

The Noble Sanctuary:

Elevating the Freeman to Nobility and Noblesse Oblige

The commentators have noted, each after his own fashion, the great shift at Chapter 25, the beginning of our Parasha, from what preceded in last week's reading. Exodus from Chapter 25 to the book's end constitutes a separate section in many respects, and the commentators struggle with relating this latter part of Exodus to what precedes. The very beginning of Chapter 25 is striking in its requisition to "fund" the materials for the Tabernacle, when all prior "funding" requests were for our poorer Israelite brethren. There are no actual requests there for gifts to the poor, but what is asked for doesn't come cheap: Helping the poor through offering them free loans and not exacting payment, forgiving their debts after a fixed term of service, and many other aspects of the laws of Mishpatim are costly, in wealth and time. Fulfilling these laws requires sacrifices from the even the meanest classes. From the wealthiest they demand major monetary sacrifices and concessions. Thus it is understandable that in Judaism the requirement of pursuing "justice" and "righteousness" ("tsedek") naturally morphed into "tzedakah," the traditional term translated in English as "charity" but which more literally meant giving one's fellow countryman the "just" share which is his due. And yet just after these previous sections appealing for the needs of the poor we immediately get to this section fundraising for the sake of the religious "cult" - for worship, the sacred sanctuary, and its dedicated officiants. Nor is this just any fundraising project: The project asks for sumptuous, opulent, and extravagant funding, requisitioning the most expensive "luxury" items and the most intricate workmanship, and presumably anything less than this quality may be turned away! This scope of this mammoth requisition is unprecedented in all the preceding.

I have more palpably felt the tension between collecting and allotting funding to charity and the need to collect and allot funds for specifically "religious" purposes during the tough times engendered by this pandemic, when so many are suffering economically. The poor, of course, must remain the primary focus, and that is precisely why the laws about the poor must precede the laws of the sanctuary in the Torah. But fundraising for the Sanctuary, expensive and luxurious though it is, also has its place.

For it is from the Sanctuary that national solidarity with our poorer brethren and obligation to them emanates. Synagogues and Sanctuaries traditionally served as centers of funds for the poor in various ways. Above all, the noble and royal ways of the Sanctuary fill its devotees with a sense of "noblesse oblige." In the Bible, the king, priest, and prophet were supposed to be the poor man's greatest friends, especially charged with helping widows and orphans. King, priest, and prophet were to be robed and surrounded with the greatest splendor, but were also to think of themselves as God's and the public's humble servants. They were to model patterns by which life ought to be lived, and their elevated "courtly" ideal was to serve as an example for all the people. Their model of nobility was supposed to "uplift" the people as a whole, and thereby to raise even the poorest out of poverty and depression.

Besides direct monetary aid, the Torah seems to be saying, the poor and the rest of the people need to learn models of nobility: People who think of themselves as freemen nobles won't allow themselves to descend into poverty. The nobility learn courtly manners, martial strength and discipline, as well as humble graciousness and a courtly ethos of willing service. This aids them in seeking others' favor. This helps all, including the poor, in everyone's pursuits. The ideal House of God teaches the common people about the importance of keeping bread on the table and cooking regular meals. It teaches the importance of the finer things in life: artistry/aesthetics, order, music, and faithful devotion to God and country - even for the meanest classes. This can, of course, backfire and give the poor the feeling that he is "entitled" to live as a noble. And indeed, it often seems to have done so in our culture where we have given the poor all sorts of "ennobling" benefits only to find them demanding more. But that may be because our greedy, atheistic, and increasingly vulgar upper classes have themselves lost their nobility of etiquette and can no longer serve as a proper model. This is why we still need the kind of classic religious model of sanctity, nobility, beauty, dignity, purity, simple grace, and humility exemplified in the Tabernacle and its service. Merely preventing the people from sinking into debt by keeping them economically afloat will not solve the problem. In the long run, a society which wishes to remain one of freemen must be elevated to follow patterns of true nobility. For many societies lacking a nobility, noble ways are supposed to live on in the religious sphere of the Sanctuary. I note that the Temple Mount is known in Arabic as "the Noble Sanctuary," and the name is apt. For it is from the Tabernacle and later Temple Sanctuary that the poor and wealthy alike may learn to comport themselves with both the dignity and humility of "noblesse oblige."



