



Greenburgh Hebrew Center

515 Broadway, Dobbs Ferry, NY 10522

914-693-4260 Main

914-693-4907 Fax

www.ghcny.org

Jay M. Stein, Rabbi

Anna May, Cantor

Barry Kenter, Rabbi Emeritus

Jeffrey S. Liss, President

May 21, 2023

Rosh Hodesh Sivan 5783

Dear Friends,

As happened yesterday morning, always we begin the book of Numbers, *Parashat Bemidbar* on the Shabbat before Shavuot, the feast of weeks recalling the revelation of God on Sinai: thunder, lightning, sounds of the shofar, and the blasts of the ram's horn announcing the descent of God onto Sinai. Quite the deal, even grander than the vision of C.B. De Mille.

The portion describes the disassembly of the portable wilderness sanctuary, how to take the pieces, wrap them and carry them to the next camping place. While done under the immediate supervision of Aaron and his sons, each of the Levitical tribes had specific portage responsibilities. Kehat, Amram's family: Moses, Aaron and Miriam's kin, have specific accountability for the arks, tables, lamps, altars and vessels, the *klei ha-kodesh*, the sacred vessels. The priests, the Kohanim, use sacred colors and cloths, blues, reds, reddish-orange dyed skins to hide what might be seen otherwise as ordinary. Items that may have resembled ordinary pieces of furniture once used for a sacred purpose retain sanctity and holiness.

I once thought this *parashah* reminds us of the need to hide the implements so as not to expose their ordinariness; people will lose their respect for the sacred once they see the inner workings. Why would anyone after seeing the inner working want to become engaged and involved in sacred service? In working for God or for the Jewish people? Now I see that the Torah alerts us to the reality that the ordinary serves as a source of potential and actual sanctification; seeing sanctity in the ordinary and in the everyday a scene of revelation. The sacred can illuminate and infuse the everyday. Yesterday's reading urges us to see the potential of the sacred in the everyday and in everything that we do. Even the everyday and the ordinary, arks, tables and lamps, are or have the potential to be *klei ha-kodesh*, sacred instruments.

No more is this more evident than in serving as president of a synagogue. There is no more sacred work than leading a Jewish community. Today we salute Jeff Liss as he completes his term as president of the Greenburgh Hebrew Center. Being president requires vision, patience, courage and the ability to get the work done. Privy to the inner working of a synagogue, a key player in its success, Jeff brought his skills, his expertise and his humor to the tasks at hand. We salute him, thank him, and wish him success as he assumes the best of all synagogue titles, Immediate Past President. Mazal tov!

Always go *m'hayil el hayil*, from strength to strength,

Barry A. Kenter

A vibrant egalitarian Conservative Jewish community in Westchester County,
embracing our traditions while actively participating in our changing world.