

# WE WERE NEVER LOST

THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL

**DOCUMENTARY FILM**

Host / Rudy Rochman  
Director / Andrew Leibman  
Producer / Jonny Pottins

**AN ADVENTURE  
INTO THE HEART OF JEWISH YEARNING;**

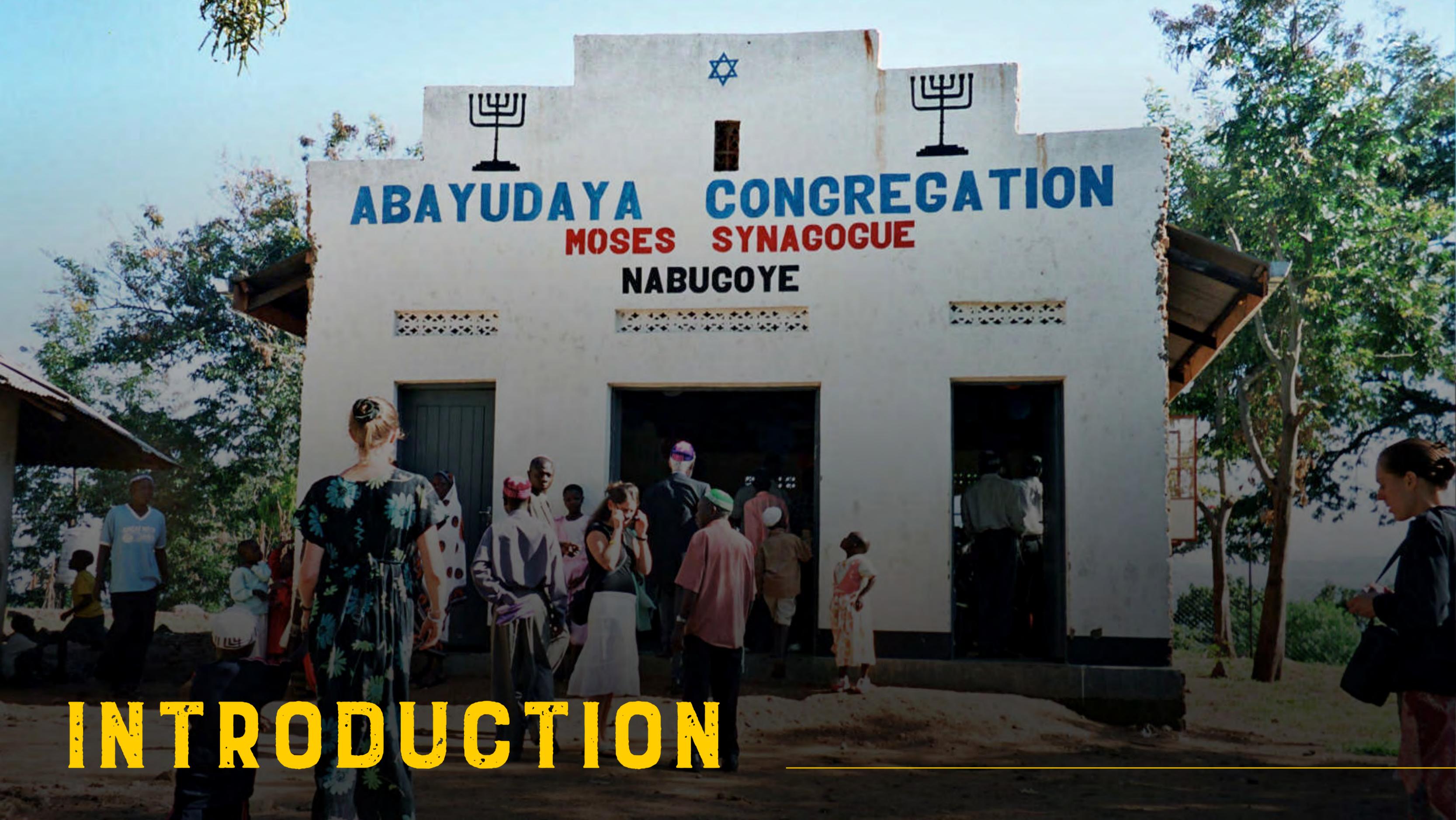
EXPLORING THE COMMUNITIES OF THE AFRICAN JEWISH DIASPORA





*"Optimism is the belief that things are going to get better.  
Hope is the belief that we can make things better..."*

*- Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ל'ט*



**ABAYUDAYA CONGREGATION**  
**MOSES SYNAGOGUE**  
**NABUGOYE**

**INTRODUCTION**

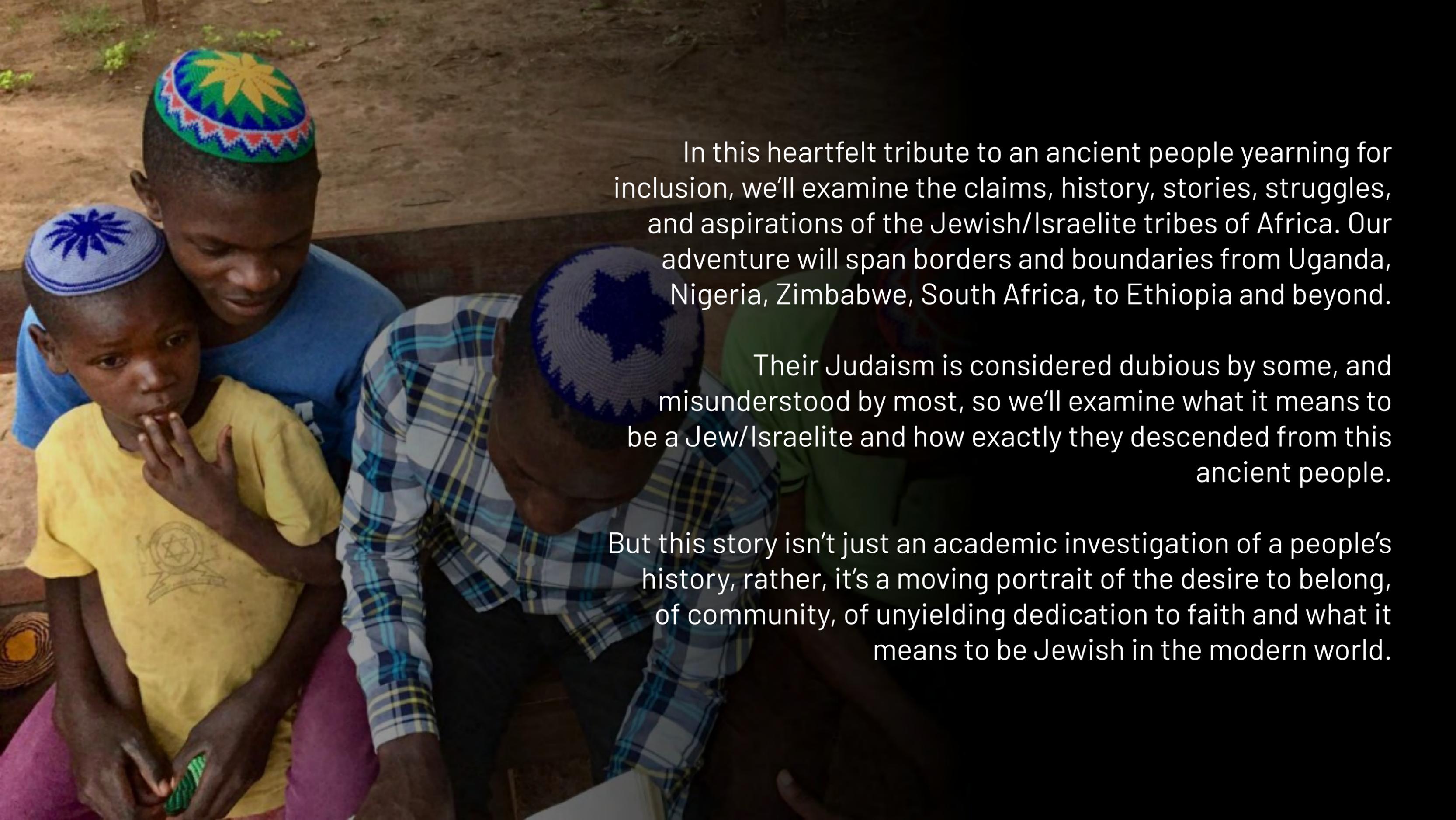
For centuries the Jewish people were a diaspora nation. Spread unevenly across the globe, communities developed unique languages and customs distinct from one another, and yet nearly all maintained their shared sacred practices, ancient traditions, and texts.

