



JEM Programs for 2023-2024

All JEM programs for 2023-2024 will be held on Zoom.

The Zoom link is

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84770990945?pwd=4h55uEQZ9CSjDQY5O8bSDDT5RxSTJK.1>

Meeting ID: 847 7099 0945

Passcode: jzGjr5

Closed captioning is available.

1. Getting Their Act Together: The Formation of an Asylum-Seeking Community in Israel

Date: October 16, 2023, on Zoom at 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Oded Oron

Ever since its creation in 1948, Israel has been a safe haven for Jews. The country became a home for Jews wishing to move there for a host of reasons, and Israel's migration policy remained mainly unchanged and unchallenged. However, in the 1990s guest workers were brought in to support labour shortages, while in the early 2000s non-Jewish asylum seekers arrived at the southern border seeking protection. Today, faced with this global migration phenomena, Israel tries to balance its commitment to the integrity of a Jewish-democratic state while honoring international legal obligations concerning the protection of asylum seekers.

Oded Oron is the Israel Institute Teaching Fellow in Political Science and Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto, specializing in Forced Migration and Social Movements. He has worked in leading Israeli media outlets such as YNET News and Ha'aretz and as a Senior Manager for the Israeli Government Press Office. Prior to moving to Toronto, he was the Assistant Director of Cornell Hillel. He is currently Manager of Data, Research, and Evaluations at JIAS Toronto – a settlement agency supporting newcomers. In 2021 he completed his certification as a regulated Immigration Consultant in Canada.

2. The Canadian Jewish Experience

Date: October 23 on Zoom at 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Allan Levine

Sponsor: Congregation Beth Tefilah

This presentation examines the key lessons, trends, and patterns of nearly three centuries of Jewish life in Canada. Jews first settled in Quebec in the mid-eighteenth century and their number continued to grow gradually in pre-Confederation Canada. Around 1900, the Jewish population increased with the arrival of immigrants from Russia and Eastern Europe, who came seeking a home and country where they could survive and prosper. While they found refuge in Canadian

cities and towns, their acceptance and integration into the larger society did not always happen, and their struggles caused much inner turmoil and hardship.

Allan Levine is an award-winning author and historian who has written sixteen books, including *Seeking the Fabled City: The Canadian Jewish Experience*, which was longlisted for the RBC Taylor Prize; *Toronto Biography of a City*; and *King: William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Life Guided by the Hand of Destiny*, which won the Alexander Kennedy Isbister Award for Non-Fiction. For the past twelve years, he has written the column “Now & Then” for the *Winnipeg Free Press*, looking at the history behind major news issues.

3. What’s in a Name? On the Uses and Abuses of Jewish Names

Date: October 30 on Zoom at 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Kalman Weiser

What are “Jewish names” and what problems have they brought their bearers? This talk explores how Jews got “Jewish” first names and family names in the modern era and how their naming practices have served not only as a source of identity and pride but also for dispute, discrimination – and even tragedy – within Jewish communities as well as in interactions with state bureaucracies and with non-Jewish society in general.

Kalman Weiser is the Silber Family Professor of Modern Jewish Studies and Director of the Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies at York University. His scholarship largely concerns the role of language in Jewish political and cultural movements. His most recent study: *Jewish Scholars, German Scholars: Yiddish Studies and the Holocaust* examines the relationship across the decades between Jewish scholars of Yiddish and their German colleagues who served the Third Reich.

4. Rescuers of Jews during the Nazi Era: Who were They and Why did They do it?

Date: November 6 on Zoom at 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Eric Gartner

Those who helped to save Jews from the Nazis during WWII can be recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations. In the sixty years since the designation was adopted, more than 27,000 individuals and groups have been recognized. They came from every walk of life – from royalty to farmers, from diplomats to fishermen. This talk will focus partially on the criteria for recognition and on some of the individuals who have been honoured. But the rescuers of Jews during the Nazi era were not limited to the Righteous Among the Nations, and Jewish rescuers do not qualify for inclusion among them. In response, other organizations have recognized the efforts of Jews in Europe and elsewhere who helped to save or rescue their co-religionists under Nazi threat. The speaker will describe some of these individuals and discuss the motivations of those who took it upon themselves to help hide or to rescue their neighbours or, in many cases, complete strangers.

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 taught numerous courses 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.

