

LAMA FILMS PRESENTS

WHAT IF

EHUD BARAK ON WAR AND PEACE

A FILM BY RAN TAL

Directed and written by RAN TAL
Producers AMIR HAREL, AYELET KAIT, RAN TAL
Editing NILI FELLER
Cinematography GIORA BEJACH
Visual Researcher HAGIT BEN YAAKOV
Research and Artistic Consulting SHIRA PERRY
Design and Animation DOVEV ALPERSON, DESIGN NINJAS
Music HAIN FRANK ILFMAN
Sound Recording TULLY CHEN
Sound Design and Mix AVIV ALDEMA
Color Grading YOAZ RAZ
Line Producers MATAN GAIDA, KARIN ETEDGI
Poster Design LAHAV HALEVY



Ruth Films
World Sales & Distribution

What If? Ehud Barak on War and Peace

Israel 2021 | 85 min. / Feature Documentary

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Produced by: LAMA FILMS - AMIR HAREL, AYELET KAIT; RAN TAL

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Visual researcher: HAGIT BEN YAAKOV

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Broadcaster: KESHET BROADCASTING

[DCP | Aspect ratio 1:2.35 | Sound 5.1 | Hebrew with English Subtitles]

World Premiere | Jerusalem Film Festival 2020 | Israeli Documentary Feature Competition





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What If? Ehud Barak on War and Peace

Logline

Ehud Barak is one of the most controversial figures in Israeli politics. It seems there are two kinds of Israelis: those who venerate him, and those who loathe him. Admired for his analytic abilities, but criticized for the tremendous military and diplomatic risks he took, such as the attempt to assassinate Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein, or the failed effort to put an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this new Ran Tal's film, Barak observes with disillusioned clarity his own history and the history of the State Israel.

Synopsis

Can a leader succeed in influencing the world? Or is he a human being like anyone else, only a grain of sand tossed to the waves of history with no ability to affect it? Tolstoy pondered this question in *War and Peace*.

78-year-old Ehud Barak is the controversial former prime minister, decorated and criticized commander on the battlefield, and one of the leading figures of the Zionist movement. He is also the initiator of Israel's assassination plan of Yasser Arafat.

In this remarkable film, Barak observes with disillusioned clarity his own history and the history of the State Israel. Twenty years after the failure of the 2000 Camp David summit, Barak looks back on his life and analyzes the Israeli reality with a critical eye.

Respected craft-master filmmaker **RAL TAL** (THE MUSEUM, THE GARDEN OF EDEN, CHILDREN OF THE SUN), known for his narrative fiction style in his formalist approach to documentary cinema, delivers an outstanding philosophical essay, and proposes a deep cinematic reflection on history and decision-making, while trying to figure it all out - "What if?"





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Historical background

Ehud Barak is one of the most controversial figures in Israeli politics. It seems there are two kinds of Israelis: those who venerate him and those who loathe him. On one hand, many people admire his analytic abilities, but on the other hand many criticize him for the tremendous military and diplomatic risks he took, such as the attempt to assassinate Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein or the failed effort to put an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Barak was born in the early 1940s to the elite Zionist society of the time - the kibbutz. To a great extent he can be seen as the fulfillment of the Zionist dream of creating a "new Jew" in Israel. His childhood was a typical combination of love for Israel's nature and Zionist ideology. He enlisted in the IDF and soon found himself in the army's most elite unit, the General Staff Reconnaissance Unit, a new, relatively unknown unit at the time. Within a few years he was appointed unit commander, eventually becoming the most-decorated soldier in IDF history. He participated in many commando operations, including the IDF's most glorified missions such as the takeover of Sabena Flight 571 and Operation Spring of Youth in the heart of Lebanon. After taking an active part in the assassination of leaders of Palestinian organizations he became the chief architect of Israel's assassination policy which still exists and was gladly adopted by the Obama administration.





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In the early 1990s, after running the gauntlet of Israeli leadership and even graduating from Stanford University in systems analysis and mathematics, he was appointed Israeli Chief of Staff. As Chief of Staff he planned the assassination of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein. The operation wasn't implemented only because of an accident during maneuvers, but it revealed how far Israel is willing to go in its battle against its enemies. In 1999 Barak beat Benjamin Netanyahu in the elections and became prime minister of Israel.

