FOOTNOTE

A film by Joseph Cedar

Academy Award Nominee
Best Foreign Language Film (Israel)

Winner, Best Screenplay
2011 Cannes Film Festival

Winner, Best Picture, 2011 Ophir Awards

National Board of Review
One of the Top Five Foreign Language Films of the Year

Film Independent Spirit Award Nominee
Best Screenplay, Joseph Cedar

2011 Telluride Film Festival | 2011 Toronto International Film Festival
2011 New York Film Festival | 2011 AFI Fest

www.footnotemovie.com

105 min | Rated PG | Language: Hebrew (with English subtitles)
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SYNOPSIS

**FOOTNOTE** is the tale of a great rivalry between a father and son. Eliezer and Uriel Shkolnik are both eccentric professors, who have dedicated their lives to their work in Talmudic Studies. The father, Eliezer, is a stubborn purist who fears the establishment and has never been recognized for his work. Meanwhile his son, Uriel, is an up-and-coming star in the field, who appears to feed on accolades, endlessly seeking recognition.

Then one day, the tables turn. When Eliezer learns that he is to be awarded the Israel Prize, the most valuable honor for scholarship in the country, his vanity and desperate need for validation are exposed. His son, Uriel, is thrilled to see his father’s achievements finally recognized but, in a darkly funny twist, is forced to choose between the advancement of his own career and his father’s. Will he sabotage his father’s glory?

**FOOTNOTE** is the story of insane academic competition, the dichotomy between admiration and envy for a role model, and the very complicated relationship between a father and son.
INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPH CEDAR

Where did the idea for FOOTNOTE come from?

It is difficult for me to answer that question without spoiling the film and giving away a key plot point, because the initial idea was exactly that – a plot point that I thought would be interesting to develop. It is remotely based on something that almost happened to me, and I enjoyed imagining how it would unfold if it did happen to me. The finished film, however, turned out to be much more complex than that initial idea. During the writing process the focus shifted from the plot to an examination of these two characters.

You have used different tools of the comedy genre (burlesque scenes, visual/editing choices, situation comedy...) that could qualify the film as an “intellectual comedy”, would you agree with this?

I like that the film may be considered a comedy, because it tells the audience that they can feel comfortable to laugh and smile and not necessarily take everything too seriously. But if we want to be formalists, strictly speaking, I think this story qualifies as a tragedy, as most father-son stories do.

The film is a portrait of 2 generations: fathers and sons. It’s both a universal issue and a great part of Israeli culture. Which one did you intend to talk about?

I’ve been thinking about this tension between the universal and the culturally specific for some time. While I’m still not sure I know if a perfect balance can exist, because one does come at the expense of the other, I find that my own natural tendency is to work with extremely culturally specific material, and hope that people outside of my close circle will somehow recognize the human motivations. This question also helps me articulate my feelings towards films I see or books I read. When a story is too “universal,” I am either suspicious of it, or bored by it.

Why did you choose Talmud researchers?

The Talmud department at the Hebrew University is a remarkable place. It is the smallest department in the university, but it is famous worldwide for its uncompromising methods and its unforgiving attitude toward the notion of ‘mistake.’ Once I started hearing stories from within this department, about mythological rivalries between scholars, stubbornness on an epic scale, eccentric professors who live with an academic mission that is bigger than life itself, even if its topic is radically esoteric, I fell in love with them all, and they became the center of this story.
The rivalry between the father and his son in your movie implies the sons’ sacrifice but maybe also the fathers’ sacrifice?

I would rather not try to interpret these themes in the film, but I believe the word ‘sacrifice’ can be very useful when discussing the nature of the father – son relationship.

Can you talk about the end of your movie?

The last 15 minutes of the film were treated more as a dance sequence than a dramatic scene. They were choreographed more than they were directed. The emotions seemed too big, too contradicting, too terrifying to put into dialogue or into simple realistic human encounters. The result is a subjective point of view of an event that from the outside seems festive and harmless, but from these characters’ perspective, from within their inner world, it is nothing less than apocalyptic.

It’s a movie about men. The women are in the shadow. Is there something to understand here?

