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INNOVATIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR SYNAGOGUES OF TOMORROW

CONNECTED CONGREGATIONS: FROM DUES AND MEMBERSHIP TO SUSTAINING COMMUNITIES OF PURPOSE

Prepared by Beth Cousens, Ph.D., for UJA-Federation of New York.

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This paper reflects UJA-Federation of New York's commitment to identify, elevate, and share innovations and strategies through SYNERGY: UJA-Federation of New York and Synagogues Together in order to strengthen synagogues. We began this exploration a number of years ago by seeking out and examining alternative financial models for synagogue sustainability. But the deeper we delved and the further we peeled back the layers, the more we began to understand that the issues facing synagogues at this time were more complex than simple financial sustainability — including, critically, the downward trend in congregational affiliation and membership. We quickly discerned that this trend was not purely a result of affordability; rather, it revealed changes in attitude toward membership and belonging, a new prevailing narrative about the lack of relevance of today's synagogues, and a shift toward a more transactional relationship between a synagogue and its congregants, where the focus is often on dues, program fees, and abatements. To shed light on the growing dissonance of our existing models, and to uncover some key innovations in alternative financial models as well, SYNERGY retained researcher Beth Cousens, Ph.D., to more deeply examine and report on the key alignment between the financial health of synagogues and the values and innovations that are reflective of this new reality.

We are pleased to share these findings, and we welcome your thoughts and reflections. Join the conversation on Twitter using the hashtag **#connectcongs** or e-mail us at **synergy@ujafedny.org**.

Sara Nathan, Chair

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SYNERGY: UJA-Federation of New York and Synagogues Together

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OVERVIEW AND KEY FINDINGS

Imagine: Monica and Jeff have relocated for work and are looking for community in their new town. Monica's parents, who were involved in their synagogue when Monica was a child, suggest that they find a local synagogue. This isn't their first thought, but Monica and Jeff are open to the idea.

Shopping for synagogues, they smile at a few people around them as they put on their coats, but they don't really get to know anyone. At one of the synagogues, before the end of the prayer services, the rabbi asks the congregants to turn to their neighbors and introduce themselves; here, the couple drops Monica's business card into a jar, indicating they'd be willing to be added to a mailing list. It is from this synagogue that someone named Debbie calls, inviting them to coffee. Curious, they agree, and over coffee they chat together about their jobs, their families, and Debbie's experiences living in the town. A few weeks later, Debbie invites them to Shabbat dinner with other synagogue families. Within a few months, Monica and Jeff go back to services at the congregation four or five times, they go again to Shabbat dinner at Debbie's, and they meet several younger couples like themselves.

When the synagogue's membership director, Jamie, calls to invite them to a conversation to talk about becoming synagogue stakeholders, they agree to the conversation — and to becoming stakeholders. During their meeting, Jamie references Exodus 35, where the Israelites bring gifts of the heart in order to construct the tabernacle together. She likens the building of their synagogue to the building of the *mishkan*. Monica and Jeff learn that, as stakeholders, the synagogue asks them to bring food and serve as hosts for one of the community's monthly Shabbat lunches in the coming year, host one or two Shabbat dinners in their home during the year, volunteer where they can, and make a financial contribution to the congregation. Jamie reviews how other stakeholders make decisions about their commitment to the congregation; she gives them a chart that relates a gift to different income levels, and also talks about the average expenses per stakeholder that the congregation incurs. She shows them a series of pie charts of congregational expenditures, helping them to understand the different outcomes and cost centers related to the synagogue's income, and gives them the phone number of a board member who is able to answer questions or talk them through the synagogue's finances at any point. Finally, Jamie stresses that their relationship with the congregation should be mutual, and that the resources of the congregation are theirs to take advantage of as

well as contribute to. They walk through the classes and programs that the synagogue offers, and Jamie emphasizes that the clergy and staff of the congregation are eager to know them. Monica and Jeff leave feeling as though they understand what it means to be stakeholders in the congregation and are excited about what the community might offer them.

Three years later, Monica and Jeff have participated in Torah learning with the clergy, hosted several Shabbat dinners for new and potential stakeholders, and launched an ongoing *havdalah chavurah* for couples their age. They attend Friday-night services alongside a variety of people who now compose their community. Jeff has begun to do data analysis for the congregation, looking at stakeholder trends over time. Monica and Jeff have an annual meeting with Jamie at which they renew their stakeholder commitment. The synagogue is one of the primary places where they receive recognition, nourishment, inspiration, comfort, and a sense of home.

Today, we seem to be in a moment of synagogue change — even radical change. In many places, including synagogues, Jewish life is more inventive than ever before. The synagogue continues to be an agent of spiritual growth and social activism. It is deeply needed in society: in our hectic, loud, and confusing world, synagogues are our true and sacred third space, a place where we can be our most human, connecting to other people, our own sense of purpose, and God. Yet the current American zeitgeist seems to hold an antipathy toward membership, especially when a financial cost is attached. Since many of our synagogues rely on membership dues for their ongoing operations, this presents a significant challenge.

