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BEN GURION, EPILOGUE will have its US premiere at the Santa Barbara Intâ??l Film Festival

Description

Posted by Larry Gleeson

Go2Films is bringing light in the form of the founder of the State of Israel and its first Prime Minister.

At a time of global leadership crisis, **BEN-GURION, EPILOGUE** (Israel/France, 2016 | Documentary, 55 min. Director: Yariv Mozer) brings thought-provoking insights about the role of leaders in todayâ??s complex world.

In the great depths of the archive, six hours of interview footage was discovered of one of modern historyâ??s greatest leaders- David Ben-Gurion. It is 1968 and he is 82 years old, five years before his death. He lives in his secluded home in the desert, removed from all political discourse, which allows him a hindsight perspective on the Zionist enterprise. Ben-Gurionâ??s introspective soul searching is the focus of this film, and his clear voice provides a surprising vision for todayâ??s crucial decisions and the future of Israel.
BEN-GURION, EPILOGUE will be making its U.S. premiere at the Santa Barbara International Film Festival (SBIFF). The festival will run February 1-11, 2017. SBIFF recently released its film program.

Watch the Trailer

Hereâ??s a poignant review of **BEN-GURION, EPILOGUE** by the New York Timesâ?? Isabel Kershner:

The first prime minister of Israel, David Ben-Gurion, at his home in 1972 on the eve of his 86th birthday.
Associated Press

Ben-Gurion on Israel, Peace and Back Pain: A Lost Interview Is Brought to Life

KIBBUTZ SDE BOKER, Israel â?? The rare, intimate and reflective interview with Israelâ??s founding prime minister was filmed nearly 50 years ago, but it never aired.

David Ben-Gurion, at 82 and five years out of office, spoke in the six-hour interview of state-building and the biblical prophets that guided him; the security imperative of his young nation and Israelâ??s quest for spiritual and moral superiority; his battle with lower back pain and his interest in Buddhism.

It was April 1968, and â??The Old Man,â?• as Ben-Gurion was nicknamed for much of his life, had been largely abandoned by his own political protÃ©gÃ©s. Paula, his rather brusque and devoted wife, had died that January, leaving him in near isolation in his chosen retirement home in Sde Boker, a remote communal village in the Negev desert.

â??The most important thing which I learned, I learned by living here,â?• he said. â??I want to live in a place when I know that my friends, and myself, we did it. Everything. Itâ??s our creation.â?•

Watch Ben-Gurion reflecting on the prophets and on turning to God for strength. â??God is everywhere,â?• he said.

He sat for two hours a day, over three consecutive days, and spoke in English. He wore a turtleneck sweater, his casual uniform for cooler days. When the interviewer said he was ready to wrap up the final session, Ben-Gurion protested that they still had 10 minutes to go.

But the reels of silent footage and the soundtrack languished for decades in separate archives. Excerpts from the recently rediscovered conversation form the core of a new documentary, â??Ben-Gurion, Epilogue,â?• in which the Zionist luminary offers a raw, contemplative self-analysis of his lifeâ??s work.

Asked if he feared for his country, he replied, â??Oh, I always feared. I always. Not just now.â?• Though it was 20 years after Israelâ??s founding, he said that he feared â??the state does not yet exist. Itâ??s a beginning only.â?•

Interwoven with other footage from the period â?? of meetings with foreign leaders, a speech in Israelâ??s Parliament, birthday celebrations â?? the film is, in part, a wistful ode to a lost generation of leaders who viewed simplicity as a virtue even as they strove for giant goals.

â??There is an absence of leadership with those values and that vision,â?• said Yariv Mozer, the Israeli writer, director and producer of the movie, which premiered last month at the Jerusalem Film Festival. The film, and the recent book by Avi Shilon on which it is based, Mr. Mozer added, â??reflect the interest of some young Israelis to turn back to our history, to our past, in order to find answers for today and maybe for the future.â?•

The graves of Paula and David Ben-Gurion, overlooking the Negev desert. Rina Castelnuovo for The New York Times

Ben-Gurionâ??s matter-of-fact voice from the grave resonates hauntingly, with its mix of pragmatism and philosophical prescriptions bordering on the prophetic. He described the prophet Jeremiah as one of the greatest because, he said, â??I have the feeling that what he was saying is true.â?•

â??He understood politics more than the kings,â?• Ben-Gurion said. â??But he was unpopular.â?•

Mr. Mozer and Mr. Shilon pointed to the former prime ministerâ??s pronouncements at the time that in return for a true peace, he would give up the territories that Israel conquered in the Arab-Israeli War in 1967, except for the Golan Heights, Jerusalem and the West Bank city of Hebron. He saw no contradiction in believing that Israel had the right to all the land, but could also concede some of it.

