



Seven Minutes in Heaven

A film by Omri Givon

**"Unforgettable! [An] impressive feature debut."
- Alissa Simon, *Variety***

**"A powerful drama. One of the highlights of [2009] Tribeca Film Festival."
- Joe Bendel, *The Epoch Times***



Israel, France, Hungary | 2008 | Drama-Thriller | In Hebrew with English Subtitles | 94 min. | 1.78 : 1 | Dolby Digital

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FESTIVALS AND AWARDS

NOMINATED Best Actress Award **ISRAELI FILM ACADEMY**

WINNER Crystal Heart Award **HEARTLAND Film Festival**

WINNER Best Feature Film **WARSAW Film Festival**

WINNER Best Feature Film **HAIFA Int'l Film Festival**

NOMINATED Grand Prix Award - Best Film **BRATISLAVA Int'l Film Festival**

OFFICIAL SELECTION

Hamptons Int'l Film Festival 2009

Tribeca Int'l Film Festival 2009

Atlanta Jewish Film Festival 2010

SYNOPSIS

Galia, a young woman from Jerusalem, and her boyfriend Oren board a local bus. The bus explodes, leaving Oren in a coma and Galia with severe burns and memory loss; she lacks memory of the day of the terrorist attack and the days leading up to it. The film begins one year after the attack, upon Oren's death. As Galia undergoes physical and mental therapy, she attempts to stitch together the shattered fragments of her life and soul. A necklace sent to her from an unidentified source sets her off on a journey to find the missing pieces of the puzzle from that horrific day.

DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

About six years ago, I was sitting at home, I was living with my parents at the time, there was a suicide bombing on a bus in Jerusalem and on one of the local TV news reports they were talking about where they take the buses that are blown up. There was a shot of a deserted parking lot with about four or five buses that were completely blown up, and that image blew me away and took me to a place where I suddenly saw a young woman standing in front of a bus, and I started writing a script that I knew would lead me to that situation. I didn't really know what I was writing. All I knew was that in the end I'd reach that woman standing in front of her bus, dealing with her trauma.

I'm the scriptwriter and the director of the film, which helped me improvise when a scene didn't work or when a location needed to be changed or a line needed to be moved, so in a flash I rewrote the lines in my head or one of the actors came up with a line and I knew how it would connect, especially in this kind of script, which is very complex and sensitive.

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR AND LEAD ACTRESS REYMOND AMSALEM

by Heeb Magazine

How did you first find your way into this story?

Omri: When I started writing, I had an image about a girl whose boyfriend died in a car accident, some kind of horror film. One day there was this bombing on a bus in Jerusalem and there was a story about some graveyard where they take the busses. The girl from this horror movie jumped in my head into this graveyard, and I knew the story was about the girl dealing with a trauma, standing in front of this bus.

The first draft was a thriller. In the second, I started asking questions about her and it became more dramatic. I decided this movie was about her inside world, with all these illusions and flashbacks. I always thought about her emotional situation. In the end, most of the movie is about that, about life, love, death.

The character of Galia is not always exactly sympathetic.

Omri: We didn't want the set-up to be that she has a very good life and everything is perfect, and then something happens. One thing that Reymond gave to the film that I didn't imagine, she gave her something very tough. Sometimes people want her to be a victim and weak. They want to love her and feel sorry for her, and Galia's very like, "Don't get close to me. I'm going to deal with it alone." I felt a responsibility for Galia not to be a cliché. She's a real woman, and something happened to her. That doesn't mean that she needs to be lovable or the perfect woman. We want her to be not politically correct and tough, and kind of a bitch.

What did you want to explore about Israel today?

Reymond: Through the research, we started understanding that you can recover from terror, but you can't be who you were. You have to invent a new you to keep going. There are people who are recovering, but you can't compare who they are today to who they were before.

I really searched for women who had been through similar situations and asked them about their relationships, how they feel about their body. How is it when you get a compliment? How is when you're walking down the street and everything is okay, but you feel like you're a monster and everybody's looking at you?

Survivor guilt is a very important theme in the film.

