



JEM Programs to April, 2022

Please sign on 5 or 10 minutes before 7:30 p.m. to be admitted to the zoom events.

Monday, January 24, 7:30 p.m.

How It Was Fun in Odessa: Jewishness, Jokes, and the Soviet Roots of Stand-Up

Speaker: John Hope

Location has moved from the JCC to Zoom.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87410478344?pwd=dXhybnZ2UTJSd0Ruc0JIUk9idmhBZz09>

Passcode: 068582

This talk will explore the culture of humour that developed in the Pale of Settlement and flourished during the time of the Soviet Union. We will look at the rise of the Russian-Jewish “satiriki” (stand-up comics), their use of irony to navigate their Jewish identity, and their influence on comedy in North America.

John Hope has a Ph.D. in Russian literature from the University of Michigan and teaches at Huron University College. His courses include “The Problem of Antisemitism” and “Experience and Expression: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union.”

Monday, January 31, 7:30 p.m.

Leonard Cohen’s Mystical Midrash

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87646273107?pwd=SmhMSDFtWmNqVVA2QzIva2Vpc3VPUT09>

Passcode: 305932

Speaker: Seth Rogovoy

Sponsors: Harold and Susan Merskey

In a multimedia presentation, author and music critic Seth Rogovoy explores how Leonard Cohen’s life and music can best be appreciated as rooted in the Jewish prophetic tradition.

Seth Rogovoy is Artistic Director of the Yidstock Festival at the National Yiddish Book Center in Amherst, Massachusetts. He is the author of *Bob Dylan: Prophet, Mystic, Poet* and a contributing editor of *The Forward*. His essay, “Leonard Cohen’s Mystical Midrash,” won the 2016 Simon Rockower Award from the American Jewish Press Association.

Monday, February 7, 7:30 p.m.

Serving Beyond the Call: Rabbi Samuel Cass and the Liberation of Westerbork Transit Camp

Speaker: Sara Poulin

Location has moved from the JCC to Zoom.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87410478344?pwd=dXhybnZ2UTJSd0Ruc0JIUk9idmhBZz09>

Passcode: 068582

Sponsor: Arlene Gleason

Rabbi Samuel Cass served with the Canadian Armed Forces as a Jewish Chaplain in Europe during the Second World War. Following the liberation of Westerbork Transit Camp in April 1945, he spent considerable time aiding survivors, both at the camp and throughout the Netherlands and Germany. This talk will discuss these experiences from Cass' perspective, as seen through the daily letters he sent to his wife in Montreal.

Sara Poulin is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of History at Western University. Her research examines the role of Canada in the liberation of the concentration camps at the end of the Second World War. Her presentation marks Sara's second appearance as a JEM speaker.

Monday, February 14, 7:30 p.m.

The Secret Bacon Story: Why Doctors Told Jewish Mothers to Feed Their Children Bacon

Speaker: Nancy Phillips

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87646273107?pwd=SmhMSDFtWmNqVVA2QzIva2Vpc3VPUT09>

Passcode: 305932

In the first half of the twentieth century, it was not uncommon for physicians in Canada, the United States, and Europe to prescribe bacon to sick Jewish children. Jewish mothers, covertly complying with this recommendation, typically prepared the unkosher meat on hot plates and small frying pans concealed in their basements. This presentation will examine why bacon was the medical profession's cure of choice, why Jewish women conformed to the prescription despite its problematic nature for kosher homes, and why this international trend in our history is largely unknown.

Nancy Phillips is a Master's student in History at York University where she also earned her undergraduate degree in Mass Communications and Sociology. She has also been a freelance writer and editor.

Monday, February 28, 7:30 p.m.

Building Scale Model Synagogues: A Way to Connect my Jewish Present with our Jewish Past

Speaker: Fred Ball

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87646273107?pwd=SmhMSDFtWmNqVVA2QzIva2Vpc3VPUT09>

Passcode: 305932

The COVID-19 pandemic has proven difficult for everyone, and we have all been challenged to stay safe while keeping occupied. Fred Ball will share his experience of the last two years of building clay scale models of seven synagogues that 'speak' to him and connect him to praying Jews who lived in distant times and places (the Netherlands, Egypt, Lebanon, Poland, the Czech Republic, Israel, and Italy). Fred has spent hundreds of hours constructing these models and will share the beauty, uniqueness, and history of the synagogues on which the models are based.

Fred Ball, a former Ontario Government Microbiologist, spends much of his retirement enjoying classical music and passionately pursuing Jewish Adult Education. He has a keen interest in all Holocaust-related subjects.