The hypothetical story of Monica and Jeff draws from the current best thinking in synagogue life about membership engagement and the accompanying financial relationship. As their story demonstrates, a transformation of synagogue-engagement paradigms accompanies a transformation of membership structures. Membership, dues, and engagement work together; a dues change cannot succeed without working on the engagement of congregants in Jewish life. Meaningful synagogue relationships and commitments allow Judaism and Jewish life to flourish.

Monica and Jeff connect with a community that follows the first of three models of synagogue life presented in this research: that of the **mishkan model**, where each member, stakeholder, or partner is seen as imperative to the community's health and vibrancy. Members are interconnected into a greater whole, annually recommitting their best gifts to the synagogue. Following the free will dues system,

the amount of their financial contribution is up to members. Congregants decide on their contribution using such guiding information as the synagogue's average expenses per household or a chart that matches gift recommendations with household income. In some cases, there is a great delineation of income categories, with the recognition that congregants bring different financial resources to the community and that the community needs every kind of contribution to succeed. In the most true *mishkan* model, all of these contributions — those based on income or not — are voluntary, designed deliberately to emphasize the congregants' opting into community. No proof of income is requested. The gift represents a genuine *chochmat halev*, a gift of wisdom and resources from the heart.

This story might have had a different trajectory if Monica and Jeff had been less interested in or less prepared for an ongoing synagogue connection. In a different scenario, they may have been more comfortable dropping into some services, classes, or holiday celebrations. In this scenario, even the best *mishkan* model of community would have been to them not engaging but threatening, and the **journey model** of Jewish community life might have been more appropriate. The journey model offers a community from which Monica and Jeff can put together a Jewish experience on their own terms, a community that elevates the personal Jewish journey as a viable and even valuable way of exploring Jewish life. Journey communities gather revenue from those paying for individual services, rather than from membership dues. These communities succeed when they do more than offer à la carte experiences, also helping individuals like Monica and Jeff compose a Jewish journey of meaningful opportunities that allow them to grow Jewishly. They are helping to prepare individuals for engagement in *mishkan* communities and develop personal, meaningful, individual Jewish practice within their own homes and lives.

The **hybrid model** is a continuum between the *mishkan* and the journey models that incorporates elements of each. Significantly, communities that successfully rely on both models do not mix the two: they ask those who are prepared to be builders of the community to then become members, and they interact with others on a journey or à la carte basis. Leaders of communities who practice the hybrid model talk about the importance of authenticity, of asking those not yet prepared for membership to subscribe only to the involvement in which they are interested.

To some extent, the hybrid model is not new for synagogues. Synagogues have long tried to act as a gateway to greater involvement for those wanting a Jewish product. In some synagogues, nursery school families do not pay membership fees and even have

reduced tuition for school enrollment during younger grades. Synagogues try to make connections, helping people move from one point of engagement to the next. At the same time, in most synagogues, those wanting only a point of engagement are pushed into becoming members. They take on more than they are ready for. They need personal attention and the opportunity to grow Jewishly in order to maintain their membership.

A variety of success factors help each of these models succeed, many of which are described in the story of Monica and Jeff. Their synagogue practices **relational Judaism**, creating opportunities for the couple to make relationships with other congregants and the clergy. The synagogue also practices "**radical hospitality**," breaking typical paradigms to welcome participants — for example, using time during services to help those in the sanctuary meet one another. Monica and Jeff are assigned to a synagogue leader to be looked after, the synagogue deliberately facilitating their synagogue comfort and connection. The synagogue is **transparent with finances** and there is an **opportunity to talk positively about money**, which makes it possible for Monica and Jeff to be true stakeholders who understand how the synagogue operates and how their financial investment is used. They have several opportunities to develop this understanding and to speak in an open and trusting environment about their resources and how the synagogue values their funds.

In commenting on all of these practices, synagogue leaders explain:

"To start with the money is backwards. Ask: What does it mean to be part of a community? How do you construe community, so out of that can grow the conversation about membership."

— Rabbi Rachel Nussbaum
Kavana Cooperative, Seattle, Washington

"We've traditionally placed value on notions of membership, of opting in, of intentionally choosing this. 'I want to be part of this community; I want to take responsibility; I want to support and nurture it.' We have a highly participatory community. It's all hands on deck. If you want to make it happen at Kolot, great — it's up to you. Anything we want, we can make happen."

— Cindy Greenberg, President
Kolot Chayeinu, Brooklyn, New York

"There is no *should*, no money that's due to us. If we want people to give more, we have to involve them and help them feel connected in the community and have quality relationships."

— Rabbi Debbie Hachen
Temple Beth-El, Jersey City, New Jersey

“My job is to create relationships with people, help make Judaism come alive for people. A big part of that is creating relationships. . . . It’s not about changing the dues structure. If you just change the dues structure and say to people you can pay what people want to pay — that might be effective for the short term, but . . . Unless people have a relationship, with others in the *shul* and especially with the clergy . . . ”

— Rabbi Daniel Gropper
Community Synagogue of Rye, New York

“There is a way to make it work. It doesn’t have to feel corporate. And the greater worry is that the Jewish people go out of business.”

— Rabbi Baruch HaLevi
*Congregation Shirat Hayam,
Swampscott, Massachusetts*

These leaders’ words are descriptions of **connected congregations** built on relationships within a culture of transparency, purpose, and authenticity, where all can connect to community, Judaism, one another, and God.

