



Ideals of Freedom Series returns next week, Upcoming Programs and More – March 16, 2026

IDEALS OF FREEDOM SPEAKER SERIES



Russian American Jewish Refugee Woman Scientist: My Story in Space and Time
Wednesday, March 25, 7:00 pm ET (online)



In 1981, **Janna Kaplan** arrived in the United States as a 27-year-old Jewish political refugee, fleeing the violent antisemitism and persecution of the Soviet Union. Having lived through and observed half a century of extraordinary history on both sides of the Iron Curtain, she will reflect on her 27 years in the Soviet Union and 45 years in America. Janna will share her at times hopeful yet often excruciating and agonizing insights into her personal, our national, and our common Jewish past, present, and future.

Janna Kaplan is Senior Research Scientist at Brandeis University, specializing in Neuropsychology and Space Research. At Brandeis since 1983, Janna studies human adaptation to various conditions of space flight such as weightlessness, high G, non-Earth planetary gravitational environments, artificial gravity, and space motion sickness. Of special interest are human factors onboard terrestrial, nautical and aeronautic vehicles. Janna's undergraduate and graduate degrees are from the University of Leningrad (now, St. Petersburg). A former *refusenik**, Janna came to the US from the Soviet Union (now, Russia) in 1982 at the age of 27 as a Jewish political refugee, fleeing state sponsored antisemitic violence and intellectual and cultural suppression. *Community partners – Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center at American Ancestors, Walnut Street Minyan of Newton, Massachusetts Antisemitism Synagogue Task Force (MAST), Orange County Jewish Community Scholar Program (CSP)*

Register here - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/russian-american-jewish-refugee-woman-scientist-my-story-in-space-and-time-tickets-1977621470053?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!



The Israeli Soundscape – A Journey Through Jazz, Pop, and Rock

Part 1 – Jazz - Tuesday, March 17, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Part 2 – Pop - Tuesday, March 24, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Part 3 – Rock - Tuesday, March 31, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Dive into the high-energy evolution of the Israeli soundscape in this three-part journey through the music that defines a nation. From the 1970s to today, we'll explore the dynamic collision of Eastern soul and Western groove, tracing how Israel "Israelized" global trends to create something entirely its own.

Part 1 – Jazz - Discover how desert rhythms and American traditions fused into a globally acclaimed genre.

Part 2 – Pop - See how infectious hooks and local narratives became a unifying force across diverse communities.

Part 3 – Rock - Experience the raw, visceral rebellion of a generation finding its voice.

Join us to uncover the identity, politics, and passion behind the melodies that resonate far beyond Israel's borders.

Yael Cherni is a conductor, soprano, and founder of Kol HaMusica, Israel's only classical music radio station. A recipient of the Gary Bertini Biennial Prize for Promising Young Conductors, she has performed worldwide and served as assistant conductor to Maestro Claudio Abbado. As a soprano, she has sung with leading orchestras in Israel and abroad. Cherni has been a visiting lecturer at Harvard University and Shenkar College, and a presenter and editor for Israeli radio, where her acclaimed series *It's All About the Classics* explored links between music and society. She was also a founder and participant in several Jewish-Arab classical music initiatives. Her first book *It's All about the Classics: An Updated View on the World of Classical Music*, was based on that praised series and was published in Israel in 2016 by Modan. Her new book *Classical Music: Undressed* dedicated to "anyone who appreciates the beauty of art" was recently published.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/PCy6rb-gSN64FZhnddOTYw#/registration>

Ancient Echoes, Modern Verse

Thursday, March 19, 3:30 pm ET (online)

Discover the profound dialogue between contemporary poetry and ancient tradition in this immersive session led by Dr. Eve Grubin. By examining the works of modern masters, including Marie Howe, Yehoshua November, Lucille Clifton, Dan Pagis, and Sharon Olds, we will explore how today's poets breathe new life into the timeless language and philosophy of the Torah, Talmud, and classic commentaries.

Dr. Eve Grubin is an acclaimed poet and scholar, the author of four collections including *Boat of Letters* (Four Way Books), *Morning Prayer* (Sheep Meadow Press), *The House of Our First Loving*, and *Grief Dialogue* (Rack Press). A specialist in the "poetics of reticence," she earned her PhD from Kingston University London and shares her expertise as a lecturer at NYU London and a tutor at the Poetry School. Her work and teaching bridge the gap between academic rigor and creative inspiration, making

her a leading voice in contemporary Jewish poetics.

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

The Holocaust – A History of Decisions, Places, and Moral Collapse

Part 3 - Sunday, March 22, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Part 4 - Sunday, March 29, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Part 5 - Sunday, April 5, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Part 6 - Sunday, April 12, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Part 7 - Sunday, April 19, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Part 8 - Sunday, April 26, 1:00 pm ET (online)

In this powerful eight-part series, Prof. Stephen Berk guides us through the Holocaust, not as a single, inevitable catastrophe, but as a series of historical choices made by governments, institutions, communities, and individuals across Europe. Moving chronologically and geographically, the series explores how the “oldest hatred” was transformed into state-sponsored genocide, how different countries responded to Nazi pressure, and how moments of action, or inaction, shaped the fate of millions. With clarity, moral seriousness, and historical depth, Prof. Berk helps us understand not only what happened, but *how* it happened, and why those lessons still matter.

Stephen M. Berk, who served as CSP’s 10th Annual One Month Scholar in Residence in February 2011, is Professor of History at Union College in Schenectady, New York, former Chair of the Department of History, Director of the Program in Russian and Eastern European Studies and Faculty Advisor to the Jewish Student Organization. He is the author of *Year of Crisis, Year of Hope: Russian Jewry and the Pogroms of 1881-1882* (Greenwood Press, 1985). He is currently writing a book titled: *Our People Are Your People: American Jewry and the Struggle for Civil Rights 1954-1965*. The book provides an interesting discussion of an extremely important chapter in the history of the civil rights movement and attempts to dispel the myths and misunderstandings surrounding the Black-Jewish relationship. A recipient of the Citizens Laureate Award of the University of Albany Foundation, Professor Berk has been a consultant to the Wiesenthal Holocaust Center in Los Angeles, has written articles on Russian and Jewish history, anti-Semitism, and the Middle East and has lectured on throughout the United States and Canada including such distinguished colleges and universities as Princeton, Vanderbilt, The University of Texas at Austin and Williams College.

https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/gNWiQkm_Txm2WQXi05WPCQ#/registration

COMMUNITY PARTNER PROGRAMS

Special Briefing on Communal Security

Tuesday, March 17, 1:00 pm ET

(online program presented by Combined Jewish Philanthropies)

Join CJP’s Communal Security Initiative (CSI) for a virtual briefing on the current threat environment facing the Jewish community and what we all can do to keep our community — and our spaces — welcoming and secure. The attack last week at Temple Israel in West Bloomfield, Michigan was a jarring reminder of the threats Jewish communities and institutions domestically and around the world are facing. With the joint U.S.-Israel war against Iran’s regime and amid the consistent backdrop of rising antisemitism since October 7, 2023, the safety and security of our Jewish community is an urgent priority.

https://www.eventbrite.com/e/special-briefing-on-communal-security-tickets-1985148003116?utm_campaign=40235311-fy26-sjb-communalsecurity-event-specialbriefing&utm_medium=email&hsenc=p2ANqtz-8znoA8EnKJF0rpn4pQYPAO9ZyCYX9yudzDFxRW4D1ufKyR4DG1vYDAi2rRKHSGIKU1PiKp-sNo2hFOTf7lqbmOxR1eSg&hsmi=408715025&utm_content=408715025&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/>

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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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