



Official Competition  
Venice Film Festival  
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A FILM BY AMOS GITAI

# PROMISED LAND



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## *Synopsis*

A night in the Sinai desert. A group of men and women keep warm around a camp fire under the moonlight. The women come from Eastern Europe. The men, who normally walk their herds in the area, are Bedouins. Tomorrow, they will secretly cross the border. Tomorrow, Diana and the others will be beaten, raped, and auctioned off. They will be passed from one hand to another, merchandised by Anne into Hanna's hostess club, victims of an international network of trafficking women. One night in the club, Diana meets Rose. She asks her for help. Their encounter is a sign of hope in the women's descent into hell.

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# AMOS GITAI

## *Interview*

### *Turned into a Commodity*

While exploring the idea of crime networks, which cross the frontiers of the Middle East, I noticed the growing phenomenon of trafficking of women into modern slavery. Women are turned into a commodity by these international networks known as white slave traffic. They are transported from their countries of origin, primarily Eastern Europe. Through the Sinai Desert, they cross very easily into Israel. Eventually they are dispatched to different Israeli cities; some also to the West Bank and elsewhere. I looked at it from my own point of view, trying to trace a road within the media bombardment of the Middle East. So I can confront the exotic nature of our iconoclastic view of the Promised Land.

### *Extensive Research*

Before the actual shooting of *PROMISED LAND*, extensive research was made thanks to reports from human rights organizations in Israel and elsewhere, hundreds of pages of testimonies by victims of white slave traffic, exposing these international networks, as well as records giving the details of their operations. I used it as a point of reference to determine the zone of reality in fictionalizing the real events.

### *A Sense of the Inhuman Conditions*

One of my main concerns on *PROMISED LAND* was asking myself how to deal with the issues of nudity, sex and violence; making those decisions about what to depict or not. It was necessary to give the audience a sense of the inhuman conditions these women are forced to go through. At the same time, the testimonies and records indicated even worse things than I actually had reenacted on the screen. This challenge was put in front of the entire crew. How do we expose this descent into hell? What are the cinematographic terms in which we can express it?



## *No Inhibitions*

Some of these women are persuaded to escape from misery by agreeing to a sort of arrangement. They try to make themselves believe that it will only be for a certain time and that they'll come out of it with some money. They are abused physically and emotionally, in every unimaginable way. They are usually always cheated and left with virtually nothing. It's more than heartbreaking. To depict this, I needed the cooperation of the actresses. They had to fully accept the project. This meant experiencing some rough situations to eventually get closer to the idea of what those women go through, especially the sense of wandering, being displaced, and gradually losing control of their destiny. The actresses interiorized the depth of these women's pain. They acted in a frank, direct way. No inhibitions. Their goal was to expose the destiny of these women.

## *The Auction*

I had read about the auctioning of women in a variety of locations. I chose to do the auctioning of the women at night, in a desert site. I surrounded these women by a group of vehicles to create a feeling of claustrophobia. It became evident that the continuous intimidation and humiliation of the victims is functional to the trafficking system. This is necessary throughout the process of taking women and converting them into a commodity to be sold, abused and raped.

## *Glamorization of Prostitution*

Cinema has contributed to a kind of glamorization of prostitution. Most movies hold on to this sort of 19th Century idea about brothels, call girls, etc. But the truth is that in our age the merchandizing technique of prostitution reached new peaks in the brutal slave-trading mechanisms. I decided not to romanticize the harsh modern reality of these women. For *PROMISED LAND*, I wanted to show concrete, realistic images about the trafficking of women and prostitution.



## *Rose*

To some extent, Rose represents us, society. At the beginning, present at the auction, she is interested as an observer, almost in a voyeuristic sense. Captivated by the auction, she makes her way to the club where the women are prepared for merchandising. One of the girls, Diana, solicits Rose for help, but Rose can't commit to helping. She even tries to avoid Diana. When Rose is in the truck with the other women, she makes the choice to become one of them to follow them more closely. She ends up developing an affinity, a solidarity, a friendship with Diana. They will reveal their story to each other. Accepting to participate and befriending Diana is part of the evolution of the character of Rose.

A woman with curly hair, wearing a dark jacket, stands in the foreground, slightly to the right of the center. She is looking towards the camera. Behind her, a large fire burns brightly, reflecting on the wet ground. To the right, a glass-walled building is visible, with interior lights and some people inside. The scene is dark, with the fire providing the main light source.

