

Principles for Synagogue Dues Calculations

OPT financial matters are established in the context of Jewish values, principles and ethics.

Principles

OPT is a community open to any Jew.

While Judaism itself can thrive without reference to finances, a community of Jews who are committed to the purposes of the synagogue - learning, worship, and fellowship - does need financial resources to help each other and themselves.

All members contribute financially; ideally, all members also contribute time, energy and talent to the congregation.

Honest and ethical financial behavior is among the core values of Judaism.

An appropriate dues structure reflects shared support of a vital community to preserve Jewish heritage and to support and develop Jewishly knowledgeable and observant families and households.

Dues structures are not designed to reflect "fee for service" or program usage for any given household but rather to meet the needs of all the community.

Dues calculations are progressive, not regressive. Those who can contribute more are asked to do so.

Dues calculations reflect sensitivity to special needs of each household, informed by guidelines based on the community's needs.

Dues are calculated voluntarily.

Dues are managed to ensure that everyone feels appreciated for their appropriate and fair contribution.

Dues are structured for efficient, predictable, fair, confidential administration.

Principles for Synagogue Dues Calculations

OPT financial matters are established in the context of Jewish values, principles and ethics.

OPT Constitution: The purpose of this Congregation shall be to worship God in accordance with the faith of Judaism, to cultivate a love and understanding of the Jewish heritage, to stimulate fellowship in the Jewish community, and to strengthen the bonds of loyalty with the Jewish People everywhere. This Congregation shall promote Judaism in all aspects of life through public and private worship, religious education, and through social welfare activities and such other means as shall serve to convey the teachings of Judaism.

Principles

OPT is a community open to any Jew.

Pirke Avot 2:5: Al tifrosh min-hatzibbur. "Hillel said, Do not set yourself apart from the community."

OPT Constitution: "Any person of the Jewish faith, or spouse (or life-partner) of such person who seeks to be permanently identified with Judaism and is not practicing another religion, is eligible for membership in this Congregation."

While Judaism itself can thrive without reference to finances, a community of Jews who are committed to the purposes of the synagogue - learning, worship, and fellowship - does need financial resources to help each other and themselves.

Pirke Avot, Ethics of the Fathers (Talmud) 3:21: Ein kemach, ein Torah... Ein Torah, ein kemach. "Without bread, there can be no Torah; without Torah, there is no bread."

All members contribute financially; ideally, all members also contribute time, energy and talent to the congregation.

Talmud Shavuot 39a: Kol Yisrael arevim zeh ba zeh. "All Israel is responsible each for the other."

1 Chron 29:10. And David blessed the Lord before all the congregation; and David said... 14. For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. 15. For we are strangers before you, and sojourners, as were all our fathers; our days on the earth are like a shadow....16. O Lord our God, all this store that we have prepared to build you a house for your holy name comes from your hand, and is all your own.

Pirke Avot 3:8: Rabbi Elzar of Barthotha said, Give Him what is His, because you and all that you have are His.

An appropriate dues structure reflects shared support of a vital community to preserve Jewish heritage and to support and develop Jewishly knowledgeable and observant families and households.

Deut 6:1 This is the commandment, the statutes, and the ordinances, that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you to perform in the land into which you are about to pass to possess it...4 Hear O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is one. 5 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your means. 6 And these words which I command you this day shall be upon your heart. 7 And you shall teach them to your children, and speak of them when you sit in your house and when you walk on the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

Dues structures - rather like real estate taxes designated for municipal and educational support - are not designed to reflect "fee for service" or program usage for any given household but rather to meet the needs of all the community.

Pirke Avot 5 mishnah 10: "He who says, What is mine is mine, and what is yours is yours, is [merely] an average character; some say that this is the [selfish] character of Sodom."

Deut 4:5 Behold -- I have taught you statutes and ordinances as the Lord my God commanded me to do so in the midst of the land to which you are coming to possess. 6 And you shall keep [them] and do [them], for that is your wisdom and your understanding

Dues calculations are progressive, not regressive. Those who can contribute more are asked to do so.

Deut 16:17 "Every one shall give as he is able according to the blessing of Adonai, your God, which Adonai has given you."

Psalms 37:21: "A lawless man borrows and never repays his debt but a righteous man deals generously and is a giver."

Ketubot 50a: If a person desires to spend liberally [on charity] he should not spend more than a fifth, [since by spending more] he might himself come to be in need [of the help] of people.

Dues calculations reflect sensitivity to special needs of each household, informed by guidelines based on the community's needs.

Need cannot be quantified on the basis of objective criteria... each person is perceived as an individual with subjective, individualistic, idiosyncratic needs¹. (Deut. 15:8: that which is sufficient for his need...)

Sifre on Deuteronomy: To one for whom bread is suitable, give bread; for one who needs dough, give dough; for one who requires money, give money; for one who need to be fed, feed him.

¹ Rabbi Byron L Sherwin. *Creating an Ethical Jewish Life*

Dues are calculated voluntarily. Honest and ethical financial behavior is among the core values of Judaism.

Ex 36:3 So they took from before Moses all the offering[s] that the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the Holy [building the Tabernacle], and they brought him more gifts every morning... 5 And they spoke to Moses, saying: "The people are bringing very much more than is enough for the labor of the articles which the Lord had commanded to do."

Talmud Shabbat 31a: Rava said, When man is led in for Judgment [in Heaven] he is asked, Did you deal faithfully in business, did you have regular times for learning, did you bear children, did you hope for salvation, did you engage in the dialectics of wisdom, did you understand one thing from another?

Dues are managed to ensure that everyone feels appreciated for their appropriate and fair contribution.

Pirke Avot 5:16 "He who desires that both he and others should give is pious (chasid)."

Dues are structured for efficient, predictable, fair, and confidential administration.

Talmud Sotah 40a: "A leader must always show respect for the community."

Baba Batra 9b: A person who gives tzedakah in secret is greater than Moses, our teacher.

Dues calculations are private matters between the household and the synagogue. (in the person(s) of the administrator, VP-Finance/Treasurer, and/or President - or their designees - as appropriate).

Dues formula:

- Are simple to understand
- Are simple to administer
- Enable a reasonable degree of predictability year-to-year
- Are fair / equitable; recognize fixed limited/small incomes and also ask those with more to do more
- Generate sufficient income for the temple's appropriate needs
- Reduce focus on "events" to raise money, which cost tremendous energy and generate little income

If dues calculations are changed, there is some transitional method which makes sense and is sensitive to these principles.