The creation of the State of Israel brought Jewish communities once estranged by geography face to face. Ashkenazim from Europe, Sephardim from Southern Europe and North Africa, Mizrahim from the Middle East and most recently Beta Israel from Ethiopia. Not to mention claimants to the tribes of Israel in the China, India and the Caucasus regions, the "Never lost tribes".

And there are still more communities who have not been brought into the larger Jewish fold. Communities who desperately want their Judaism recognized, appreciated and embraced by the wider Jewish world.

**This documentary is their story.**





In this heartfelt tribute to an ancient people yearning for inclusion, we'll examine the claims, history, stories, struggles, and aspirations of the Jewish/Israelite tribes of Africa. Our adventure will span borders and boundaries from Uganda, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, South Africa, to Ethiopia and beyond.

Their Judaism is considered dubious by some, and misunderstood by most, so we'll examine what it means to be a Jew/Israelite and how exactly they descended from this ancient people.

But this story isn't just an academic investigation of a people's history, rather, it's a moving portrait of the desire to belong, of community, of unyielding dedication to faith and what it means to be Jewish in the modern world.



# THEMES

# ACTIVISM & STORYTELLING

This is a film about Jewish identity through the lens of the Jewish African experience.

Rudy will delve deep into the age old question of "Who is a Jew?" while weaving together the unique history of several tribes.

## THE LEMBA OF ZIMBABWE

*What role does genetic evidence play in shaping one's identity?*

## THE IGBO OF NIGERIA

*What is the significance of passing down an origin story for millenia?*

## ABAYUDAYA OF UGANDA

*Through what process does an individual truly become part of the nation of Israel?*

## BETA ISRAEL & FALASHA OF ETHIOPIA

*How did this tribe achieve acceptance back into mainstream Judaism?*



# ACTIVISM & STORYTELLING

How can we create an interconnected worldwide Jewish family that serves as a light to the nations?

What is the role of Am Israel and Eretz Israel in assisting a people that strive to rejoin a collective?

A young boy with a black kippah is shown in profile, reading a book. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a bookshelf. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

**This film aims to fundamentally shift the way Jewish identity is understood by the world.**

Simply put: Our Hebrew-Jewish family in Africa needs help. They deserve recognition like all Israelites; to reconnect, contribute, grow and strengthen Am Israel.

The stakes are high, these communities face poverty, anti-Semitism, threats from radical terror groups, and trouble getting access to clean water, electricity and basic resources.

These issues beg the question: How can we improve their lives and have them rejoin the fold of Am Israel?

**WHY?**

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# VISUAL STYLE

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Out among the gorgeous vistas of the African continent we'll film in lush 4k to fully capture the vibrant locations and the stories of diverse communities.



Part "Planet Earth" and part "Vice Doc" - we'll split the difference between carefully considered, well framed composition and guerilla style cinematography.



From small, remote villages in jungles to densely populated cities, our adventure will take us all over the continent. Talking head interviews and in-situation conversations will drive the narrative.





# SUBJECTS

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## THE IGBO OF NIGERIA

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Religious practices of the Igbo Jews include circumcision eight days after the birth of a male child, observance of kosher dietary laws, wearing tallit and kippot, and the celebration of holidays such as Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah.