I will argue that the mother character, Yehudit, is a catalyst for the entire story and is very much in the dramatic spotlight of the film. But it is true that this film is about two men, and in the service of dramatic focus, it is their perspective that is investigated in the film.

Can you comment on the title? And the importance of this footnote?

One Talmud researcher, who is known to be very sparse and dry in his writing, once explained to me his use of a footnote like this: “it is a piece of information, sometimes an anecdote, that is not necessarily verifiable, sometimes even outrageous, or silly, often only remotely relevant to the main text, but at the same time it is just too irresistible and juicy to leave out entirely… “ That is pretty much how I feel about this film. It’s a footnote.
BACKGROUND

Talmudic Studies

The Talmudic literature is the name of a compilation of Jewish texts that were written in Palestine and Babylon circa 200-500 AD. This prolific literature, written in Hebrew and Aramaic, includes some of the Jewish people’s masterpieces, including the Babylonian Talmud (the Gemara), the Mishnah (the first written compendium of Judaism's Oral Law), the biblical exegeses and more. It was written during a major political-cultural crossroads in the history of the Jewish people, the turning point following the destruction of the Temple and loss of political independence and the metamorphosis that this culture underwent when it became a subjugated, often oppressed minority, in the Diaspora. Undoubtedly these texts, considered sacred, were at the center of the Jewish people’s cultural and intellectual enterprising during their period of exile, and they are strewn with the cultural and sociological seeds that will generate the developments and challenges throughout this era, which lasted over 1500 years after they were written.

The Talmudic texts were edited and conveyed orally. They were subsequently written down and copied in manuscripts for hundreds of years, until they were finally printed during the printing revolution in the 15th and 16th centuries.

‘Talmudic Studies’ is a name for the attempt to approach these texts with an objective scrutinizing eye, while applying diverse academic tools of critique. This approach began in German universities in the 19th century, as part of an overall trend known as ‘Judaic Studies’, and continues to this day in many universities worldwide. The study attempts to research the historical background of these texts, the daily reality they reflect, their linguistic and cultural characteristics, the literary sources, their editing process and much more. In addition, the study focuses on recreating these texts – recreation of the original texts that were found and a general attempt to recreate texts that were lost.

One of the issues that makes Talmudic Studies a volatile area, even controversial to some extent, is the academic-analytical approach to traditional texts that many consider ‘sacred’. The basic skepticism as to the reliability of the text, the interweaving of the text in the greater picture of ideological struggles and historic developments, the exposure of the many voices that can be heard from within the text and its editing trends – all these clash head on with the traditional assumptions that underlined the study of these texts for hundreds of years, and therefore provoke strong emotions among today’s traditional society as well.

The Talmud Department at the Hebrew University – The Jerusalem School

The Talmud Department was one of the first of eight departments that were set up when the Hebrew University was established in 1928, and still exists to this day. Among the lecturers who taught in the department we find such giants as Saul Liberman, E.S. Rosenthal, E.E. Urbach, Israel Ta-Shma and more, known to all individuals who take an interest in the study of the Talmud. The founder of the department, Prof. Yaacov Nachum Epstein, a legendary Talmud
researcher with degrees from German universities and once a student of East European yeshivas, solidified the nature of the department that characterizes it to this day.

In light of Epstein’s studies, the Jerusalem school focuses on the bland textual reconstruction of the Talmudic texts and their wording during the preliminary research stages. The winding and unwinding of these long scrolls of ancient texts over the years resulted in many mistakes and errors, which raise doubt as to the authenticity of the text that were obtained. Therefore, before any researcher can ask himself questions that pertain to the content of the text, the concepts conveyed therein, the literary design or the history reflected therein, he must do his best to reconstruct the original text after it was obtained through dubious channels after hundreds of years.

This nondescript textual study, known as ‘philology’, requires extreme diligence. The researcher must collect photographs of the existing manuscripts of the text, some hidden away in libraries and basements around the world, and conduct a meticulous comparison of each and every word. This is painstaking work, rummaging around lost archives to find one more manuscript that will shed light on a baffling sentence in a forgotten text. Endless searching and documentation of small errors made by the Jewish book copier in the Middle Ages, in frozen Europe or remote Yemen, who lost focus for a split second.

