



# NO PROMISED LAND

EIN FILM VON RAPHAEL BONDY

MIRA FILM IN KOPRODUKTION MIT ZÜRCHER HOCHSCHULE DER KÜNSTE UND SCHWEIZER RADIO UND FERNSEHEN

MIT INBAR BUGALE, BENNY AKLUM, LEMLEM MESFIN, SHLOMO SHMUEL. PRODUZENT HERCLI BUNDI. PRODUZENTIN ZHDK ANITA WASSER. ASSOCIATE PRODUCER MIRA FILM YADIM JENDREYKO. HERSTELLUNGSLEITUNG ZHDK FILIPPO BONACCI. KAMERA MENI ELIAS. TON HAIM MEIR. MONTAGE NOEMI PREISWERK. MUSIK RAHEL ZIMMERMANN. SOUND DESIGN HANNES BARFUSS. TONMISCHUNG GREGG SKERMAN. COLOR GRADING RALPH WETLI. REDAKTION SRF URS AUGST BÜRGER, BELINDA SALLIN. MIT FINANZIELLER UNTERSTÜTZUNG VON BUNDESAMT FÜR KULTUR (BAK), MIGROS KULTURPROZENT, AVINA STIFTUNG, KATHOLISCHE KIRCHE IM KANTON ZÜRICH, SCHWEIZERISCHER ISRAELITISCHER GEMEINDEBUND.

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Download: Filmstills, Crew Portraits

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## Logline

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Against the backdrop of nationwide demonstrations, four young Ethiopian Jews reveal their struggle with racism against their community in the promised land of Israel.



## Synopsis

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No Promised Land tells the story of four young Jewish Ethiopians facing an identity crisis as their community experiences exclusion in what they expected to be their new-found homeland in Israel. Teacher Benny and fashion designer Lemlem immigrated to Israel with their parents. Social activist Inbar and stand-up comedian Shlomo were born in Israel. Despite the fact that they speak fluent Hebrew and served in the compulsory military service, just like all Israelis, their dream of belonging did not come true. Now, in the wake of growing demonstrations against police brutality, a new hope arises, for a life without discrimination.

## Historical Background (The Beta Israel)

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Until the arrival of protestant missionaries in the 1950s, the Ethiopian Jews were isolated from the rest of the Jewish world. For over 2000 years, they lived embedded in the hills of Gondar in the remote rural north of Ethiopia.

The traditions and customs of this Ethiopian minority group, who named itself "Beta Israel" ("Home Israel"), were passed down from generation to generation, as did the long-desired wish to go back to the Holy Land of Jerusalem. For hundreds of years they have been reciting the prayer: "The hungry goes to the food, the thirsty to the water, but I want to go to Jerusalem.", during their Sabbath ceremonies.

The first contact "Beta Israel" made with a Jewish organization was in 1867, when Professor Joseph Halévy was travelling through the country. Later his scholar Jacques Faitlovich, who had the intention to prevent the Christianization of Beta Israel, followed in his footsteps. Over time contact between Jews from Europe, Asia and Beta Israel intensified, and their misbelief that they were the only Jews in the world started to disappear.

The Beta Israel were discriminated and oppressed in Ethiopia. For a long time, they did not have the right to own land and made their living mainly through handcrafts, pottery and iron-smithing. Most of these Ethiopian Jews kept their Jewish identity a secret in order to avoid discrimination and prosecution. Between 1935 and 1941, Italy ferociously occupied eastern Africa, under the governance of Mussolini. The fascist development in Italy and Nazi-Germany involved plans for Jewish camps in Ethiopia and other places in the fascist colonial empire. "Beta Israel" feared for their lives, due to the rising power of the anti-Semitic occupation.



J. Faitlovich 1923

The Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, who tolerated the Jews in his country, was forced into exile. As a result of several consecutive defeats in Africa during the second World War, the Italian colonization of Ethiopia came to an end. Emperor Haile Selassie then returned from the British exile to retake his throne. Haile Selassie, a descendant of King Solomon of the Kingdom of Israel, had sympathy with the Jews of his country. Nevertheless, he had a dogmatic ideology and anti-Zionist stance, therefore he did not allow any Jewish Ethiopians to immigrate to the Jewish State, after the founding of Israel in 1948.

In 1973 the Israeli Chief Rabbi Ovadiah Yosef recognized the Ethiopian Jews as "real" Jews according to the laws of the "Halakha" (Jewish religious Law). Finally, the State of Israel officially approved the Ethiopian Jews as descendants of the Tribe "Dan". Based on these grounds, the former Israeli Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Menachem Begin provided a way for Ethiopian Jews to immigrate to Israel under the "Law of Return".

