



Ideals of Freedom Speaker Series starts next week, From Soil to Soul Food Series starts in three weeks, Upcoming Programs and More – January 5, 2026

IDEALS OF FREEDOM SPEAKER SERIES



Black-Jewish Relations in the Country of Immigrants: Legacies Shared and Divided
Wednesday, January 14, 7:00 pm ET (online)

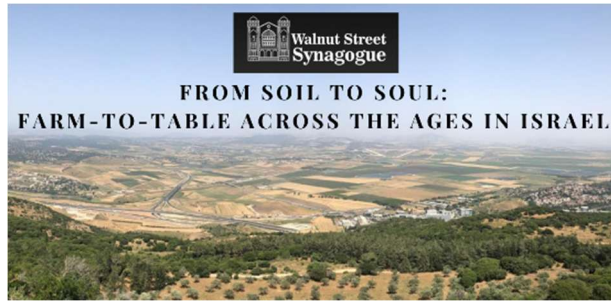
As a Jewish political refugee from the Soviet Union, Janna Kaplan understands the pain of discrimination and the agony of denied opportunities. As a career scientist, she studies data—the history and the present—and detects patterns and trends that offer some predictive insight into the future. Having married into an American Jewish family of Civil Rights leaders, she learned about the extraordinary power of a non-violent movement that united American Blacks and American Jews. Yet this powerful Black-Jewish alliance of the 1950s and 1960s, dedicated to the noble cause of equality, justice, and progress, eventually succumbed to challenges that continue to divide these communities today. The question remains: what can be done about it?

Janna Kaplan is Senior Research Scientist at Brandeis University specializing in Neuropsychology and Space Research. Janna's late husband, Edward Kivie Kaplan (1942-2024), a Brandeis professor in the Humanities and Religious Studies, was the son of Kivie Kaplan (1904-1975), a Boston industrialist who was deeply involved in the Jewish social action and in the Civil Rights movements. Kivie Kaplan was elected National President of the NAACP in 1966 and served until his death in 1975. *Community partners – Walnut Street Minyan of Newton, Massachusetts Antisemitism Synagogue Task Force (MAST)*

Register here - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/black-jewish-relations-in-country-of-immigrants-legacies-shared-divided-tickets-1977563745397?aff=oddtcreator>

Learn more about the series here - <https://walnutstreetsynagogue.org/ideals-of-freedom/>

FROM SOIL TO SOUL FOOD SERIES



Ancient Practices – Agriculture of the Ancestors

Wednesday, January 28, 7:00 pm ET (online)

We begin by traveling back in time to explore how ancient Israelites cultivated the land using terracing, spring-fed irrigation, and the Seven Species —figs, grapes, olives, pomegranates, dates, wheat, and barley. Featured are two important heritage sites: Neot Kedumim, the biblical landscape reserve, and Sataf, where ancient techniques are still visible in the hills outside Jerusalem. We'll also trace the development of wine from biblical times to today's boutique vineyards, examining how ancient viticulture inspired Israel's booming wine industry and how wine remains both a ritual and a symbol of rootedness in the land.

Gila Levitan moved to Israel in 2005. She decided to become a licensed tour guide in order to pursue her passion for exploring and travelling around Israel. Gila is very curious and likes to know all the little details and being a guide enables her to teach people about a place that she loves. Gila loves to add touches of local culture to her tours, off the beaten track places and local delicacies - the best way to travel she believes is to taste new flavors and make new friends. Gila is proud to have been awarded the TripAdvisor Certificate of Excellence for the past five years in a row.

Register here - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/from-soil-to-soul-series-ancient-practices-agriculture-of-the-ancestors-tickets-1978938462212?aff=oddtcreator>

Learn more about the series here - <https://walnutstreetsynagogue.org/from-soil-to-soul/>

CSP

We are pleased to be a partner congregation of the Orange County Jewish **Community Scholar Program (CSP)**. Please join us at an upcoming program!



Jewish Settlement in North America & The Importance of Mobility

Part 2 – Expansion and Upheaval – Sunday, January 11, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Part 3 – From the Lower East Side – Sunday, January 18, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Part 4 – From Suburbia to Sunbelt – Sunday, January 25, 1:00 pm ET (online)

(online in partnership with the Orange County Jewish Community Scholar Program)

Join us as we explore how American Jewish life has been built, rebuilt, uprooted, and re-rooted over 250+ years, tracing a story of mobility, reinvention, and opportunity from colonial port cities to today's suburbs and Sunbelt hubs.