In 2000, after barely a year in office, and after ending the Israeli occupation of Lebanon, Barak set out on the adventure of his life, initiating and pushing for an international conference with Yasser Arafat and Bill Clinton at Camp David with the aim of putting an end to the bloody conflict of over a century between the Jews and Arabs in Israel/Palestine.

The tension-fraught summit meeting was a failure, ending in bitter disappointment. Barak and Clinton blamed Arafat for its failure. In response, the Palestinians started the Second Intifada which cost the lives of thousands of Israelis and Palestinians and essentially killed the peace process and Barak's political career when he had no choice but to call for elections, in which he lost to Ariel Sharon, putting an end to the shortest, most turbulent term of office ever for an Israeli prime minister.

Barak is despised by his critics and enemies on the Left, who see him as the man who personally shot down the last hope for peace between Israel and the Palestinians and nearly wiped out the Israeli peace camp. His rivals on the Right accuse him, just as they accused Yitzhak Rabin, of offering the Palestinians the vast majority of the occupied territories in the West Bank and Gaza, including the Holy of Holies - dividing the city of Jerusalem.

Today, as he approaches his ninth decade, Barak looks back on his life and the Israeli enterprise lucidly and honestly and addresses one of the most fundamental and fascinating questions that can be asked about leadership - Does a leader really mold reality as he wishes, or is he only a product thereof?

Unlike the populist leaders of recent years, Barak looks at his massive lifework from a unique perspective, combining his experience as a leader with his ability to analyze reality with a critical, objective eye.

In the film "What If" Barak asks himself and the viewers the big question: "What if he'd done things differently?" - Could he have done things differently at all, or is reality so complex and inflexible that nothing he did could have diverted it from its course?

Ran Tal



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Ran Tal

Biography

Ran Tal, born in 1963, is an independent director. His films deal with the State of Israel through political, historical and geographical spaces. Tal films won multiple awards in Israel and abroad. Among Ran's most prominent films are **The Museum** (2017). **The Garden of Eden** (2012). **Children of the Sun** (2007). **67 Ben Tsvi Road** (1998). **My Dream House** (2005), **Skin Deep** (1996).

Tal is the founder and the editor of **TAKRIV**, a magazine for documentary film criticism.

He is the **Head of the International MFA Documentary Film Program at the Tish Film School in Tel Aviv University** and teaches cinema at **Sapir College**.

Filmography

What if? Ehud Barak on War and Peace | 2021

The Museum | 2017

11th David A. Stein Memorial Award for the Best Documentary, Toronto Jewish Film Festival, 2018

Nomination to Ophir Award in the Best Documentary Feature Category, Israeli Academy of Film and Television, 2018

Best Editing - The Israeli Documentary Forum Awards, 2018

Best Cinematography - The Israeli Documentary Forum Awards, 2018

Best Music - The Israeli Documentary Forum Awards, 2018

Best Sound - The Israeli Documentary Forum Awards, 2018

Best Visual Design- The Israeli Documentary Forum Awards, 2018

Jewish Time | 2016

Video work for the new wing of The Museum of the Jewish People.

The Garden of Eden | 2012

Best Director - Jerusalem International Film Festival, 2012

Best Feature - Mediteran Film Festival - Grand Prix, 2012

Best film - Miradas Doc, Spain, 2012

Best Documentary - The Israeli Documentary Forum Awards, 2013

Best Editing - The Israeli Documentary Forum Awards, 2013

Best Sound - The Israeli Documentary Forum Awards, 2013

Best Original Score - The Israeli Documentary Forum Awards, 2013

Best Photography - The Israeli Documentary Forum Awards, 2013





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Children of the Sun | 2007

- Audience Award – Israfest Film Festival, NY, 2008
- Grand Prix – The 6th Warsaw International Jewish Film Festival, Poland, 2008
- Best Documentary Award – The 6th Warsaw International Jewish Film Festival, Poland, 2008
- Best Sound - The 6th Warsaw International Jewish Film Festival, Poland, 2008
- Best Documentary - The Israeli Academy Awards, 2008
- FIAT Award for Best Use of Archival Footage - The International Federation of Television Archives, Germany, 2008
- Best Documentary - The Israeli Documentary Forum Awards, 2008
- Best Directing - The Israeli Documentary Forum Awards, 2008
- Best Production - The Israeli Documentary Forum Awards, 2008
- Best Editing - The Israeli Documentary Forum Awards, 2008
- Best Original Score - The Israeli Documentary Forum Awards, 2008
- Best Sound Track - The Israeli Documentary Forum Awards, 2008
- Best Research - The Israeli Documentary Forum Awards, 2008
- Wolgin Award for Best Documentary Film – The Jerusalem International Film Festival, 2007
- Best Editing Award – The Jerusalem International Film Festival, 2007
- The Audio-Visual Award by the Forum for the Preservation of Audio Visual – Jerusalem Film Festival, 2007