As the world trends more toward smaller institutions, independent meaning, and even greater lifetime mobility, American religious life will only continue to change. The synagogue business model will need to change as well, perhaps more dramatically than outlined here, making revenue and membership experimentation even more important as synagogues continue to inspire rich engagement in Jewish life. For many of us, change is confusing, even scary. The unknown can seem as though it will bring a situation worse than our current challenges. We have an opportunity in our experimentation to return to a sense of deep Jewish purpose and continue our age-old, inspiring, and relevant tradition — to grow in every sense. Abraham Joshua Heschel suggests, “There has perhaps never been more need of Judaism than in our time, a time in which many cherished hopes of humanity lie crushed. We should be pioneers, as were our fathers three thousand years ago.”¹ In our experimentation, we can be pioneers.

1 Abraham Joshua Heschel, “To Be a Jew: What Is It?” in *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), 8.

PART I: CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Introduction: The Landscape

In many ways, American synagogues and religious or spiritual communities — congregations — are more vibrant than ever. Clergy are compassionate, motivating, inspiring, and authentic in their presentations of how to live Jewishly in the 21st century. For some, synagogues are a place of sacred community.

Yet Jewish synagogue participation has decreased nationally alongside participation in American congregations of all denominations.² Moreover, many individual congregations are facing increasing and untenable membership attrition. This is true particularly since the start of the economic downturn in 2008. As the discretionary dollars of American Jews have decreased, American Jews have eliminated spending on discretionary items; and synagogue membership, it has been revealed, is discretionary to many.

Moreover, as the membership revenue of synagogues has decreased, the economic instability of a number of synagogues has been revealed. Some congregations had been using their reserves even when memberships were more stable; as membership began to decrease, these congregations dipped into their reserves even more deeply, and they did not have the funds to do so.

For almost all synagogues, membership requires the payment of dues, and these dues are the synagogues’ primary source of revenue. Most congregations use a flat dues system, where all congregants are assessed the same amount.³ (There are exceptions for nursery school families, younger adults, or older adults, for example.) If congregants are in need, then dues abatements are offered and congregants are asked to share tax returns or other proof of income and expenses in order to receive relief.

Sometimes, members face synagogue financial obligations in addition to their membership dues. Some communities ask members to pay for High Holiday tickets, events, or children’s programs like school, camp, or preschool. Often, congregations assess a building fee, particularly from new members who are asked to contribute immediately to the

2 Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 70–90.

3 Barry Mael, “Can Synagogues Live By Dues Alone?” *e-Jewish Philanthropy*, February 22, 2013, <http://ejewishphilanthropy.com/can-synagogues-live-by-dues-alone>.

building fund. Congregations also attempt to raise funds from congregants through annual appeals (particularly focused on Yom Kippur), auctions and other fundraisers, donations, and so on.⁴ Membership does not allow escape from these fees. The request for funds can seem constant.

“We do pay dues. And though we attend often and understand that dues are the present way in which synagogues are structured to work, it is a difficult check to write.”

American Jews confirm that their synagogues seem financially unreasonable. In a brief online survey sent using a snowball sample to a random, nonrepresentative sample of American Jews, individuals shared the following about the membership dues they pay. Their ideas are illustrative of the themes found throughout the survey responses.

- We do pay dues. And though we attend often and understand that dues are the present way in which synagogues are structured to work, it is a difficult check to write.
- I think it’s so expensive, and I threaten all the time to drop out as we’re not really getting enough bang for our buck. We want a place for the *chagim* [holidays] . . . that’s important. With small kids, evening programs don’t work, and because we’re not at the preschool or Hebrew school at the synagogue — we’re a bit on the outside.
- For years we paid “full” dues and realized after a job layoff that we were paying the same dues as those in our community with six-figure incomes, which we never had. We are middle income, always have been, and when faced with a reduced income, the synagogue reduced our dues. It was humiliating to give reasons why we couldn’t pay full dues, and we are expected to submit the same form year after year otherwise we will be assessed the “full” six-figure-income dues.
- I’d be more inclined to continue with the model and feel great about my dues if the synagogue environment itself was more focused on connecting members to one another, relationship building, and less retail Judaism . . . Fees for membership are too high. We in our shul have two rabbis, four

⁴ We mention the financial requests made of congregants only to provide a brief example of this kind of revenue collection. This research does not offer a comprehensive study of these requests that addresses, for example, the kinds of financial requests made of congregants, when they are made and for how much, why they are made, and so forth.

to five office people, many maintenance people, and constantly are expanding. The shul does too much and should cut back. Adding in seats and membership, the lowest possible cost annually for my family is around \$2,000 — too much.

- When my own brother asked me to justify paying dues for his synagogue in New Orleans . . . taking into account he does not have kids and still has to pay fees for programs on top of the membership fee — besides explaining operating costs, or that “it signifies your commitment to the community” or its “karma for me if you pay into the system,” I found myself struggling to come up with a meaningful answer.