â??He thought that the most important thing was to live in the Middle East in peace with our neighbors,â?• Mr. Shilon said. â??He said that Israel can win a lot of wars and the Arabs can lose a lot of wars, but that Israel would not be able to stand one defeat; that one lost war would be the end of Israel.â?• Mr. Shilon added, â??The problem with Ben-Gurion was that people stopped listening to him.â?•

Mr. Mozer and Yael Perlov, the editor and co-producer of the documentary, uncovered the lost interview almost by chance, in the Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive in Jerusalem. There, while working to restore an old and unsuccessful feature film about Ben-Gurion by Ms. Perlovâ??s late father, David Perlov, they tripped across the silent film reels. It took six months to find the soundtrack, which they did in the Ben-Gurion Archives in the Negev.

The interview had actually been conducted as background research for the Perlov film. The former prime minister had chosen the interviewer, Clinton Bailey, who was then a recent immigrant from the United States. Mr. Bailey had been befriended by the Ben-Gurions after Paula invited him in for tea one day when he was wandering near their home in Tel Aviv.

Ben-Gurion helped Mr. Bailey secure a teaching job at the academy he had established at Sde Boker, and Mr. Bailey would sometimes join the aging politician on his brisk walks around the kibbutz.

Mr. Bailey went on to become an eminent scholar of Bedouin culture â?? and mostly forgot about the 1968 interview. Recalling the period, Mr. Bailey said the simplicity of the Ben-Gurionsâ?? cabin at Sde Boker was â??a statement,â?• adding: â?? I donâ??t think Ben-Gurion wanted the perks of power.â?•

At Ben-Gurionâ??s request, the cabin has been preserved and is open to the public. A trickle of Israeli families on school break and foreign tourists passed through on a recent sunbaked weekday.

The man who helped create the modern state of Israel insisted, in his sunset years, on being treated like any other member of the Sde Boker collective and ate lunch in the cramped communal dining room.

â??In our kibbutz I told them my name is David,â?• he said in the interview with Mr. Bailey. â??Not Ben-Gurion. So every morning I came to see what David has to do, and I went to do the work. This is what our prophets said, to serve as an example to other people.â?•

Ben-Gurion, left, signing a document proclaiming the new Jewish state of Israel, at midnight on May 14, 1948, in Tel Aviv. Associated Press

(Kibbutz residents who were there at the time said they gave him the easier jobs, like tending to the lambs and measuring precipitation.)

Archival footage shows Ben-Gurion dedicating the arrival in Sde Boker of the â??radiotelephone,â?• which he called a â??dubious blessing.â?• In another clip, Moshe Feldenkrais, the mind-body clinician, described how he persuaded Ben-Gurion to perform a circuslike physical feat to bring him more in tune with his body, which resulted in Ben-Gurionâ??s famously photographed headstands.

Ben-Gurion died in 1973, and was buried in a simple grave next to Paulaâ??s on the edge of a stunning desert canyon. His will stipulated no eulogies or gun salute. The tombstone is inscribed only with his name and the dates of his birth, death and immigration to the country.

Settling the Negev, in his mind, was imperative for the young stateâ??s future. It was also a place where he could champion his ideals.

â??We wanted to create a new life, not the life that exists,â?• he said of the Zionist pioneers. â??I believed that we had a right to this country. Not taking away from others, but recreating it.â?•

He had made tough choices along the way, like refusing to allow the return of Palestinian refugees from the 1948 war over Israelâ??s creation, and placing Israelâ??s Arab citizens under military rule.

Ben-Gurion believed the stateâ??s mission was to fulfill the biblical concept of an â??am segulah,â?• an exemplary nation of higher virtues, treasured by God. Asked in 1968 if Israel was carrying out that mission, he replied: â??Not yet.â?•

(Source: Go2Films)

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