Sali Elmlich's film, *Asa Turns 13*, won the Mika Eilon Best Film Award  
 at the Cinema South Festival

The jury supported its choice: "With sensitivity and passion, the director invited us to enter his intimate world, creating a special, cohesive, authentic, realistic, and poetic cinematic world."

The second prize was won by Manya Lozovskaya for her film "Hebrew Kisses." The film "Cathriel," by Roni Ashernizky, Yulia Zavt and Noa Chen, won the award for the best animated film.

Thousands of viewers from around the country watched dozens of films, shows and performances during the five days of the Cinema South Festival.

Tonight, the film "Asa Turns 13," by Sali Elimelech, won the Mika Eilon Best Film Award at the Cinema South Festival, held by the School of Audio and Visual Arts at Sapir College. The film was declared the winner in the closing ceremony.

The film tells of a small town with a central spiritual organization, in which Asa awakens on the day before the coming of age ceremony that will transform him from a boy to a man. His father's expectations and the pressures from his surroundings force him to find his way on his own. The focus of this moving film is a boy, orphaned of his mother, living with his father in Netivot on the eve of his Bar Mitzva. Director Sali Elimelech (a native of Netivot, named after the Baba Sali) amazes by creating a rich and fascinating view of the southern town from the viewpoint of a unique, heart-touching character, portrayed with great talent by a child who is not an actor.

The judges, Orit Azoulay, Tatiana Brandrup and Eva Sangiorginimko, explained their considerations for choosing the film: "With sensitivity and passion, you invited us to enter your intimate world and created a special, cohesive, authentic, realistic, and poetic cinematic world. In the space of thirty minutes, you condensed a loaded, complex story into images, sounds and characters that reveal layers in the experience of a detached, isolated geographic and mental periphery and the essence of Jewish culture and mythology. "

The second prize was won by the film "Hebrew Kisses" by Manya Lozovskaya. The jury explained the choice: "The film explores a question about tradition that challenges Judaism today. The director confronts the definition of individual and social identity through her personal experience in an original and refreshing way. The result is the revelation of profound observations of the faith – declared and tacit – ingrained in a generation."

In addition, the Ronit Elkabetz Memorial Scholarships and Grants Project was launched at the Cinema South Festival. The project is a joint initiative of the Yashar and Elkabetz families and the Cinema South Festival.

Shlomi Elkabetz presented the project, saying "It is sad to participate in this project for the obvious reasons. So much could have been said and done, but Ronit's uncompromising spirit continues to ignite the emotion and incite the imagination in a dimension that is beyond time or the physical world. To know that actions and films have a life and entity that has nothing to do with our physical presence. The project is a wonderful extension of an idea that was conceived at the moment when Ronit decided that people would want to hear her. She didn’t know exactly when it happened, but I know it happened. This evening is a testament to the power of her decision.”

The project will find creators and projects that integrate aspects of the artistic and ideological pathways for which Ronit fought, as a woman, actress and creator.

The project will award a production grant of 330,000 NIS for a first film by a creator from the south, two writing and development grants, a grant for the development of a documentary film, four scholarships of merit for students from the South, and an additional independent, unrestricted grant for a creator in the spirit of the project chosen by the search committee.

Search Committee: Chairman: Nili Feller, Maysaloun Hamoud, Avishay Kahana, Elad Keidan.

The sponsors of the project, which includes scholarships and grants of NIS 700,000, are: the Yashar-Elkabetz Family, the Cinema South Festival, the Gesher Multicultural Film Fund, HOT8, the Yehoshua Rabinovich Foundation for the Arts – Cinema Project, the Israel Film Fund, the New Fund for Cinema and TV, and Sophie Dulac Distribution, France.

Additional winners:

• Third place for best film: *Absorption Center,* directed by Jonathan Grynkraut.

• Best animation film award: *Cathriel,* directed by Roni Ashernizky, Yulia Zavt and Noa Chen.

• Best TV pilot award: *Personal Use,* directed by Eytan Baritzy.

• Camera award: Demian Tzatzkin for the film *Fuad*, directed by Guy Wasserman.

• Editing award: Inbar Katz and Shir Rahum for the film *Fuad*, directed by Guy Wasserman.

• Production award: Naor Zana for the film *Two of Every Kind*, directed by Efrat Chen Weiss, Naor Zana and Neta Bar.

• Audience favorite: *Two of Every Kind*, directed by Efrat Chen Weiss, Naor Zana and Neta Bar.

• Original music award: Lior Waitzman for the film *Nameless*, directed by Tamar Guttman.

• Soundtrack design award: Moris Studios for the film *The Updates*, directed by Mor Hanay.

As part of the festival, the annual Pitch Competition of the Sapir Television Specialization Track for series and formats was held. Among the winners, the rising trend of social drama was evident. These deal with social injustices, which are fought against as part of the narrative- not always using straightforward methods- by the heroes and heroines.