

2023-24 Highlights in Jewish History

Second Saturdays of the Month, 11:00 - 12:00 noon

Free and open to all

For more information, contact Wendy Schwartz, wschwartz@templeisrael.com

(Updated 7-26-2023)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://templeisrael.zoom.us/j/98918960695>

Meeting ID: 989 1896 0695

Join us for lively discussions of important events in Jewish history with Dr. Joseph Goldman. Dr. Goldman is a noted historian and taught at the university level for over 40 years. He holds PhDs in Political Science and History.

Saturday, July 8, 2023

Moses Sofer and the Invention of Ultra-Orthodox Judaism

Sofer spanned the late 18th and early nineteenth centuries when European Judaism was at a crossroads. The Maskilim, Jews who embraced the enlightenment, bought into the French Revolution and early modernity after France and Prussia emancipated their Jews. The notion of "Protestantizing" Judaism as a religion with non-Hebrew liturgy, an overlooking of Talmud, and seeking "accommodation" or "assimilation" with non-Jews offended a purist like Moses Sofer. Judaism must not be altered for its time, Sofer demanded. Judaism is immutable--period.

Saturday, August 12, 2023

Who Wrote *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and Why?

This enduring forgery of a "Global Jewish Conspiracy" inspired pogroms in Russia that complemented Naziism and has been peddled at times in the modern Islamic world. Inventing a fictitious "history" of the text, Sergey Nilus worked for the tsarist secret police and Pavel Krushvan was a Moldovian publicist with his own newspaper. Does it matter who wrote it? Yes.

Saturday, September 9, 2023

Henrietta Szold and Hadassah

While touring Palestine in 1909, Henrietta Szold founded Hadassah in order to mobilize women. Her accomplishments led to the great hospital and medical center in Jerusalem that employs and serves Jews and Arabs today.

Saturday, October 14, 2023

Shabbat Through the Ages

What can we learn from how Jews celebrated Shabbat in the United States? From the opening of the Touro Synagogue in Rhode Island in 1637 through more recent waves of immigration, we will focus on the tensions between the desire to maintain tradition, pressure to assimilate, and the economic realities of immigrant communities.

Saturday, November 11, 2023

Munich, Jews, and the Rise of Hitler

Between 1919 and 1923 Munich became the hotbed of antisemitism when socialist Kurt Eisner took power for a few months until the former Berlin Jew was assassinated. The Bavarian public blamed the Jews among them for the rowdy disorder that unfolded in the streets as Nationalists and Communists fought against one another. In the beerhalls, an Austrian veteran of World War I ranted to audiences about how the Jews stabbed Germany in the back. Three years later, this same Adolf Hitler launched his abortive revolution from Munich before he was imprisoned and wrote *Mein Kampf*.

Saturday, December 9, 2023

Masada and the Chanukah Lights for Liberty

Nearly 250 years after the Maccabean revolt, shortly after the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, a small group of Jews isolated themselves in Herod's fortress on a plateau in the Judean desert. Rather than succumb to their potential Roman captors, after a long siege, most of them died in a murder-suicide pact. While Moshe Dayan's cry "Masada shall not fall again" has inspired generations of Israeli soldiers, we also sometimes think of this as a story of martyrdom, paralleling the martyrs of Bar Kochba's time in the second century of the common era. What do scholars say really happened? How does the archaeological evidence suggest Chanukah may have been celebrated there? How should we remember?

Saturday, January 13, 2024

“We Won't Let the Jews Replace Us:” The Politics of Activist White Supremacy

Sloganeering of Neo-Nazis used at Charlottesville has a familiar ring since the Nazis used "Die Juden sind unser Unglück" –the Jews are our misfortune—long before Josef Goebbels became propaganda minister of the Third Reich. In the 16th century, Martin Luther wrote similarly in his antisemitic pamphlets aimed at German Jews and their rabbis who refused to convert to Luther's brand of "homegrown Christianity" that sparked the Protestant Rebellion against the Catholic Church and Jewry.

Saturday, February 10, 2024

Ruth Bader Ginsburg on Roe vs. Wade

While it would be twenty years before she began serving on the Supreme Court, the future Justice Ginsburg thought the 7-2 decision legalizing abortion may have been too sweeping and too radical for the long-term evolution of reproductive rights. She preferred an incremental approach, case by case, to build a legal and constitutional foundation to establish the right to privacy and choice. Was she right?

Saturday, March 9, 2024

Masonic Jews or Jewish Masons?

While the idea of a brotherhood with secrets has often been exploited to perpetuate antisemitic tropes, Jews have been a part of Freemasonry for nearly 300 years since the Grand Lodge in England admitted them. We will explore the history of Freemasonry, what has attracted Jewish men to this fraternal organization that links its traditions to the biblical King Solomon, and how this history relates to the emergence of other fraternal organizations such as B'nai B'rith.

Saturday, April 13, 2024

The Wheels to Death: Adolf Eichmann and Transport Engineering

Of the millions of people who were transported to the camps, thousands of Jews perished in cattle cars—the wheels to death—before they ever arrived at their intended “final destinations.” How was the German Railway enlisted to provide transportation to the concentration camps and death factories and how did it become the backbone of the "Industrial Holocaust?"

Saturday, May 11, 2024

Another Face of Zionism: Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg (Ahad Ha'am) and Cultural Zionism

Ahad Ha'am (Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg) was a contemporary of Theodor Herzl, and his bitterest foe when it came to a Jewish state. Ha'am invented "cultural Zionism" as a counterpoint to "political Zionism" that emphasized the flourishing of Jewish creativity over nation-statehood. Herzl and Ha'am went "hammer and tongs" at one another to win the minds and hearts of the nascent national homeland movement. Their legacies still shape Israel and the Diaspora today.

Saturday, June 8, 2024

Nazi Billionaires: The Dark History of Germany's Wealthiest Dynasties

Some of the richest industrialists and bankers that paid for Hitler made money during the Third Reich and in Post-War West Germany. David DeJong, author of this book published in 2022, explores who they were and how they stayed rich and became richer.