needs money. For this, as "In the Name of the Father" recounts, community members were required to do "distribution" work. That is, selling books and leaflets with the rabbi's texts on streets and crossroads, collecting money

while bringing the message of their teacher and rabbi to the public and promising blessings to donors.

Ojalvo says that you can trace the amount of money the community collected by examining the records of the non-profit the rabbi established to manage the community's assets. She says the reports filed with the Registrar of Non-profit Associations show that the turnover reached millions of shekels annually. "In my opinion, it's the cynical exploitation of good people, people who just want a blessing, who are sometimes facing some sort of illness or some other difficulty. And in the world of believers, receiving a blessing from the rabbi means a lot."

In the series, people who knew Rabbi Schick describe him at times as a revered leader, a spiritual father, the sort who knows how to lavish love on his flock, to give warm and personal attention, to give them shelter, a community and a sense of belonging and purpose. And others describe a volatile, angry and cruel person, who can eject people from the community without batting an eye if he thinks they'll besmirch its good name.

Besides for the community's remote location, Ojalvo explains other elements that helped it grow and flourish. When people who were facing crises – traumatized veterans, for example – met with the rabbi, he would address them personally as "sons and daughters," give them advice. He would say "You're my son, I care about you, I love you like a father loves a child," she recounts.

In addition, his charisma and knowledge of Torah were impressive. He would promise believers a place in the afterlife, and would tell them, "I'm the greatest doctor. I'm the greatest psychologist, I'm a direct contact to the Creator – if you want to talk to the Creator, talk to me," she says.

"He would often give them good advice, help them with many things. If one fought with his wife, for instance, he would mediate between them. But even if things at home became really bad, he wouldn't let them divorce. And if a woman still decided to get divorced, she would risk being kicked out. Sometimes a car will come in the middle of the night and take a woman and

her children because she wanted a divorce. They would scoop her up from the community to some central bus station and tell her 'don't you dare come back, because we don't have divorced women here.'" Meaning that it's all good until it's not. Everything is alright until it's no longer alright. The man is helpful and gives advice, but at some point this advice becomes oppressive and harmful."

In interviews you did with people who left the community, most of them admit that had the rabbi still been alive, they would likely not have dared to speak. Meaning that even after they left, they still feared him.

"That's an issue I've given a lot of thought to. I think that we're all impacted very deeply by perceptions we had in childhood. Things you knew as a child as the absolute truth are very hard to shake off, to suddenly look at critically when you become an adult. They were always told that the punishment for messing with holy men is death, and they don't have support from their families because their family is still there, faithful believers.

"And you have to understand that those who spoke with me were already rebellious as kids in this community. Even back then they were called names, and to be rebellious in a place like this requires immense strength. I figure that the decision to be rebellious as a child in a place like this stems from some sort of overwhelming need, it seems that they just couldn't stand it. And I think that the enormous mental sacrifice required to sit and talk about it on camera years later stems from the same place, from some deep need to seek truth and justice."



Ojalvo sat with about 10 former members of the community who were interviewed in the series, out of about 30 to 40 who discussed their experiences with her, to discuss what should and shouldn't be included in the interviews ahead of time. She promised they would be able to come to the editing room to see the edited interview, and would be able to ask to change anything that seemed imprecise or incorrect. "They were full partners of mine in this thing, they're friends of mine, they're my brothers and sisters for life. I have great love and appreciation for those who had the courage to come and talk," she says. "In the end, by the way, none of them asked to change a word that was said. They hid nothing."

What do you predict – or hope – will happen after 'In the Name of the Father' airs?

"My partners and I want the series to make the authorities go into the community, for the good of everyone. For them to provide some protection for those who want to speak out about this place, to decide once and for all that child weddings are illegitimate. And for the rabbis officiating these weddings to go to prison. To simply enforce the law.

