



Ideals of Freedom Series returns in May, Upcoming Programs, Shul Tours and More – April 27, 2026

IDEALS OF FREEDOM SPEAKER SERIES



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-americas-synagogues-tickets-1977635831007?aff=oddtcreator>

Visit the Wyner Family Jewish Heritage Center at American Ancestors to explore materials from their archives of the New England Jewish community (photos, scrapbooks, objects, historical documents, and more!), to tour their space, to create some archive-themed Shavuot crafts, to learn about our educational programming and classroom visits, and to have a nosh with staff and other community members.

<https://hubs.americanancestors.org/wyner-family-jewish-heritage-center-open-house>

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 for a confidential conversation. Questions can be directed to 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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