These individuals pay synagogue dues but, for a variety of reasons, see synagogues as too costly or not worthwhile. They cannot afford the dues, and the process to receive relief is not compassionate. They receive little from their synagogue. Some have begun to see their membership dues as quid pro quo, where they are a consumer that should be paying what the synagogue is worth to them; others resent that their synagogue treats them like a consumer rather than a community member. Some see their synagogue as spending too much. Many likely do not know what the synagogue’s expenses actually are, as many synagogues do not have a process for sharing that information. In total, these individuals do not feel connected to their congregation, nor do they feel that their congregation is worthwhile. These individuals continue to pay their dues, but their payment is “a difficult check to write.”

“Membership is a really tough nut to crack. People in my world talk more about money than just about anything else. I don’t think anyone solved it.”

— Rabbi Noa Kushner
The Kitchen, San Francisco, California

For these reasons, perhaps, Rabbi Noa Kushner at the Kitchen in San Francisco, California, has summarized about synagogue membership dues, “Membership is a really tough nut to crack.” The landscape is filled with negative emotions, resigned synagogue memberships, and, for many, a lack of ideas about forward direction.

The Power of Synagogue Life

Yet synagogues cannot just go out of business. They represent the historic Jewish mandate to organize Jews into communities of support, worship, trust, and action. From Jewish tradition, we learn the potential of community. In death, we seek a minyan,

a community within which to mourn. We spend the days after death in shiva: we tell stories to others of those who passed, and we are greeted and cared for. On Yom Kippur, we accept responsibility as a people: we have become guilty, we have betrayed, the *Vidui* reads.⁵ When we are married, we say the special wedding blessings that are part of *Birkat HaMazon*, the *Sheva Brachot*, within a minyan; as a new house of Israel, we are welcomed into the larger community, where we learn that we are not alone. At their best, synagogue communities offer human connections and connections to God at such crucial times — times when we are most vulnerable and open to possibility.

Such connections are perhaps more important today than ever. Our world is increasingly fragmented. We once met one another for recognition, companionship, and support at a commons, the center of our towns.⁶ Today, we lack these places that interconnect and remind us of our values, giving us basic companionship and also helping us, through our relationships, to take responsibility for one another's well-being and act together for the greater good. Jewish life has always been focused on such spaces where we are recognized and valued for our gifts, where we give and receive support, and where we go from one to many, moving from individuals to a community, working collaboratively and interdependently to strengthen the world, our families, and our lives. Synagogues can achieve each of these goals, reminding American Jews that they are part of a larger, sacred whole. Through building individuals into communities and facilitating worship, synagogues can be the center of life's meaning, add to life's joy, help us be resilient in the face of challenges, and allow us to find the sacred.

At their best, synagogue communities offer human connections at crucial times — times when we are most vulnerable and open to possibility.

Synagogues are sources of social change. When they bring people together, they have the potential for tremendous power. Throughout America's history, Jewish religious leaders have been prophets and actors, critics of the social order and advocates of change. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel famously marched with the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.,

5 The *Vidui* is one of the central prayers of the Yom Kippur liturgy. *Vidui* translates to "confession," and in the *Vidui*, those praying use the liturgy to confess their wrongdoings, usually speaking in the plural ("We have betrayed") rather than the singular.

6 Laurent A. Parks, et al., *Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996).

noting that "his feet were praying"; but countless others also marched, preached, and sometimes risked their jobs for civil rights and to advance social good throughout history.⁷ In recent decades, change has come from the ground up as synagogues organize their members to accomplish policy change and to serve. The Union for Reform Judaism's Just Congregations project⁸ and Uri L'Tzedek⁹ are two national examples of how synagogues have become ways for individuals to take action toward justice locally.

Synagogues also mobilize American Jews to bring Judaism to life. About the importance of preserving Jewish tradition, Heschel wrote this 70 years ago:

There has perhaps never been more need of Judaism than in our time, a time in which many cherished hopes of humanity lie crushed. We should be pioneers, as were our fathers three thousand years ago. The future of all men depends upon their realizing that the sense of holiness is as vital as health. By following the Jewish way of life we maintain that sense and preserve the light for mankind's future visions.¹⁰

Heschel frames Judaism as not just relevant but also imperative. It is the framework through which we can understand how to heal the world, and it is the set of steps that can direct us to take action toward healing the world. It is daring but, as Heschel says, we can be pioneers. Judaism and its holiness and orientation toward responsibility are essential to the world's future vibrancy. Through community, and today through synagogue community, we live Judaism.

Synagogues bring us joy, connection, responsibility, and support. Synagogues deliver us from the mundane to the holy. Synagogues bring us into the outside world through Jewish tradition, helping us to face and act on the world's challenges. Synagogues act as a true and sacred third space, a place where, in our busy, on-the-go lives, we can stop and connect to other people, our own sense of purpose, and God.¹¹

7 Jonathan D. Sarna, *American Judaism: A History* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2004), 308–312.

8 "Just Congregations," Union for Reform Judaism, accessed May 7, 2013, <http://urj.org/socialaction/training/justcongregations>.

9 Uri L'Tzedek, accessed May 7, 2013, <http://www.utzedek.org>.

10 Abraham Joshua Heschel, "To Be a Jew: What Is It?" in *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996), 8.

11 The "third space" is a concept developed by Roy Oldenburg in *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons and Other Hangouts at the Heart of Community* (New York: Marlowe & Company, 1989). It refers to the places between the home and the office in which

The paper responds to the challenges of membership by focusing on the opportunities for synagogues to dramatically strengthen the roles that synagogues play in the lives of their congregants. By studying and adopting some of the practices outlined in this document, synagogue communities can grow stronger — and, therefore, Judaism and the lives of Jews can grow stronger.

