

# Film and Religion: An Introduction

by Paul V.M. Flesher and Robert Torry

(Study guide by Den'ja Pommerane, with Paul V.M. Flesher)

## Study Guide

Focusing on American major-release films since World War II, the authors show how films use religious imagery, characters, and symbolism from Primarily Christian, but also Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, and Islamic traditions. Each chapter analyzes significant contextual issues through the lens of select films.

Films include: *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!*; *When Worlds Collide*; *The Day the Earth Stood Still*; *Quo Vadis*; *The Robe*; *The Ten Commandments*; *King of Kings*; *Jesus Christ, Superstar*; *The last Temptation of Christ*; *The Passion of Christ*; *The Exorcist*; *The Omen*; *close Encounters of the Third Kind*; *Agnes of God*; *The Apostle*; *The Natural* ; *Field of Dreams*; *Little Buddha*; *The Legend of Bagger Vance*; *The Chosen*; *The Quarrel*; *Destiny*; *My Son the Fanatic*.

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## Chapter 1

### Christmas Films: The Search for Meaning

*Current Christmas films must deemphasize the commercial aspects of the holiday even as they avoid straying too close to the Christian meaning of Christmas.*

1. What is targum? How is it constructed and used within a given story? How does targum help explain strange or fluid concepts in a text? Why is the concept of targum important to consider when discussing films? Explain how the six rules of targum reshape a text. What is their importance? How do they work?
2. If a story is well known, does the meaning change in different contexts, whether these are different forms of media, or different staging of the story? If so, what changes and for what purpose? If not, what stays the same and why?
3. Examine the advantages and disadvantages of written stories and filmed stories. Consider mass audiences, individuals as listeners and viewers, and the storytellers. How do the texts and the stories a society tells aid in the enculturation of individuals into a group?
4. Can cultural anxieties, concerns, and ethics be separated from the stories that individuals tell within that culture? Why or why not? Consider organic stories versus targumic transformations. Does the story of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* help explain your answer?
5. How does the cartoon version of *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* use the targumic process to give meaning to Christmas? How is the meaning reshaped throughout the two films (the cartoon and the Jim Carrey version)? Are these meanings different from those of other Christmas films, especially those that lack the Nativity story?

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## Chapter 2

### **Religion, Science Fiction and the Bomb**

*After World War II, the United States had to come to terms with new realities. Movies of this era called upon the most powerful explanations available, such as religion, to bring comfort in the face terrifying experiences.*

1. When Science Fiction films first dealt with the atomic bomb, the filmmakers used explicitly secular themes that made literal and symbolic references to the bomb. What is the purpose of using such symbolism rather than referring back to the bomb? Why do you think Science Fiction was the genre that lent itself to films concerning the atomic bomb? How does this genre reshape our understanding of the bomb?
2. What is the Puritan concept of typology? By what logical progression does it make connections? Discuss why typology requires either a historical or cultural context to be able to identify a functional theme. Why is the notion of typology important to this chapter? In terms of typology, explain cause and effect. How does type and antitype work (or not work) within a cause and effect relationship?
3. How is each film's religious symbolism hidden within its secular imagery? With the lens of typology, explain the reasoning by which the Puritans saw themselves as the "New Israelites" and America as the "New Jerusalem." How does Puritan doctrine (i.e., America as the new "Promised Land") aid in explaining the arms race and the Cold War?
4. The atomic bombs that were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were extremely destructive forces, the most destructive the world had ever seen. Is destruction a necessary part of salvation? How does this chapter support or negate your answer? Explain.
5. What is the importance of the setting—outer space and the future—in both *When Worlds Collide* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still*? How does setting aid in the development of an understanding about the atomic bomb?

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## Chapter 3

### **Making Rome Christian**

*What is Christianity's role in the world's most powerful nations?*

1. How do the main characters in these films demonstrate the virtues of the ideal Roman? How is Rome, as portrayed in the films, compared to that ideal? To which of these images of Rome do these films compare America during the Cold War? What about Communist Russia? Why do you think films dealing with the contrast between pagan Roman culture and Christianity appear after World War II? Why is Christianity the hero and how is it presented to the audience?
2. How are the plots in *The Robe* and *Quo Vadis* similar or different? What is the function of the similarities? How do these films set up Christianity as the victor over pagan Rome? Why are these concepts important to Cold War America? Do these films argue that the just and virtuous will prevail? Or, do they posit that believing makes something true? How do these films suggest these notions at work within America during the Cold War?
3. How does the process of conversion play in the United States after World War II? Is it necessary to discuss conversion when discussing change? What reshaping is needed to transform old motives into new? How radical must that change be?

