



## Ideals of Freedom Series returns in May, Upcoming Programs, Shul Tours and More – April 13, 2026

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### Holocaust Remembrance Day begins this evening יום השואה

#### IDEALS OF FREEDOM SPEAKER SERIES



**From Synagogue to Museum: The Journey of a Jewish Immigrant Woodcarver and His Torah Arks**  
Wednesday, April 15, 7:00 pm ET (online) **CANCELLED**

**Immigrant Voices in Color: Murals and other Art from America's Synagogues**  
Wednesday, May 13, 7:00 pm ET (online)

Join art and architectural historian **Dr. Samuel D. Gruber** for an illuminating journey through the vibrant art and design of America's historic synagogues. This illustrated lecture explores how Jewish immigrants expressed their faith, identity, and aspirations in a new land through color, pattern, and imagery. Dr. Gruber will highlight the beautifully painted ceiling, pillars, and curtains of the Walnut Street Synagogue in Chelsea, one of the few surviving examples of the richly decorated immigrant-era sanctuaries that once flourished across the country. He will also present murals and artwork from other current and former synagogues, revealing how these sacred spaces became canvases for storytelling and memory. Through his engaging talk and striking visuals, Dr. Gruber will show how these works of art—created by and for immigrant congregations—continue to speak to us today, celebrating a legacy of creativity, resilience, and community that is central to the American Jewish experience.

**Dr. Samuel D. Gruber** has been a leader in the documentation, protection, and preservation of historic Jewish sites worldwide since 1988. He was founding director of the Jewish Heritage Program of World Monuments Fund (1988-1996) and Research Director of the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad (1998 through 2008). He presently directs Gruber Heritage Global, a cultural resource consulting firm and is president of the not-for-profit International Survey of Jewish Monuments. He has taught as part-time faculty in Art History and Jewish Studies at Syracuse University (1994-2022) and at Binghamton, Colgate, Cornell, and Temple universities and Le Moyne College. Sam received his BA in Medieval Studies from Princeton University, his Ph.D. in Art and Architectural History from Columbia University and is a Fellow of the American Academy of Rome, where he won the prestigious Rome Prize in Art History. Sam writes and lectures about Jewish art and architecture. He is author of *American Synagogues: A Century of Architecture and Jewish Community* (2003), *Synagogues* (1999), and scores of reports, articles, and book chapters. Since 2008, he has written the blog Samuel Gruber's Jewish Art and Monuments. He is a frequent invited speaker and consultant across the United States and in Europe. *Community partners – Wyner Family Jewish*

*Heritage Center at American Ancestors, Massachusetts Antisemitism Synagogue Task Force (MAST), Orange County Jewish Community Scholar Program (CSP)*

**Register here** - <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/immigrant-voices-in-color-murals-and-other-art-from-america-synagogues-tickets-1977635831007?aff=oddtcreator>

**Learn more about the series here** - <https://walnutstreetsynagogue.org/ideals-of-freedom/>

## 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!



### **The “Redemptive ” Antisemitism of the Nazi Period**

Tuesday, April 14, 1:00 pm ET (online)

made Nazi antisemitism different from earlier forms of hatred, and how did it become the driving force behind the Holocaust? In this compelling lecture, we will examine the rise of antisemitism in Germany between 1933 and 1945, exploring not only the events themselves but the radical ideology that fueled them. Drawing on Saul Friedländer’s powerful concept of “redemptive antisemitism,” this session will show how Nazi thinking cast Jews not simply as enemies, but as a poisonous force whose removal was imagined as a form of national purification. By probing the motives, ideas, and moral collapse at the heart of the Nazi project, we will confront the disturbing question of how such a doctrine could take hold in one of Europe’s most cultured societies and where, within that process, the Holocaust became tragically imaginable.

Originally from London, **Dr. Katherine Aron-Beller** is a Senior Lecturer in Jewish History at the Hebrew University’s Rothberg International School and a Senior Research Fellow at Tel Aviv University. An expert in the history of antisemitism, medieval and early modern Jewish history, Jewish-Christian relations, and the Papal Inquisition, she is the author and editor of several major works, including “Jews on Trial and Christian Images and their Jewish Desecrators.” She has also led Jewish historical tours throughout Europe, including Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and the United Kingdom.

<https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/JukzcAd-RZSwCFPAOKRnPg#/registration>

### **Legends of Leisure – The Golden Era of the Borscht Belt Resorts**

Thursday, April 16, 3:30 pm ET (online)

Join us for a virtual tour led by Dr. Sharon Keller exploring the Catskills Borscht Belt Museum in Ellenville, New York, a lively tribute to the storied resort world that once drew generations of mostly Jewish vacationers to the mountains of upstate New York. Through photographs, recreated spaces, memorabilia, and exhibitions that spotlight the food, comedy, and social life of the Borscht Belt, the museum preserves the spirit of an era that helped shape American Jewish culture and popular entertainment. Along the way, colorful figures like Morris Katz, the famed quick-painting entertainer of the Catskills hotels, help bring to life the creativity, humor, and larger-than-life personality that made this world so memorable.

**Dr. Sharon Keller**, CSP’s 15th Annual One-Month Scholar in Residence (January 2016) and the recipient of the 5th Annual CSP Maimonides Award for Excellence in Jewish Education. is a captivating and unconventional educator who brings the ancient world to life. With a PhD in Hebrew and Judaic Studies from NYU—where she specialized in the Bible and the Ancient Near East—Dr. Keller has held faculty positions at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Hebrew Union College, NYU, and Hunter College. She currently teaches in the Comparative Literature Department at Hofstra University, where she continues to explore the ancient Mediterranean through courses on biblical literature, Egyptology, and

archaeology.