Rooted in a fundamental belief in the value of Jewish tradition and synagogue life, this paper sets out to answer a set of intersecting questions. The simplest question we asked: Why has there been a decrease in the payment of synagogue dues? Knowing the potential that synagogue life can reach, we suspected this question hid others: How can it become more meaningful to be a synagogue member? Has the perceived value of membership changed and, if so, why? We began with the problem of membership attrition but came to ideas about synagogue purpose and vision.

This paper responds to the problem of membership attrition with a profound affirmation of the need for synagogues not only to be maintained but also to grow and thrive. It also responds to the challenges of membership by focusing on the opportunities for synagogues to strengthen dramatically the roles that synagogues play in the lives of their congregants. By studying and adopting some of the practices outlined in this document, synagogue communities can grow stronger — and, therefore, Judaism and the lives of Jews can grow stronger.

It should be noted that we intend for this piece to be useful for any Jewish spiritual community. In our research, we found that revenue challenges are uniquely felt by more established communities, but that communities across all denominations — synagogues, minyanim, *havurot*, independent communities — struggle with how to structure membership, require dues revenue in some way, and have something to learn and teach on this topic. We use the terms *synagogue* and *congregation* interchangeably; and when we use either, we mean a religious or spiritual community. We include the number of emerging communities that may not call themselves synagogues but that, like synagogues,

we stop for reflection and connection. Oldenburg describes these as cafes, bookstores, and other public places. Hayim Herring writes about the synagogue's potential to be such a space in "The Third Place," published on the Alban Institute's website at <http://www.alban.org/conversation.aspx?id=8062> (accessed April 26, 2013).

Methods of Gathering Data

Conducting this research involved a number of steps.

Interviews

We conducted interviews with those who have experience experimenting with synagogue purpose and membership structures. Interviews took place with varied congregational leaders — rabbis, executive directors, membership directors, and board presidents — of congregations both denominationally affiliated and independent and focused on several key questions:

- How are you thinking about the relationship between the synagogue's purpose, the concept of synagogue membership, financial revenue, and the dues structure?
- What should the purpose of the synagogue be, and how can that be expressed in the synagogue's revenue sources and expenditures?
- What conversations have you had within the congregation about this? What changes have you experimented with?
- What additional changes are you considering? What stops you from moving forward with any change?
- How have you moved from old to new?

Interviews also took place with individuals who have studied or worked in the area of membership from the organizational or academic perspective, focusing on these same issues. In total, we conducted about 25 interviews.

Reading

We surveyed a variety of articles, books, webinars, and blog posts that have focused on issues related to membership. These are drawn into the research when relevant.

Survey

We designed a survey of four open-ended questions to obtain ideas from congregation members and nonmembers, those who consider paying dues. The survey was shared through social media, via Facebook and Twitter, and through e-mail to the author's colleagues and friends and UJA-Federation of New York professionals, who were then encouraged to forward the survey to their colleagues and friends. This is a snowball sampling method, and while the responses have not been categorized to ensure they represent American Jewry more broadly, they offer examples of how some American Jews are thinking about membership.

gather people together for the purposes of worship, learning, support, and the living of Jewish tradition.

A Deeper Discussion of Challenges

For deeper analysis of challenges, see appendices A to D.

The economic downturn of 2008 was a catalyst that spurred individuals into ceasing synagogue memberships. It was only a catalyst, though — an incident that revealed commitments, feelings, and other factors or situations that were already in place, each of which shapes or complicates membership attrition.

Generational Attitudes

Increasingly, American Jewish attitudes have changed and become more hostile to synagogue life. (This is not only true of American Jews: religious attendance has decreased since the 1950s and early 1960s for all Americans.) The synagogue of the 1950s was the center of the suburban community, an experience that helped those developing suburban roots to become middle class. Baby boomers joined congregations but with different expectations; they wanted a more personalized experience, one that would reflect their spiritual seeking. Younger Jews — those in generation X and millennials — have extended their parents' interest in this personalized experience. They are religious but not necessarily interested in religion. Slow to marry and have children (and marrying and bearing children in fewer numbers than their parents), they are also often repelled by the very idea of synagogue membership. At the same time that they are avoiding synagogue membership, baby boomers are finding that without children at home, they no longer have a connection to their synagogues. Generational change alone is leading to membership attrition.

The Psychology of Money

Membership as a model of congregational revenue is complicated by the attitudes toward money that many of us bring to synagogue life, which can create an unpleasant synagogue culture around money. Catherine Fischer, director of membership and programming at Congregation Rodeph Shalom in Philadelphia, explains: "When people are talking around that [dues relief] table, they bring so much — they bring a whole childhood, they bring their fears, they bring their sense of worth. It's so sensitive." Yet many synagogues have not recognized that sensitivity. Some say that synagogue leaders look at their congregations and see scarcity, not abundance. There is mistrust between leaders and congregants around money, and a lack of shared values around the nature of economic fairness. As a result, synagogue leaders do not necessarily bring sensitivity to the process, and asking for dues relief can be "mortifying," in the words of one synagogue leader. The relationship between synagogue and congregant becomes transactional, rather than sacred.

