



**Cultural Traditions - Flavors of the Land online
Wednesday evening, Ideals of Freedom Series returns in
March, Upcoming Programs and More –
February 2, 2026**

Today is TuBishvat!

חג שמח

**FROM SOIL TO SOUL: FARM-TO-TABLE ACROSS THE
AGES IN ISRAEL**



Cultural Traditions – The Flavors of the Land
Wednesday, February 4, 7:00 pm ET (online)



This session focuses on the diverse communities that have shaped Israeli cuisine over the last century. As migrants from across the Jewish world arrived in Israel, they brought with them recipes, spices, and deeply rooted culinary traditions. These combined with local and Middle Eastern flavors to create a unique Israeli fusion kitchen. We'll take a visit to Wadi Nisnas, Haifa's vibrant food market, where Jewish, Christian, and Muslim vendors sell produce and prepared foods that reflect generations of shared culinary memory. We'll also explore the enduring practice of foraging for local herbs like za'atar and chubeiza to examine how dishes like stuffed grape leaves preserve diasporic identity while adapting to a new 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-cultural-traditions-the-flavors-of-the-land-tickets-1978941112138?aff=oddtcreator>

Part 3 - Modern Innovation – Tech Meets Tradition, February 11 at 7:00 pm ET (online) **Register**

here - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/from-soil-to-soul-series-modern-innovation-tech-meets-tradition-tickets-1978941333801?aff=oddtcreator>

Part 4 - Farm to Community – Food Justice & Urban Agriculture, February 18 at 7:00 pm ET

(online) **Register here -** <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/from-soil-to-soul-farm-to-community-food-justice-urban-agriculture-tickets-1978941771109?aff=oddtcreator>

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

IDEALS OF FREEDOM SPEAKER SERIES



“Filthy, Un-American, and Often Dangerous:” Antisemitism and the Emergency Quota Act of 1921
Wednesday, March 4, 7:00 pm ET (online)

After the destruction of World War I, hundreds of thousands of European Jews sought to escape violence and poverty by emigrating to America. American consuls in Europe viewed these desperate Jews through a deeply antisemitic lens, fearing that they were radicals trying to enter and destroy the country with help from an international Jewish conspiracy. Acting on these fears, officials at the State Department worked with Congressional leaders to release reports that publicized the dangers of Jewish immigrants and ultimately led to the passage of the 1921 Emergency Quota Act. That legislation was instrumental in establishing the quota system that would keep desperate European Jews out of the country only a decade later, as they attempted to flee the Holocaust.

Kirsten Fermaglich is Professor of History and Jewish Studies at Michigan State University. Her most recent book, *A Rosenberg by Any Other Name: A History of Jewish Name Changing in America* (New York University Press, 2018) was awarded the Saul Wiener Book Prize by the American Jewish Historical Society in June 2019. From January 2022 through June 2023, she served as a National Archives Distinguished Fellow, tasked with studying antisemitism in the United States federal government. Fermaglich is also the author of *American Dreams and Nazi Nightmares: Early Holocaust Consciousness and Liberal America, 1957-1965* (Brandeis University Press, 2006) and the co-editor of the Norton Critical Edition of Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (2013), with Lisa Fine. From 2016 through 2021, she was co-editor of the journal, *American Jewish History*, along with Daniel Soyer and Adam Mendelsohn. She currently serves on the board of the Association for Jewish Studies. *Community partners – Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center at American Ancestors, Massachusetts Antisemitism Synagogue Task Force (MAST), Orange County Jewish Community Scholar Program (CSP)*

Register here - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/antisemitism-and-the-emergency-quota-act-of-1921-tickets-1977620146093?aff=oddtcreator>

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

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!



From Sand to Skyline: An Urban Tel Aviv Exploration

Part 1 – History: Jaffa Belle of the Seas - Tuesday, February 3, 3:30 pm ET (online)

Part 2 – Culture: Foundations: From Colonies to City Streets - Tuesday, February 10, 3:30 pm ET (online)

Tel Aviv is a city built on layers of history, architecture, culture, and flavor. Join renowned tour guide Gila Levitan for two eye-opening virtual journeys that takes you far beyond the guidebooks.

Part 1 – History: Jaffa Belle of the Seas - Wander the winding alleys of ancient Jaffa, where Tel Aviv's story starts. Discover the city's oldest treasures—from the flea market to the Ilana Goor Museum—and see how historical streets are adapting to a 21st-century landscape shaped by the new light rail and modern development.

Part 2 – Culture: Foundations: From Colonies to City Streets - Explore the first bold steps beyond Jaffa's walls—the American and German colonies, Neve Tzedek, and the old train line turned Park HaMesila. Contrast the charm of Florentin's bohemian vibe with the creeping edges of gentrification in this dynamic portrait of Tel Aviv's earliest neighborhoods.

Originally from Sydney, Australia, **Gila Levitan** moved to Israel 20 years ago, transitioning from a career in physiotherapy to becoming a top-rated tour guide, celebrated on TripAdvisor. With her passion for detail and love for teaching, Gila will enrich your knowledge and inspire your next adventure. Don't miss this chance to uncover the lesser-known treasures of Israel with one of the country's most acclaimed guides.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/srllSUeJS1qwVESmxiHAKg#/registration>

Judaism and Astrology

Thursday, February 5, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Once quite common in Jewish culture—from late antiquity through the medieval period—astrology has largely faded from mainstream Jewish life, even though its traces still appear in texts, calendars, and Jewish art. This lecture explores the evolving relationship between Judaism and astrology, asking why it once flourished and why many communities later distanced themselves from it. Along the way we'll tackle the big theological questions astrology raises: Does a universe governed by the stars leave room for free will? Is consulting the heavens a kind of idolatry or forbidden divination—or can it be understood as a form of wisdom about God's created order? Did any Jewish thinkers treat astrology as a kind of prophetic insight, or as a competing claim to revelation? And if fate can be "read," what happens to reward and punishment, responsibility, and moral choice? Drawing on examples from the Bible, Talmud, and Midrash (and later Jewish interpretation), we'll map how Jewish voices debated astrology—sometimes embracing it, sometimes warning against it, and often using it to clarify what Judaism ultimately insists upon: human accountability and a relationship with God that transcends the stars.

