

## THE JEWISH JOURNAL OF GREATER LOS ANGELES

# Community

### God's Conversations With Allah

by David Finnigan, Contributing Writer

#### Excerpts:

Documentary filmmaker Ruth Broyde-Sharone's latest work, "[God and Allah Need To Talk](#)," will make its Los Angeles debut Sunday, Sept. 14, with the 18-minute film being central to a three-hour interfaith celebration highlighting common bonds between Muslims, Christians and Jews. "A lot of people have awareness at these events, but they're not changed," said Broyde-Sharone, who from her Culver City home office has coordinated the afternoon slate of film, dance and music at the Laemmle Fairfax Theater.

"So far," she said, "about 300 people have contacted her to confirm they will come." The interfaith event follows similar outreach through the Islamic Center of Southern California and Reform synagogues such as Temple Kol Tikvah in Woodland Hills . .

Broyde-Sharone documentary, the event's short centerpiece, details post-Sept. 11 interfaith relations between Southern California's Muslims and Jews. Its title comes from a billboard Broyde-Sharone saw in Hollywood. Somewhat shaky handheld camera work gives the film a home movie feel as it shows non-Muslims — notably a Jewish couple — visiting the Islamic Center during observances of a Muslim holiday. The film then details this year's April 11 Muslim-Jewish seder, "Breaking the Silence: A Passover Celebration Seeking Peace and Reconciliation," at Temple Kol Tikvah.

. . After trying some matzah, a Muslim African American boy says to the camera, "It's kinda hard and crispy, but it tastes real good." Broyde-Sharone completed the short film in four months.

"For me to do this in four months was a revelation and remarkable," she said, adding that interfaith activists in Detroit and Philadelphia want to screen it. "It was almost like this was being propelled beyond me. It was a really a series of events that just pulled together for me to finish this."

The filmmaker said the Sept. 14 event will also ask participants to make some kind of a serious commitment to remaining involved with people they met that day from other faiths. "For some people it will require a big stretch," she said. "It's not about holding hands and singing 'Kumbaya.' It's about really being able to move yourself beyond your comfort zone. I think that's the part that's usually neglected at these events — 'What next?'"

Performers for the Laemmle Fairfax Theatre event will include a Palestinian violinist, an Iranian singer, Ladino singer Stefani Valadez and L.A. composer Steven Longfellow Fiske. "It's through the artists of our community that we're going to move

this entire agenda forward," said Broyde-Sharone, who is also an interior designer and freelance journalist who has written for The Jerusalem Post. Her short films include the Encyclopedia Britannica educational film "Israeli Boy: Life on a Kibbutz," and the 13-minute video, "Children of the Dream ... the Reality," which was commissioned by the Anti-Defamation League's Los Angeles office. Broyde-Sharone also has filmed more than 30 seders for an upcoming documentary about how Jews . . . and non-Jews use a seder dinner as a metaphor to discuss their own particular suffering. "So when I went to these two events [at the Islamic Center and Temple Kol Tikvah], I was thinking about them as a larger film," said Broyde-Sharone, who attends Ohr HaTorah in West Los Angeles.

Expected at Sunday's event are clergy and laypeople, like Rabbi Steven Jacobs of Kol Tikvah and Rabbi Neil Comess-Daniels of Santa Monica's Beth Shir Shalom; local Pakistani community representatives; David Lehrer and Joe Hicks of Community Advocates, Inc.; and peace activists from groups such as the Progressive Jewish Alliance. Speakers will include author Jack Miles, UCLA public policy analyst Xandra Kayden and CSUN assistant professor of religious studies Amir Hussain. They hopefully will move interfaith issues, "from the head and slowly thru to the heart," Broyde-Sharone said.

Would the Israeli-Palestinian conflict be discussed? "No," said the filmmaker/event organizer. "The way to get people to come together is to find common areas where they don't feel they already have to defend themselves or attack."

Though Broyde-Sharone said the West Bank and Gaza, are, "like the white elephant that nobody wants to talk about in the room," as for her event, "the day is apolitical. "But in dialogue with Muslim friends, the filmmaker makes it clear that it is wrong for Americans to have as, "their entire frame of reference of who a Muslim is to be Sept. 11 and Muslim extremists." She said it is also wrong when Muslims in Southern California do not denounce suicide bombers and other terrorism far away. She said she tells Muslims, "it's important that we hear you say 'we will not accept this.'"