

THE SETTLERS

a Shimon Dotan film

Produced by LES FILMS DU POISSON, Estelle Fialon TALISMA PRODUCTIONS, Jonathan Aroch FILMOPTION INTERNATIONAL, Paul Cadieux

Co-produced by ARTE France, YES DOCU, NDR, BR, HR

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> World Sales Cinephil / Philippa Kowarsky

> > Duration 110'

Languages Hebrew, Arabic, English English subtitles

ONE-LINER

Since Israel's decisive victory in the 1967 Six-Day War, hundreds of thousands of Israeli citizens have made their homes in the Occupied Territories of the West Bank. With unprecedented access to pioneers of the settlement movement and a diverse group of modern-day settlers, religious and secular alike, **The Settlers** is a comprehensive exploration of the controversial communities that exert inordinate influence on the sociopolitical destinies of Israel and Palestine.

SHORT SYNOPSIS

Even though no Jews lived in the historic Jewish heartland of Judea and Samaria before the 1967 Six Day War, it is now home to hundreds of thousands of Jewish settlers, who are almost as diverse in their outlooks, origins, ideologies, and socioeconomic backgrounds as Israeli society itself. How did it happen? What drew them there?

The story of Israeli settlements in the West Bank is an intriguing, unavoidable feature of modern Israeli life: complex and elusive in its early years, and increasingly wild and tragic as the years go by. It is a story that has been with us for almost half a century, and still shows no sign of resolving itself.

Much like the Occupation itself, the settlement phenomenon has received extensive coverage in the media. But this coverage tends to focus on fallout, and rarely on the ideological and historical forces that led to the creation of the settlements and with them, the unflinching grip that Israel has on the West Bank, a grip that has become the new hallmark of a society once founded on the ideals of secular liberalism and equality.

Combining history and headlines, THE SETTLERS is the first comprehensive look at the meeting point, where radicals, idealists, messianic fanatics, true believers and political opportunists, living on the fault lines of an age-old conflict, come face to face with history itself. Today, the settlers threaten to ignite the Middle Eastern powder keg.

SYNOPSIS

"And I will give unto thee and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the Land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." Genesis 17:8

If the struggle between Israel and the Palestinians really lies at the heart of the Middle East conflict, then the fate of the region will be determined by the future of the Israeli settlements in the West Bank. Even though almost no Jews lived in the historic Jewish heartland of Judea and Samaria before the 1967 Six Day War, it is now home to about 400,000 Jewish settlers, a population that is growing at three times the rate of the rest of Israel.

Who are these settlers, who are almost universally regarded as obstacles to peace in the region? What brought them to this contested bit of land to build their homes among a hostile population? How is the rapid growth of this phenomenon, from just a handful of ideologues into a mass movement, changing Israeli society as a whole?

THE SETTLERS is a riveting documentary that offers a comprehensive look at the settler phenomenon, from its origins just before the Six Day War, right up until today. Very little has actually been said about the evolving historical and ideological forces that led to the creation of the first tiny settlements and which now lie behind entire cities and towns. While much has been said about their impact on the peace process, not enough has been said about the settlers themselves, a community almost as diverse in its outlooks, origins, ideologies, and socioeconomic backgrounds as Israeli society itself.

With unprecedented access to the settlements and settlers, director Shimon Dotan explores the world that the settlers have created for themselves at the heart of a century-old conflict. He examines the different waves of settlement activity and what motivated them, from the messianic fervor that immediately followed Israel's stunning victory in the Six Day War in 1967, to the ideologically driven campaign to settle the heart of the West Bank's central ridge right after the Yom Kippur War of 1973, to the vast wave of settlers who moved to the region over the past two decades in search of a better quality of life, far from Israel's overcrowded coastal towns. He looks at growing extremism in the settler community, who felt their core beliefs and way of life threatened, with the election of Yitzhak Rabin in 1992 and the signing of the Oslo Accords one year later. In 1995, Rabin was assassinated by an extremist Jew, in a successful attempt to stop the peace process and to prevent the removal of settlements. Today, groups like the "Hilltop Youth" often break the law to ensure a continued Jewish presence in the region. Too often, the authorities just stand back and watch, unwilling to engage "our own flesh and blood" in the violent manifestations of a political conflict.