The extent of familiarity of the Jerusalem school researchers with the texts is more profound than anyone else’s. They are driven by an uncompromising loyalty to the original text. They view their pedantic study as the cornerstone for all the future towers that will be built in terms of these texts, though their endeavors are not afforded the recognition it deserves and is considered pointless, technical work.

This style is not very popular and the Talmud department attracts very few students as opposed to other departments. And among these students, some are forced to leave due to the high scholastic demands and the taxing nature of the work and studies. Nonetheless, many renowned researchers in diverse fields of Judaic studies included this department on their academic route and its academic standards are highly acclaimed in the field of Judaic studies the world over.

The critics of the Jerusalem school claim the exaggerated adherence to details prevents a view of the overall picture, and its members are an exclusive and arrogant clique that has lost its relevance.
The Israel Prize

The Israel Prize is a prestigious award that the State of Israel has been handing out since 1953 to outstanding citizens in the following four main areas: (a) the humanities, social sciences, and Jewish studies; (b) the natural and exact sciences; (c) culture and arts; and (d) lifetime achievement and exceptional contribution to the nation. Each main area is divided into subfields, changing from year to year in a perennial cycle. The Minister of Education is in charge of selecting the prize recipients, but in fact selection is made by a public committee of judges, comprised of experts in the specific field in which the prize is being awarded that year. The committee must find a candidate it agrees upon unanimously and the Minister generally approves its recommendation. The names of the winners, along with the names of the judges on the committee and the committee’s reasons for their selection, are published officially several months before the award ceremony and are kept confidential until the official announcement. The prize itself is granted every year in a state ceremony on Independence Day, and is attended by the Heads of State.

Every Israeli citizen, including the committee members, can recommend a candidate for the Israel Prize until committee discussions begin. An individual cannot suggest himself. The identity of the recommending individual remains confidential and is not made public even after the prize is awarded the winner.

Subfields in the area of Jewish studies include: Jewish thought, Talmud, History, Bible, Literature, Philosophy and Archaeology. Contrary to the winners in the area of ‘natural and exact sciences”, in Jewish studies it is often difficult to distinguish between ‘pure science’ and non-scientific ‘cultural/religious activities’, and this lack of distinction has often been at the center of controversy when it came to the identity of some of the prize recipients in these categories.

The Prize also includes a monetary award in the amount of NIS 75,000 (equivalent to more than $20,000 USD), however its reputation is based on its prestige and public recognition. During the 57 years in which the Prize has been awarded, several winners refused to accept it, each for his own reasons and in his own style. Most famous among them was David Ben Gurion, who claimed he didn’t need the Prize for performing his duty to the nation; Prof. Yeshayahu Leibowitz, who turned it down due to the political controversy surrounding his nomination; and Uri Zohar, who declined as an act of defiance against the establishment. The first individual to turn down the award, as early as 1957, was Prof. Hanoeh Albeck, a professor of Talmud at the Hebrew University who objected to the award in principle. In the case of refusal, the award is cancelled in the area in question that year and is not awarded to an alternative candidate.
ABOUT THE CAST

SHLOMO BAR ABA (Eliezer Shkolnik)

Shlomo Bar Aba has starred in a number of films, television series and theatre productions. In addition to his role as Eliezer Scholnik in FOOTNOTE, he has also starred in other films such as HALF A TON OF BRONZE (TV movie, 2010), WITNESS IN THE WAR ZONE (1987), NISUIM FIKTIVEEM (1988) and KVALIM (1992).

In television, Bar Aba hosted Whose Line Is It?, the Israeli version of the British improvisational comedy television show. He has also starred on the Israeli television series Mischak Machur (2006) and was a regular guest on Zehu Ze Hai (1995).

Bar Aba has also performed in a number of theatrical productions, including Good Soldier Svejk, The Sunshine Boys, The Producers and Waiting for Godot.

LIOR ASHKENAZI (Uriel Shkolnik)

Lior Ashkenazi is a film and television actor who has starred in such films as WALK ON WATER (2004) and LATE MARRIAGE (2001). Additional film credits include ULTIMATUM (2009), HELLO GOODBYE (2008), THE BUBBLE (2007) and MATANA MISHAMAYIM (2005).