Monday, March 7, 7:30 p.m.

The Biggest Part of Their Lives: The Ovitz Family Theatre Troupe, Dwarfism, and Surviving Auschwitz

Speaker: Sonia Halpern

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87646273107?pwd=SmhMSDFtWmNqVVA2QzIva2Vpc3VPUT09>

Passcode: 305932

This talk will examine the astounding biography of the Ovitzes, an Orthodox Jewish family from Transylvania, whose seven of ten offspring were international stage performers and, significantly, dwarfs. In 1944, the entire family was deported to Auschwitz where, surprisingly, in a place where disability typically meant inevitable death, their dwarfism kept them alive. Overcoming the trauma of their Holocaust experiences, however, would be a lifelong recurring role.

Sonia Halpern is an Art Historian and a multi award-winning professor at Western University. She has published academic articles, two collections of poetry, and a book of original music compositions, Sonia has appeared in many local theatrical productions and is a regular contributor to Jewish educational programs in London.

Monday, March 14, 7:30 p.m.

The Last Will and Testament of the 93 Bais Yaakov Girls: Orthodox Memory in Times of Catastrophe

Speaker: Naomi Seidman

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87646273107?pwd=SmhMSDFtWmNqVVA2QzIva2Vpc3VPUT09>

Passcode: 305932

This talk will explore the story that shook the Jewish world in the winter of 1942-1943 when approximately ninety-three girls and young women affiliated with the Bais Yaakov Seminary in Krakow killed themselves rather than be taken as prostitutes by German soldiers. In the weeks following the *New York Times* report about these martyrs, mass memorials were held, streets were named in their honor in the Land of Israel, and poems and sermons were devoted to them. While the story has since been understood to be a pious fiction, we will explore the meaning of this episode for Holocaust memory and the history of Bais Yaakov in the postwar period.

Naomi Seidman is Chancellor Jackman Professor of the Arts in the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto. In 2020, her fourth book, *Sarah Schenirer and the Bais Yaakov Movement: A Revolution in the Name of Tradition*, was awarded a National Jewish Book Award.

There is no JEM program on Monday, March 21.

Monday, March 28, 7:30 p.m.

The Role of Trains in the Holocaust

Speaker: Eric Gartner

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87646273107?pwd=SmhMSDFtWmNqVVA2QzIva2Vpc3VPUT09>

Passcode: 305932

Images of the Holocaust include the cattle cars frequently used to transport Jews to concentration and extermination camps. The role of trains during the Holocaust continues to interest scholars. Who bore the cost of transporting Jews to the camps? Other than the Reichsbahn, what other national railways transported Jews to the death camps? Were any of these companies held responsible for their role in the extermination of Jews? Did railway employees try to assist the Jews? These are a few of the questions that have been researched as early as the 1960s and will be addressed by our speaker.

Eric Gartner is a graduate of Osgoode Hall Law School (1974) and holds a Graduate Law Degree from the University of Oxford (1975). He was the Director of Research at McCarthy Tetrault for 30 years, an adjunct professor at four of Ontario's law schools, co-founder of *The Supreme Court Law Review* (1978), and

Lecturer at Ryerson University's Life Institute on law and law-related topics. He has also taught numerous courses on a variety of topics at the Life Institute, including courses on the Supreme Court of Canada, the Charter of Rights, freedom of speech, law and medicine, etc. Some of his courses include a Holocaust component, e.g., courses on apologies, altruism, monuments, and memorials.

Monday, April 4, 2022, 7:30 p.m.

Joshua and the "Conquest" of Canaan

Speaker: Jim Stevens

Location has moved from the JCC to Zoom.

Zoom link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87646273107?pwd=SmhMSDFtWmNqVVA2QzIva2Vpc3VPUT09>

Passcode: 305932

The Jewish people celebrate first fruits, harvests, and trees, so why don't we celebrate the conquest of the promised land? Indeed, there is a stony silence in our life cycle events about this culmination of the Exodus. Could there be a deep dark reason that nobody wants to talk about – until now?

Jim Stevens is a retired teacher with a lifelong interest in ancient biblical history and archaeology. His intellectual curiosity and knowledge compel his audiences to challenge their assumptions about Biblical events.

To be added to JEM's private email list, please contact Sandra at sandra@safranhr.com.

Jewish London will post notices about weekly JEM programs on the community eBlasts.

JEM is co-sponsored by the Martin Bass Fund for Human Resources of Or Shalom, Temple Israel, Jewish London, and B'nai Brith Men, with additional support from the Selma Rothfeld Family Endowment Fund of the London Jewish Community Foundation and numerous individual donors.