



The Green Prince Discussion Guide

Director: Nadav Schirman

Year: 2014

Time: 101 min

You might know this director from:

In the Dark Room (2013)

The Champagne Spy (2007)

FILM SUMMARY

There was never any doubt which side Mosab Hassan Yousef would take in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As the eldest son of the Palestinian Islamic organization Hamas' spiritual leader, his route was carved out in blood-stained stone. But when Mosab chose to follow his gut's desire for peace and not bow to his assumed obligations, he sparked the flame of betrayal, shame, and the beginnings of a supremely powerful friendship.

There is nothing naive or unsophisticated about Yousef, nicknamed "The Green Prince" by Israeli Security Agency Shin Bet for his royal status as the son of a leading Hamas' figure and green denoting Islam. The film grants the ever-eloquent and intelligent Mosab an oasis of space to describe and defend his well-calculated decision to side with his family's - and people's - most loathsome enemy. Seated atop the same chair in the same shirt for the duration of the film's run time, Mosab plays the role of the accused. Only this time the interrogator is no terrorist enclave or security official, the role of the interrogator is handed to us.

As the camera turns we face Mosab's handler from Shin Bet (The Israeli Security Agency) who eventually becomes his most trusted ally, Gonen Ben Yitzhak, as he offers us his side of this twisted tale. With archive clips of the civilian battlefield and reconnaissance footage of covert meetings, THE GREEN PRINCE offers an insider's look at the pain, heartache, and brutal reality of a long unresolved conflict, and one man's efforts towards peace.

An extraordinary tale of personal risk, trust across boundaries, and friendship despite the greatest of odds, THE GREEN PRINCE offers no conclusive resolution, no clear-cut right or wrong. As Mosab now calls the U.S. home, disowned by his entire family, and Gonen returns to the tumultuous conflict zone that continues to claim numerous civilian casualties, the screen darkens, the emotional battle left for us to resolve.

FILM THEMES

With his beloved father taking the road of violence over reconciliation, Mosab weighs the risks of betrayal over death, shame over war, and is awarded the deepest of bonds from the most unlikely of friends.

THE GAME OF TRUST

Psychological tactics and strategic techniques were all employed by Shin Bet to penetrate the enemy at its most tender core, recruiting the “Son of Hamas”. Gonen understood that if Mosab was ever to prove useful to his agency and country, a firm foundation of trust would need to be established. And so on numerous occasions he broke the rules, bending protocol to prove to Mosab that he could be trusted and that he was not only his employer but also his friend. By creating that iron bond, Mosab could then be convinced to do the impossible, to go against the core of his upbringing and shift the conflict for the better.

SHAME

Early on, Mosab informed us: “It’s very hard to face this monster of shame.” Shame is a highly potent brunt to bear within Palestinian society, and Mosab carried it deep in his bones. From the secret of a childhood rape to the shame of betraying his family by siding with the enemy. The pressure to keep his truth a secret was overwhelming, and the burden of shame finally became too much to bear. Only once he had left his homeland and reestablished himself far from the society that branded him a traitor could he tell his tale and release himself of his perceived wrongdoings.

PEACE THROUGH DECEIT

As the battle thickened and missiles replaced suicide bombers, Mosab found himself confronting difficult decisions. Hamas enforced a policy of violence and full-on war techniques. Israel met fire with fire, and the civilians bore the brunt of their leaders’ decisions. Yousef resolutely devoted himself to bring about change through peaceful measures, even if this meant betraying his family, the greatest bond he could ever imagine breaking. “In a perfect world, I wanted my father to know everything,” he sadly stated, but this was no perfect world, and desperate times call for desperate measures. By placing peace above his responsibility to family – a colossal decision – Mosab is a hero to some, pariah to others, with peace as his guiding motive all along the way.