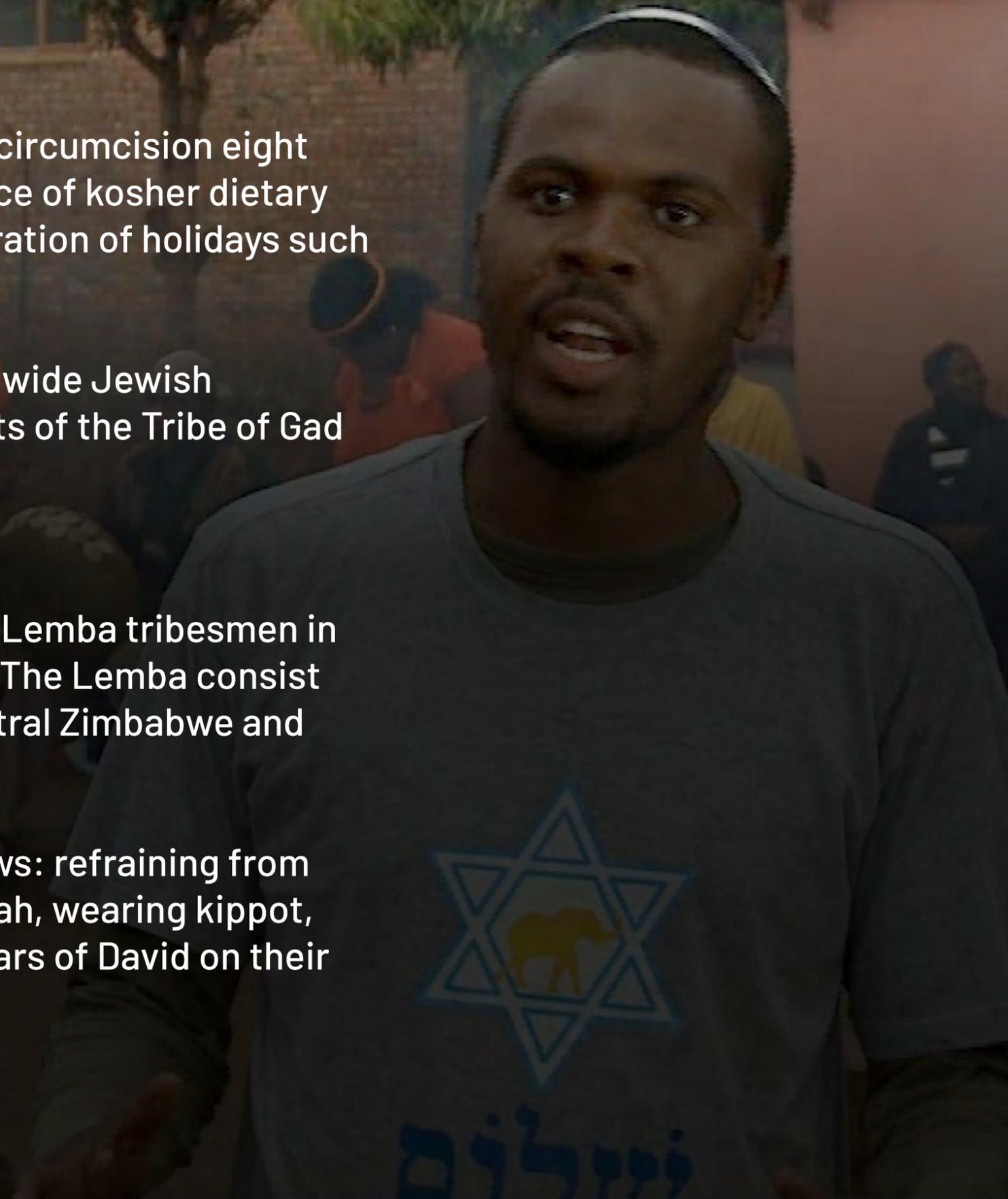
They identify themselves as part of the worldwide Jewish community, and believe to be the descendants of the Tribe of Gad from the Israelites.

