



## **MORE LOST THAN GAINED**

2001 | video | 10'30| HE with EN subtitles

### **ABOUT**

### **SYNOPSIS**

### **DIALOGUE LIST TRANLATED**

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### **ABOUT**

*More Lost than Gained* has started accidentally. While filming another video, our camera has captured a monologue describing a home-video-camera smuggling incident. (Until very recently, anything purchased outside of Israel and cost more than 200\$, had to be declared at customs, and the tax was very high. Many Israelis used to evade the declaration.) This monologue struck us as a very accurate reflection of the complex relationship Israelis have developed towards their state and its authorities. Looking for more stories and putting them side by side was the little research which followed. As we see it, *More Lost Than Gained* is a document about a country, which became the enemy of its own citizens.

### **SYNOPSIS**

“MORE LOST THAN GAINED” is the frustrated conclusion of one of four people who confess to the camera how they smuggled their own home-video cameras to Israel, revealing their reasons, their fears and their feelings, ranging from guilt to elated victory.

“You don’t smuggle just in order to save money, but as an act of protest”

## DIALOGUE LIST

- different colours indicate different speakers

### MORE LOST THAN GAINED

- [ More lost than gained
- [ The camera was the newest technology
- [ The newest technology
- [ Not in its ability but in that it was bigger and heavier, so it could also serve as a weapon.
- [ Not one of those huge packages, but something which you hold in your hand and can feel its weight.
- [ My brother lives in Miami, Florida... in Miami, Florida, and... I was also in Brooklyn, I've been to lots of places, I was in the US twice, for a month...there is a shop in Brooklyn, owned by Israelis , who sell electrical appliances.
- [ I bought the video camera in Hong Kong and when we returned to Israel, after a year, we had to decide how to smuggle it into the country without paying tax.
- [ Two days before I returned to Israel from a trip to Spain, our guide, Doron, took us to a place where you can buy tax-free goods. And I decided to buy the camera that I've always dreamed about, with a screen that films in super VHS, to use it for the community TV. When I chose it, my first thought was how do I smuggle it to Israel.
- [ But it's a really...really good thing. It's a...GFC...GMC...how do you call it? (JVC- Amir answers) I have one, it works great!
- [ And then you say: you bring it back to Israel and you don't want to pay tax. Why not paying tax? First of all...
- [ Because!
- [ In those days you are in the middle of the Intifada...
- [ What's the connection?!
- [ Do you wanna pay tax in the Intifada?
- [ What's the connection?!
- [ I don't want to pay tax in the Intifada!
- [ I didn't throw in political reasons!
- [ In addition to this, our bag was stolen... in China. There was nothing in it but it was nicked!
- [ But this already gave us an idea.
- [ Our story began last year. We came back from a long visit to the US. And, of course we bought there lots of things, lots of clothes etc... including a video camera. A Hitachi, which I researched before what to buy and where. We paid 350\$.
- [ We went to the police and reported our bag stolen, containing all our documents. Basically, we said to ourselves, that if we say that our declaration form was amongst the documents, it means that we declared the camera when we left Israel, we don't have to declare it again, but we can't prove it since our bag was stolen in China.

- [ So, my first thought was – how do I smuggle it to Israel? Cause I really, really don't feel like paying tax. The state doesn't deserve it and anyhow they take a lot of tax. Some people told me – put it between your clothes, some said just to declare, to pass at the red lane and declare it, I decided that it doesn't suit me.
- [ I am not a liar, the only place I may lie is at the customs at Ben Gurion airport
- [ Then he told me, the shop owner, a religious guy, idiot, and I am a idiot for listening to him... he told me hide it up your sleeve and...and put your coat like this... and I listened to him like an idiot
- [ Then we arrived in Israel, knowing full well that I will be the one to smuggle it in my bag, as I never get searched.
- [ I bought the camera, arrived at the hotel, all the small parts, including the charger, cables and batteries, I put between my clothes, the camera itself I wrapped in plastic. It was a bubble wrap, the kind that kids love to pop... something like this... I emptied my wash bag, and I shoved it in.
- [ We travelled with four kids too. Some of them too young to understand what customs is all about... and some do.
- [ Many people told me... in the hotel there were many Israelis, and there were a lot in Brooklyn, who live there... told me: listen, put it on, hang it...like this...without the bag, as if you're now... and they won't do anything to you, no customs, nothing! And I didn't listen to them, I listened to the guy in the shop.
- [ So she took the camera with her
- [ No,no,no, we arrived in Israel and the bag didn't. and we had to leave the airport without the camera... then the bag arrived, a few days later, of course they opened it and saw the camera straight away but we didn't want to pay tax on it.
- [ We went through the red lane, and declared customs on something silly assuming that if they concentrate on the silly thing, they will say "go on, you can go" and we can get out of there with our expensive camera.
- [ My only fear was what do I do if customs officials , airport officials catch me. I decided to play dumb, as it is my first trip abroad.
- [ It worked, and whilst the custom's official was asking questions like... "do you have anything else in your suitcases, something else expensive?" I said: "no...". I felt bad. I don't like lying. I don't lie.
- [ You don't smuggle to save money. Actually you do it as an act of protes, I think. It's a niche of non-conformism that we allow ourselves with all these years of bloodshed in the army, the missiles etc...
- [ I just got into my head that they won't catch me. In the worst case, it's my first trip abroad and I didn't know... play dumb.
- [ First of all we had this note from the Chinese police, that we did declare that our forms were stolen, including the customs declaration we gave when we left Israel. It turns out that the customs... once you declared at customs, they don't keep a copy of the form.
- [ So, in front of the kids I said: "no, I don't have anything else to declare", so he lets me go. And my son, 8 years old, Nir: "Dad, Dad, but there

is..." and this is all in front of the custom's official. And i... gesture to him so the officer won't see...

- [ Then I came to release the camera relying on this note I got from China, from the Chinese police and because they did not understand what was written, and I translated it, it wasn't reliable enough. Then they asked: "who gave you the camera?" so I said: "my fater gave it to us as a wedding gift" so they said: " good, go bring us a notary statement that your father gave it to you as a gift"
- [ Comes the gut from the customs and says: "come..." as if I am some kind of thief. I showed him that I paid and that everything is fine, but... because I evaded, and did not declare it, 250\$ fine and 250 tax.
- [ In short, we got through and ... with a very unpleasant feeling.
- [ I took my suitcases and simply left through the "nothing to declare" lane. I only remembered the camera when I left the airport.
- [ So I called my Dad and said: " OK, you have to make a notary statement saying that you gave us the camera as a gift." He said "why should I?" "just come and do it, who knows you didn't". we actually signed a notary statement that had nothing to do with reality... and with this statement I went to the customs and, with no shame, gave it saying: "here is my Dad's statement" together with the Chinese note that I translated and I received the bag with the camera and I went outside cheering with joy and happiness.
- [ It took us about 10 minutes to decide that all the money that we would have left at customs, we will donate to charity.
- [ And I started dancing, because I like to dance in these circumstances. So Yoav said: "shush...! There are customs officials hanging around outside to see who comes out happy, and THEN they catch you!
- [ I, Marti Friedlander, shall decide where all this righteous money will go, not for some deputy minister's car but for charity.
- [ It seems to me that...because I forgot about the camera, I didn't show any signs of fear, and therefore they didn't catch me. I hope next time I will be able to smuggle bigger things.