Many synagogue bills, for example, come without any acknowledgement of the sacred relationship between congregant and community: no words of gratitude, or Torah, or community purpose.

Our attitudes, perhaps, make us less likely to talk about money in the congregation, and as a result, synagogues are not often transparent about finances. Few deliver annual reports that reveal how their funds have been spent and what has happened as a result of dollars given. As Reverend John Wimberly suggests, funds become a black box in which congregants do not understand how important they are in making this holy community happen, nor understand why their community costs so much.¹²

With complicated ideas about money and a lack of understanding of the synagogue's expenses and financial reality, congregants and synagogue leaders can and often do expect the worst of each other. The congregation comes to be in business transactions with members rather than in relationships with members, practicing values that are contradictory to, not in tune with, the sacred mission of the synagogue.

Inclusivity: The Role of Barriers

Synagogues remain highly oriented toward male–female, Jewish–Jewish, two-partner families. As a result, individuals who do not see themselves as part of this membership category walk away — individuals that include single adults, non-Jewish members of Jewish families, gay and lesbian potential congregants, Jews of color, and others. UJA-Federation of New York's Jewish Community Study of New York: 2011 demonstrates the extent to which Jews as a group are truly diverse, and that Jewish engagement for nontraditional populations is lower than that of white Jews in heterosexual relationships.¹³ The Jewish face has changed, but the congregation has not. And the more that these families and individuals do not participate in synagogue life, the more that synagogue life seems like something for only traditional Jewish families.

The inclusivity of synagogues extends to the emphasis they place on their congregants and participants being recognized while at synagogue. Too often, an individual slips into a synagogue service and then slips out, escaping without saying anything to anyone, without sharing his or her name or details about his or her day. Recognition comes in different forms, from being acknowledged by another to sharing one's name

12 John W. Wimberly, Jr., *The Business of the Church: The Uncomfortable Truth that Faithful Ministry Requires Effective Management* (Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 2010).

13 Steven M. Cohen, Ph.D., Jack B. Ukeles, Ph.D., and Ron Miller, Ph.D., *The Jewish Community Study of New York: 2011 Comprehensive Report* (New York: UJA-Federation of New York, 2012).

or story. Engaging in any of these actions allows an individual to become part of the community, to feel that they have invested a part of themselves in the space. Without these practices, the synagogue's efforts can be undermined, in a sense, emphasizing a participant's loneliness rather than helping him or her make a connection.

Brous emphasizes that when we look at our reality not out of a sense of loss but out of a sense of creativity, of possibility, we begin to imagine: “What can we learn from what we are seeing? What can we do to shift the trends?” A new reality emerges.

Fear of Change

Current membership policies often remain in place because they are known and comfortable. There is fear around the unknown — fear that any change will bring a threat, that change will facilitate the synagogue's losing battle to keep members, that change will lead to failure. Rabbi Sharon Brous calls this fear “an ethic of inevitability,” the belief that younger Jews are bound to ignore the synagogue for a while, the belief that they are “narcissists” who will “come back to Hebrew school when they need it.” She emphasizes that those who practice this ethic of inevitability believe “None of this is our fault. ‘They just don't get it, those younger Jews.’” In Brous's construction, fear keeps individuals inside of their current paradigms, inside their culture of scarcity and mistrust and away from change, which seems to lead to loss.¹⁴ Brous emphasizes that when we look at our reality not out of a sense of loss but out of a sense of creativity, of possibility, we begin to imagine: “What can we learn from what we are seeing? What can we do to shift the trends?” When we act not in an effort to protect the past but in a real exploration of what could be in the future, a new reality emerges — a better and stronger reality.¹⁵

These challenges — generational attitudes, the psychology of money, the role of barriers, and our fear — point to the need for a renewed demonstration of the purpose of synagogue life and a synagogue revenue model that is strongly aligned with the synagogue purpose, and therefore compelling. The next sections discuss ideas about purpose and related membership or revenue models, sharing lessons learned from an environmental scan of trends and accomplishments across the synagogue field as well as recommendations for a different future.

14 Sharon Brous, “Synagogues: Reimagined,” in *Jewish Megatrends: Charting the Course of the American Jewish Future*, by Rabbi Sidney Schwarz (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2013), 62.

15 Ibid.

PART II: IDEAS AND OPPORTUNITIES

“Start With Why”

For many congregants, the structure of dues and membership becomes the entirety of their relationship with the congregation, since they either pay dues but do little else with the congregation or are troubled by the dues system so much that it occupies their thinking about the synagogue. Yet synagogue dues and membership are an artifact of the synagogue, just one aspect of synagogue culture and a way for synagogues to collect revenue. They are a tactic, a means to an end — the end, or purpose, being Jewish celebration, communal support, spiritual growth, healing the world, and living Judaism in the best way possible.

