

# The NEW YORK Jewish Week

## Domestic Disturbances

*A new crop of Israeli films at the Israel Film Center Festival holds the Middle East conflict somewhat at bay.*

By George Robinson  
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Take, for instance, “The Testament,” a compelling first feature from journalist and producer Amichai Greenberg. Greenberg’s film centers on the dilemma of Yoel (Ori Pfeffer in a marvelously nuanced and subtle performance), a charedi researcher and historian who works for an agency involved in Holocaust restitution cases.



In the course of investigating the site of an alleged massacre of Jews in 1945 Austria, he stumbles across a secret involving his mother, a particularly close-mouthed survivor of the death camps. This secret threatens to unravel his whole life and identity. In order to find answers, he guardedly misuses access to confidential files while straining to find the truth about the massacre site under a strict and unhelpful deadline.

Greenberg treats this story with a sober, measured pace that seemingly belies the tensions bubbling on and under the surface of Yoel’s quest. There are moments of genuine suspense balanced against a chilly mise-en-scene of modern office spaces, a nicely achieved see-saw between the blood-soaked realities of the past and the seemingly antiseptic present. The moral quandaries Yoel faces are delineated intelligently, and Pfeffer’s performance is deftly constructed around his internal struggles.

The result is one of the best films of the first part of 2018, taut and thoughtful. “The Testament” is an exceptional debut.

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