Part 2 – Expansion and Upheaval follows the period from the Revolution through the Gilded Age, including Jewish participation in the Revolution, German Jewish migration and economic ascent, Civil War complexities, and the rise of philanthropy and national Jewish organizations.

Part 3 – From the Lower East Side to Main Street explores mass Eastern European immigration (1880–1924), urban growth, labor and tenement life, the flowering of Yiddish culture, and the push west and south to places like Boston and beyond.

Part 4 – From Suburbia to Sunbelt surveys 1924-2024 immigration restriction, postwar suburbanization, the rise of new Jewish centers outside major cities, the growth of communities in Los Angeles, Houston, Phoenix, Atlanta, Boca Raton, Austin and more, and what American Jewish mobility may tell us about the next chapter ahead.

Jonathan D. Sarna, PhD, is the University Professor and Joseph H. & Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University and one of the world's leading scholars of American Judaism. He also serves as Chief Historian of the National Museum of American Jewish History and has been named to Newsweek's list of "America's 50 Most Influential Rabbis" (as a scholar). A graduate of Brandeis University (BA) and Yale University (PhD), Prof. Sarna has authored or edited more than 30 books, including the award-winning *American Judaism: A History, When General Grant Expelled the Jews, Lincoln and the Jews*, and *Jews and the Civil War*. Prof. Sarna is widely recognized as the preeminent interpreter of how Jews have shaped—and been shaped by—the American experience. *This program is fully funded by a grant from the Jewish Community Foundation Orange County.*

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/7q6Ed4KLR6KS-OdJuRv-wA#/registration>

Sidelines to the Ballot Box: The Political Evolution of American Jews

Part 1 – Reluctant Citizens - Thursday, January 8, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Part 2 – Union, Reconstruction & the Gilded Age (1840–1914) - Thursday, January 15, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Part 3 – From Eugene V. Debs to Lyndon Johnson - Thursday, January 22, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Part 4 – A House Divided surveys Jewish politics since the 1960s - Thursday, January 29, 1:00 pm ET (online)

American Jews went from a cautious, politically invisible minority to one of the most influential political communities in the country, and this four-part series traces the surprising—and often dramatic—story of that transformation.

Part 1 – Reluctant Citizens explores Jewish political neutrality in colonial America and the early republic, including fears of standing out, backlash, and accusations of dual loyalty, alongside the emergence of the first Jewish voters, litigants, and officeholders.

Part 2 – Union, Reconstruction & the Gilded Age (1840–1914) examines Jewish combatants and chaplains in the Civil War, General Grant's Order No. 11 and its aftermath, and the growth of Jewish advocacy amid civil-rights and immigration debates.

Part 3 – From Eugene V. Debs to Lyndon Johnson follows the rise of Jewish progressive politics shaped by immigrant experience, labor activism, the New Deal coalition, and Jewish leadership in law, civil rights, and national political organizations.

Part 4 – A House Divided surveys Jewish politics since the 1960s — realignment, Israel and social issues, the emergence of a growing Republican wing, generational divides and identity politics, and what 2026 might reveal about the next era of Jewish American political life.

Jonathan D. Sarna, PhD, is the University Professor and Joseph H. & Belle R. Braun Professor of American Jewish History at Brandeis University and one of the world's leading scholars of American Judaism. He also serves as Chief Historian of the National Museum of American Jewish History and has been named to Newsweek's list of "America's 50 Most Influential Rabbis" (as a scholar). A graduate of Brandeis University (BA) and Yale University (PhD), Prof. Sarna has authored or edited more than 30 books, including the award-winning *American Judaism: A History, When General Grant Expelled the Jews, Lincoln and the Jews* and *Jews and the Civil War*. Prof. Sarna is widely recognized as the preeminent interpreter of how Jews have shaped—and been shaped by—the American experience. *This program is fully funded by a grant from the Jewish Community Foundation Orange County.*


<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/dwHWpccu3SvuajoHeLjE-Sw#/registration>

COMMUNITY PARTNER PROGRAMS

International Holocaust Remembrance Day Commemoration

Monday, January 26, 7:30 pm

(online program presented by the Lappin Foundation)



LAPPIN FOUNDATION

"The lesson is that people should take care of each other and be helpful and kind and give each other a chance, no matter their background, what religion they are, what color skin they have, or where they are from."
Magda Bader, Holocaust Survivor

Please join us for a memorable International Holocaust Remembrance Day Commemoration
Monday, January 26, 2025
7:30 p.m.-8:30 p.m. ET on Zoom

The split second it took for them 14-year-old Magda Bader to let go of her mother's hand and take her sister's hand to leave the line destined for the gas chamber was her life-changing moment of survival. We invite you to hear Magda Bader's testimony of her lived experiences during the Holocaust as she shares memories of the ghetto, deportation, surviving Auschwitz, and more.

