



## TIKKUN

**A film by Avishai Sivan**

\*Official Selection, 2016 New Directors/New Films

\*Official Selection, 2015 Locarno Film Festival

\*Winner, Best Israeli Feature Film, Best Script, Best Actor, Best Cinematography  
2015 Jerusalem Film Festival

2015 / Israel / 120 min. / B&W / In Hebrew & Yiddish w/ English subtitles

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## **Synopsis:**

Haim-Aaron is a bright, ultra-Orthodox religious scholar living in Jerusalem. His talent and religious devotion are envied by all. One evening, following a self-imposed fast, Haim-Aaron collapses and loses consciousness. The paramedics announce his death but after his father takes over resuscitation efforts, Haim-Aaron miraculously comes back to life.

After the accident, try as he might, Haim-Aaron remains apathetic to his studies. He feels overwhelmed by a sudden awakening of his body and suspects this is God testing him. He wonders if he should stray from the prescribed path and find a way to rekindle his faith.

Haim-Aaron's notices his son's changed behavior and tries to forgive him. He is tormented by the fear of having crossed God's will the night he resuscitated his son.

## **Director's Statement:**

In everyday Hebrew, the word 'Tikkun' means improvement or rectification. However, the term 'Tikkun' has a more metaphysical meaning in Judaism. The Jewish faith supports the idea of reincarnation- the belief in a soul's cycle or return to the world after biological death. 'Tikkun' refers to a soul returning to the living world in order to rectify an unresolved issue from its past life; to redeem itself before transitioning to the next world.

I started writing 'Tikkun' immediately after the premiere of my first feature film, 'The Wanderer', at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival. Within a month I had written a treatment that was accepted to Torino Film Lab. I had no doubt that my next film would also be set in the Jewish ultra Orthodox world. Even before I shot 'The Wanderer', my vision was to create a trilogy based on one yeshiva scholar and his crisis of faith. Hence I was already mulling over the central themes of 'Tikkun' back when I wrote 'The Wanderer.' Like the treatment, I wrote the first draft of the script extremely quickly. I always describe the relationship between 'The Wanderer' and 'Tikkun' as an escalation: The film 'Tikkun' is more extreme in every respect, from the technicalities of shooting in black and white, to its focus on the regimented lives of the ultra-Orthodox. The protagonist Haim-Aaron lives in Me'a She'arim, one of the oldest Jewish neighborhoods in Jerusalem. For the Hasidic population, life in Me'a She'arim close to the site of the Holy Temple is in itself holy. Haim-Aaron is a student in yeshiva. He is regarded as an 'illui' or prodigy, a rare distinction given to yeshiva students for their extraordinary intelligence and insight. An illui is likely to become an important Rabbi or

community leader. 'Tikkun' is a story of life and death set in a closed society with rigid, clear-cut rules. At the start of the film, the lead character is an outstanding member of his community. Later, he starts questioning its religious rules, driven by an urgent need to challenge and deepen his faith.

The casting process lasted a year and a half, due to the enormous challenge of finding the lead actor. I met with many talented actors but something was always lacking. The more I researched, the more I wondered how I would manage to bring a non-religious, professional actor anywhere close to the specific mannerisms and dialect of a devout Hasidic Jew. Eventually we scouted ex-yeshiva scholars who had left religion. We tried teaching them basic acting techniques in the hope of discovering natural talent. Aharon Traitel, a former Hasidic Jew responded to our casting advert and after the first few auditions I remained unsure about him. Then, unlike the other candidates, Aharon started suggesting script amendments and guided me in my research on ultra-Orthodox Jews. He also translated the relevant scenes to Yiddish. He has a hidden charm that I needed to surface and trust in order for him to take on the main role. It was a risk worth taking as, over time, Aharon became deeply entrenched in the project and came to understand all the minutia of the story.

As a director, my most valuable document is my shooting script, which I write alone. I need this kind of intimacy so I can write freely and unhampered, imagining the film down to the last detail. For me, this is a lengthy process, longer than scriptwriting, after which I embellish the script and the direction. In addition, when writing the shooting script, I usually scout potential locations. The first person I consult is my cinematographer, Shai Goldman, who with his rich experience is the person to fine tune the shooting script, ahead of filmmaking. 'Tikkun' had a scheduled 433 shots, 195 scenes, spread over 21 shooting days.

## **Director's Biography:**

Avishai Sivan (born 1977, Israel) is a filmmaker, visual artist and published author. Sivan's first feature film, 'The Wanderer' premiered at the 2010 Cannes Film Festival in the Directors' Fortnight section. The film won Best First feature Film and Best Cinematography at the Jerusalem Film Festival later that year.

His second film 'Visa' won Best Independent Feature Film at The Cinema South Festival, Sderot- Israel in 2013. Sivan's documentary 'Soap Opera of a Frozen Filmmaker' a seven-part video diary won Best Experimental Film at the Jerusalem Film Festival in 2007.

In 2010 Sivan received the Israel Ministry of Culture's Cinema Prize. His first book, 'Musings on Filmmaking whilst Cycling through the City' was published in 2011.

Sivan is currently developing his next feature film entitled 'The Pirate' a spy thriller based on the novel 'The Smell of Blue Light' by Nir Hezroni. Sivan also exhibits artwork in galleries and museums in Israel and abroad.

**Cast:**

Haim-Aaron....Aharon Traitel

Haim-Aaron's Father....Khalifa Natour

Haim-Aaron's Mother...Riki Blich

Yanke...Gur Sheinberg

Yeshiva Colleague....Omri Fuhrer

Yeshiva Head Rabbi....Dani Kedem

Young Female Driver....Shani Ben Haim

**Crew:**

Director and Writer....Avishai Sivan

Producers...Ronen Ben-Tal, Avishai Sivan, Moshe Edery, Leon Edery

Cinematographer....Shai Goldman

Film Editors....Nili Feller, Avishai Sivan

1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Director....Doron Ofer

Line Producer....Uria Kedem

Sound Design and Mix....Aviv Aldema

Sound Recordist....Alfred Tesler

Art Director....Amir Yaron

Visual Effects.....Dani Cohen

Make Up Artist.....Orly Ronen

Costume Designer.....Malky Fogel

Casting....Bar Hadas