4. Examine the importance of emphasizing freedom and slavery in this chapter. How is physical slavery different from spiritual slavery? Is Christianity necessary for physical and/or spiritual freedom? Explain. Can violence be good? Why or why not? Can some acts of violence be justified? If not, what are the consequences? If violence can be justified, does that make it morally right? How do *The Robe* and *Quo Vadis* deal with this issue?

5. What is “progress” as suggested in these films? Why is it important to this chapter? Are all advocates of progress working towards the same goal? Consider the United States and Communist Russia. What about Nero and Rome in comparison to the Christians? Why do you think these films denounce the idea of a state under one man’s control, but not dedicated military or political service to that same state? How do the United States and Communist Russia play into this notion? What about Rome?

6. Do you agree that the use of Christianity in these films aids the justification of America as a progressive state? Why or why not? If so, why do you think both movies only hint towards a Christianized Rome? If not, why do you think that the characters in these films convert to Christianity?

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## Chapter 4

### ***The Ten Commandments and America’s Fight against Tyranny***

*The Ten Commandments* is the pivotal movie for the use of religion in American postwar film.

1. What is the significance of DeMille’s opening speech and the opening credits claiming that *The Ten Commandments* draw upon many ancient sources? Why is this important to the story of Moses and the Exodus? If the ancient sources were not listed, would the film still have the same impact on the audience? Explain. 3. When *The Ten Commandments* director DeMille opened the 1956 film by stating, “this same battle continues throughout the world today,” does this statement still apply today? If yes, give an example. If not, explain why you disagree. Why is this movie still shown on TV on a regular basis?

2. The story of the Israelites exodus from Egypt is a well-known story within Judaism and Christianity. Why is authentication needed for the story of *Ten Commandments*? How does this concept work with the targumic process?

3. Why do you think the writers of *The Ten Commandments* felt the need to “Christianize” Moses? Can typology be used to address this question? How does this Christianization aid in the film’s portrayal of the United States and the Cold War?

4. How does the use of dialogue and scenes from Scripture, such as the book of Isaiah and Paul’s letter to the Hebrews, aid in reshaping the story of Moses? Why, in the targumic process of *The Ten Commandments*, is it necessary to take in dialogue and scenes from other books in the Bible? How does the material taken from the New Testament aid in the presentation of Moses to a Christian audience?

5. Why is the Americanization of Moses in *The Ten Commandments* important? How do the filmmakers do it? Consider all of Moses’ attributes and think about how the film uses typology to help answer this question.

6. How do freedom and law work together? Does law by its very nature promote slavery? Why or why not? Consider some of the writings of Thomas Paine mentioned in this chapter to help you answer this question.

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## Chapter 5

### **The Messiah of Peace**

*A film's portrayal of Jesus makes profound commentary about its own time, place, and audience.*

1. In the previous chapters, we have seen how different films expressed ways in which America should deal with Communist Russia and other communist states. How does the *King of Kings* suggest that America deal with the Cold War and the use of nuclear weapons? How does it differ from the other films? By providing a visual portrayal of Jesus, *King of Kings* targumically enhances the written Gospel story. How do the earliest scenes of the adult Jesus use visual imagery to enhance him in ways not evident from the biblical text?
2. The Sermon on the Mount in the gospels is just that, namely, an address to the disciples and others present. For what purpose did *King of Kings* recast the Sermon on the Mount as a question and answer session? How is the new context created through targumic transformation? When Jesus speaks words from the gospels, how does the film change the context—i.e., the actions accompanying the statements—of the utterances and thereby change the words' meaning? Compare the gospel and film versions of: the stoning of the adulteress, the Last Supper, and the trail of Jesus before Pilate?
3. Are words more important than action from a targumic viewpoint? In this film, which element (words or action) carries the most power to transform a text and reshape its meaning? Explain your answer. Does your answer apply to targumized films in general?
4. In *King of Kings*, Judas attempts to get Barabbas and Jesus to work together against the Roman occupation. Can war and peace work together as Judas wants? Why or why not? How does this apply to the Cold War? Let's frame the question in another way. Perhaps war and peace cannot work together. Does Judas try to transform one into the other? What response would *King of Kings* give to the suggestion that the "armed peace" of the Cold War should change into a "hot" war?
5. In *King of Kings*, John the Baptist serves as a foil for Jesus. What political options does John the Baptist offer that Jesus cannot? Similarly, John the Baptist provides a foil for Moses in *The Ten Commandments*. If John's political message concerning those that oppress the Jews echoes that of Moses, does his death indicate the failure of those views? How can this be seen as a comment on the modern use of the bomb? What is the "real freedom" that *King of Kings* expresses? What are the key scenes that address this idea? Is this freedom the same as that featured in *The Robe* and *Quo Vadis*? Could this idea of freedom work for citizens of a modern communist nation?
6. Compare and contrast the ways in which *The Ten Commandments* gains authority with the ways *King of Kings* gains authority.