[https://us06web.zoom.us/join/arFWSsw\\_SQKTqJIBvjYnfQ#/registration](https://us06web.zoom.us/join/arFWSsw_SQKTqJIBvjYnfQ#/registration)

### **The Holocaust – A History of Decisions, Places, and Moral Collapse**

**Part 7** - Sunday, April 19, 1:00 pm ET (online)

**Part 8** - Sunday, April 26, 1:00 pm ET (online)

In this powerful eight-part series, Prof. Stephen Berk guides us through the Holocaust, not as a single, inevitable catastrophe, but as a series of historical choices made by governments, institutions, communities, and individuals across Europe. Moving chronologically and geographically, the series explores how the “oldest hatred” was transformed into state-sponsored genocide, how different countries responded to Nazi pressure, and how moments of action, or inaction, shaped the fate of millions. With clarity, moral seriousness, and historical depth, Prof. Berk helps us understand not only what happened, but *how* it happened, and why those lessons still matter.

**Stephen M. Berk**, who served as CSP’s 10th Annual One Month Scholar in Residence in February 2011, is Professor of History at Union College in Schenectady, New York, former Chair of the Department of History, Director of the Program in Russian and Eastern European Studies and Faculty Advisor to the Jewish Student Organization. He is the author of *Year of Crisis, Year of Hope: Russian Jewry and the Pogroms of 1881-1882* (Greenwood Press, 1985). He is currently writing a book titled: *Our People Are Your People: American Jewry and the Struggle for Civil Rights 1954-1965*. The book provides an interesting discussion of an extremely important chapter in the history of the civil rights movement and attempts to dispel the myths and misunderstandings surrounding the Black-Jewish relationship. A recipient of the Citizens Laureate Award of the University of Albany Foundation, Professor Berk has been a consultant to the Wiesenthal Holocaust Center in Los Angeles, has written articles on Russian and Jewish history, anti-Semitism, and the Middle East and has lectured on throughout the United States and Canada including such distinguished colleges and universities as Princeton, Vanderbilt, The University of Texas at Austin and Williams College.

[https://us06web.zoom.us/join/gNWiQkm\\_Txm2WQXi05WPCQ#/registration](https://us06web.zoom.us/join/gNWiQkm_Txm2WQXi05WPCQ#/registration)

## **COMMUNITY PARTNER PROGRAMS**

### **Declarations of Americanism: Jewish-American Displays of National Identity**

Thursday, April 16, 4:00 pm ET

*(online program presented by the Wyner Family Heritage Center at American Ancestors)*

As we commemorate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, questions of national identity and democratic commitment are top of mind. Jewish Americans have long grappled with these topics, navigating assimilation while encountering suspicions of dual loyalties. With the dramatic rise of immigration in the late 19th century, Jewish immigrant communities encountered heightened pressures and possibilities to exhibit American identity. In this talk, Jewish Heritage Center (JHC) Historian in Residence Madeline DeDe-Panken considers why Jews leaned into American iconography throughout the 19th and early 20th century and how such displays shaped Jewish life in America. Madeline DeDe-Panken is a historian with broad interests in culture, gender and public knowledge. Her current research explores the rise of popular mycology at the turn of the twentieth century. Madeline has multifaceted experience in museums and non-profits, having held fellowships at institutions including the Schlesinger Library, Massachusetts Historical Society, and the Center for Women’s History at the New-York Historical Society.

[https://hubs.americanancestors.org/declarations-of-americanism-jewish-american-displays-of-national-identity?utm\\_campaign=18167937-FY26%20JHC&utm\\_medium=email&hsenc=p2ANqtz-Rmkjsl\\_HL3VftRLjbJHueO6IAjiD36o7QwDjJph4-wL8dGf9x30WTkKNVDIt7xIIPTOC7bYGFvq6aOkr95nmsWjVZ\\_q&hsmi=408259099&utm\\_content=408259099&utm\\_source=hs\\_email](https://hubs.americanancestors.org/declarations-of-americanism-jewish-american-displays-of-national-identity?utm_campaign=18167937-FY26%20JHC&utm_medium=email&hsenc=p2ANqtz-Rmkjsl_HL3VftRLjbJHueO6IAjiD36o7QwDjJph4-wL8dGf9x30WTkKNVDIt7xIIPTOC7bYGFvq6aOkr95nmsWjVZ_q&hsmi=408259099&utm_content=408259099&utm_source=hs_email)

## 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.org/visit/>



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](mailto:intake@yadchessed.org) for a confidential conversation. Questions can be directed to [info@yadchessed.org](mailto:info@yadchessed.org).

**Support Yad Chessed** - <https://givebutter.com/yadchessed>

## GIVING

Please visit our Giving page to send tributes, recognize yahrzeits and make other general donations to support the Walnut Street Synagogue and help us preserve, maintain and secure our 116-year-old building. Donations can be made online or through the mail. Tributes and other donations may be recognized on our Giving Page unless otherwise requested.

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

## VISIT US ONLINE

Website

<https://walnutstreetsynagogue.org/>

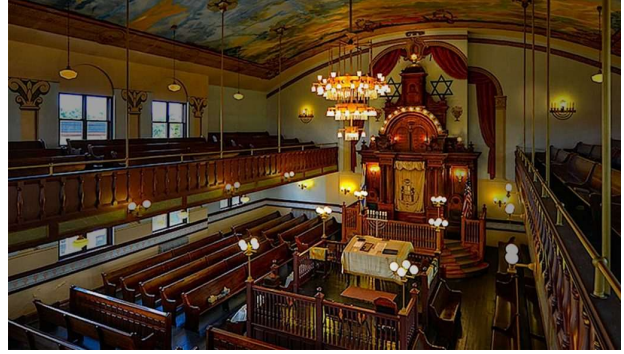
Facebook Page - Walnut Street Synagogue

<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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