The program is free and everyone is welcome. For more information, please contact Sharon Wynn at 978.506.4490 or email s.wynn@lappinfoundation.org.
Please register here for the Zoom link.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

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The Lappin Foundation is inviting the community to commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day with a virtual event featuring Magda Bader's testimony of her lived experiences during the Holocaust as she shares memories of deportation, surviving Auschwitz, and more.

Register here - <https://lappinfoundation.tfaforms.net/282>

Understanding the Middle East's Shifting Landscape

Thursday, January 29, 8:00 pm

(online program presented by the Massachusetts Antisemitism Synagogue Task Force)



Massachusetts Antisemitism Synagogue Task Force
Presents:
Understanding the Middle East's Shifting Landscape

with Gregg Roman
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MIDDLE EAST FORUM (MEF). THE JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY NAMED HIM ONE OF THE "TEN MOST INSPIRING GLOBAL JEWISH LEADERS."

THURSDAY, JANUARY 29, 2026 8 PM EST ZOOM

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- AHAVAT TORAH CONGREGATION-STOUGHTON
- CAEF-CANADIAN ANTISEMITISM EDUCATION FOUNDATION
- CONGREGATION BETH JACOB-PLYMOUTH
- #ENDJEWHATRED
- JEWISH FEDERATION OF CENTRAL MA
- MATTATHIAS PROJECT
- RICI-RHODE ISLAND COALITION FOR ISRAEL
- STANDWITHUS NEW ENGLAND
- TEMPLE BETH ISRAEL-WALTHAM
- TEMPLE EMANUEL-NEWTON
- TEMPLE EMETH-CHESTNUT HILL
- WALNUT STREET SYNAGOGUE-CHELSEA

Middle East Forum | **PLEASE PRESS HERE TO REGISTER** | **MASSACHUSETTS ANTISEMITISM SYNAGOGUE TASK FORCE**

The Massachusetts Antisemitism Synagogue Task Force presents: Gregg Roman, Executive Director of Middle East Forum. Roman is the executive director of the Middle East Forum, previously directing the Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh. In 2014, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency named him one of the "ten most inspiring global Jewish leaders," and he previously served as the political advisor to the deputy foreign minister of Israel and worked for the Israeli Ministry of Defense.

Register here - https://www.eventbrite.com/e/understanding-the-middle-east-s-changing-landscape-tickets-1978830152254?aff=oddttdcreator&utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

GIVING

Please visit our Giving page to send tributes, recognize yahrzeits and make other general donations to support the Walnut Street Synagogue and help us preserve, maintain and secure our 116-year-old building. Donations can be made online or through the mail. Tributes and other donations may be recognized on our Giving Page unless otherwise requested.

<https://walnutstreetsynagogue.org/giving/>

YAD CHESSED



Yad Chessed helps Jewish individuals and families who struggle with financial hardship pay their bills and buy food. As a social services agency rooted in the Jewish values of kindness (chessed) and charity (tzedakah), they are committed to helping those in need navigate a path toward financial stability while preserving their privacy and dignity. They provide emergency financial assistance, grocery gift cards and compassionate advice for those trying to make ends meet. Hundreds of families and individuals throughout the state rely on Yad Chessed to provide for their essentials, and even at times, a Jewish burial for a loved one. Members of our community, as well as others in the Jewish community, who need assistance may contact Yad Chessed by phone at 781-487-2693 or by Email at intake@yadchessed.org for a confidential conversation. Questions can be directed to info@yadchessed.org.

Support Yad Chessed - <https://givebutter.com/yadchessed>

VISIT US ONLINE

Website

<https://walnutstreetsynagogue.org/>

Facebook Page - Walnut Street Synagogue

<https://www.facebook.com/WalnutStreetSynagogue>

Facebook Group - Jews of Chelsea, MA Then and Now

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ChelseaJews>

The Walnut Street Synagogue is the center for Jewish history, education and culture serving Chelsea, Greater Boston and beyond and is the historic home of Congregation Agudas Sholom. (added to National Register of Historic Places in 1993)



Walnut Street Synagogue, 145 Walnut Street, PO Box 505265, Chelsea, MA 02150-5265
Contact us at: central.walnutstreetshul@gmail.com