In addition to his work in film, Ashkenazi has also starred in Israeli television shows such as Ha-Emet Ha'Eroma and In Therapy.

ALISA ROSEN (Yehudit Shkolnik)

Aliza Rosen is an Israeli actress who has starred in such films as FOOTNOTE (2011) CHEMO KING OF JERUSALEM (1987), EIZE YOFI SHEL TZAROT (1976), I LOVE YOU ROSA (1972) and WHERE IS DANIEL WAX (1972).


During the Years Aliza Rosen has appeared in many theaters across Israel in leading roles.

ALMA ZAK (Dikla Shkolnik)

Alma Zak has starred in many films, television shows and theatre productions.

Zak has acted in a number of Israeli television shows including *Yellow Peppers*, *Till the Wedding*, *In Treatment*, *Eretz Nehederet*, *Hartzufim* (guest star), *Only in Israel* (guest star), *Small Country Big Man* (guest star) and *Avraham Hefner*.

On the stage, she has performed in productions of *Uri, The Girl That I Love, Village* and *The Meaning of Life*.

Zak was born in Tel Aviv, Israel and studied acting at the Tel Aviv University.

**MICAH LEWESOHN (Yehuda Grossman)**

Micah Lewesohn was born in Jerusalem and graduated from the Israeli Music Conservatory in Tel Aviv where he also played jazz.

After completing his studies at New York University – Film & Television (BA) and Theater Directing (MFA) – he received a National Endowment for the Arts grant, serving as the Assistant General Director at the Pittsburgh Public Theater.


His productions won several theatre prizes including best play, best musical, best revival as well as best director awards.

Among his translations for the theater: *Buried Child, The Dresser, The Glass Menagerie, Iron* and recently his new Hebrew version of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*.

Lewesohn teaches acting and directing, and served as Artistic Director of The Israel Festival, Jerusalem 1994-2001.

Lewesohn is on the Board of Directors of The Suzanne Dellal Center for Dance and Theater, Tel Aviv; AICE - Australia Israel Cultural Exchange; and the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Jerusalem.

Since May 2009, he has served as Director of the Beit Zvi School of the Performing Arts.
YUVAL SCHARF (Noa - Newspaper Reporter)

Yuval Scharf is a young Israeli actress who has starred in films such as FOOTNOTE (2011), THE DEALERS (2011) and LOST ISLANDS (2008).

Schraf’s television credits include Other Life, Srugim, Big Head and The Naked Truth.

Having studied at the Nissan Nativ Acting Studio in Israel, Scharf has performed on stage in productions such as Chekov’s Uncle Vania, Alma and Ruth, Terms of Endearment and Equus.

ABOUT THE CREW

JOSEPH CEDAR (Director/Screenwriter)

Born in New York, Joseph Cedar immigrated to Israel with his family at the age of six. Cedar studied philosophy and theatre history at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and is an NYU Film School graduate. He currently lives in Tel-Aviv with his wife and three children.

His first two feature films, TIME OF FAVOR (2001) and CAMPFIRE (2004) were chosen to be Israel’s official selections for the Foreign Language category at the Oscars®. Both films were box-office hits in Israel and were distributed theatrically in North America and Europe. CAMPFIRE had its world premiere at the Berlin Int. Film Festival 2004.

Cedar received the Silver Bear award for best director for his third film, BEAUFORT (2007), which premiered in the main competition at the 2007 Berlin International Film Festival. BEAUFORT became the top grossing film in the Israeli box-office that year and was later nominated for an Academy Award® for the Best Foreign Language Film in 2008.

FOOTNOTE is Cedar’s fourth feature film.

YARON SCHARF (Cinematographer)

Yaron Scharf is one of the leading cinematographers in Israel. Born and raised in Jerusalem, he graduated from film school at Tel Aviv University and from the School of Visual Arts in New York.

Since 1993, Scharf has been involved in many feature films, television series, documentaries and commercials. In addition he has won many awards for his work in these areas.