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## Chapter 6

### **The Accidental Superstar**

*Jesus as the antiestablishment hero.*

1. What three factors discussed in the chapter came together to make up the youth movement in the 1960's and 1970's? How does this context of the youth movement help explain the film *Jesus Christ, Superstar*? How does *Jesus Christ, Superstar* bring a new dimension to the American imagining of Jesus?
2. Discuss the similarities and differences between the White House and priests, hippies and Jesus with his disciples. How do these identifications help reshape the image of Jesus in this film? Why is Jesus reconstructed in this manner?
3. Many characters in *Jesus Christ, Superstar* refer to "clear sightedness." What is the importance of clear sightedness in relation to the establishment, Judas, the disciples, and Jesus? Why is this concept important to the context of America when this film was popular?
4. Besides the fact Judas is played by an African American in *Jesus Christ, Superstar*, how is Judas a symbol for both the Civil Rights Movement and the established order? Why is this issue important to mention with regard this film? Why is Mary like "everyman" who is a Christian convert? How does Mary's love for Jesus in *Superstar* become a criticism of the modern Christian Church? From the film's perspective, what do the modern Christian Church and the established society have in common?
5. Why do you think Jesus never acts to move the plot forward and just reacts to those around him in *Superstar*? If Jesus represents the counterculture, how does this identification help explain your answer? Why is passivity a significant quality for this representation?
6. How does *Jesus Christ, Superstar* gain authority? Does it need the same authority as *King of Kings* or *The Ten Commandments*? Why or why not? Is the targumic process used in *Jesus Christ, Superstar*? If so, to what extent is it used? If not, explain why it would not need to be used.

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## Chapter 7

### **Tormenting Christ**

*Understanding the human and divine Jesus and the meaning of salvation today.*

1. This chapter begins by introducing ancient debates about the nature of Jesus. What is the purpose of this? How does this question help frame the film's portrayal of Jesus? Compare the Jesus depicted in *The Last Temptation of the Christ* to the Jesus depicted in *Jesus Christ, Superstar* and *King of Kings*. Does the *Last Temptation's* Jesus build upon the Jesus portrayed in the other films? In what key ways does this Jesus differ? God seems to change Jesus' assigned mission several times during this film. What is the importance of Jesus' changing missions? How does this relate to the nature of Jesus?
2. Are visions and dreams reality? In *Last Temptation*, do visions reinforce or undermine reality? Explain. Are all "texts" empty until humans assign meaning? Why is this notion important to the film's portrayal of Jesus' visions and dreams? Explain your answer.
3. The issue of authority is important when we discuss historical figures in the context in which they lived. Where does *The Last Temptation of the Christ* gain its authority? How does the targumic transformation apply here? Is it vital that this story follows the gospels directly? To achieve its goals, should the film follow the gospels more directly?

4. What is the purpose of uncertainty in *The Last Temptation of the Christ*? How does it help or hinder the audience's understanding of Jesus? Consider the nature of Jesus when answering this question. What features of Jesus' personality are divine? Which are human? Give as many examples of both aspects from the film. Why is it important that the audience see both sides? Would the film have the same effect if only the divine or the human sides were portrayed? Why or why not?

5. Mary Magdalene plays a large role in this film and in Jesus' psyche. She seems to be a childhood friend, a jilted lover, an adult fascination, a voice of temptation or perhaps even of Satan himself, and ultimately a bride and a wife. Do these roles suggest that the film portrays Mary as a typical woman or as a symbol? If she is a symbol, what does she symbolize? Or, perhaps the question should be, what different aspects does she signal?