Dr. Eyal Dujovny, PhD, is an anthropologist and Israeli government-licensed tour guide whose work bridges society, politics, and history with depth and nuance. A passionate educator and cross-cultural broker, he is dedicated to helping people understand Israel's diverse cultures, religions, traditions, and ancient sites in a way that builds real connection. Specializing in educational tourism, he has guided everyone from Bat Mitzvah families and Birthright groups to dual-narrative tours of the Arab-Israeli conflict, battlefield programs, cruise ships, heads of state, and the occasional celebrity. Dr. Dujovny has also lectured for Sar-El Volunteers for Israel, the Haifa–Boston Connection, Birthright-Taglit, and at universities including Haifa University, the University of Georgia, Kyoto University, and institutions in Kolkata, India.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/6Rdv1EhURfmOPHTlxzt9Vw#/registration>

Soviet Jews: From Revolutionaries to Refuseniks

Part 2 – Builders of a New Society: Jews in the Early Soviet State - Sunday, February 8, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Part 3 – Under Stalin: Terror, War, and the Destruction of Jewish Public Life - Sunday, February 15, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Part 4 – The Thaw, the Struggle, the Exodus: Soviet Jews from the 1950s to the 1990s - Tuesday, February 24, 1:00 pm ET (online)

The story of Soviet Jews is not a story of a single identity or a single role. It is a story of builders and critics, of loyal citizens and disillusioned dissidents, of idealists who believed in the Soviet dream and victims crushed by the very system they helped create. Across seven decades, Jews stood on every side of the Soviet project — as passionate revolutionaries, administrators, cultural leaders, soldiers, skeptics, silent conformists, targets of repression, and ultimately as the men and women who helped bring Jewish life back to the world stage.

Evgenia Kempinski is a professional Jewish tour guide, born and raised in St. Petersburg, Russia. With over fifteen years of experience guiding Jewish heritage tours in her hometown, she has developed a deep passion for uncovering and sharing the stories of the Jewish Diaspora. With her family she spent six enriching years living in Israel and now resides in Barcelona, continuing her mission to connect people with Jewish history and culture around the world. She is the founder of the Online Jewish Travel Club, a vibrant community that brings together Jews from different countries through a shared love of travel, art, and Jewish heritage.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/rmrcJR0mSAqJuoFyISrC7A#/registration>

COMMUNITY PARTNER PROGRAMS

Imagining Early American Jews

Tuesday, February 17, 6:00 pm

(online program presented by the Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center at American Ancestors)

Join the Jewish Heritage Center for a talk with Dr. Michael Hoberman regarding his upcoming book, *Imagining Early American Jews*. Dr. Hoberman will discuss popular interpretations of early Jewish American history. He will discuss how the Jewish experiences of the American Revolution, the institution of slavery in the early republic and antebellum period, and westward migration have been imagined and commemorated. He will explore how interpretations and representations of the past are key to understanding Jewish American history and identity. Dr. Hoberman is a professor of English Studies at Fitchburg State University and has published several books on Jewish American history, including *New Israel/New England: Jews and Puritans in Early America* and *A Hundred Acres of America: The Geography of Jewish American Literary History*. His articles can be found in *Tablet Magazine*, *The Jewish Review of Books*, and other popular and scholarly venues.

Register here - https://hubs.americanancestors.org/imagining-early-american-jews?utm_campaign=18167937-FY26%20JHC&utm_medium=email&hsenc=p2ANqtz--LPg5XscBFk4qUzSZKB605Wzc3xWXbRiiCTqZFoFs-vzjfUmeOAQ1MVQhkQQ7B4IHcb6MTkBoSV9XVihxzuA2Xf39fA&hsmi=397399891&utm_content=397399891&utm_source=hs_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



Matanot LaEvyonim – Gifts for People in Need

The Walnut Street Synagogue is pleased to be participating again this year in Yad Chessed's Purim Campaign. From now until Purim Day (11:00 am on Tuesday, March 3), you can donate tzedakah to Yad Chessed to fulfill the Purim mitzvah of Matanot LaEvyonim. For over 35 years Yad Chessed, has worked to address the needs of Jews in Greater Boston and beyond who struggle with financial and food insecurity. With the support of donors and partner organizations, Yad Chessed's team of social workers provides swift emergency financial assistance, grocery gift cards, and compassionate care, advice, and referrals to those in need. Yad Chessed aids more than 2,400 Jewish individuals across Massachusetts annually. The mitzvah of Matanot LaEvyonim is central to the spirit of Purim and reminds us that we are obligated to offer a helping hand to those in our midst who need it most. Yad Chessed will use donations raised to fund vouchers that can be used on Purim Day so our neighbors in need can purchase food and celebrate the holiday.

Donate online here - <https://givebutter.com/YadChessedPurim2026>

You may also mail a donation to Yad Chessed at: (*Please include the word "Purim" and "Walnut Street Synagogue" on your check memo.*)

333 Nahanton Street
Suite 315
Newton, MA 02459

Any questions: email info@yadchessed.org or call: 781-613-3413

For more information about Yad Chessed's Purim Program visit www.yadchessed.org/purim/

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)



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