Remembering One of the Great Events of Modern Israeli History With A New, Magnificent Film: "Exodus 91: the Untold Story of Operation Solomon (1991)"

By Victor Goldsmith

This film was produced by OpenDor Media in J'lem and had a world debut at Lincoln Center, about 1 year ago, which we attended. It is a great honor to bring you the new Israeli magnificent film, first as a discussion event on Sunday, December 10th, 2023, and second, by free streaming for 1 week, December 11-17, 2023. (https://vimeo.com/786286662 - Password E91Preview)

Les Agisim and I see this as a way to help Israel at this terrible time, by showing the unique positive side of Israel – this emergency airlift and successful integration of large numbers of black Jews in Israel. Les handled most of the PR and worked with FJMC to send notices to several 1,000's of people. I extend congratulations to Les, as just last week, Les was awarded the Metro Region of FJMC, Man of the Year Honor.

I have been closely following the arrival of the Ethiopian Jews in Israel, and their subsequent great success. I lived in Israel for 7 years and taught at Haifa University, during the time of the predecessor airlift, Operation Moses, in the 1980's. I visited the Ethiopian absorption center in Tivon, 2 days after Operation Moses with my father. We were surrounded and warmly hugged and embraced, with great laughter by these very happy new Israelis. When I attended IDF Army training in the 1980s, 3 in our unit were Ethiopian Jews, who proved to be very gentle, and as such, underwent training for fighting for the defense of their new home, Israel! These Ethiopian Jews are right now, both as Israeli soldiers and officers, at the front lines, giving their all, for their country.

I express my thanks to our Partners in the NYC Metro Group of Synagogues of FJMC - Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs, the largest Jewish Men's Club in the world, who helped pay for this film and opened their large membership list to Les. Specifically, thanks to Alan Budman, FJMC International President, Shea Lerner and Aaron Altman of the New York Metro Region and Lisa Pollack. This event was in collaboration with Temple Emanuel's Men's Club under the leadership of Joel Boosen and his team. Many thanks for hosting this event.

I want to thank my friend of many years, David Coleman, at Open Dor Media, Israeli Film Company for inviting me to the Film Debut at Lincoln Center, and his encouragement and help in bringing this film to us, and for our two distinguished guests, Mazi Malesa Pilip and Gideon Naim, Executive Film Producer, and the son of Israeli Ambassador to Ethiopia Asher Naim.

"Mazi Melesa Pilip, a Nassau County Legislator. At the age of 12, Mazi flew on this emergency "Operation Soloman" airlift with her family. Subsequently, Mazi served in the Israeli army paratroopers, and went on to get her BA and MS college degrees in Israel. Her two sisters are also contributing to Israel, as a Judge, and affiliated with the Israel Army. Mazi Then moved to Great Neck and now serves in the Nassau County Legislature. And she continues to have a bright future. An extraordinary success story." She spoke to us after the film, to tell what it was like for her and her family, in coming to Israel, and after arriving in Israel.

Gideon Naim was born in Jerusalem Israel. After serving in the IDF from 1982-85 during the first Lebanese war, he went on to study Economics in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He then went on to co-found numerous technology companies focused on the healthcare industry. Currently he splits his time between a new startup company focused on affordable homes, continued investments in health-tech in the US and Israel, as well as philanthropy projects such as promoting Ethiopian integration into Israeli society, following in his father's footsteps.

But the most thanks goes to Israeli Ambassador to Ethiopia, Asher Naim, who conceived this Airlift of 14,000 Ethiopians in 1991, and flawlessly, executed this at a dangerously time of Ethiopian civil war, as depicted in detail in the 1 1/2 hour film, which I ENCOURAGE ALL TO SEE VIA STREAMING!

Executive Producer Gideon Naim introduced the film, and got us in the mood for one of the great moments in modern Jewish History. At the end of the film there were many tears of happiness from the audience. Thanks to the many efforts of Les Agisim and FJMC, we had 95 pre-registrants.

Mazi Melesa Pilip then told us her recollections from the flight and related events, and, as a great example, her very successful life, to date. She was very informative and enthusiastic of what she and her family went through, and the many gifts that Israel rewarded them, for their dangerous decision to come to Israel!

Gideon Naim then led the Q and A. Questions asked included:

1. We all have fathers and we think they are special, but you made a movie about YOUR father. What drove you to do this?
2. His mother, Hilda Naim, told me about the many large classes she conducted for Ethiopians on the Embassy Compound, at this time, why was this left out, and her role as an extremely helping wife, emphasized?
3. And other questions, resulting in an interesting discussion.

And, of course thanks to Joel Boosin and Andrew Chait, President of the TE Men's Club for offering us such delightful facilities at Temple Emanu-El for viewing the film. And thx to all who assisted us in many ways.

I gave special gifts to Melesa, Hilda (wife), Gideon Naim (son), Shea Lerner (representing FJMC New York Metro Region), and to Les of Modern Israeli Art! Cynthia Ahn, and I visited Israel last June, which included a day at the Ethiopian Absorption Center (they are still coming), and spent lots of time with our Israeli friends, enjoying the beautiful Hula Valley Bird Sanctuary at the upper Galilee, the relaxing Sea of Galilee and the very important and significant Jorden River. After the war started, Cynthia chose to make note of these beautiful Israeli moments in her art, and sent this art to the friends that accompanied us in June. I then gave gifts of computer generated copies of these three special moments that we all hope will return quickly!

Here are some comments from our enthusiastic and emotional audience.

Having just returned from the FJMC sponsored screening of the docudrama: Exodus 91: The Untold Story of Operation Solomon, at Temple Emmanuel in NYC, I cannot help but draw the parallel between the rescue of Ethiopian Jewry and the Chanukah Story itself. For anyone to claim that Israel is an Apartheid state just has to ask, "Why did no other country care about the plight of 14,000 Black African Jews, other than Israel?" We were fortunate to have the Executive Producer of the film Gideon Naim, son of Israeli Ambassador to Ethiopia, Asher Naim z'l and Legislator Mazi Melesa Pilip, of the Nassau County Legislature, who personally was evacuated on the airlift, as a young child with her family.

Special thanks and kudos to Les Agism, Victor Goldsmith, Dr. Steven Mandel, Aaron Altman and Lisa Pollack for not only coordinating this wonderful event, but for re-engaging our city Men's Clubs and welcoming our bretheren from the Reform Movement. We are making strides, not as separate entities, but as one strong voice on behalf of Klal Yisrael.

- Shea Lerner, Vice President of Development, Parker Jewish Institute

Thank you! It was a great night and the addition of Mazi was brilliant. Hope to see you guys soon.

- Gideon Naim, Executive Producer, Open Dor Media

Victor, Thank you for your Brooklyn background. You had a vision and made it come true. What a special occasion!!! Thank you making it available to all of us. Bravo!!! I thought the Ethiopian woman was sensational.

- Leslie Agisim

You, Leslie, and Victor, show your commitment to the highest Jewish values of community, inclusivity and friendship. I am fortunate to call both of you my friends. Movie-Agreed-What a tribute to Israel.

- Steven Mandel MD

Please convey this streaming information to friends and family. Encourage them to watch the free movie streaming available for 1 week: December 11-17, 2023.
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