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## Chapter 8

### **Violence and Redemption**

*Jesus as an authentic and authoritative savior.*

1. How does *The Passion of the Christ* aim to persuade the viewing audience to convert to Christianity? Is there power in viewing a film such as this one? How do viewers' comments like "...the truest..." "...the most faithful..." or "...the most real..." affect the popularity and authority of a film like *The Passion of the Christ*? List the ways *The Passion of the Christ* claims authority. How are these ways important to the film as a story?
  2. How does the targumic process impact the film's depiction of "truth?" Does the notion of truth help to illustrate the targumic transformation used by Gibson? How does it reshape the story? In your opinion, does it work? If so, explain why it does. What elements are used to reconstruct *The Passion of the Christ*? If it does not work, explain why.
  3. Explain how truth and compassion become key indicators of those who decide to follow Jesus. Both notions are present in *The Passion of the Christ*. Explain truth and compassion in terms of cause and effect. What does suffering have to do with sin and salvation? Explain how all three of these elements work together in the film.
  4. We saw in the film *The Last Temptations of the Christ* how the divine side of Jesus worked. How is the divine nature of Jesus displayed in this movie? Why was this important to the overall meaning of the film?
  5. Is the targumic process necessary in all Jesus films? Explain. Why does the story need to be changed "in plain sight"?
  6. How is Jesus, the second Adam, reaffirmed in *The Passion of the Christ* as the antitype of "the first" Adam? Is this necessary for films that portray Jesus? Did another film make reference to this specific type/antitype relationship? Why is this important to understanding of Jesus? Explain.
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## Chapter 9

### **The Devil: Screening Humanity's Enemy**

*The nature of evil and its place in our world.*

1. The opening scenes of *The Exorcist* are distinguished by an absence of speech. The only thing the audience hears are eerie sounds accompanied by common sounds. Why is sound important to the opening scenes? What does it accomplish that visual effects, spoken utterances, and other film elements cannot do?

2. The character of evil differs from culture to culture. What is evil in *The Omen* and *The Exorcist*? What does it have to do with Satan? How do the film's ideas of evil enter into and excite America's fears and anxieties? What do both *The Exorcist* and *The Omen* attempt to say about modern American society? Why is this critique important to understand when viewing these films? How is the concept of invasion paramount to the understanding of these films?
3. Both films involve foreign places. What is the importance of these places when discussing both films' overall comment on America? How do foreign ideas aid or deter America from seeing itself as the Promised Land?
4. Karras is both a priest and a psychiatric counselor. He attempts to sway Chris away from an exorcism by telling her that modern science has names for some of the symptoms that Regan is exhibiting. Can science and religion exist together? In *The Exorcist*'s critique of America, do the filmmakers think so? Why or why not? How is the father figure portrayed in *The Exorcist*? In *The Omen*? Why are these portrayals important to the films' comments on American society? Why is the "father" important?
5. Speech creates sound by definition. Does that sound communicate or is it mere noise? If the latter, how do these films suggest it? If the former, explain how the films support your answer? What is the difference between noise and speech?
6. How do these two films reshape the meaning of God? What would be the purpose of doing so? How about the meaning of evil? What is the importance of belief in the two films? Belief in what? How is belief expressed? Does belief bring about change? Explain.

## Chapter 10

### **God as Alien: Humanity's Helper**

*Understanding "otherness."*

1. *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* suggests that film and television could be a redemptive force. Do you agree or disagree that film is a powerful redemptive force in American mass culture? Why or why not? What is it redeeming?
2. What is the importance of illustrating repetition in *2001: A Space Odyssey*? What does this factor say about the human condition? How do *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *2001: A Space Odyssey* explain God? Why is God explained in this manner? How does it reshape the meaning of God?
3. Marshall McLuhan—a 1960s media guru—said that all technology is an extension of the human body. Why is seeing one's self reflected back at the self when looking at technology important? How does HAL (the computer) play into reflection?
4. How does the historical and national context in which *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* was released help explain the meaning of the film? What does being childlike have to do with UFOs and God? How does the notion of "childlike" work within *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*? Why is it important?
5. What does Rudolf Otto's term *mysterium tremendum* mean? Within the context of the two films, how does this term apply? What does it suggest about the depiction of alien contact? Why is *mysterium tremendum* important to the understanding of these two films? Compare the way these films link God, children, and being childlike with the way the previous chapters films linked children and Satan. What is important about the similarities and the differences? Does the concept of *mysterium tremendum* help illuminate this comparison?