## Historical Background (Evacuation)

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After a national revolution in Ethiopia in 1974, a military coup followed, and Haile Selassie's Monarchy came to an end. The Emperor had to resign and died shortly after under mysterious circumstances, while he was in detention. Afflicted by wars and famine, the country was once again devastated. General Mengistu Haile Mariam overtook power and established a military dictatorship inspired by the political Marxism-Leninism philosophy. A 16 year-long civil war against the communistic central government raged during his ruling, whereby numerous rebel groups fought for the independence of individual provinces.

As a result of lacking diplomatic relationships with Ethiopia, the Israeli intelligence agency (Mossad) contacted officials in neighboring Sudan. Thousands of Beta Israel walked by foot to reach the Sudanese border and entered Sudan, where they were waiting for their evacuation, a secret operation. An estimated 4,000 Jews perished on this journey as well as in the overcrowded camps, due to famine, diseases, and violence. Between 1977 and 1984 approximately 8,000 refugees were evacuated to Israel. Practically overnight, a large part of this group, who was rich in old customs and traditions, and previously neither had access to running water nor electricity, arrived in the modern State of Israel. As it became apparent that the remaining Beta Israel were in danger, a wave of immigration intensified. The first secret airlift was called "Operation Moses" (1984) and was followed by later immigrations.

"Operation Moses" ended on January 5, 1985 after the Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres held a meeting confirming the airlift, which was a political secret. Sudan in response interjected the airlift just moments after Peres finished speaking. The information was apparently leaked causing a political conflict between Sudan and Israel due to pressure from Sudan's Arab allies.

As a result, the operation could not accomplish its goals and many of the already evacuated people were worried that they would never see their relatives again. Over 1,000 Ethiopian Jews were left behind, approximately 650 of whom were evacuated later in the U.S.-led Operation Joshua.

Year	Immigration - Total
1980-1989	16'965
1990-1999	39'651
2000-2004	14'859
2005-2009	12'586
2010-2013	7'200

*Immigration Statistics: Beta Israel*



## Historical Background (Change)

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In 1991 the Ethiopian dictatorship of Mengistu Haile Mariam was en route to collapse. A few days before the rebels of the Revolutionary Democratic Front took over the capital city Addis Ababa, Mengistu managed to flee to Zimbabwe. A controversial agreement with regime officials enabled Israel to bring the remaining Ethiopian Jews to Israel and the largest operation, "Operation Solomon" was carried out successfully. Approximately 14,325 Ethiopian Jews were flown to Israel within 36 hours.



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Due to the fear that Ethiopian children could spread diseases they contracted in Ethiopia, many Israeli families removed their children from schools. In the 90's there was a scandal when the Israeli blood bank removed Ethiopian blood donations out of fear for diseases, amongst them HIV. In 1996, over 10,000 Ethiopians demonstrated against this procedure in front of the parliament building. The actions by the blood bank were also strongly criticized by Prime Minister Shimon Peres who condemned the decision and stated that leaders of the Ethiopian community should have been involved.

## Historical Background (Today)

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Today, over 135,000 Ethiopian Jews live in Israel, with a total population of 8.4 million. No less than 40 percent of them were born in Israel. In November 2015, the Israeli government under the leadership of Benjamin Netanyahu decided to bring the remaining 9,000 Jews who still live in temporary camps across Ethiopia to Israel.

The social status of the Ethiopian community within the Israeli society continues to deteriorate, as the authorities have yet not made a proposal for a realistic solution to better integrate Ethiopian Jews. Today, they still live apart from the rest of the Israeli society. Poverty, low levels of education, high suicide rates and crime within their community is a big cause for concern. Furthermore, many Orthodox Jews do not recognize the Ethiopian Jews, as they practice an old form of Judaism for centuries, which rarely exists today.

Many Ethiopian Israelis suspect opportunistic motivations on behalf of the government as reasoning for their immigration. In the Israeli Ethiopian community, it is widely believed that Israel wanted to appear tolerant without any real concern for their well-being and integration.

The rise in police brutality against Ethiopian Israelis has unsettled the community. A recently released video shows how policemen brutally attacked an Ethiopian Israeli soldier. This most recent event led to new protests against racial discrimination. In 2015, some demonstrations turned violent, due to the high presence of the police and their aggressive approach. Although the media covered the demonstrations, they referred to them as “small scale riots”, without proper consideration of much larger disregarded issues concerning inequality and seclusion.