## *A Kind of Apocalypse*

The end of the movie is a kind of apocalypse. Total chaos. But out of this chaos comes freedom for Diana and Rose. I think chaotic situations can break the repressive nature of the structures which are in control. Other openings are then proposed, maybe even freedom.

### *Simple and Direct Lighting*

Originally we were supposed to build towers for the lighting set-ups. There was an idea about a big balloon spreading a kind of moonlight. I always voted for more simple and direct lighting systems. Why can't we just use campfire? Why not use flashlights to light up faces partially, to give a kind of masked appearance? Why not use car headlights to add a kind of mystery and claustrophobia to the scenes?

### *Finding Cohesion in Chaos*

As a filmmaker, I hope to reach new frontiers. I try to find cohesion from unpredictable or chaotic situations. But, obviously, when you direct a film, it's extremely complicated to create the appropriate level of chaos. I want to construct something, but I don't want it to be too structured, which is an aspect of filmmaking. The question is how to direct a scene and keep it raw and exposed yet not fall into other kinds of cinema, like the making of highly polished, formalistic images. I find trying to work in this freer way fascinating, but it's also very exhausting and demanding. It also takes time to formulate the right crew, whose job is to construct order, and ask them to be your partners in what is an extremely unpredictable, and often messy, voyage.

### *A Sense of Geographical Continuity*

The spine of the story is the destiny of these women. We follow their path as they are transported from one place to another. Geographic situation is constantly changing in *PROMISED LAND*. From Tallinn to Haifa, Cairo to Ramallah via Eilat, the women are passed around. From desert landscapes to parking lots to an immense underwater aquarium set to vehicles driving along highways, etc. I shot *PROMISED LAND* in real geographical continuity, from the desert to Eilat, from Eilat to the North. While in the Middle East, we only drove; no flights. I wanted to have a sense of geographical continuity in order to direct and to gradually compose the film.





### *Registering Exposed Nerves*

I needed two cameras to simultaneously describe the events, to be able to cut from one point of view to another. I also wanted to move through the various arenas of the story more fluently and really try to capture the nuances of the relationships between everyone involved. This needed a much more 'live' camera strategy. Small digital cameras allowed us to get in very close and project a sense of intimacy into the film. This roughness can give a sense of urgency. I found it fascinating that the camera was always ready with the capacity to register a kind of exposed nerve. The camera was willing to participate in the unveiling of the events. It's an interesting way of working, but I needed to redefine, re-articulate details every day, sometimes every minute.



## AMOS GITAI – Director

**Amos Gitai** was studying architecture, following in his father's footsteps, when the Yom Kippur War interrupted his studies and it was the use of his Super8 camera, whilst flying helicopter missions, that led to his career as a filmmaker.

Based in Israel, the United States and France, Gitai has produced an extraordinary, wide-ranging and deeply personal body of work. In around 40 films – documentary and fiction - Gitai has explored the layers of history in the Middle East and beyond, including his own personal history, through such themes as homeland and exile, religion, social control and utopia. His trademark style includes long takes with scarce but significant camera movements and a devilishly clever sense of humour.

In the late 70s and early 80s, Gitai directed numerous documentaries, including *HOUSE* and *FIELD DIARY*. During the same era, Gitai received his Ph.D. in architecture from the University of California, Berkeley.

Following the controversial reception to *FIELD DIARY*, Gitai moved to Paris in 1983, where he was based for the next ten years and during this period continued to travel widely directing such documentaries as *PINEAPPLE* – a humorous odyssey about the growth and marketing of pineapples. He also made *BRAND NEW DAY* – a film that followed Annie Lennox and the Eurythmics as they toured Japan.

During this period he began directing fiction and historical films about the experience of exile. These films include the Venice critic's prize-winning *BERLIN JERUSALEM* and the extraordinary trilogy on the Jewish legend of Golem.

In the mid-90s Gitai moved to Haifa following the election of Yitzhak Rabin and began the most fertile, productive period of his career to date. Over 10 years, Gitai made some 15 films, both documentary and fiction. The 1995 feature *DEAVARIM* marked the return to his country and his reunion with the light and landscape of Tel Aviv. The first film in Gitai's trilogy of Israeli cities, *DEVARIM* was followed by *YOM YOM* (shot in Haifa) and *KADOSH* (shot in Mea Shearim, the Jerusalem district of Orthodox Jews).

