



Jewish Journeys to the Far East returns this week, Revisiting (the History of) Jewish Chelsea, Shared Legacies, Upcoming Programs, Shul Tours and More – May 5, 2025

JEWISH JOURNEYS TO THE FAR EAST

Our new live virtual travel series, *Jewish Journeys to the Far East*, continues in two weeks.



Join us for the second session in our series on May 7 at 7:00 pm ET when we will visit the Jewish community in Taiwan. We will learn about how Taiwan's Jewish community began in 1955 on a military base and is now deeply rooted in the life of the island. They may have one of the world's only shuls that was unaffected by the pandemic! In fact, their Chanukah gathering of 200 during Covid may have been one the world's largest (legal) celebrations. Our guide will be Leon, an artist who co-leads the Taiwan Jewish Community together with the 102-year-old Rabbi Einhorn. Leon's art is a powerful form of storytelling and much of his latest work, including 'dream-scapes' and a Haggadah, is a journey into the exciting revival of Jewish life in that corner of Asia.

Register here - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/jewish-journeys-to-the-far-east-taiwan-tickets-1263043670619?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>

Learn more about the series including information about an in-person series viewing opportunity for those in the Chelsea, Winthrop, Revere and East Boston areas.

<https://walnutstreetsynagogue.com/far-east-travel-series/>

REVISITING (THE HISTORY OF) JEWISH CHELSEA

Tuesday, May 13, 7:00 pm ET (online)



Join American Jewish historian Dr. David E. Kaufman for an hour-long exploration of the Jewish past of Chelsea, lovingly called 'the Jerusalem of Massachusetts.' Dr. Kaufman will treat this remarkable history in multiple contexts, ranging from how the Chelsea experience exemplifies the Jewish relationship to cities throughout history to his own family history in the Chelsea Jewish community.

Dr. David E. Kaufman is an established American Jewish historian who earned his PhD at Brandeis University in 1994. During his graduate studies, he focused on the history of the Jewish communities of the Boston area and became well known as a popular lecturer and tour guide of Jewish neighborhoods. In the authoritative volume *The Jews of Boston* (CJP, 1995), he published his first major article on the synagogues of Boston. He is also a 'son of Chelsea' as his great grandfather was Asher Bookstein, the unofficial Sofer Stam (Torah scribe) of the Chelsea Jewish community. Dr. Kaufman is excited to be returning to the Walnut Street Shul to give an online talk in which he will give context to his family history by recounting the greater, and often unappreciated, history of the Jews of Chelsea, Massachusetts. Dr. Kaufman was our featured speaker for Chelsea Jewish Heritage Day in September 2024. For those who have attended programs with our partner, the Orange County Jewish Community Scholar Program, you will also recognize Dr. Kaufman as a frequent and particularly eloquent speaker there.

Register here - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/revisiting-the-history-of-jewish-chelsea-tickets-1336032261459?aff=oddtcreator>

SHARED LEGACIES: AMERICAN LESSONS OF BLACK/JEWISH COOPERATION

Sunday, June 8, 1:00 pm ET (in-person at Williams School, Chelsea)



photo courtesy of Menemsha Films

Please join us for a screening of the film, *Shared Legacies*, about Black-Jewish cooperation during the civil rights movements of the 1960s, on June 8 at the Williams School in Chelsea. Besides the film, the program will provide an opportunity for discussion with Chelsea City Councilor Leo Robinson and Janna Kaplan. Janna's late husband Edward Kaplan and his father Kivie Kaplan, Boston industrialist and former president of the NAACP, appear in the film.

Registration opens soon

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!



Creation, Retaliation, Chosenness and Faith – Four Challenges to the Bible

Session 1 - Tuesday, May 6, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Session 2 - Tuesday, May 13, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Session 3 - Tuesday, May 20, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Session 4 - Tuesday, May 27, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Join us for a compelling four-part series with Rabbi Dr. Rafi Zarum, based on his recent award-winning book, *Questioning Belief*. In this thought-provoking series, Rabbi Zarum tackles some of the most pressing and challenging questions at the intersection of tradition, ethics, and contemporary thought. Drawing deeply from classical Jewish sources while engaging with modern sensibilities, he offers surprising, provocative, and energizing insights that speak to today's Jewish experience. Over four sessions, we'll explore: what the Creation story teaches us if it's not taken literally, the ethical dilemmas raised by King David's actions and their relevance to modern warfare and shared responsibility, the complex and often misunderstood notion of the Jewish people as "chosen", and what belief means in a Jewish context, even for those who question or reject the idea of God. Whether you're a seeker, a skeptic, or a committed believer, this series will invite you into a rich and honest conversation about faith, identity, and meaning in the modern world.

Rabbi Dr Raphael Zarum is Dean of the London School of Jewish Studies (LSJS) where he holds the Rabbi Sacks Chair of Modern Jewish Thought, established by the Zandan family. He lectures in Jewish philosophy and education, and trains teachers and rabbis. Rabbi Zarum has a PhD in Theoretical Physics from King's College London and an MA in Adult Education from University College London. His rabbinic ordination was awarded by the Montefiore Kollel and Rabbi Sacks, and he is also a graduate of the Mandel Leadership School in Jerusalem. Rabbi Zarum regularly writes articles for the Jewish press and essays for journals. His recent book, *Questioning Belief: Torah and Tradition in an Age of Doubt*, published by Koren, was the finalist in the Rabbi Sacks Book Prize, awarded by Yeshiva University. Rabbi Zarum appears on many podcasts and recently launched his own, *Big Questions of Jewish Belief*. He is an acclaimed educator who travels the globe lecturing in many Jewish communities and diverse institutions.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/Dbfk8TQYRcq1QYGQh0oc4Q#/registration>

The Jewish Legacy of Bulgaria and Greece

Session 1 - Thursday, May 8, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Session 2 - Thursday, May 15, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Session 3 - Thursday, May 22, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Session 4 - Thursday, May 29, 1:00 pm ET (online)

Join us for a captivating four-part series with Jewish heritage educator Evgenia Kempinski as we explore over two thousand years of Jewish history in Bulgaria and Greece, lands where Jewish communities have contributed richly to cultural and spiritual life for centuries. From ancient settlements to vibrant Sephardic centers, this journey will trace a powerful legacy of resilience and creativity.