*Attack on Soldier Damas Pakada, April 2015*

## Director's Statement

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My grandmother Lilian Bondy Blumenstein escaped from Germany during the second World War. Fortunately, she was granted entry into Switzerland as a refugee, where she met my grandfather François Bondy, who was a well-known Journalist. Together they moved to Paris, where my mother grew up in a multicultural environment, the eldest of three children. My mother's upbringing was not religious; however, they were aware of their Jewish background and history. I first connected with my Jewish heritage in my youth, when I attended religion classes at the Jewish community center in Zurich.

I always felt a strong interest for Israel and Judaism, and I believe that in addition to this somewhat natural pull to my background, it may also be related to the fact that I never felt that I belonged in the environment I grew up in. Despite the fact that I was born and raised in Switzerland, people always looked at me as a foreigner. My longing to identify with a group resulted in fantasies of being Israeli, fantasies I kept secret. It is only now, in my late twenties, that I started to feel comfortable with outing my Jewish identity which led to anti-semitic confrontations, those mainly connected to the existence of Israel.



When a series of terror attacks swept across Europe in 2015, it triggered existential fears regarding my future as a Jew living in Europe, so I decided to visit Israel for the first time. I knew that large amounts of Jews from all over the world have been immigrating there since its establishment in 1948, and perhaps I thought that maybe I would too. While I spent time getting to know the crazy metropolitan city of Tel Aviv, I met a group of Jewish immigrants whose story touched me. I heard about riots that took place in the city center. The covers of the local newspapers reported about Ethiopian Jews demonstrating against discrimination towards their community. It was reported that clashes had turned violent between police forces and the demonstrators, the images shown on nationwide media outlets were shocking. With police brutality and the Black-Lives-Matter movement gaining worldwide attention, the protests in Israel also quickly picked up momentum.

Although I was always aware of racism as a worldwide issue, it was disappointing for me to see it in Israel, the supposed homeland of all Jews. The very people who suffered oppression for centuries, who endured and survived the horrors of the holocaust, were marginalizing their own brothers and sisters in the state that was created to put an end their constant search for belonging. Having struggled with my own identity crisis and the somewhat naive idealization of the state of Israel as a refuge for Jews, it was hard for me to admit that maybe there is no promised land. At least not for everyone. This led me to deeper questions about society as a whole, is there such a thing as a home? Is the ideology of a home for Jews sustainable? How can we overcome barriers of hatred and prejudice?

Through my encounters and conversations with members of the Ethiopian community, I learned that they live in a state of limbo and after reaching a place where they thought they would finally be accepted, they were rejected. In my documentary "No Promised Land", I explore their stories of struggle, frustration and their search for identity.

The film follows the personal portraits of four protagonists, all Ethiopian and all of them struggling with similar symptoms. The portraits are composed of cinematic observations of their everyday life, as well as interview conversations appearing on and off screen. Private and public archive footage serves to clarify broader and historic contexts.

## Producer's Statement

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Ongoing conflicts in Middle East have been a subject of media for as long as I can remember. The more I learned about it, the more I realized how complex it is.

When Raphael Bondy asked me to produce his film "No Promised Land". I had a feeling that this could be a very sensitive subject and I thought to myself "Is this a project that we will be able to manage?"

The film's topic, focusing on the exclusion of the Ethiopian Jews amongst other Jews in Israel, is rooted in the midst of a political hotspot of world politics. Their search for recognition assumes that there is a better future ahead which gives the film a timeless dimension.

As a Jew who has not lived or immigrated to Israel, Raphael is able to have an objective approach to portraying the issue and the fact that he is also young and ambitious, means that he can meet the protagonists at eye level in order to get a real take on their experience.

Although the film takes a critical standpoint on racial issues, ideology, identity and governmental institutions, I believe it ultimately emits a positive message. Even though the protagonists are not the ones who decided to immigrate to the homeland of the Jews (Israel), it is they who now have to cope with the consequences and make sure that they have a place in this society, their challenges are large and systematic, but they are ready to fight.





*Inbar Bugale leading a demonstration against racism, Tel Aviv 2016*

*"If they say we were saved, then why are we still struggling?"*

*Inbar Bugale*

Director

### **Raphael Bondy**

Email: [raphael@bondy.com](mailto:raphael@bondy.com)

Phone: +41 78 822 15 80



Raphael Bondy was born in 1988 in Zurich, Switzerland. He was exposed to art from an early age as both his parents were painters. He discovered his passion for documentary film making while attending film school in London and Los Angeles. He worked as a Director of Photography in the TV and film industry. He has recently received his MA degree in Film, Directing Documentary, from the Zurich University of Arts. No Promised Land is his first feature documentary.