As he meets with the settlers and with experts on the settlement enterprise, Dotan ponders how this political phenomenon has affected the Jewish State. A century ago, the founders of Zionism envisioned a nation state of Jews that would serve as a beacon for liberal ideals. This was the state that Herzl envisioned and David Ben Gurion dreamed of, when he declared Israel's independence in 1948. Despite compromises to the religious community, Israel at its inception was a secular, semi-socialist state, which prided itself on its democracy, including its ability to embrace a sizeable Arab minority that rejected the very notion of a Jewish state. But the Six Day War and the settler movement changed all that. Today Israel is being forced to decide whether it will be a democracy with a Jewish majority, or whether it should abandon democracy to maintain control of the historic homeland, with its overwhelming Palestinian majority. The dominance of the religious sector among the powerful settler bloc has redefined the relationship between synagogue and state in the rabbis' favor. But religion is just one factor in the mutually dependent relationship that

has emerged between the settlements and Israel's government today. As the film reveals, a small but vociferous minority of settlers has had an impact far beyond its size on the political, military, and judicial institutions of the state.

Combining history and headlines, THE SETTLERS illuminates key factors in the mutually dependent relationship between the settlements, the Israeli government, and the continuing occupation of the West Bank — historically and today. It offers an intimate and unique look at the settlers themselves, past and present —at those who created the storm in the first place and at those who are in the eye of the storm today.

TIMELINE

November 29, 1947	The United Nations votes to partition the British Mandate of Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem remaining under international jurisdiction for a period of ten years.
May 14, 1948	Israel declares its independence. The surrounding Arab armies invade the new state. Although Israel expands its boundaries, it also loses several Jewish settlements, including Kfar Etzion. Jerusalem is divided between Israel and Jordan.
May 19, 1967	Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, head of the Mercaz HaRav Yeshiva in Jerusalem, delivers a speech expressing his regret that Israel accepted the Partition Plan of November 1947. He also expresses a deep longing for the Jewish holy sites in the West Bank. After the Israeli victory in the Six-Day War less than a month later, when all these sites came under Israeli control, his students came to see his speech as prophetic.
June 5-10, 1967	The Six-Day War. Israel occupies Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights from Syria, and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, from Jordan. Not a single Jew had lived in the West Bank since 1948.
September 27, 1967	The children of the original settlers of Kfar Etzion, led by Hanan Porat, reestablish their parents' kibbutz outside Jerusalem, which was destroyed in Israel's War of Independence.
11 April, 1968	A group of settlers led by Rabbi Moshe Levinger moves into the Park Hotel in Hebron, posing as Swiss pilgrims. The next day they announce their plans to reestablish the Jewish community in the city. On May 21, they are relocated to a nearby military base, which formed the basis of the new settlement of Kiryat Arba.
October 6-25, 1973	The Yom Kippur War. After failed diplomatic attempts to convince Israel to withdraw to the pre-1967 border lines, Egypt and Syria launch a surprise attack on Israel, in an attempt to regain control over the Occupied Territories. Israel succeeds in repelling the invasion, but at a devastating cost in lives.
December 1975	After seven failed attempts to establish a Jewish settlement near the West Bank city of Nablus, the Israeli government finally allowed a group of Jewish families to occupy the abandoned Kaddum army base. Renamed Elon Moreh, it was the first of many settlements created by the populist Gush Emunim movement.
May 17, 1977	Menachem Begin is elected prime minister of Israel. At that time, only 4,400 lived in 31 settlements in the Occupied Territories. Upon winning the election, Begin visits the settlers in Kaddum to announce that there will be