Session 1 - We will uncover the deep historical roots of Jewish life in these regions, from antiquity through the Ottoman era.

Session 2 - We will explore traditions, daily life, and the unique Sephardic heritage that flourished there.

Session 3 - We will turn to the 20th century to examine the rise of modern Jewish communities, their cultural impact, and the tragedy of the Holocaust.

Session 4 - We will reflect on the post-war experience and the state of Jewish life in Bulgaria and Greece today.

Don't miss this opportunity to engage with a rich, lesser-known chapter of Jewish history and identity. 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/DNXtkEzVQAGtofOxdewzZQ#/registration>

Exploring Jewish Cuba – History, Heritage, and Personal Encounters

Sunday, May 11, 7:00 pm ET (online)

Join us for a special CSP online conversation with Dr. Sharon Keller and Rabbi Elie Spitz, who recently returned from a powerful weeklong visit to Cuba's Jewish community. In a country where time seems to have stood still, Cold War-era slogans still hang alongside vintage American cars and crumbling colonial buildings, Jewish life persists with resilience and hope. Participants in the recent Cuba trip met with community leaders, visited synagogues in Havana, and witnessed firsthand how, after decades of religious repression, Cuban Jews are once again celebrating their heritage openly and joyfully. Alain Bastow, the man who at age 24 (30 years ago) escaped Cuba in an inner tube will join the conversation to tell his personal story. With fewer than 1,300 Jews remaining in a nation of 11 million, many of them elderly, isolated, and struggling with severe shortages of food, medicine, and basic supplies, they encountered stories of incredible perseverance, dignity, and community spirit. In this program, we will learn about the rich and often overlooked history of Jewish life in Cuba, garner insights into the challenges facing the community today, and explore meaningful ways we can offer support and solidarity. Don't miss this unique opportunity to connect with a Jewish story that is both deeply rooted and urgently unfolding.

Dr. Sharon Keller, who served as CSP's 15th Annual One Month Scholar in residence in January 2016 and who earned her doctorate at New York University (NYU) in the Department of Hebrew and Judaic Studies in the area of Bible and the Ancient Near East, is a member of the Classics faculty at Hofstra University. She has been an Assistant Professor of Bible and Ancient Semitic Languages at The Jewish Theological Seminary and at Hebrew Union College. She has also held appointments at NYU, and New York City's Hunter College, teaching biblical text courses as well as more general courses in biblical literature and history, as well as the courses in the art and archaeology of the lands of the Bible and the ancient Mediterranean world. She has written and edited numerous scholarly articles and academic books, most of which relate to the interplay between biblical Israel and ancient Egypt. Her most popular book, *Jews: A Treasury of Art and Literature* was awarded the prestigious National Jewish Book Award. Known for the enthusiasm and humor that she brings to all of her talks that make otherwise esoteric subjects easily accessible, Sharon is an in-demand lecturer and adult education course instructor throughout the United States.

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, Does the Soul Survive? A Jewish Journey to Belief in Afterlife, Past Lives & Living with Purpose and Increasing Wholeness: Jewish Wisdom and Guided Meditations to Strengthen and Calm Body, Heart, Mind and Spirit* (all Jewish Lights), and many articles dealing with spirituality and Jewish law. Rabbi Spitz contributed an essay in honor of his grandfather in Menachem Rosensaft's *God, Faith & Identity from the Ashes*, and he spent the past seventeen months teaching the Psalms with half-hour presentations for each Psalm (recently completing all 150 Psalms!).

<https://us06web.zoom.us/join/registration/SffjEpCKQUiocGUxTPse9Q#/registration>

SHUL TOURS

If you live in the Boston area and have never seen our historic shul, or haven't visited in a while, or if you plan to visit the area, we welcome you to see our shul in person! Tour our historic synagogue that was built in 1909 and was added to the National Register of Historic Place in 1993. Come see our 1,109-seat sanctuary with its painted ceiling and wall frescoes, murals and carved wood Aron Kodesh. Check out our collection of Judaica, artwork, photos, documents, books, posters and plaques that come from our synagogue, synagogues in Chelsea that have closed along with fraternal, social and educational organizations from Chelsea and elsewhere in Greater Boston. Please follow the link below for more information and to request Individual/Family or Group tours.

<https://walnutstreetsynagogue.com/visit/>

GIVING

Please visit our Giving page to send tributes, recognize yahrzeits and make other general donations to support the Walnut Street Synagogue. Donations can be made online or through the mail.

<https://walnutstreetsynagogue.com/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>

OUR COMMUNITY NEWS

Do you have milestones such as marriages, births, Bar and Bat Mitzvahs, special birthdays, graduations, etc. to share with our community? If so, please submit details to central.walnutstreetshul@gmail.com to be included in our weekly announcements. Photos are welcome!

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

VISIT US ONLINE

Website

<https://walnutstreetsynagogue.com/>

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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