

FIU talk explores ‘spiritual resistance’ of women during the Holocaust

Regina Jonas and Edith Stein were two German Jewish women who, against impossible odds, held steadfastly to their spiritual beliefs and served their communities during the Holocaust. While the women’s expressions of faith were markedly different from one another, each was considered a religious rebel during this turbulent period of history.

Scholar and author Emily Leah Silverman will examine the spiritual resistance and religious vision of Jonas and Stein in a talk, Wednesday, Nov. 12. The program will be held at 7 p.m. at the Jewish Museum of Florida-FIU, 301 Washington Ave., Miami Beach.

Presented by FIU’s Program in the Study of Spirituality, the event is free and open to the public.

Regina Jonas was the first female rabbi in Jewish history, having received her *smicha*, or rabbinical ordination, in 1935 from the head of the Liberal Rabbis’ Association in Offenbach am Main. She served as a rabbi in Berlin until 1942, when she was deported to the Theresienstadt concentration camp where for two years she continued her work, including counseling internees.

Edith Stein was the first woman to receive a doctorate in philosophy at the University of Gottingen from the “father of phenomenology,” Edmund Husserl. She claimed her Jewish identity while she was still a cloistered Carmelite nun. In a 1933 letter to Pope Pius XI, she denounced the Nazi regime and asked, “as a child of the Jewish people,” for the Pope to speak out against the tyrannical rule.

Both women ultimately met their untimely deaths after being deported – Stein in 1942 and Jonas in 1944 – to the Auschwitz extermination camp. Jonas, who was 42 when she was murdered, was largely forgotten until 1991 when an American-based German scholar rediscovered her and made her works known worldwide. Stein, 51 at the time of her death, was canonized in 1998 by Pope John Paul II and was made one of six patron saints of Europe.

Speaker Emily Leah Silverman, who last year authored the book, *Edith Stein and Regina Jonas: Religious Visionaries of the Death Camps*, is a lecturer at San Jose State University in the Humanities and president of the American Academy of Religion’s western region. She has authored a number of articles and co-edited *Voices of Feminist Liberation*. She received her Ph.D. from the Graduate Theological Union and her Master of Divinity from Harvard Divinity School.

The program is cosponsored by FIU’s Jewish Studies Initiatives and European Studies.

For more information, call 305.348.7266.

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