To achieve maximal levels, an organization's tactics should be driven by its mission and its chosen strategies. More specifically, the mission — or an organization's purpose in the world — should define its strategies, and its strategies should define its tactics. Simon Sinek talks about this as a relationship between *why*, *how*, and *what*, and he notes that when organizations show a clear link between their mission, strategies, and tactics, the organization relates to its clients (or congregants) more authentically, and clients respond more fully.¹⁶ In synagogue life, the *why* is a synagogue's purpose. It might include the worship of God, the making of life's meaning, the release of pain and fear, the living of values, or the living of Judaism. Prayer, study, and home-based celebrations or observances like shiva and holiday meals are the *how*, the primary ways in which the synagogue achieves its *why*. Tactics like the religious school, adult education classes, and membership dues are part of the *what* of the synagogue.

As the challenges reveal, it is not clear that membership dues in their current form can best help the synagogue achieve its *why*. Yet the synagogue is still needed in the world. Individuals may be leaving the synagogue or deciding against joining not because they *reject* the synagogue's purpose but because they do not *understand* the synagogue's purpose; they might see membership dues as a tactic that actually contradicts the synagogue's purpose and makes it less welcoming and less affirming. What if synagogue membership structures actually advanced the synagogue's *why*? A synagogue's purpose can be directly related to its membership structure, with membership and dues models reflective of why synagogue leaders see themselves in business, these models part of the *what* that helps a synagogue accomplish its goals.

16 Simon Sinek, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* (New York: Penguin, 2009).

These models demonstrate that when the synagogue's purpose and revenue models match, congregants and constituents respond. Members understand the purpose of the community, understand what is asked of them, and give in response.

As we entered this research, the relationship between synagogue purpose and membership structure was a hypothesis. Interview respondents affirmed these ideas: we found that the more purpose-driven a synagogue and the more reflective its membership and dues models of its purpose, the more its members are engaged and the less attrition it experiences.

Models of Membership for Connected Congregations

Up to today, revenue models for many synagogues have been separate from their sense of purpose. The *why* of synagogues may have been around community and worship, but the *what* of synagogue revenue has focused on individual contributions because they are “due” to a congregation, because the congregation is owed these funds. As reviewed, generational attitudes and the recession have made this model no longer tenable. Those who are becoming Jewish adults today seem increasingly unlikely to affiliate in the traditional paradigm.

The more purpose-driven a synagogue and the more reflective its membership and dues models of its purpose, the more its members are engaged and the less attrition it experiences.

We offer three models of garnering revenue from synagogue members and participants, each linked to the synagogue's vision and purpose. In describing these models, we begin each not with its dues structure but with the synagogue's purpose and framework for involvement. Each description recommends that the revenue model help carry out the purpose of the congregation, and that the revenue model be woven into the cultural fabric of the congregation — in Rabbi Dan Judson's words, part of “who they want to be, who they are.” These models demonstrate that when the synagogue's purpose and revenue models match, congregants and constituents respond. Members understand the purpose of the community, understand what is asked of them, and give in response.

Mishkan: Each Member a Partner

In a mishkan, free will, or fair-share revenue model, congregations meet with each new member family to orient them to the community. Congregants enter into a covenant with the congregation and agree to be a stakeholder — a builder of the community. “Membership” consists of that covenant: being a member means being a stakeholder and builder. To build the community, congregants make all types of contributions that are not limited to a financial contribution. They have significant freedom to determine what their financial contribution to the synagogue will be. Annually, congregants and community leaders work together to determine the congregation's vision of Jewish life and how the community might advance that vision, and the congregant makes a pledge of contributions for the coming year.

Exodus tells us that when it came time for the Israelites to build and beautify the *mishkan*, a physical case for the Commandments, it was a communal effort. Moses directed all who were of a willing heart to donate to this project on behalf of everyone, and all stepped forward, men and women both. “Every one whose heart stirred” gave of their talents and their resources; the women who were “wisehearted” spun decorations, and the men brought gold.¹⁷ Members of the community worked together, each contributing to a community need. The community project could not have happened without each member.

Individuals become not members but true partners — and not simply financial partners. They are stakeholders, builders of their own community.

The current exchange of dues for membership connotes a passive paradigm of synagogue activity. Rather than all contributing from their hearts, a few operate the community while many support it with their dollars. Some communities use a different paradigm, one that resembles the building of the *mishkan*, with a dues structure that resembles more a model of contribution than a model of funds “due” to the congregation. The congregation is highly transparent and communicative, with frequent conversation about what is necessary to advance and facilitate the community. Every community member's contribution matters.

Synagogues that have experimented with this model of the *mishkan* often use one of two systems to generate revenue: a system of free will dues or a system of fair-share or income-based dues, both with a great deal of individual flexibility for the congregants

¹⁷ Exodus 35:25.

to choose the financial amount given and both fully voluntary (not assessed) by the synagogue. The finances donated to the congregation are part of a larger set of contributions that members make to help their community flourish. Individuals become not members but true partners — and not simply financial partners. They are stakeholders, builders of their own community. They give gifts of the hand and heart: their funds and their volunteerism.

Rabbi Rachel Nussbaum, who — with community partners — is building the Kavana Cooperative in Seattle, suggests that “to start with the money is backward.” Members’ engagement in the community should begin with “what does it mean to be part of a community; how do you construe community.” Then out of that conversation grows a conversation about the act of joining, so that joining becomes a way to build community and an act that represents affirmation of the interdependent nature of community and a member’s place in it. Together, partners, community leaders, and the rabbi build their *mishkan*.