With his return to his homeland he also returned to a significant moment of his life and made *WAR MEMORIES*, documenting the time he was shot down in the Yom Kippur War, which served as a rehearsal piece for his epic fiction film, *KIPPUR* (2000). Other fiction features followed: 2001's *EDEN*, based on an Arthur Miller novel, then *KEDMA* and *ALILA*.

Gitai's films have been chosen for numerous international film festivals such as Cannes, Venice and Toronto. His work has been the subject of major retrospectives, amongst these are two different travelling retrospectives that toured North America and a retrospective at the Lincoln Center, as well as events at the Frankfurt Am Main Filmuseum, the Jerusalem Cinematheque, the NFT and ICA – both in London, the Cinematheque Francaise in Paris, the Filmoteca Espanola in Madrid and the Museo Nazionale de Cinema in Turin. In 2003, the Paris' Centre Pompidou organized a complete retrospective of Gitai's work.

1980 **HOUSE** — documentary  
1981 **WADI** — documentary  
**IN SEARCH OF IDENTITY** — documentary  
**AMERICAN MYTHOLOGIES** — documentary  
1982 **FIELD DIARY** — documentary  
1983 **ANANAS** (Pineapples) — documentary  
1984 **BANGKOK–BAHRAIN** (Labour for Sale) — documentary  
1985 **ESTHER** — feature  
1987 **BRAND NEW DAY** — musical documentary  
1989 **BERLIN–JERUSALEM** — feature  
**BIRTH OF A GOLEM** — docu–drama  
1991 **GOLEM, THE SPIRIT OF EXILE** — feature  
**WADI, TEN YEARS LATER** — documentary  
1992 **METAMORPHOSIS OF A MELODY** — documentary/theatre  
1993 **QUEEN MARY** — documentary  
**THE PETRIFIED GARDEN** — feature  
**THE WAR OF THE SONS OF LIGHT  
AGAINST THE SONS OF DARKNESS** — documentary/theatre  
**IN THE VALLEY OF THE WUPPER** — documentary  
**KIPPUR WAR MEMORIES** — documentary

1994 **IN THE NAME OF THE DUCE** — documentary  
**GIVE PEACE A CHANCE** — documentary  
1995 **DEVARIM** (Things) — feature  
1996 **THE ARENA OF MURDER** — documentary  
**MILIM** (Words) — theatre /documentary  
1997 **WAR AND PEACE IN VESOUL** — improvised docudrama  
1998 **A HOUSE IN JERUSALEM** — documentary  
**ZION, AUTO–EMANCIPATION** — documentary  
**YOM YOM** (Day After Day) — feature  
1999 **KADOSH** (Sacred) — feature  
2000 **KIPPUR** — feature  
2001 **EDEN** — feature  
**WADI GRAND CANYON** — documentary  
2002 **KEDMA** — feature  
2003 **ALILA** — feature  
2004 **PROMISED LAND** — feature



## DIANA BESPECHNI — Diana

Diana Bespechni makes her acting debut in Amos Gitai's *PROMISED LAND*. Ukrainian-born Bespechni moved to Israel as a teenager and attended Haifa University.

## ROSAMUND PIKE — Rose

Rosamund Pike shot to international fame as Miranda Frost in the James Bond film *DIE ANOTHER DAY*. In addition to Amos Gitai's *PROMISED LAND* she will be soon be seen in Laurence Dunmore's *THE LIBERTINE* with Johnny Depp, and a new version of Jane Austen's *PRIDE AND PREJUDICE* directed by Joe Wright. Born in London, she studied English literature at Oxford before embarking on an acting career that began with appearances in British series, including *LOVE IN A COLD CLIMATE*, *TRIAL & RETRIBUTION IV* and *WIVES AND DAUGHTERS*. She won rave reviews for her 2003 West End stage debut in Terry Johnson's *HITCHCOCK BLONDE*.