EINAT GLASER-ZARHIN (Editor)

Einat Glaser-Zarhin is an editor of feature and documentary films and television.

A graduate of the Film and Television department of the Tel Aviv University, Glaser-Zarhin also was a tutor at the Sam Spiegel Film School in Jerusalem.

Among her works: INTIMATE GRAMMAR (2011); A MATTER OF SIZE (2009); NOODLE (2007); THE HOUSE ON AUGUST STREET (2007); THE DEBT (2007); AVIVA, MY LOVE (2006); CAMPFIRE (2004); BONJOUR MONSIEUR SHLOMI (2003); BROKEN WINGS (2002); THE COMEDIANS (2000); PASSOVER FEVER (1995); ZOHAR (1993); AMAZING GRACE (1992); and many more.

Glaser-Zarhin was awarded the Israeli Film Academy award for editing a total of six times for the work on her various films, and the Doc-Aviv Award for THE COMEDIANS.

ALEX CLAUDE (Sound Designer)

Alex Claude, a native of Warsaw, Poland, is a sound designer who has worked in music direction, design and editing film soundtracks, documentaries, installations, music, modern ballet and theatre soundtracks.

Among his film credits are FOOTNOTE; LEBANON (2010), Golden Lion winner at the 2009 Venice International Film Festival; BEAUFORT (2007, Silver Bear Winner at the Berlin International Film Festival); MY FATHER MY LORD (2007, Best Feature Film at the 2007 Tribeca Film Festival) FREE ZONE (2005); CAMPFIRE (2004); IN A NAME OF THE GOD (2003); KEDMA (2002); KIPPUR (2000); KADOSH (1999); YOM YOM (1998).

For his work in films, Claude has been awarded four times for Best Sound Design by the Israeli Film Academy ‘Ophir’ Prize and awarded three times for Best Sound Design by the Israeli Documentary Makers Forum.

Claude has worked on many modern ballet pieces by Rami Beer and has worked on theatre productions of Rain Man, Post Funeral Conversations (written by Yasmina Reza) and Waiting for Godot, among others.

Claude also holds a place close to his heart for children’s theatre, working on productions such as Hello, My Princess and The Frog Prince.

In addition to FOOTNOTE, Claude has also worked with director Joseph Cedar on BEAUFORT and CAMPFIRE.
**AMIT POZNANSKY (Composer)**

Amit Poznansky is an accomplished composer / arranger / orchestrator of film and television scores, music for the theater, as well as concert, chamber and choral music.

Coming from a classical background as a pianist, Amit started his career mainly as a performer and participated in numerous productions in the Israeli repertory theater, mostly in the two major ones: The Cameri (Tel-Aviv's municipal theater) and Habima (Israel's national theater). Among these productions were Shakespeare's plays *As You Like It* and *Hamlet*, Brecht's *Mother Courage & her Children, Murder* and *The Whore from Ohio* by Hanoch Levin. Amit has arranged, adapted and orchestrated the music for the Israeli major productions of the musicals: *The Producers, Oliver!, Yentl, and Fiddler on the Roof* (which was honored as the Best Musical in 2008).

Poznansky has written the score for Joseph Cedar's feature film, **FOOTNOTE** (2011), which was performed by the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra. He’s also written music for many short films, TV movies & documentaries, including: BARKS and THE GAMES THEY PLAY by Ram Loevy (Channel 8); UNCLE POMPA - a fantasy film (soundtrack released on MCI Records); Frame Story - a television series (Channel 2), as well as for several series on the HOP! TV-channel.

In 2003, his debut solo album, *Life of the Dead*, based on the poetry of Hanoch Levin, was released. Amit composed the music, sang, played, arranged and produced the disc. The album is distributed by iMusic. In November 2006, a suite from his album was performed in concert by the San Francisco Bay Area Chamber Symphony. In 2009, his song-cycle from *Life of the Dead*, was performed by the Copenhagen Girls' Choir, in Copenhagen, and London.

In 2007, *Virtual Instruments Magazine* published its feature interview with Amit Poznansky in the June/July issue. In it Amit discusses his approach to composing and sequencing and focuses on his Broadway Big Band™ pieces, as well as his other orchestral works. You can check it out at [www.virtualinstrumentsmag.com](http://www.virtualinstrumentsmag.com).

