



Purim, Ideals of Freedom Series returns on Wednesday, Upcoming Programs and More – March 2, 2026

Purim begins this evening

HAPPY PURIM!

חג פורים שמח

Purim Party – The community is invited to join a celebration of Purim this evening at Temple Tifereth Israel in Winthrop! Please contact us for details if you are interested and did not receive the special email announcement.

Online Lecture – See CSP section below for program on March 3.

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

For more information about Yad Chessed's Purim Program and to donate online, visit www.yadchedded.org/purim/

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 Viener 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>

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 Godless Megillah

Tuesday, February 3, 3:30 pm ET (online)

Why is God's name missing from the Book of Esther? This little biblical book has precious little religion in it. The main characters, both Jewish and not, seem unconcerned with any kind of ritual worship. In this playful and passionate class, we will study four traditional reasons why God is absent and then suggest a fifth which provides a whole new perspective to the Book of Esther. This, in turn, leads to a dilemma we all face in modern Western society.

Rabbi Dr Raphael Zarum is Dean of the London School of Jewish Studies (LSJS) where he holds the Rabbi Sacks Chair in Modern Jewish Thought, established by the Zandan family. He is the Scholar in Residence at the Central Square Minyan in Hampstead. His latest book, *Questioning Belief: Torah and Tradition in an Age of Doubt*, was a Yeshiva University Book Prize finalist. Rabbi Zarum hosts the *Big Questions of Jewish Belief* podcast and travels the globe lecturing in Jewish communities and diverse institutions.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/xFxnmdnTKKW04JUy9a6ew#/registration>

How Sid Caesar Reinvented American Comedy

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

Join us for a fascinating conversation between Rabbi Elie Spitz with David Margolick, an acclaimed journalist and cultural historian, as he reflects on his remarkable career and introduces his latest book, *When Caesar Was King: How Sid Caesar Reinvented American Comedy*. Margolick spent years writing for *The New York Times*, including covering major legal affairs such as the O.J. Simpson trial, and continues today as a contributing editor at *Vanity Fair*. A four-time Pulitzer Prize nominee, he is the author of numerous celebrated books that explore the currents of American culture and public life. His newest work is a true passion project: a deep, affectionate portrait of Sid Caesar, brought to life through interviews with many of America's most influential comedians, all of whom trace their creative DNA back to Caesar's groundbreaking impact on comedy.

David Margolick's prior books include *Elizabeth and Hazel: Two Women of Little Rock*, a study of the iconic photograph taken outside Little Rock Central High School during the desegregation crisis of 1957 (Yale University Press); *Beyond Glory: Joe Louis vs. Max Schmeling, a World on the*

Brink (Knopf); *Strange Fruit: The Biography of a Song* (Harper Collins); *The Promise and the Dream: The Untold Story of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy* (Rosetta Books); and *Dreadful: The Short Life and Gay Times of John Horne Burns* (Other Press). In addition, for Kindle Singles he has written *A Predator Priest*. He is now completing a biography of Jonas Salk for the "Jewish Lives" series published by Yale University Press.

Rabbi Elie Kaplan Spitz, a spiritual leader and scholar specializing in topics of spirituality and Judaism, teaches, writes and speaks to a wide range of audiences. He served as the rabbi of Congregation B'nai Israel in Tustin, California, for over three decades and served as member of the Rabbinical Assembly Committee on Law and Standards for twenty years. Rabbi Spitz is author of *Duets on Psalms: Drawing New Meaning from Ancient Words*, co-authored with Rabbi Jack Riemer, *Healing from Despair: Choosing Wholeness in a Broken World*; and *Does the Soul Survive? A Jewish Journey to Belief in Afterlife*.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/join/8DZCMBufQSiLSIWDPgzZeQ#registration>

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

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

Part 2 - Sunday, March 15, 1:00 pm ET (online)

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. In Part 1, "The Oldest Hatred and the Rise of Hitler," we trace the long history of antisemitism in Europe and examine how Nazi ideology built upon centuries-old myths, resentments, and racial thinking. We will explore how economic crisis, political instability, and propaganda enabled Hitler's rise, and how antisemitism moved from prejudice to policy.

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/join/gNWiQkm_Txm2WQXi05WPCQ#registration

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/>

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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