We live in a secular age, or so generations of university-trained sociologists and historians have taught. Yet well into the twenty-first century, religion and the questions it raises remain a significant presence in the ordinary lives of believers, atheists, seekers, and the merely curious. Contemporary cinema, because it can make ordinary life unusually vivid, may help us clarify our situation. By dissecting richly insightful films such as Gabriel Axel’s 1987 “Babette’s Feast,” Giddi Dar’s 2004 “Ushpizin,” and Agnieszka Holland’s 1999 “The Third Miracle,” we can catch a glimpse of the elusive character of “transcendence” and the promise and problems of “being religious” in a secular age.

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