Amit has been collaborating with Edition Svitzer publishing house, a company based in Copenhagen, Denmark. Among the recent publications are his *Waltz for Flute & Piano*, and *Life of the Dead (a Song Cycle for Female Choir)*.

**ARAD SAWAT (Production Designer)**

Arad Sawat is a production designer and art director for motion pictures in television. As a production designer, he has worked on Joseph Cedar’s **FOOTNOTE** (2011) and Oded Davidoff’s **THE DEALERS** (2011).

In television, Sawat has been the production designer on Israeli series such as *My Troubles with Women, Asfur, 15 Minutes, Wonderful Divorce, Danny Hollywood, Exposed, When Will We Kiss, The Octet, The Giants* and *Our Song*.
As an art director, Sawat has worked on television shows such as Sabry Maranan, Cofico, Gerry Mendelbaum Private Eye, Aharony cooks and The Dinner Club, amongst others.

Arad Sawat lives in Tel Aviv with his wife Gal Rosenbaum Prat and son Michael.

DAVID MANDIL (Producer)

MoviePlus Productions is an independent production company established by David Mandil, specializing in full length feature films, documentaries, TV series and dramas.

Over the years the company has produced more than fifteen full length feature films, amongst them are Joseph Cedar’s BEAUFORT (2007), CAMPFIRE (2004) and TIME OF FAVOR (2001). FOOTNOTE is Mandil’s fourth collaboration with Cedar.

In addition to his collaborations with Cedar, Mandil has produced a number of films including ZIMZUM (2002), TEUM KAVANOT (2001), TOTAL LOVE (2000), URBAN FEEL (1999), and DAY AFTER TODAY (1998). For documentaries, Mandil has produced the films SHVUYA (2008), NURAN (2008), MEVUZBAZIM (2007) and KATIF ACHARON (2006).

Mandil’s producing experience is extended to television where he had producer mini-series and television programs like Deus, Jerusalem Brew and As If Nothing Happened.

MOSHE & LEON EDERY (Producers)

The Edery brothers, Moshe and Leon, are a classic tale of movie success. The children of Moroccan immigrants, they came to Israel at a young age. As boys, they worked in the local cinema, and their love for cinema paved the way to success in the local industry. In the 1970s, the Edery brothers began distributing films and established the United King Group. Besides their distribution work, they have established and run movie theaters around the country, culminating in the Cinema City complexes, which have changed the movie theater map in Israel.

Moshe and Leon Edery are Israeli cinema’s largest private investors. For decades they have produced, some of Israel’s finest films—among them Oscar® nominee and Berlin Film Festival winner, BEAUFORT (2007); Venice Film Festival ‘Golden Lion’ winner, LEBANON (2010); as well as LOST ISLAND (2008); AVIVA, MY LOVE (2006); WALK ON WATER (2004); and TURN LEFT AT THE END OF THE WORLD (2004).

For years now, the Edery brothers have purchased the rights to Israeli films, improving their image and sound, and upgrading them to digital media for renewed distribution on television and DVD. Today, United King holds the rights to 350 Israel films, including some of the greatest classics of local filmmaking. In recent years, United King Group has also purchased the music catalogues of the leading music labels NMC and Hed Artzi, as well as the distribution company Globus United, which specializes in marketing and distribution of DVD and multimedia, representing most of the large American studios.
It was in part the desire to build a suitable home for screening Israeli cinema that brought the Edery brothers to the pinnacle of their enterprise and the construction of the impressive and successful Cinema City complex at Gelilot Junction. Recently, they added a second Cinema City complex in Rishon LeZion, and other such initiatives are in the works in Jerusalem and in other places.

Moshe and Leon Edery are collaborating with Joseph Cedar for the second time on FOOTNOTE.

CREDITS

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Josh Shkolnik
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Editing
Sound Designer
Sound Mixing
Composer
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Casting
Costumes
Make-up
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Creative Designer
Line Producer
Executive Producer
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David Mandil, Moshe Edery, Leon Edery

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