My Dream House | 2005

Winner of the DocAviv Film Festival.



67 Ben Tzvi Road | 1999

Gold Plaque Award, Intercom Film & Video Competition, Chicago 1999.

Skin Deep | 1996 with Etgar Keret,
Winner of the Ophir award.

Tal directed several films for television, including **Gitay in Search of the Carmel | 2009** | about director Amos Gitay and **Born Again | 2008** | about author Yoram Kaniuk.



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Producers

Lama Films

Located in Tel Aviv, Lama Films is one of the leading production companies in Israel, concentrating on social, political and cultural oriented projects.

Since the turn of the millennium, Lama films produced a line of internationally acclaimed and successful films, thus established itself as a major production company in the local scene, as well as a first-choice addressee for production companies from around the world, who seek co-productions in the Middle-East.

Whether documentaries or fiction films, Lama Films' productions address phenomena that reflect the essence of Israeli existence, yet still appeal to diverse audiences around the world.

The portfolio of Lama Films include, among others, the US box-office success **Walk on Water** (Eytan Fox 2004), the 2006 **Oscar nominee** for best foreign film **Paradise Now** (Hany Abu-Assad, 2005), the **Cannes Film Festival 2007 Camera d'Or Winner Jellyfish** (Shira Geffen & Etgar Keret, 2007), and the Annie Awards 2009 nominee for the Best Animated Feature & Best Directing, the acclaimed animated film **\$9.99** (Talia Rosenthal, 2009)



Amir Harel

Beginning his professional career as film editor back in late 80's, Mr. Harel produced his first film, "The Square of Dreams", in 1999, in a collaboration with the late film producer Haim Manor. A year later, he initiated Lama films as a self-owned company.

Since then Mr. Harel led his way picking his projects thoughtfully and carefully, keeping long-term collaborations with directors, screenwriters and film-editors, as well as production companies from around the world.



Ayelet Kait

Before arriving in Lama Films, Ms. Kait worked as a line-producer and as executive producer in a long list of films, both in Israeli TV networks and the local film industry.

Ayelet joined Lama films in 2005 as a partner.



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World Sales

Founded by **Ruth Diskin** in 2001,

Ruth Films has been a leader in world sales and marketing of quality independent films worldwide.

As a boutique sales company, Ruth Films represents artistically excellent and compelling works that address arts & culture, history, Jewish content, Middle East topics and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Films from the catalogue have been shown widely at international film festivals in addition to broadcasts on global outlets. As one of the highly acclaimed Israeli distributors, Ruth Films works with organizations and institutions that integrate non-commercial, educational media into their programs. This includes colleges and universities, archives, art cinemas, libraries, museums, galleries, and symposiums. Keeping things intimate, Ruth Films focuses on character-driven stories that address broad and diverse audiences.



Hadar Porubanova

was born in Czechoslovakia. Fluent in five languages, she holds a Master's degree from the Faculty of Philosophy, Comenius University Bratislava - Departments of Journalism and Romance studies, French language and literature.

She founded and ran the International Francophone Film Festival in Bratislava FIFFBA from 2000-2014. She was audiovisual attaché to the French Embassy in Slovakia - French Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 2003-2009, journalist at the Slovak National Radio, Broadcast in French (2000-2003), and director and founder of the Non-Profit Organization FIFFBA (2009-2013).

Hadar moved to Israel in 2011 and served as International Relations Manager at the Sam Spiegel Film & Television School Jerusalem for the David Perlov International Film Project, as personal assistant to the Ambassador at the Embassy of Slovakia in Israel. She has vast experience in the field of film marketing and distribution worldwide.

Hadar Porubanova is the new Owner and **Managing Director of Ruth Films** since January 2017.



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