5. Music among the Crypto-Jews of Portugal

Date: November 13 on Zoom at 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Judith Cohen

In 1497, King Manuel I of Portugal decreed that all Jews had to convert to Christianity or leave the country. Thousands left, others converted and stayed, and some kept practicing their Jewish faith as Crypto-Jews. The early 20th century saw the “discovery” of the Jews of Belmonte and the northeast region of Tras-os-Montes, who had lived in isolation with few cultural contacts with the outside world. After many years of recording and studying Ladino songs throughout the Sephardic diaspora, our speaker wondered whether those Jews who had never left Portugal and Spain had kept any old melodies or singing practices. She interviewed many people over several decades and will discuss how songs and recited prayers work in both the religious and secular contexts. She will also describe the folklorization of the music from what was believed to be a vanished world and will illustrate her talk with photos and recordings.

Judith Cohen is a Canadian ethnomusicologist and singer known for her work in Sephardic music. She was attracted to folk music as a child. She has a B.A. in English Literature from McGill University, a B.F.A. in Music from Concordia University, an M.A. in Medieval Studies from the University of Montreal, and a Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology from the University of Montreal. Her performance and workshop repertoires include village songs of Spain and Portugal, narrative ballads and stories in English, pan-European traditions, Balkan singing, songs of French Canada, and Yiddish songs. She has spent many years carrying out fieldwork and research into the role of music in the lives of Portuguese Crypto-Jews.

6. The First Female Spy in Palestine

Date: November 20 on Zoom at 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Adam Hummel

Sarah Aaronsohn was a product of the First Aliya to Palestine, having been born in 1890 in the small community of Zichron Yaakov. A first-hand witness to the Armenian Genocide in 1916, she became convinced that the Ottomans would turn on the nascent Jewish community in Palestine. She and her famous brother, Aaron Aaronsohn, created an elaborate spy ring in Palestine which they called “Nili,” to spy for the British against the Ottomans. Though she died at the age of 27, her actions against the Ottomans directly contributed to the British conquest of Palestine, the Balfour Declaration, and the eventual British Mandate and establishment of the State of Israel. Sarah Aaronsohn was a fascinating woman ahead of her time, who died a Jewish and Zionist hero.

Adam Hummel is an immigration and estates lawyer living in Thornhill, Ontario. Over the last several years, He has been involved in many capacities in Toronto’s organized Jewish community, including as a board member of Hillel Ontario, JIAS, and CIJA. He is also a member of the Jewish Diplomatic Corps of the World Jewish Congress, undertaking diplomatic activities on behalf of the international Jewish community.

7. The Jews of the Great Silk Road: Yesterday and Today

Date: January 29, 2024, on Zoom at 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Manashe Khaimov

Our speaker will take us in the footsteps of the Bukharan Jewish merchants on the Silk Road. We will discover the ancient network of trade routes that were crucial to Eurasian cultural interaction for centuries, understand the impact and the contribution that Central Asia's Jewish communities of today's Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan made towards the development of this ancient path, and learn about the Jewish presence in this area for over 2000 years.

Manashe Khaimov, MSW, is a community organizer, serial entrepreneur, and social innovator. He is an Adjunct Professor in the Jewish Studies Department at CUNY Queens College, with a specialty in History and Culture of the Mizrahi and Central Asian Jews. He is also the President and CEO of the Sephardic American Mizrahi Initiative.

8. The Goldschlager Collection of Holocaust Memoirs at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library

Date: February 5 on Zoom at 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Nadav Sharon

In 2021, Professor Alain Goldschlager donated his vast collection of Holocaust memoirs and literature to the University of Toronto's Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, a gift which forms one of the most comprehensive collections of such materials in the world. This presentation will discuss the unique nature and importance of the collection. Dr. Sharon will present just a few of the memoirs it contains and will describe the library's stewardship of the collection and its continuing efforts to expand it.

Nadav Sharon holds a Ph.D. in the history of the Jewish people in the Second Temple period from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (2013). A revised version of the dissertation was published as a book by the Society of Biblical Literature in 2017. Dr. Sharon has also published several academic studies in the field of Second Temple Judaism. Following several of postdoctoral positions, he earned a Master of Information degree from the Faculty of Information at the University of Toronto. He is currently the Judaica Librarian at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library of the University of Toronto as well as the Jewish Studies selector for the University's Central Libraries.