6. How does the Puritan notion of typology and its interpretation beyond the biblical text into events apply to *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*? Explain type and antitype within this context.
  7. How does the consumer culture exude millennial significance in *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*? Why might this be important to Americans? Discuss your answer in terms of typology.
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## Chapter 11

### **Religion and Scandal, Crime and Innocence**

*Religious people can be pious and scandalous at the same time.*

1. How do the films *Agnes of God* and *The Apostle* answer the question, can a Christian be both a pious believer and wicked individual? Is this circumstance inherent in Christianity's understanding of the human condition? Or, do these films reshape the meaning of being Christian? In both films, we have "righteous" individuals who have committed crimes. How is the audience to make sense of Agnes and Sonny in the light of Christianity? Do these films reshape our understanding of Christianity, or do they simply emphasize particular aspects of it?
  2. How does law work within Christianity? Are there different types of law? Why would notions of law be important to these films?
  3. Explain the problems with miracles in the secular world. Can miracles exist? Why or why not? Why is science set up to oppose religion or vice versa?
  4. Compare and contrast the characterization of Sonny and Agnes. How does the social context in which these two characters live their lives help in your comparison? How does their identity as Christian believers complicate the audience's understanding of them?
  5. Scripture is quite strict about the sin of sexual intercourse outside of marriage, yet both Sonny and Agnes have committed this sin. Should they be equally condemned? Do the films indicate that these sins have affected their relationship with God or their religious devotion? Explain how Sonny's passion is both redemptive and destructive. Examine Sonny in light of Jesus' passion in *The Last Temptation of the Christ*. What are the similarities and differences between these two films? How do these films reconstruct Christianity? How does a Christian community keep Christianity stable?
  6. Both films portray a community that is penetrated by an outsider; the convent is entered by the investigator while Sonny's church is attacked by a man driving a bulldozer. What impact do Agnes and Sonny have on these intruders? Are they able to emerge from their intrusion unscathed?
  7. In *The Apostle*, after Sonny baptizes himself, he changes his name to The Apostle E.F. Is Sonny really an apostle? Explain. Consider how language defines reality.
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## Chapter 12

### **The Religion of Baseball**

*Sports can be religion for some. Baseball also says something about who we are as religious people.*

1. In the context of *The Natural* and *Field of Dreams*, how is baseball redemptive? What is baseball redeeming? How is baseball like a religion? What quality does the sport possess for it to acquire a religious function? How is Roy Hobbs like Jesus? Why does he symbolize the "ideal" American? Could Jesus be seen as this type of ideal American?

2. How is *The Natural* like *The Exorcist* or *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*? Compare and contrast these films. What common points do both films make about American society? Why are these points important to the overall understanding of these films?
3. What is the importance of hearing in *Field of Dreams*? How does it compare to the role of sound in *The Exorcist*? How does cause and effect work within *Field of Dreams*? Explain the quote from the film, “if you build it, he will come.” If we consider the field to represent America as the Promised Land, what would this suggest “he” symbolizes?
4. Explain how a baseball field can be a religious shrine. How does language—the use of particular words—help to construct it as such? What does the Fisher King in T.S. Elliot’s *Waste Land* have to do with baseball and America? Does the poem fit? Why or why not? Explain.
5. How do *Field of Dreams* and *The Natural* differ politically, given the context in which the films were released? Compare and contrast both films.
6. What role does imagination play in the discussion of God? Why do you think it’s important?
7. What are the parallels between American society and the game of baseball? What qualities and ideals does baseball have that American society also has? How do these qualities work to define baseball and America? Has the game of baseball changed in its history? In what ways has it changed; for the better or worse? In what ways has it stayed the same?

## Chapter 13

### **Dharma in America**

*Asian religions are present but unrecognized in America.*

1. Why do you think Asian immigrants to American saw no need to “complicate matters by trying to introduce their religion” to American society as a whole? What matters didn’t they want to complicate? Do you think that these Asian religions would have been more accepted if they were introduced earlier into American mass society?
2. What does *The Legend of Bagger Vance* and *Little Buddha* suggest about how well Asian religions could fit in America? Why is this suggestion important for the viewing audience of these films to recognize? How do these films allow the audiences to acknowledge this suggestion?
3. How are Christianity and Buddhism shown to parallel each other in *Little Buddha*? Why would this parallel be important? How does this parallel advance the suggestion of question two? How is the Buddhist notion of impermanence symbolized in *Little Buddha*? What American images does *Little Buddha* use to suggest impermanence? Why does impermanence play such a great part in the film?
4. Think about the English definition of the word “emptiness” and the Buddhist meaning of the word. How does emptiness apply to the American obsession with material wealth and comfort? Do you think most Americans are likely to agree with your answer? Why or why not?
5. How do “things unseen” become important in *The Legend of Bagger Vance* and *Field of Dreams*? Are the “things unseen” in both films illusions? Does that give them a positive or negative value for each film’s purpose?
6. How does *The Legend of Bagger Vance* use action to illustrate its point about life and golf? How does Junuh’s ego consciousness affect his play? Does the interaction of ego and action aid in illustrating Hinduism to an American audience?