Reymond: I didn't meet anybody who'd been through that and didn't have any kind of guilt. Everybody did. They remember faces of people they never met, and they appear in dreams and illusions. A lot of them have a lot of shame to talk about it. They don't want people to know that they feel guilty, because you're alive, you shouldn't feel guilty, you should say thank you that you're

here. We did a lot of interviews with people who didn't know each other, but had the same experience. It was very mystical to see that she was from Haifa, and someone else was from Jerusalem, and they've never met but are talking about the same thing.

The film never politicizes the bombing. It's much more about the healing afterwards. Why was it important to keep that the focus?

Omri: The most important thing is to see the after-effect. I was interested to find this girl a year later and see what's happened. Even in Israel, you never hear about these stories. There is this label after something happens, "post-traumatic," but you don't really understand what it is. Did you ask survivors if they've gone back onto the bus?

Reymond: Most of them really wanted to meet the paramedic that saved them or return and see the coffee shop that exploded. All of them said it took a long time to do it. It depends on their age. If the person is older, they did it more quickly. The younger people needed a long process to go back.

The pressure suit she wears for her burns is such a great image for the difference between living in the past versus the freedom of finally moving on.

Omri: This is also from the research. I didn't know there is such a thing. When I met people with scars, the first thing they'd tell me is about this suit. For Reymond, when you put it on, you're in the character. It's tight and people are very, very afraid to take it off.

Reymond: It's like a second skin. They all talk about it and were very afraid to let go of it. Even scenes when the audience can't see it, it was important to me to still wear it.

Did the victims you spoke to ever mention anger about the bombing itself?

Omri: No. It was amazing. I spent hours with them, and we never talked about politics.

Reymond: Or hate.

Omri: They are just dealing with their own life. They don't give a damn about the prime minister. They don't have hate or anger. Both of us were amazed by how those people just want to live. It's so powerful. They're very optimistic and strong. But not one word was said about being angry.

In Israel you can find a lot of people who were close to somebody affected by a bombing. The feeling on the street is that everybody's living because of this, because life can end right now. They're living in an aggressive way. You feel alive. It's the opposite of what people think from outside Israel. Israelis must do everything now, and hurry. But everyone is in some way feeling the fear. You think more about the essence of life in some way.

I'm curious about how this film will play in the U.S. compared to Israel, because here these bombings are numbers on the news. It's very easy outside of Israel to lose that perspective.

Omri: Politics makes people into numbers. In filmmaking and art, the human side is the essence. That's what this movie is about. I was very surprised by the questions after the screenings at Tribeca. Maybe one or two were about the situation or terrorism, but most were about the relationships, the characters. I said, okay, people saw the movie. They didn't see the subject. I know that if someone only read the one-liner, they'd think something else about it.

BIOGRAPHIES & FILMOGRAPHIES

OMRI GIVON

Director & writer

Omri Givon (b. 1977, Israel) directed the television drama *Valley of Dreams*, which was broadcast on the Israeli satellite channel "Yes". *Seven Minutes in Heaven* is his feature film directorial debut.

REYMOND AMSALEM

Galia

Filmography

2010 Blank Bullet by Haim Bouzaglo

2010 The Human Resources Manager by Eran Riklis

2010 Bein HaShmashot by Alon Zingman

2009 Lebanon by Samuel Maoz

2007 Rendition by Gavin Hood

2006 Three Mothers by Dina Zvi-Riklis

2006 Janem Janem by Haim Bouzaglo

CREDITS

CREW

Director & Screenwriter
Producers

OMRI GIVON
MAREK ROZENBAUM, ELIE MEIROWITZ, ITAI
TAMIR, MICHAEL ROZENBAUM, FERENC
PUSZTAI

Editor
Director of Photography
Sound
Original Music
Makeup

ROTEM SHAMIR
NITAY NETZER
CHEN HARPAZ
ADRIEN BLAISE
NANA CHIABAUT

CAST

Name

Acting Role

Galia
Boaz
Oren
Dr. Talia

REYMOND AMSALEM
ELDAD FRIBAS
NADAV NETZ
RONIT YUDKEVITZ