HUMANITY AMONGST ENEMIES

Having successfully recruited Mosab for Shin Bet and watched him blossom into the agency’s most powerful secret weapon, Gonen could have simply followed the rules of his agency and utilized Mosab for the tool he was, personal ties aside. But he understood the great sacrifice Mosab made on a daily basis to honor his job, and Gonen could not separate Mosab the agent from Mosab the man. Gonen crossed the line between private and duty, losing his job, risking his life, all in the name of personal devotion and friendship. Their tale is one of human bonds, of people choosing love over duty and staying true to their heart.

“How can you establish a life or a family or a relationship of any kind based on a false identity?”

Mosab Hassan Yousef

“Hamas was not just a movement to us. It was the family’s business. It was our identity. It was everything.”

Mosab Hassan Yousef

“We are living a lie, and people are dying because of this lie.”

Mosab Hassan Yousef

FILM FACTS:

- THE GREEN PRINCE was granted many awards, including Best Documentary from the Awards of the Israeli Film Academy, a Bavarian Film Award, Best Editing at the DocAviv Film Festival, an Audience Award at the Moscow International Film Festival, and an Audience Award at Sundance. In addition, it received glowing nominations, including for the Grand Jury Prize at Sundance and a Golden Frog at Camerimage.
- Director Nadav Schirman was born in Jerusalem and was raised all over the world, since his father was an Israeli diplomat. After living and studying in the U.S., he returned to Israel to complete military service. Prior to THE GREEN PRINCE, he directed “In the Dark Room” and “The Champagne Spy,” films dealing with terrorism and spying. He now calls both Frankfurt, Germany, and Tel Aviv, Israel, home.
- When director Nadav Schirman was waiting to meet Mosab Hassan Yousef for the first time in a New York hotel lobby, the news of Osama bin Laden’s death came on the television. They met and immediately went to Ground Zero to witness the American celebration surrounding this event.
- Mosab Hassan Yousef was named “The Green Prince” by Shin Bet because green is the color of Islam, and he comes from a royal Hamas family.
- The first time both Mosab Hassan Yousef and Gonen Ben Yitzhak saw THE GREEN PRINCE was at its 2014 Sundance premiere.
- The 2014 population of Israel, officially known as the State of Israel, was 8.3 million. The country shares land borders with Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank. Both Hebrew and Arabic are official languages, with Hebrew used by the majority. English is also commonly heard, as children are taught it at a young age and many TV shows are broadcast in English. Although there is no official state religion, Israel is the only Jewish-majority state in the world, with 75% of the population practicing Judaism, and the country was founded as a national home for the Jewish people.
- Rather than denoting country borders, the term Palestine refers to a geographic region including the State of Israel and Palestinian Territories, and has long been a heated meeting ground of religion, commerce, and politics.
- Israel and the United States together account for 82% of the global Jewish population.
- As of 2014, The Palestinian Territories include the Gaza Strip and the West Bank and there were 4.5 million Palestinians, and although the UN declared this region the State of Palestine in 2013, there is continued dispute about what it should be called.
- The motto of Shin Bet, the Israeli Security Agency also referred to as Shabak, is “Defender that shall not be seen” or “The unseen shield.”

WAYS TO INFLUENCE

1. Read Mosab Hassan Yousef’s book “Son of Hamas,” where he provides an insider’s account of a life lived amongst terrorism, intelligence, and deceit. Available at www.sonofhamas.com.
2. Learn more about the Israeli-Palestinian Peace Process and the region’s history. Consider both side’s perspective with an open mind– much of what we have been taught is biased depending on our own upbringing and country of origin.
3. The OneVoice Movement campaigns to make the two-state solution a reality in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Learn more about their cause.
4. Interested in working in security, intelligence, and reconnaissance? For U.S. citizens, the National Security Agency offers information. Most countries have an equivalent.

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Documentaries provide the perfect topic for meaningful conversations. If you want to talk about the things that matter with people that matter then pick a film, invite your friends, and watch & discuss together. It's as easy as that.

Influence Film Club – We are the conversation after the film.