7. It would seem that America values the individual more than the collective group. Do you agree or disagree with the statement made above? Why? How does the Hindu notion of selflessness work in the context of American individuality?

8. What does “Atman is Brahman” mean? How does Junuh’s realization of this truth influence his game? Explain how the “perfect swing” represents the true self.

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## Chapter 14

### **Jewish Films: Finding the Path Between Torah and Modernity**

*Thinking about how change happens.*

1. Although Judaism has seen many violent events in its long history, the Holocaust is the most destructive event in recent history. How did the Holocaust change Judaism? Why is an understanding of the Holocaust essential to understand Judaism in America today?
2. What challenges do Jews face when defining themselves in modern American society? Why is such a definition important to any group, especially the Jews? How do the films *The Chosen* and *The Quarrel* exemplify this struggle of definition?
3. How do Danny’s and Reuben’s life choices illustrate Judaism in America? In the context of the films, how is America helping or hindering the unity of Jewish society? How does the understanding of America as the “New Israel” work with or against your answer? What is the purpose of compassion in *The Chosen*? How does this virtue play out in Danny’s family? Does Reuben have compassion? Does he need it? Explain.
4. Why is the modern world seen as dangerous to some in Judaism? What quality does the modern world possess that would cause Judaism’s redefinition? How is this definition played out in both *The Chosen* and *The Quarrel*? In what ways do *The Chosen* and *The Quarrel* relate to one another? What is each film trying to say about Judaism’s need to identify itself within the modern world?
5. How does the label of “righteous man” given to Danny by his father help unite the generations and assure the survival of Judaism?
6. To what extent do the Holocaust and modernity provide the same symbolism in respect to Judaism? Are both necessary negative? Why is it important to link these two different concepts together?
7. What is the importance of “distance” in *The Quarrel*? How does distance aid or hinder the unification of the Jewish community? In the film, why does distance need to occur?

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## Chapter 15

### **Islam and Fanaticism: Only in the Eye of the Beholder?**

*Religion: a tool for peace or violence, change or the status quo. Religion bespeaks of the best and the worst of humanity.*

1. Both films, *My Son the Fanatic* and *Destiny*, deal with the issue of fanaticism. What is fanaticism? Is Islam the only religion with this concept? Within the context of the two films, is fanaticism depicted only negatively? Explain.
2. Why do some creators of Islamic mass media (e.g., film) feel the need to hide their message? How do they accomplish this?
3. What is *Destiny* trying to say about fanaticism in Islam? How is the film’s message getting across to the audience? What would the ramifications be if a filmmaker delivered his message without subterfuge?

4. Do you think American mass media presents many positive portrayals of Islam and Muslims? Are positive portrayals common or rare? What does this reveal about American perceptions of Islam?
5. What words does Averroes use to illustrate his feelings toward fanaticism? Are these words powerful? Do you agree with them? Why or why not?
6. What role should reason play in interpreting the Quran? Explain the different answers to this question given by the different groups in *Destiny* and indicate how they relate to positions taken by different philosophers described in the chapter? How does interpretation take place in film for those who oppose Averroes position?
7. Does fanaticism even exist in *My Son the Fanatic*'s reality? If perception can define reality in this film, can fanaticism be correct and justified? How?
8. To what degree can one say that the main issue in *My Son the Fanatic* is the problem of whether modern/ Western society allows a place for Muslims? Does this issue ever get resolved? What different symbols do the father, son, and wife represent concerning Muslims in the Western world?
9. Does Western behavior represent positive values that should be emulated or negative actions that should be avoided? How does the portrayal of the West provide a yardstick for measuring Muslim behavior in the films?
10. To what extent can you say that the climax of *Destiny* represents a triumph of Averroes's belief in human reason to interpret God's will in the face of ignorance represented by Christian fear, Muslim fanaticism, and the ruler's selfishness? Does the climax of *My Son the Fanatic* present the triumph of the son's search for Islam within decadent Western society or the father's triumph in recreating himself as Western?