Shabbat Terumah

February 4-5, 2022 | Adar 3-4, 5782

SCHEDULE

Candle Lighting | 4:59 pm

Friday Evening Services | 5:00 pm

Zemirot | 8:30 am

Shahrit | 9:00 am

Jr. Congregation | 10:30 am | Levy | Led by teen leaders and Mrs. Lisa Rohde

Kiddush | Outdoors | following services

NO Shabbat Afternoon Class this week.

Shabbat Afternoon Services | 5:00 pm

Habdala | 5:48 pm

Virtual Habdala | 6:00 pm | Rev. Z. Edinger

Weekday Service Times

Morning Services

Sunday: 8:05 am

Monday-Thursday: 7:05 am

Evening Services

Sunday-Thursday (Minha/Arbit): **5:00 pm**

*Reminder: **WELL-FITTED MASKS REQUIRED INDOORS. KN95 PREFERRED.**
If you choose not to wear a mask outdoors when permitted, you represent & warrant that you're fully vaccinated.*

Please send UPDATED vaccination card(s) to info@shearithisrael.org.

Many upcoming activities will require proof of UP-TO-DATE vaccination & boosters.

THIS SATURDAY NIGHT

Parent-Child Learning - with S'mores!

Next Session: Saturday Night, February 5

This session will be led by Seth Haberman, on the topic of:

“If God Wrote A Comic Book...”

For elementary school children and their parents or grandparents

To register, visit shearithisrael.org/csiyouth5782.

COMING UP

With blood donations still in short supply, join Shearith Israel in conjunction with Lincoln Square Synagogue for another:

Blood Drive for the NY Blood Center

February 27 | Held at Lincoln Square Synagogue (180 Amsterdam Ave)

Saving a life takes just an hour of your time!

There has been a chronic gap in blood donations since the start of the pandemic. At the same time, the need for blood from patients in our local hospitals has increased by 10-15% from pre-pandemic levels, from pent up demand for treatment and surgeries postponed during the pandemic.

We're encouraging folks to give blood and/or help amplify the message on the need for blood in our community. You can visit nybc.org to learn more. Use that link to schedule your donation for February 27th.

Youth Trip to the Tenement Museum: *At Home in 1911*

NEW DATE: Sunday, February 13 | 11:00 am

Meets at the Museum: 97 Orchard Street

Full vaccination required - bring proof!

Our youth are invited on a special tour of the recreated 1910s apartment of an Eastern European Jewish family earning a living in the garment trade. Like the majority of immigrants at the time, the Rogarshevskys faced many challenges – with the added difficulties of raising six children in a three-room NYC tenement. Step into their home and experience what daily life was like for an immigrant family in 1911 – balancing work, family, community, and an evolving cultural identity.

To register, visit shearithisrael.org/csiyouth5782.

PURIM

Sisterhood Mishloah Manot Project

Place your order by: Midnight on Saturday, February 19

Once again the Sisterhood is offering members an opportunity to send Mishloah Manot to other members of our congregation. Your friends can receive either a card or a package* of Purim treats (their choice of which they want), letting them know you included them on your list.

All you have to do is log in to your ShulCloud member account, fill out the online form, and pay by credit card. (You MUST be logged in to be able to view the form.)

Proceeds from this program will fund the Sisterhood's many other projects.

To select recipients, visit shearithisrael.org/sisterhoodmanot.

**Note that packages are only available for pickup at the Synagogue; there will be no package delivery.*

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hazak u'Barukh to our members **Robyn & Mark Tsesarsky** and to Lincoln Square Synagogue, upon the naming of the "Tsesarsky Family Building."
Kol haKavod!

Condolences to **Daniel Feder**, upon the passing of his mother, Shirley Feder.

NEW! Free Covid Tests - Every home in the U.S. can order four free at-home COVID-19 tests. Order today at: covidtests.gov

If you are aged 65+ or immunocompromised, **NYC will send a trained clinician to your home to do a free PCR test.** Available 7 days/week, 9am-7pm.

Call 929-298-9400 to schedule an appointment.