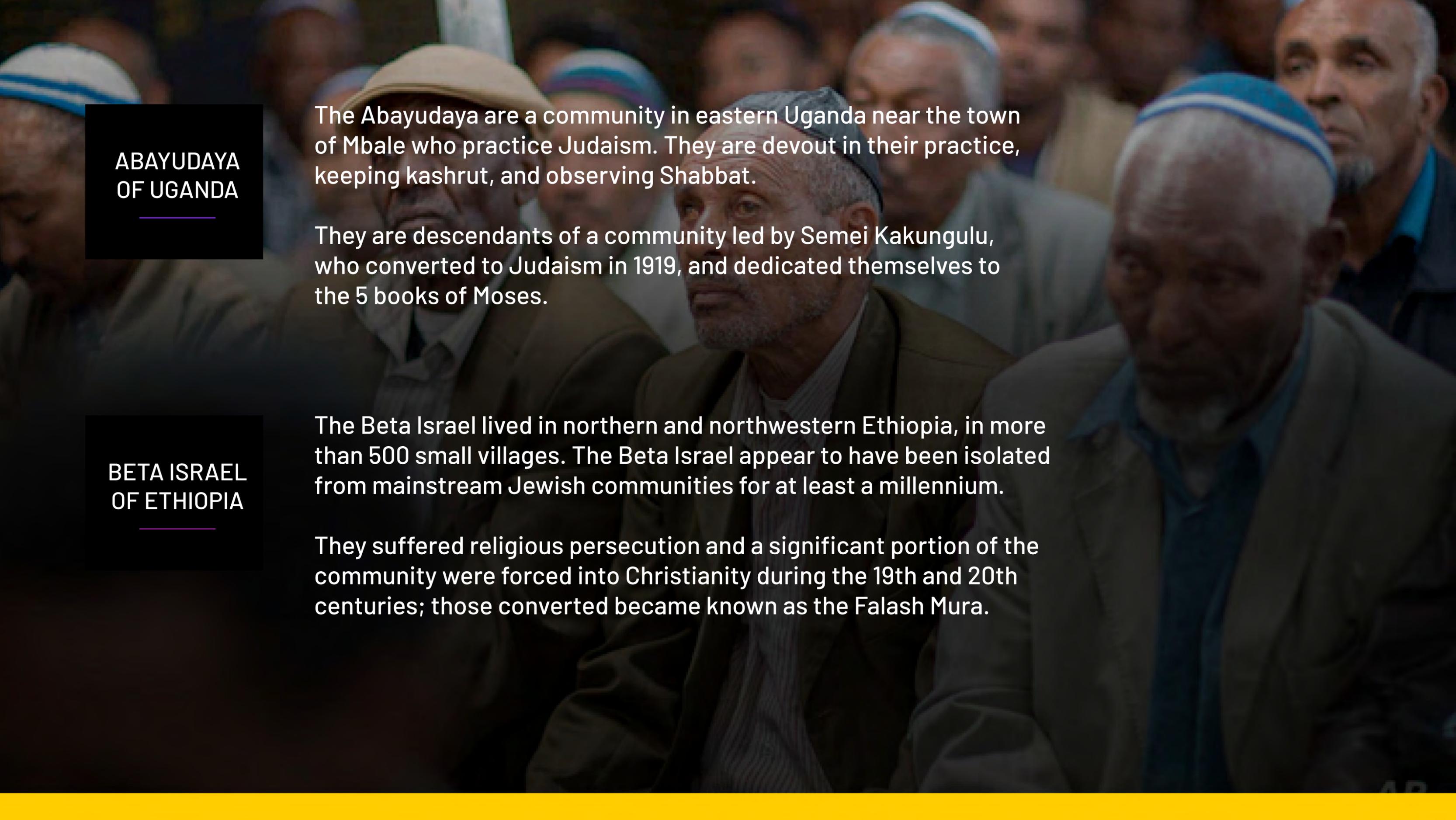
## THE LEMBA OF ZIMBABWE

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Genetic tests have revealed that many of the Lemba tribesmen in southern Africa have middle eastern origins. The Lemba consist of 70,000 to 80,000 members who live in central Zimbabwe and northern South Africa.

They have customs very similar to that of Jews: refraining from eating pork and other foods forbidden by Torah, wearing kippot, have a holy day once a week, and even put Stars of David on their gravestones.





## ABAYUDAYA OF UGANDA

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The Abayudaya are a community in eastern Uganda near the town of Mbale who practice Judaism. They are devout in their practice, keeping kashrut, and observing Shabbat.

They are descendants of a community led by Semei Kakungulu, who converted to Judaism in 1919, and dedicated themselves to the 5 books of Moses.

## BETA ISRAEL OF ETHIOPIA

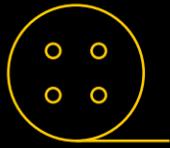
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The Beta Israel lived in northern and northwestern Ethiopia, in more than 500 small villages. The Beta Israel appear to have been isolated from mainstream Jewish communities for at least a millennium.

They suffered religious persecution and a significant portion of the community were forced into Christianity during the 19th and 20th centuries; those converted became known as the Falash Mura.



Pre-Production and Production  
\$401,000



Post Production  
\$121,000



Travel  
\$78,000



Total  
\$600,000  
+ 10% contingency

# BUDGET

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Activist / Influencer Rudy Rochman will host this journey. The film will use his deep knowledge of Jewish history and passion for empowering the next generation of Jews. We'll film his discovery, connections, and interactions with the Jewish tribes in the African diaspora, and basic resources.

These issues beg the question: How can we improve their lives and have them rejoin the fold of Am Israel?