	"many more Elon Morehs." He then appoints General Ariel Sharon as his settlement "czar."
September 17, 1978	Menachem Begin signs the Camp David Accords in Washington, returning the Sinai to Egypt and promising Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza.
June 2, 1980	Jewish extremists place bombs in the cars of three West Bank Palestinian mayors, maiming two of them.
March 9, 1982	Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, spiritual leader of the settlement movement, dies. More than 21,000 settlers live in 73 settlements.
	The settlement project experienced an enormous growth spurt between 1982 and 1991. In that time, the movement saw a shift from settlements driven by ideology to the establishment of suburban communities, driven by economics. The process was expedited by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the fall of Communism in the late 1980s. Hundreds of thousands of new immigrants from the former Soviet bloc flooded the country, and they needed new homes and new communities.
December 1987 – 1991	The first Palestinian uprising, known as the Intifada. In 1991 more than 100,000 settlers live in 120 settlements.
September 13, 1993	Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat sign the Oslo Accords, granting the Palestinians an interim self-government on part of the West Bank and Gaza, as the first step in implementing a two- state solution. Israel commits to freeze all settlements activities.
February 25, 1994	Dr. Baruch Goldstein of the settlement of Kiryat Arba opens fire on Arab worshippers at the Cave of the Patriarch in Hebron, killing twenty-nine before he is killed.
November 4, 1995	Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated by a Jewish extremist, whose goal was to stop the peace process and prevent the removal of any settlements.
September 2000 – 2005	The Second Intifada.
May 8, 2005	Deputy State Attorney Talia Sasson releases a report disclosing that the Israeli government had been diverting millions of dollars to build and expand illegal settlements in the West Bank since the Oslo Accords.
August 22, 2005	Under Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Israel completes its disengagement from the Gaza Strip, including the evacuation of 21 settlements there and four additional settlements in the northern West Bank.
December 2009	Israel announces a 10-month freeze on the construction of new homes in the West Bank. Close to 350,000 settlers are now living there.
May 16, 2015	Rabbi Moshe Levinger, founder of the Jewish settlement in Hebron, dies. Over 400,000 settlers live in more than 200 settlements and illegal outposts across the West Bank.

MAIN SUBJECTS (in alphabetical order)

SETTLERS:



HANAMEL DORFMAN: 22-year-old Hanamel Dorfman, is one of the leaders of the Hilltop Youth. He represents the next generation of settlers, setting up illegal outposts on "barren" hilltops across the West Bank. Hanamel belongs to a new trend of extremists, which are in conflict with the secular State of Israel and aspire to reestablish a Jewish kingdom, based on biblical law.



<u>YEHUDA ETZION</u>: A founder of Gush Emunim, Etzion is now one of the movement's leading ideologues. A munitions expert by training, he was a key figure in the Jewish Underground, who planned to blow up the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount. Since his release from prison, he has been active in the movement to allow Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount.



<u>MOTTI KARPEL</u>: A former career soldier who found religion, Karpel is an ideologue of the settler movement, who believes that Zionism has run its course and must be replaced by a new movement centered around the settlements. Karpel was editor of the settler magazine, *Nekuda*. He was a founder of the settlement of Bat Ayin, which consists mainly of Jews who found religion later in life.



<u>BENNY KATZOVER</u>: A founder of the Gush Emunim movement. Katzover was one of the original participants in the Passover seder at the Park Hotel in Hebron, which led to the founding of Kiryat Arba. After the Yom Kippur War, he and his friend MENACHEM FELIX (also featured in the film) founded a group that attempted to settle in Samaria. A public figure who served for 12 years as head of the Samaria Regional Council, he openly advocates for the elimination of democracy in Israel.



<u>SARAH NACHSHON</u>: Nachshon played a seminal role in establishing the Jewish settlement in Hebron proper. Her son, Avraham Yedidiah, was the first child to be circumcised in the Cave of the Patriarch. When the child died of SIDS five months later, she insisted that he be buried in the old Jewish cemetery in the city. When her request was denied, she carried the corpse there on foot, while Israeli troops looked on aghast. Finally, Defense Minister Shimon Peres gave the order allowing her to bury her child there.