#### **Director – Filmography**

2019 – No Promised Land (feature documentary)

2014 – Girlfriend Wanted (short documentary)

2009 – Into The Zone (short documentary)

2008 – Discordance (short documentary)

#### **Education**

2014 - 2018 – MA Directing Documentary – ZHdK Zurich University of the Arts

2008 - 2010 – DC Cinematography – NYFA Los Angeles

2007 - 2008 – Practical Filmmaking – Met Film School London

2006 - 2007 – Media Certificate SAE Zurich

## Filmography Producer

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Producer Mira Film

### Hercli Bundi

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Phone: +41 43 960 36 84



Mira Film was founded in 2002 by Vadim Jendreyko and Hercli Bundi. Both work as authors, directors and producers. The focus is on films with social, political and cultural issues with a strong personal touch. In co-production with Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, France, Chile, China, Canada and the USA, they have produced outstanding documentaries that have been shown and awarded prizes in cinemas, television and festivals worldwide.

### Filmography

- 2019 – NO PROMISED LAND – by Raphael Bondy, 52 min
- 2018 – DER NACKTE KÖNIG – by Andreas Hoessli, 108 min
- 2018 – EISENBERGER – by Hercli Bundi
- 2018 – BLUE NOTE RECORDS: BEYOND THE NOTES – by Sophie Huber, 85 min
- 2018 – BEYOND THE OBVIOUS – by Vadim Jendreyko, 52 min
- 2017 – LES DÉPOSSÉDÉS – by Mathieu Roy, 90 min
- 2016 – ZAUNKÖNIG – Tagebuch einer Freundschaft» by Ivo Zen, 78 min
- 2016 – THE BEEKEEPER AND HIS SON – by Diedie Weng, 85 min
- 2016 – CALABRIA – by Pierre-François Sauter, 116 min
- 2016 – AMA-SAN – by Cláudia Varejão, 99 min
- 2015 – UNESCO WELTERBE SCHWEIZ – 34 Shorts for UNESCO Switzerland
- 2014 – THE CHIMPANZEE COMPLEX – by Marc Schmidt, 75 min
- 2014 – PADRONE E SOTTO – by Michele Cirigliano, 72 min
- 2014 – EINE FAMILIE KÄMPFT – by Michael Werder, 51 min
- 2013 – EVERYDAY REBELLION – by Arash & Arman T. Riahi, 110 min
- 2013 – DIE REISE ZUM SICHERSTEN ORT DER ERDE – by Edgar Hagen, 100 min
- 2012 – WHERE THE CONDORS FLY – by Carlos Klein, 90 min

2012 – ZWEI FLÜSSE – ZWEI LIEDER – by Sarah Derendinger, 52 min  
2011 – MARCHESA – by Hercli Bundi, 26 min  
2011 – FLYING HOME – by Tobias Wyss, 80 min  
2010 – THE HOUSE IN THE PARK – by Hercli Bundi, 86 min  
2009 – DIE FRAU MIT DEN 5 ELEFANTEN – by Vadim Jendreyko, 93 min  
2008 – GEHEILIGTES GEBEIN – by Dominik Wessely, 57 min  
2005 – PLAY - DON'T PLAY – by Manfred Ferrari, 52 min  
2005 – LA SAVUR DIL PALC – by Manfred Ferrari, 25 min  
2004 – LEISTUNG AM LIMIT – by Vadim Jendreyko, 53 min  
2004 – PASTIZIERS - ZUCKER, HEIMWEH, ABENTEUER – by Manfred Ferrari, 25 min  
2003 – TRANSIT: ZÜRICH FLUGHAFEN – by Vadim Jendreyko, 53 min

## Cinematographer

### **Meni Elias**



#### **Director – Filmography**

- 2015 – THE JERUSALEM DREAM (Documentary IL)
- 2013 – HABRICHA (Documentary IL)
- 2011 – FAT COWS LEAN COWS (Documentary IL)
- 2011 – JUST LIKE THE QUEEN OF ENGLAND (Documentary IL)
- 2010 – WHEN ISRAEL WENT OUT (Documentary IL)
- 2006 – THE LOST FINALI CHILDREN (Documentary AT/FR)

