

Focus on Film

# The Fig Tree

Drama  
Israel

Monday, May 13, 2019 @ 1:00 p.m.

***Director: Aalam-Warqe Davidian, 2018 Israel***

***Running time: 93 minutes, Amharic, Hebrew with English subtitles***

*The Fig Tree* portrays the unmitigated sadness of life in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1989. Young women are often abused and treated as servants for men and older people in their families, as Mina, our teenage heroine, is. All young men, 15-30 years of age, are subject to conscription in the dictator's army. Following military service, veterans and the wounded that return from war are ignored, untreated and later are almost nonexistent in society. The war and poverty threaten everybody. This film, the feature directional debut of female filmmaker Aalam-Warqe Davidian, examines the difficult reality the Jews faced in Ethiopia during the late 1980s civil war.

Acting in the film, particularly that of the lead actress who plays Mina, the teen living with her grandmother and brother, is excellent. Mina's boyfriend Eli, a Christian, attempting to dodge conscription

hides in the forest – a big fig tree is their clandestine meeting place. The film is also a story about young love!

In a first encounter between the two, they find an army veteran, severely maimed, who has attempted suicide. Mina tries to save him, but emigration seems the only good way to escape the miserable lives of the Ethiopians.

Mina's parents are already in Israel and she and the remainder of her family plan to be sent there soon using forged papers. The director of the film lived a similar story, although she was younger when she immigrated to Israel. Emigration is fervently to be wished seeing the dismal, difficult lives lived by these poor people.

Incredibly, there are still thousands of Ethiopian Jews migrating annually to Israel, thirty years after the time portrayed in this film. It is a realistic and a pathetic situation.

***Reviewed by Anita Ehrenfried***

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