DANIELLA WEISS: One of the first Jewish settlers in Samaria, Weiss assumed a leadership role in the formal settler movement, even serving as mayor of the West Bank town of Kedumim. She later broke with the movement over its willingness to compromise with the government over settlement activity and helped found Nahala, which supports a more active settlement approach, including the seizure of land for outposts. She is known as the "Grandmother of the Hilltop Youth."

EXPERTS:



<u>SHLOMO GAZIT</u>: A Major General (ret.) in the IDF, in 1967, Gazit was appointed by Moshe Dayan to oversee political and economic affairs in the Occupied Territories immediately after they were seized. The group he created eventually became known as the Unit for the Coordination of Operations in the Territories. He later served as Chief of Military Intelligence. He is now a staff member at the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies in Tel Aviv University.



<u>MOSHE HALBERTAL</u>: A world-renowned authority on Jewish philosophy and ideas, Halbertal is also a founding member of several religious peace movements that advocate democracy and compromise with the Palestinians. He is Professor of Jewish Thought and Philosophy at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and has been a visiting professor at the law schools of Yale, Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, and New York University.



<u>TALIA SASSON</u>: A former Deputy State Attorney, a report she published revealed how the government was acting illegally by diverting state funds to support settlements, including illegal outposts in the West Bank. Having left her government position, she is active in the peace movement.



<u>MICHAEL SFARD</u>: An attorney specializing in international human rights and the laws of war. Sfard has represented a variety of Israeli and Palestinian human rights and peace organizations before the Israeli Supreme Court. He is considered Israel's pre-eminent legal expert on the settlements and the challenges posed by the broader infrastructure of the Israeli occupation to Palestinians and to Israel's democracy.



<u>RAJA SHEHADEH</u>: A Palestinian lawyer and writer. Born in Jaffa, he currently lives in Ramallah. Shehadeh is a founder of the first Palestinian human rights organization Al-Haq, an affiliate of the International Commission of Jurist. He has written several books on international law, human rights and the Middle East.



<u>TOMER PERSICO</u>: Dr. Persico is a research fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, and teaches at the department for Comparative Religion in Tel Aviv University. His fields of study include contemporary spirituality, Jewish renewal, and the forms of secularization. Persico is also a prominent social activist, advocating freedom of religion in Israel.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

On November 4, 1995, I was driving on the I-95 south towards Virginia to film a few 'summer shots' for a film I was doing in Montreal. As I was searching for a decent signal on the radio, the sound of an NPR affiliate station came crackling through: *A radical religious Jew had assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.* I stopped the car at once. It didn't sound real, yet it was. Rabin's murder was a stake to the heart of a fragile peace process. It was encouraged by a faction of extremist rabbis and politicians in order to prevent the possible removal of settlements and of an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank. A new brand of religious and political extremism surfaced in Israel.

That day was poignant for me. Before I became a filmmaker and a student of conflict and violence, I was a participant in it. For more than five years I served as a Navy Seal in the Israeli Defense Forces. The assassination of Yitzhak Rabin crystallized many of the questions I have since asked myself and explored in my films. Questions about the nexus of faith and violence, and how personal identities and collective values shape what we determine is worth killing and dying for.

As the brutal clashes of the second intifada broke out, in September 2000, most Israelis viewed Palestinian terrorists as assassins and criminals while for most Palestinians they were heroes and freedom fighters. I was intrigued by this discrepancy, which seemed to apply inversely to Israeli soldiers. In 2006 I was granted rare permission to talk to and film Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. The world I found between those walls was a complicated one, of rapprochement between guards and guarded, but also of profound political and religious radicalization. These conversations formed part of my previous documentary, HOT HOUSE (winner of a Sundance jury prize, 2007).