#### **Cinematographer – Filmography**

- 2006 – BISHOP STRASSE – (Director: Micha Shagrir - Documentary IL/AT)
- 2005 – TROUBLED WATER – (Director: Joris Ivens (Documentary IL)
- 2005 – EYE WITNESS – Channel 2 (Documentary IL)
- 2004 – SAZ – Broadcast on Channel 2 Israel (Documentary IL)
- 2004 – EXTAZY – 6 parts of a series, National Geographic (Documentary IL)
- 2003 – 4 WEDDINGS AND A FEW FUNERALS – NatGeo (Documentary IL)
- 2003 – WAKE ME UP WHEN THE NIGHTMARE IS OVER – YES TV (Documentary)
- 2002 – THE OTHER PROMISED LAND – Channel 2 Israel (Documentary IL)
- 2002 – WHERE WAS GOD DURING THE HOLOCAUST? (Documentary IL)

## Filmography Crew

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Editor

**Noemi Preiswerk**



### **Editor – Filmography**

2019 – BEAST (Director: Lorenz Merz)

2019 – NO PROMISED LAND (Director: Raphael Bondy)

2016 – BLUE MY MIND (Director: Lisa Brühlmann)

2016 – PERIPHERIE (J.E Mack, L Ribler, L Brühlmann, Y Joerg, W. Pillonel)

2016 – ABSEITS (Director: Cosima Frei)

2015 – DINI MUETER (Director: Cosima Frei)

2015 - FREMDE (Director: Lisa Brühlmann, Jan-Eric Mack, Luca Ribler, Wendy Pillonel)

2014 - MÄGE (Director: Lisa Brühlmann)

2013 - BABE (Director: Lucy Brydon)

2012 - TONSPUR (Director: Reto Caduff und Laurin Merz)

### **Director – Filmography**

2011 - THE DUST AND THE LIVING ONE (Director: Noemi Preiswerk, Janine Barbisc)

Original Music

**Rahel Zimmermann**



**Original Music – Filmography**

- 2019 – NO PROMISED LAND (Director: Raphael Bondy)
- 2018 – HER COOKIE (Director: Geena Gasser)
- 2018 – CONCRETE (Director: Sirinda Marti, Luca Ruchen, Nicolas Roth, Pirmin Bieri)
- 2018 – DAS BLUT EINES REICHEN (Director: Flurina Marugg)
- 2017 – TRAUMFRAU (Director: Daniel Best Arias)
- 2017 – COYOTE (Director: Lorenz Wunderle)
- 2017 – ALPAS von (Carmen Walker)
- 2016 – IS MICHEL HOUELLEBECQ OK? (Director: Nathalie Kamber und Yves York)
- 2016 – ACIDUM (Director: Kaja Ramseier)
- 2016 – SEELENWELTEN (Director: Flurina Marugg)
- 2015 – BEI WIND UND WETTER (Director: Remo Scherrer)
- 2015 – PROCEDERE (Director: Delia Schiltknecht)
- 2015 – ANIKA (Director: Anaïs Voirol)
- 2014 – ANGLERFISH (Director: Dominic Lutz und Charmaine Bossart)
- 2013 – NIEMANDSLAND (Director: Jérôme Furrer)
- 2013 – CHLOÉ (Director: Nathalie Kamber)

## Main Credits

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With	Benny Aklum Inbar Bugale LemLem Mesfin Shlomo Shmuel
Director	Raphael Bondy
Editing	Noemi Preiswerk
Cinematography	Meni Elias
Sound	Haim Meir
Music	Rahel Zimmermann
Additional Sound Additional Editing	Ronen Berger Carmen Walker
Assistant Director Assistant Editor	Tuvia Hizkiyahu Fabienne Koch
Color Grading	Ralph Wetli
Sound Design Sound Mix	Hannes Barfuss Gregg Skerman
Producer Production Associate Producer	Hercli Bundi Mira Film Vadim Jendreyko
Coproducer	Anita Wasser and Filippo Bonacci , ZHdK Zürcher Hochschule der Künste, ZHdK Schweizer Radio und Fernsehen
Directing Advisor	Sabine Gisiger
Editor SRF	Urs Augstburger Belinda Sallin
With financial support by	Bundesamt für Kultur (BAK) Migros Kulturprozent Avina Stiftung Katholische Kirche im Kanton Zürich Schweizerischer Israelitischer Gemeindebund

## Downloads

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Following Link contains: Film Stills, Crew Portraits

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/4co23mpk202zngx/AACjafIPD1IEyniS6rua8DQZa?dl=0>