"We're also starting a fund now, for therapy for those who left Yavne'el, and in my wildest dream the Haredi community will embrace this project. [We want] for there to be more options for treatment, for welfare, for counseling and someone to talk to within the community itself. But it won't happen until external intervention comes... Besides, I would like the truth to come out and for some basic justice to be done. If someone wants to come prostrate themselves at the rabbi's grave, and pray and donate to his NGO – be my guest, but only after hearing the other side of the story, too. Until now, a little girl who was assaulted and raped in this community was labeled a whore while her rapist remained a saint and kept living his life – that's not fair."

INTERVIEWS WITH DIRECTOR BAT-DOR OJALVO:

UK MEDIA



Life and Culture

Name Of The Father: New film on sins of a Charedi cult leader shown on BBC

A documentary about abuse in a sect that sparked outrage in Israel is to be shown on the BBC



BY NICOLE LAMPERT
MAY 11, 2023 16:05

SHARE VIA



FILM TV BBC CHAREDI

When the documentary film *Name of the Father* aired in Israel a few weeks ago, it led to dozens of phone calls from men and women who had suffered sexual abuse in a Charedi community — and spurred national debate about how the country’s extremist communities can be better policed.

Now the three-part series, which details the rape, violence and child marriage that have taken place in a Strictly Orthodox Breslov community, has been adapted into a documentary for BBC’s Storyville. And it’s a harrowing watch.

[> Read full interview](#)



INTERVIEW

Sexual abuse, underage marriages and physical violence – Chasidic life in a remote corner of Israel

Last week the BBC aired a film that exposes the systematic abuse of children in the Breslov community. We spoke to its director



By JENNI FRAZER | May 24, 2023, 3:17 pm

Bat-Dor Ojalvo is the director of one of the year’s most important films — *In the Name of the Father* — screened in the BBC’s prestigious Storyville slot last week. It is the deeply disturbing account of a Breslov Chasidic community, set up in a northern Israeli town, Yavniel. The man who encouraged people to move to Yavniel, Rabbi Eliezer Schik, died in 2015, aged 74. But as the film shows, the rabbi, working from Brooklyn, presided over a massively corrupt culture of sexual abuse of young girls and boys, of illegal under-age marriages, and of physical and emotional violence.

It took Ojalvo and her team seven years of relentless, dedicated research, to make the film. The rabbi was universally known as Mohorosh, and witnesses in the film tell Ojalvo’s camera that “he is not dead, how could he be dead? He is a tzaddik” (righteous person).

[> Read full interview](#)

IMPACT CAMPAIGN

For over 40 years Israel authorities have closed their eyes to the atrocities that takes place in Yavniel (Israel) orthodox Hasidic community: Underage marriages, multiple sexual assaults, incest, violent reprisals, and pedophilia.

With extraordinary access to and archive footage from one of the most silenced communities based in Israel with a leader based in Brooklyn in the US, this film reveals the scandal that erupted when the Rabbi who established and led the community died. Inheritance battles and across the board human rights violations.

These wrongdoings continue to exist today.

The series creators are committed to create social change and disrupt these ongoing misconducts. These pledges were also made to the contributors to the film.

IMPACT campaign produced as part of IMPACT Lab by CoPro - Israeli Content Marketing Foundation Geshar Multicultural Film Fund and the New Fund for Cinema and Television (NFCT)

Israel: Series Impact

Since launching the impact campaign this was achieved:

Government level - established connections with: Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Social Services, The Office of the State Attorney, Education, Health, as well as liaising with policymakers to review legislation opportunities

Police – high ranked interdisciplinary team was set and linked to other authorities: state attorney and social affairs. We keep a close eye on their progress
Nonprofit organization – we engaged with many orthodox crime/sexual victims' organization and secured the best collaborator. Together we now offer immediate help and treatment to the cult survivors. Secondly, we are working on a prevention and safeguard designed plan joining together a nonprofit and local representative of the Ministry of Education.

Individual assistance – beyond treatments we helped contributors personally with their wishes to get education, driving license etc.

Influencers - we held a pre-premiere screening inviting ultraorthodox influencers, from Rabbis to lawyers, therapist and other professionals that later conveyed our stories to their followers.



CONTACTS

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Production

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