And yet, I felt that HOT HOUSE tells only one side of a vital story. I felt that the phenomenon of Jewish extremism, a volatile brew of religion and politics, is on the rise, and penetrating into the Israeli mainstream.

A crucial step in understanding an unresolved conflict, I believe, is listening to the extremists on both sides, listening to those who are drawing the fault lines between the parties. Even if they are few in numbers, the impact of their actions is disproportionately high.

That is why I decided to make THE SETTLERS.

Almost as soon as I got the word out that I was planning on making this film, the internet was abuzz with stories of a "deep leftist," who was coming to upend the settlement enterprise. People were warned not to talk to me. But they did. In fact, many invited me into their homes and eagerly shared their stories. It was no secret that I disagreed with much of what they had to say. I made that perfectly clear to them before I turned on the cameras. Nor do I believe they thought they could change my mind. Perhaps they thought that I was a conduit, through which they could tell their side of the story.

My original plan was to interview settlers only. Opposing voices have plenty of platforms that they can use to express their views. But as I proceeded I came to appreciate how complex the story really is, not only for the settlers, but for Israeli society in general. That is why I decided to conduct interviews with some of the leading Israeli observers of the settlement phenomenon and a Palestinian observer.

I wanted to confirm what I was hearing, and to provide my audience with an idea of the opposition that the settlers are facing, not only from the Palestinians or the international community, but from their fellow Israelis.

I have already noted how I was received warmly (always, not mostly) by the settlers, even though they knew that I refused to ask them softball questions or provide them with an open mic. For the most part, they accepted this, but there was one incident that illustrated for me how high the stakes really are in this contentious little corner of the world. One day, while filming in an olive grove in the Palestinian village of Burin, a group of settlers from nearby Yitzhar attacked our crew, beat our cinematographer with an iron rod, and stole all of our camera and sound equipment. We immediately filed a police report in the town of Ariel and waited. We didn't hear anything about it for a month, so we called the police and were politely informed that the file was closed for lack of evidence.

We had heard stories about similar incidents, but most of these involved Palestinians, not film crews, who may not have been sympathetic to the cause, but were not antagonistic either. The culture of the settlers is changing rapidly. After years being on the receiving end of violence, it seems as if they are starting to mete it out against their enemies, real or perceived. How this development will impact the region yet remains to be seen, but the ramifications are real. I believe this makes it all the more important to understand who these settlers are. There may be fewer than half a million of them, but they hold the fate of Israel in their hands, and by extension, the fate of the entire Middle East.

DIRECTOR SHIMON DOTAN

SHIMON DOTAN is an award-winning filmmaker working on narrative and documentary films. He is a Fellow at the New York Institute of the Humanities, recipient of a Guggenheim fellowship-award and of the Cullman Fellowship-award for scholars and writers at New York Public Library. DOTAN's films have been the recipients of the Special Jury Prize at Sundance (HOT HOUSE) Silver Bear Award at the Berlin Film Festival (THE SMILE OF THE LAMB), numerous Israeli Academy Awards, including Best Film and Best Director (REPEAT DIVE; THE SMILE OF THE LAMB), and Best Film at the Newport Beach Film Festival (YOU CAN THANK ME LATER). DOTAN was born in Romania and grew up in Israel. He has taught filmmaking and film studies at Tel Aviv University in Israel, Concordia University in Montreal and is presently teaching Political Cinema at New York University and Film Directing at the New School University.