9. How did Chanukah and Purim Catch On? The Establishment of 'Minor' Jewish Holidays and Judea-Diaspora Relations

Date: February 12 on Zoom at 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Dr. Malka Z. Simkovich

In the Hellenistic era, Judean leaders in Jerusalem sent letters to Jews living in Egypt, imploring them to observe the holidays of Chanukah and Purim. Why were these holidays important to leaders in Jerusalem, and why were they so focused on the practices of their Jewish kin in Egypt?

This lecture will explore the dynamics of Judea-diaspora relations in the ancient world, and how the observance of Chanukah and Purim was used as an opportunity for Judeans to enforce the idea of Judean exceptionalism.

Dr. Malka Simkovich is the Crown-Ryan Chair of Jewish Studies and director of the Catholic-Jewish Studies program at Catholic Theological Union in Chicago. She holds a doctoral degree in Second Temple and Rabbinic Judaism from Brandeis University and a master's degree in Hebrew Bible from Harvard University. She is the author of two books, *Discovering Second Temple Literature: The Scriptures and Stories That Shaped Early Judaism* and *The Making of Jewish Universalism: From Exile to Alexandria*. Her forthcoming book, *Letters From Home: The Creation of Diaspora in Jewish Antiquity*, will be published in March 2024.

10. **Indigenous Peoples and Jews in Canada: A Tangled History**

Date: March 4 on Zoom at 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: David Koffman

This presentation offers a wide-ranging introduction to the history of encounters between Canadian Jews and Indigenous peoples, from the Jewish settlers and fur traders of the 18th century to the eve of our recent national reconciliation discussion. The talk will include information about business entanglements, Jewish agricultural colonies, the Indigenous art market, the Jewish literature preoccupied with Indigenous themes, Jewish legal, medical, and justice work on behalf of First Nations communities, and much, much more.

David S. Koffman is the J. Richard Shiff Chair for the Study of Canadian Jewry in the Department of History at York University. He is the author of *The Jews' Indian: Colonialism, Pluralism, and Belonging in America*, and the editor of *No Better Home? Jews, Canada, and the Sense of Belonging*. He is the Acting Director of York's Israel & Golda Koschitzky Centre for Jewish Studies, and the editor-in-chief of the journal *Canadian Jewish Studies/Études juives canadiennes*.

11. **A "Safety Net" in Times of Crisis: Defending Civil Liberties and Jewish-Arab Solidarity**

Date: March 11 on Zoom at 7:30 p.m. Speaker: Ben Murane

Following the Hamas attack on Israeli communities near the Gaza border and the ensuing war, the New Israel Fund around the world mobilized to meet the immense needs of the moment. Ben Murane, the Executive Director of the New Israel Fund of Canada, will share insights into the work of Israeli grassroots activists at this time:

Why do eight out of ten Israelis blame their government for military and humanitarian failures on and after October 7th?

Why haven't we seen an outbreak of inter-communal Jewish-Arab violence inside Israel like we did in May 2021?

What are Israeli human rights experts saying about the war in Gaza? How are progressive Israelis beginning to prepare for "the day after"? Join us for an update about how grassroots initiatives are working even in times of crisis to achieve a society based on peace, equality, and social justice for all.

12. **Recording History: Jews, Muslims, and Music across 20th-Century North Africa**

Date: March 18 on Zoom at 7:30 p.m.

Speaker: Christopher Silver

In *Recording History*, Christopher Silver provides the first history of the music scene and recording industry across 20th-century Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia, offering striking insights into Jewish-Muslim relations through the rhythms that animated them. For more than six decades, thousands of phonograph records flowed across North African borders. The sounds embedded in their grooves were shaped in large part by Jewish musicians, who gave voice to a changing world around them. Their popular songs, broadcast on radio, performed in concert, and circulated on disc carried with them the power to delight audiences, stir national sentiments, and frustrate French colonial authorities. Dr. Silver will introduce the JEM community to a world of many voices, whose music defined their era and still resonates into our present.

Dr. Christopher Silver is the Segal Family Assistant Professor in Jewish History and Culture and Graduate Program Director, Department of Jewish Studies at McGill University and an Associate Member of the Department of History and Classical Studies.

Please contact sandra@safranhr.com to receive emailed JEM fliers and updates. The Jewish London website will include the entire JEM schedule during the JEM season; click on jewishlondon.ca/community-links/, then on JEM.

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