## ANNE PARILLAUD — Anne

Anne Parillaud has balanced a career between her native France and the US for the past decade. Her 2004 credits include Amos Gitai's *PROMISED LAND* and Ludi Boeken's French thriller *DEADLINES*. Other recent French films include Catherine Breillat's farce *SEX IS COMEDY*, Oliver Marchal's thriller *GANGSTERS* and Claude Lelouch's romantic comedy *ONE 4 ALL (UNE POUR TOUTES)*. Parillaud's US credits include Michael Lindsay-Hogg's *FRANKIE STARLIGHT*, John Landis' *INNOCENT BLOOD*, Raoul Ruiz's *SHATTERED IMAGE*, Randall Wallace's *THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK*, Adam Coleman Howard's *DEAD GIRL* and Vincent Ward's *MAP OF THE HUMAN HEART*. Perhaps Parillaud's most unforgettable performance has been as a secret government assassin in Luc Besson's 1990 film *NIKITA* which won her France's Academy Award (Cesar) for Best Actress.

## HANNA SCHYGULLA — Hanna

In a career spanning over 30 years, Hanna Schygulla has remained one of cinema's leading actresses. In addition to *PROMISED LAND* Schygulla also appeared in Amos Gitai's *MILIM*, *THE PETRIFIED GARDEN*, *METAMORPHOSIS OF A MELODY* and *GOLEM: THE SPIRIT OF THE EXILE*. Her acclaim has led to working in numerous international films including Bela Tarr's *WERCKMEISTER HARMONIES* (Hungary), Fernando Trueba's *THE GIRL OF YOUR DREAMS* (Spain), Ivan Fila's *LEA* (Czechoslovakia), Leidulv Risan's *PAKTEN* (Norway), Agnes Varda's *101 NIGHTS* (France), Kenneth Branagh's *DEAD AGAIN* (USA), Erdek Kiral's *THE BLUE EXILE* (Turkey), Janusz Kijowski's *WARSAW — YEAR 5703* (Poland), Pal Sandor's *MISS ARIZONA* (Hungary) and Amos Kollek's *FOREVER LULU* (US).

Born in German-occupied Poland and raised in Munich, Schygulla first won international acclaim for her performances in the films of Rainer Werner Fassbinder. She starred in some 20 films by the German master, including *THE BITTER TEARS OF PETRA VON KANT*, *LILI MARLEEN*, *BERLIN ALEXANDER PLATZ* and *THE MARRIAGE OF MARIA BRAUN*, which won her Berlin's Best Actress prize. Her other classic films include Margarethe Von Trotta's *HELLER WAHN* (FRIENDS AND HUSBANDS), Jean-Luc Godard's *PASSION*, Ettore Scola's *THAT NIGHT IN VARENNES*, Volker Schlöndorff's *DIE FALSCHUNG* (CIRCLE OF DECEIT), Andrzej Wajda's *A LOVE IN GERMANY*, Wim Wenders' *THE WRONG MOVEMENT* and Marco Ferreri's two films *THE FUTURE IS WOMAN* and *THE STORY OF PIERA*, which won her Cannes' Best Actress prize.



HANWAY *presents*

**PROMISED LAND** *A film by Amos Gitai*

**ROSAMUND PIKE / DIANA BESPECHNY / HANNA SCHYGULLA / ANNE PARILLAUD  
KRISTINA LIKHNYSKI / KATYA DRABKIN / ALLA AN / YUSSUF ABU WARDa / SHALVA BEN MOSHE**

*Photography* **Caroline Champetier** *Editing* **Isabelle Ingold** *Music* **Arvo Pärt / Simon Stockhausen**  
*Casting* **Ilan Moscovitch** *Line Production* **Shuki Friedman** *Art* **Eli Zion Miguel Markin** *Costumes* **Laura Sheim Dinulescu**  
*Sound* **Oleg Kaiserman / Alex Claude / Stéphane Thiébaud** *Executive Producers* **Jeremy Thomas / Michel Propper**  
*Produced by* **Michael Tapuach / Laurent Truchot / Amos Gitai** *Screenplay* **Amos Gitai / MarieJosé Sanselme**  
*Directed by* **Amos Gitai**

*Rose* — Rosamund Pike  
*Diana* — Diana Bespechny  
*Hanna* — Hanna Schygulla  
*Anne* — Anne Parillaud  
*Alla* — Alla An  
*Kristina* — Kristina Likhnyski  
*Katya* — Katya Drabkin  
*Yussuf* — Yussuf Abu Warda  
*Hezi* — Amos Lavie  
*Igor* — Shalva Ben Moshe  
*Greg* — Craig Bachins  
*Meital* — Meital Peretz  
*Menahem* — Menahem Lang  
*Rani* — Rani Kauchinsky  
*Peeter* — Peeter Polluveer  
*Yelena* — Yelena Marunchenko  
*Sacha* — Sacha Zov

