

## 'Rain 1949': A disturbing documentary

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*Rain 1949*, directed by Ilan Yagoda, is one of those disturbing documentaries that need to be seen. The focus of the film is Kibbutz Megiddo, formerly the Arab village of Lajun, where Yagoda once lived for four years.

An Israel Film Service Production, *Rain 1949* is a catharsis of sorts, symbolized by the torrential rains of 1949 which could never quite wash away the past - neither the past of the Arabs who fled during the War of Independence, nor the past of the Holocaust survivors who came to make new lives on the land so recently - and from the standpoint of the Arabs, only temporarily - vacated.

The Arabs from Lajun now live in nearby Umm el-Fahm, but none of them, not even those born after 1949, can forget their attachment to the land. Some of them appear on camera recalling how, on that fatal day, they took with them only some pitot, cheese and olives wrapped in a kerchief. They thought they were leaving for only a few hours - at worst a few days. They never imagined that it would be forever.

The people who live there now admit that when they arrived they found many household belongings. They thought that they had been abandoned by people long dead. It never occurred to them that the owners of these objects were still alive and so close at hand.

Yagoda uses the rain as a symbol throughout the film. It was pouring buckets the day the new immigrants who came to found the kibbutz arrived. For them, it was a sign of blessing. For the Arabs, it was a curse. It prevented their immediate return. Later, when they wanted to come back to their homes, they were occupied by Jews.

One of the Arabs did return. He was a good-looking, personable lad whom the kibbutzniks adopted. He shuttled between Umm el-Fahm and Megiddo. Still strikingly handsome, he is more resigned today than he was in his youth. He is the uncomplaining victim of an obviously advanced case of Parkinson's. It puts him in the same category as Arafat, he jokes.

Curiously, there is no enmity between the people of Lajun and the people of Megiddo. Some of them even visit each other from time to time. But the majority on both sides don't really want to know each other. And there is no magical happy ending, for there is no way that there could be.

"Neither side wants to see the other," says Yagoda. "To do so would be to acknowledge that the other side exists."

"But they can't escape each other's existence forever. After 50 years they can't ignore each other."