THE PRODUCERS

ESTELLE FIALON is Associate Producer at Les Films du Poisson, an acclaimed French production company founded by Yaël Fogiel and Laetitia Gonzalez in 1994, which has won a string of international awards. Among the company's accolades are Best Director and the FIPRESCI Prize at the Cannes Film Festival for *On Tour* by Mathieu Amalric; the Camera d'Or at Cannes for *Jellyfish* by Etgar Keret and Shira Gefen; and five César awards (French Oscars) between the films *Since Otar Left*, directed by Julie Bertuccelli, and *Voyages*, directed by Emmanuel Finkiel. In 2006, Fialon founded the documentary branch of the company. She has since led a number of noteworthy international coproductions. In 2013, she received a nomination for the Academy Awards and for the Producers Guild of America for Dror Moreh's documentary feature *The Gatekeepers*. She produced Blaise Harrison's celebrated documentaries *Summer Growing Up*, which premiered at the 2011 Directors' Fortnight in Cannes, and *Harmony*, presented in the official competition of the 2013 Locarno Film Festival. She is currently developing the new documentary feature by Dror Moreh, *Corridors of Power*. Fialon is also the producer of *Eat that question – Frank Zappa in his own words*, directed by Thorsten Schütte, premiering in Sundance 2016 in Doc Premieres.

JONATHAN AROCH is noted for producing pioneering feature films and television series, some of which are considered seminal in Israeli film and television. His film and television productions have collected 30 Israeli Academy Awards and several international awards. He has collaborated with Shimon Dotan, beginning with *The Smile of the Lamb* (1986). In 1990 Aroch co-wrote and produced *Shuroo*, written and directed by Savi Gabizon. *Shuroo* was the most successful Israeli film in the Nineties. In 1994, Aroch produced *Song of the Siren*, directed by Eytan Fox, which was one of the most successful Israeli films in the Nineties and was shown extensively abroad, including on ARTE and ARD. In the noughties, Aroch produced and directed several documentary films and documentary series including *Hats of Jerusalem*, which was broadcast on several European TV stations and participated in competition at IDFA. In 2007 Aroch collaborated with Dotan on *Hot House*. Aroch's television drama productions *Shtisel* (2013) *Srugim* (2010-12) and *Hafuch* (1996-1999) were all rating leaders. These days, Aroch is working on his first English language American feature.

PAUL CADIEUX is one of Canada's leading and most active film and television producers. Among numerous awards, he has one a Genie award for Best Canadian Motion Picture for the Oscar-nominated *Les Triplettes de Bellville*. He also produced Danae Elon's *P.S.JERUSALEM* which premiered at TIFF in 2015. In his more than three decades as producer, co-producer, executive producer and distributor Paul often prefers to operate out of the limelight yet has been centrally involved in dozens of major Canadian and international projects and hundreds of television episodes ranging from children's animation series to thriller feature films, international co-productions of feature documentaries and television miniseries of pretty much every stripe in both English and French.

MAIN CREDITS

Written & Directed by: Shimon Dotan Produced by: Estelle Fialon, Jonathan Aroch, Paul Cadieux, Shimon Dotan Executive producers : Philippa Kowarsky, Charles Ferguson, Maryse Rouillard Associate producers: Yaël Fogiel, Laetitia Gonzalez, Dikla Barkai Edited & written by: Oron Adar Cinematographer: Philippe Bellaïche Associate editor: François Gédigier Original music: Ray Fabi Sound design & Music direction: Alex Claude Drawings: David Polonsky Visual Effects: Macguff/Small Sound Recorder: Ronen Geva Consulting Editor: Netaya Anbar Line producers: Stéphanie Andriot Production Manager & Assistant director: Dan Aroch Research: Alona Abadi, Esther-Miriam, Racheli Wasserman Archive Research: Daniela Reiss Razon, Sharon Hammou

FESTIVAL SCREENINGS

2016 Sundance Film Festival World Documentary Competition section

Friday, January 22, 3:00 p.m. (<u>World premiere</u>) Yarrow Hotel Theatre, Park City

Saturday, January 23, 1:00 p.m. Redstone Cinema 2, Park City

Saturday, January 23, 9:00 p.m. Salt Lake City Library Theatre, Salt Lake City

Sunday, January 24, 3:00 p.m. (<u>Press & Industry</u>) Holiday Village Cinema 2

Wednesday, January 27, 8:30 a.m. Egyptian Theatre, Park City

Friday, January 29, 12:15 p.m. - SETTL292 Holiday Village Cinema 2, Park City

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