Kadri Kousaar  
Mart Laisk  
Ingrid Bakho  
Olga Shapira  
Elena Kurkchi  
Maria Sokolov  
Ella Viik  
Tanya Sveshko  
Vick Shapir  
Lilach Bitan  
Yulia Sharkanovich  
Marina Pinchsov  
Marta Morbayov

*Conductor* — Aarne Saluveer

*Voice Coach* — Ludmilla Issakova

*Estonian Choir*

Teele Viilup  
Maris Uksti  
Katrín Aarma  
Lili Madissoo  
Mirjam Puur  
Liis Kalvik  
Maris Muul  
Maimu Annus  
Kris Lutter  
Nelli Napp  
Maria Valdmaa  
Britta Kongo  
Annely Leinberg  
Maarja Aarma  
Kreet Saarna

*Director*  
**Amos Gitai**

*Screenplay*  
**Amos Gitai  
MarieJosé Sanselme**

*Executive producers*  
**Jeremy Thomas  
Michel Propper**

*Produced by*  
**Michael Tapuach  
Amos Gitai  
Laurent Truchot**

*Co-produced by*  
**Alain MamouMani  
Peter Watson  
Uzi Peled**

*Director of Photography*  
**Caroline Champetier**

*Second Camera*  
**Vladimir Truchovski**

*Production Designers*  
**Eli Zion  
Miguel Markin**

*Costume Designer*  
**Laura Sheim Dinulescu**

*Sound Engineers*  
**Oleg Kaiserman  
Daniel Ollivier  
Ants Andreas  
Olger Bernadt**

*Editors*  
**Isabelle Ingold  
Yann Dedet**

*Sound Designer*  
**Alex Claude**

*Sound Mixer*  
**Stéphane Thiebaut**

*Line Producer*  
**Shuki Friedman**

*Casting and Artistic Adviser*  
**Ilan Moscovitch**

*Production Manager*  
**Alon Elias**

*Extra Coordinator*  
**Tzili Eli**

*Sound Editor*  
**John Purcell**

*Editing Assistant*  
**Doron Suliman**

*Mixer Assistant*  
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*Effects Editor*  
**Ofir Ben Zion**

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Gracy Banush**

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**Ronit Dugo Aviv**

*Head Gaffer*  
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**Merav Zehavi  
Rachela Nisanov  
Lee Tal**

*Production Coordinator Estonia*  
**Tiina Lokk**

*Production Coordinators France*  
**Stéphanie Collomb  
Mônica Thomas**

*Executive for Recorded Picture Company*  
**Matthew Baker  
Richard Mansell**

*Head Grip*  
**Ofer Almog**

*Foles*  
**Nicolas Becker**

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Assia Zipper

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Pini Klavir

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Roy Raz  
Keren Fromer

*Personal Assistant*  
Benoit Gitane

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Eyal Elhadad

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Avichai Bari

*Assistants to the Director*  
Avichai Hoening  
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Aqua Sun Nueba

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Laurent Hassid, Ginger Corbett, Ruth  
Sinai, Einat Fishbhain, Neomi Levencoren,  
Sylvie El Sayegh, Jérôme Clément, Bruno  
Deloze

*Music*  
Peace Upon You Jerusalem  
Composed by Arvo Pärt  
Text : Psalm 122  
Estonian Television Girls Choir  
Conductor : Aarne Saluveer  
Courtesy : Universal / Vienna

A Time For  
Lyrics : Ecclesiastes  
Music : Markus and Simon Stockhausen

*Vocals : Hanna Schygulla*  
From The War Of Sons Of Lights Against  
The Sons Of Darkness  
Courtesy : Agav Films

*Internet*  
By Tom Petrover  
Performed by Hayehudim  
Courtesy : Hed Artzi Music

*Sahek Ota*  
By Tom Petrover  
Performed by Hayehudim  
Courtesy : Hed Artzi Music

*Produced by*  
Agav Hafakot  
Hamon Hafakot  
Recorded Picture Company  
MP Productions

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2004  
Agav Films, MP Productions,  
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