Rudy is known for his work as a Jewish & Israel rights activist with over 100,000 followers worldwide on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [Twitter](#).

Rudy currently serves on the boards of The Israel Innovation Fund and American Zionist Movement. In 2018, Rudy received the 36 Under 36 award for being one of the most influential Jews in the world.



RUDY ROCHMAN

**HOST**

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Andrew is an award winning filmmaker based in NYC. He runs a boutique video agency, [Leibman Productions](#), where he creates content for brands and small businesses.

His passion for documentary filmmaking has led his work to be published by [National Geographic](#) and [Thrasher Magazine](#).

In February 2020, Andrew's documentary, [Sign At All Times](#), won first place in the short film category at The International Sports Press Association Media Awards.

Since 2018, Andrew has been producing Jewish/Israel activism videos with Rudy Rochman that have accumulated millions of views across social media. Their work has proven effective in inspiring young Jews to learn about their identity and motivating them to stand up for their people.



ANDREW LEIBMAN

**DIRECTOR**

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As a producer of Branded Content, documentary television, and Feature Films, Jonny has a longstanding history of creating moving, story driven content with large, well known brands. He has worked with E! Channel, Food Network, Discovery Channel, History Channel and produced for brands like Coke, Harlequin, Mattel, MasterCard, Warner Bros, Budweiser, BMW and more. His latest feature film "White Lie" premiered at TIFF '19 and was nominated for 4 CSAs.

He has travelled all over the globe, always excited by pushing the limits of media in order to tell great stories.

[jpottins.com](http://jpottins.com) • [\\_jonny\\_lp](https://www.instagram.com/_jonny_lp)

**PRODUCER**

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JONATHAN POTTINS



PERSONAL MESSAGES  
HIGHLIGHTING THE  
**IMPACT & REACH**  
OF RUDY'S ACTIVISM.



Thank you Rudy! For doing something important! Coming from an extreme leftist community - I was taught to be anti-Israel, without ever having heard from an Israeli Zionist point of view... Thanks to you I've realised that I'm in fact a Zionist myself.

Shalom aleichem Rudy. I just wanted to let you know how much you've inspired myself and so many others with your activism and videos. I disconnected from Judaism after my bar mitzvah aside from family gatherings. Since finding your videos a few months back I have reconnected and reestablished my roots, consuming as much history, tradition, and culture as I can. I don't expect a response as I know how busy you must be but I wanted to thank you for giving me my identity back and instilling in me pride for where I came from. Keep fighting the good fight and know that you have an army of people behind you that are very thankful for your work and dedication to the cause. I'm in veterinary school now so super broke but I still couldn't help but to donate \$5 a month to you on Patreon.com. I even booked a trip out to Israel in December to come see the homeland! All the best, keep making that fire content. Bless.

Shalom Rudy how are you? Holy sh\*\* you are a total inspiration bomb. Not only what you are doing, engaging in conversations, but also the approach you're doing that, staying calm and trying to understand opinions. What you are doing is just incredible and exactly what this generation needs. Anyway, you have really really inspired me, and as I imagine many more people as well, and this is just amazing! Please continue with your incredible content!

Hey Rudy! I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciate what you do. I'm Jewish and used to be terrified to speak up against people that wanted to destroy Israel. But through the education of your videos, I've learned how to properly respond and educate people like that. I've become more confident when trying to defend Israel because of you. So thank you so much! Continue to spread positivity and knowledge on the subject of Israel! Much love, from Canada!

Hi Rudy. I recently stumbled onto one of your YouTube videos and haven't been able to stop watching your videos since. You're a great speaker and I admire what you do. You have enlightened me so much regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and I hope you will keep spreading the truth. Last summer I visited the southern borders of Lebanon and saw Israel from afar but I hope one day to actually visit Israel. God Bless you always.

Hi Rudy, I stumbled across your videos, and just wanted to congratulate you on your unique approach to hard conversations. I am of Turkish origin, brought up as a Sunni Muslim, and honestly for most part of my 40 years of life I've hated Jews, and always wished the worst on them. That was until I came across your posts, you have a good heart, and I can see this, you talk to people while respecting them, even though some show hatred towards you. Love your work, continue my brother, by the way, you are the first Jew that I actually felt love for. I will be sharing and promoting your posts to my friends and family, Shalom my friend.

# RUDY'S ACTIVISM

# THANK YOU

CONTACT

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