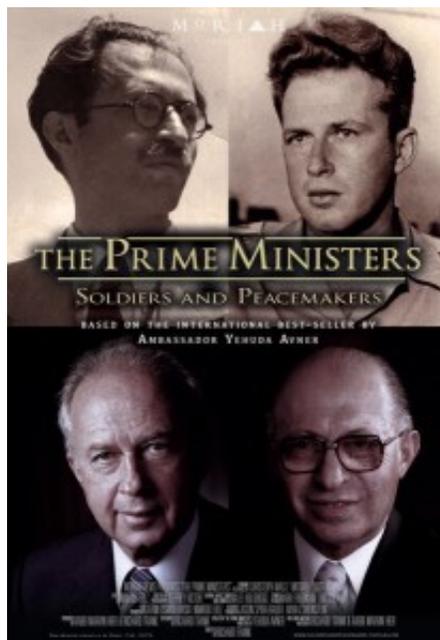


Reviews by Amos Lassen

Books, Movies and Judaica and Random Thoughts About Whatever

“THE PRIME MINISTERS: SOLDIERS AND PEACEMAKERS”— Israel’s Leaders, Part II



“THE PRIME MINISTERS: SOLDIERS AND PEACEMAKERS”

Israel’s Leaders, Part II

Amos Lassen

We now have the second volume of “The Prime Ministers”, a documentary based on Yehuda Avner’s book of the same name. Richard Trask’s documentary is a companion piece to “The Prime Ministers: The Pioneers” and together we get an inside look at the key events and leadership of the State of Israel.



This film looks at the years Yehuda Avner served as a diplomat and an aide and speechwriter to Yitzhak Rabin and Menachem Begin. Rabin's early peace negotiations with Egypt, the raid on Entebbe, and the financial scandal that ended the two-term prime minister's first administration took place. During the years that Menachem Begin served as prime minister we had Anwar Sadat's historic visit to Jerusalem, the secret Camp David talks, and the bombing of Iraq's nuclear facility.



We become very aware of the tense relations between United States presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan and we get an inside look at what went on behind the scenes while the Oslo Accords were being negotiated and the continuing struggle with the Arab nations and with the Arabs living within Israel's borders. This is an oral history and it is accompanied by never-before-seen footage and photographs.



The film looks at Rabin's election as the country's first native born Israeli leader in 1974, how he negotiated the first bilateral treaty between Israel and Egypt in 1975, the dramatic events surrounding Israel's rescue of hostages in Entebbe in 1976, the tense relationship between newly elected United States President Jimmy Carter and Rabin, and Rabin's loss of his office because of a financial scandal involving his wife Leah. Avner went on to work for Menachem Begin when he was elected prime minister in 1977—something that surprised the world. We go behind the scenes of Sadat's historic visit to Jerusalem, the Camp David negotiating process, the difficult relationship between President Carter and Menachem Begin and the tense relations that arose between Begin and President Reagan over the 1982 Lebanon War. The documentary also looks at Begin's decline after the death of his beloved wife Aliza, and Yehuda Avner's career as a diplomat in the United Kingdom and Australia before returning to Israel to work with Yitzhak Rabin not long before his assassination in 1995, after he had been elected a second time as Israel's Prime Minister.



For me personally, it was exciting to relive Sadat's visit to Israel since I was living there when he came. I was reminded on that powerful quote by former Prime Minister Golda Meir, "We can forgive the Arabs for killing our children. We cannot forgive them for forcing us to kill their children. We will only have peace with the Arabs when they love their children more than they hate us".



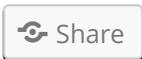
In the documentary we hear the voices of Michael Douglas as Yitzhak Rabin and Christoph Waltz as Menachem Begin and Nicola Peltz as the voice of Esther Cailingold. It is hard not to become emotional while watching this. It again made me realize the importance of the State of Israel in our lives and I must add that it made quite homesick at times.



Yehuda Avner was born in Manchester, England and went to Palestine in 1947. He eventually entered Israel's foreign service and served as speechwriter, secretary, and advisor to four Israeli Prime Ministers — Levi Eshkol, Golda Meir, Yitzhak Rabin, and Menachem Begin. Occasionally, Avner's narrative is overly gossipy, but for the most part this is a revealing story of how these men operated in moments of both calm and crisis. Avner reserves his greatest admiration for Begin, and his near-worship of the man is likely to discomfit many in Israel and in the U.S. The film opens in New York City on October 9 and in Los Angeles on October 14.



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