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Dr. Robert Harris Explores Light in the Jewish Tradition at Hancock Shaker Village

(Hancock, MA, July 12, 2023) Hancock Shaker Village is pleased to announce a lecture by Dr. Robert A. Harris (Professor and Chair, Hebrew Bible and Its Interpretation, Jewish Theological Seminary) on July 27th from 4 to 5pm, exploring light in the Jewish tradition and its possible influence on Shaker views. The lecture is the first in a series of three throughout the summer and inspired by the current exhibition *Stillness and Light*.

Light is a cross-cultural symbol for knowledge, truth, and awareness that takes on even deeper meanings when we consider its links to religious texts and traditions. From ceremonial use to symbolic “divine light,” it signifies peace, wisdom, and joy. For the Shakers, light was an enduring spiritual presence that they embraced it in every corner of their lives, from their architecture to their celebrated Gift Drawings. Inspired by the theme of light in Shaker architecture and faith, this lecture series will explore the subject in the context of religions past and present: medieval Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Together the group of distinguished scholars will illuminate new perspectives on global religious traditions and draw connections with the Shakers’ own.

Stillness and Light is currently on display in the Brick Poultry House and features sixteen black and white photographs by John Mancia. Mancia has been practicing the art of photography for many years, undeterred by the ever-evolving changes in photographic technologies. John started his career in the New York museum world and transitioned into international medical publishing, where he spent thirty years in the industry. Recently, photography has become a more realized passion, especially for the creation of black & white or monochrome images, his preferred format. Since first visiting the Berkshires in the 1970’s, John’s has had a special interest in Shaker history, originating from earlier graduate studies in religious communities of the medieval period in Western Europe. When not shouldering a camera, John can be found sitting in the light by a window studying classical guitar.

For more details Dr. Harris’ lecture, and this lecture series, please visit Hancockshakervillage.org/events.