“To start with the money is backward.”

— Rabbi Rachel Nussbaum
The Kavana Cooperative, Seattle, Washington

What does a *mishkan*-oriented synagogue look like? Its values and practices include genuine trust and collaboration, transparency and conversation about the synagogue’s health and needs, a culture of respect and generosity, an annual check-in and renewal of commitments, multiple contributions from community partners (or members), and plenty of choice and opportunities to opt in. For example:

- Synagogue leaders do not assume that those participating in the synagogue owe something to the congregation. Rabbi Debbie Hachen of Temple Beth-El Jersey City, New Jersey, emphasizes, “There is no money that is due to us.” Assessment of a certain amount does not occur; instead, a request for contributions is made, with recommended giving amounts. The recommended amounts might be based on income or based on the congregation’s average expenses for each member household.

“There is no money that is due to us.”

— Rabbi Debbie Hachen
Temple Beth-El, Jersey City, New Jersey

- The life of the community happens through joint efforts. Synagogues have staff, but each partner in the community contributes in needed ways. At Rabbi Nussbaum’s Kavana Cooperative, community partners might give from their professional skills, helping with strategic planning or data management, or they might volunteer in the kitchen. “The best community-building opportunities happen when slicing apples together,” Nussbaum emphasizes. At Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation in Bethesda, Maryland, members pledge to co-create two Kiddush lunches a year; they bring in vegetarian food for 50 people and work in the kitchen to setup and cleanup their community’s weekly lunch. It is a high point for members, according to the synagogue’s leader, Rabbi Fred Dobb. Dobb summarizes: “The check you send in with membership — it’s only one piece of a commitment you’re making to an ethos, an expectation. There’s this central, additional piece that people latch on to.”

“The check you send in with membership — it’s only one piece of a commitment you’re making to an ethos, an expectation.”

— Rabbi Fred Dobb, *Adat Shalom Reconstructionist Congregation, Bethesda, Maryland*

- Rather than receive an annual bill, community partners and leaders sit together annually to discuss their connection to the community and, in the case of Kavana, engage in their Jewish “check-up.” It is an opportunity to reflect on, revisit, and renew commitments, and it is done through an individual meeting, a conversation with a synagogue leader who can make a personal connection.
- When first becoming a community partner or stakeholder, individuals sign a covenant with the congregation, a recognition of their responsibility to participate in community activities and responsibilities. Often, signing this covenant implicates them to the less formal requirements of community, such as participating in shiva minyanim and celebrations, even of people whom they do not know well. It is also a more conceptual covenant. The covenant of Congregation Beth Jacob in Redwood City, California, reads: “As a member of CBJ, I hope to bring my best self, my talents, and my time to the task of building *kehillah kedosha* — a holy community for me, for others, and for the next generation.” With these words, Congregation Beth Jacob motivates the building of a *mishkan*.

- A *mishkan* congregation raises revenue from community members. The model, though, emphasizes the opportunity for an individual to contribute to his or her community, rather than the mandatory assessment the community makes of the individual. The contribution resembles a gift to a cause in which the individual believes, rather than a painful dues assessment. Rabbi Charlie Savenor notes the difference: “When I write a check to a nonprofit that I really believe in, I feel good about it. I’m not sure I know anyone who feels good about paying affiliation dues to anything.”

At Temple Beth-El, a free will system solicits individual gifts from congregants. The “*Terumah*” campaign — not a dues process — asks congregants to “look back at what you gave last year for dues plus Yom Kippur Appeal.” It then offers a target: the average funds per household it needs to collect in order to facilitate its desired programs and meet expenses. The *Terumah* brochure notes that after families look back, they should “then remember: we need to collect on average \$1,850 per household, single or family, to fully fund our operating budget without using reserves.” The congregation gives a recommended target gift knowing that members would otherwise have no way to estimate what is needed of them, and believing that members want to do what is needed. Finally, it tells congregants to use their own good judgment to choose an amount that they will give: “We know many households cannot reach that average. If you need to give less than the average, go right ahead. If you can give more than the average, please share your blessings.” The congregation reminds congregants: “You know how much you love this temple community. You know your own financial situation best. Please be realistic. Please be generous.” Even while a request is made, the choice of what to contribute is in the congregants’ hands. The synagogue’s leaders do not need to negotiate with congregants about their assessment. Time can be spent cultivating relationships.

The congregation gives a recommended target gift knowing that members would otherwise have no way to estimate what is needed of them, and believing that members want to do what is needed.

At Kolot Chayeinu in New York City, the congregation began with a pure free will process but found that congregants wanted more guidance. To acknowledge the varying resources of congregants, the synagogue developed a model where congregants voluntarily give a “fair share” of their income. Community leaders have worked hard for this system to be in

line with their ethos of contribution and an emphasis on each congregant’s importance to the community. So as to validate and include congregants with all kinds of resources, there are 15 delineated income ranges, the lowest range between \$0 and \$15,000 and the highest at more than \$500,001. The extensive membership and participation form offers these categories and asks congregants to place themselves where they see fit. The form also asks that congregants indicate when they will serve as synagogue greeters, work on different holiday celebrations for the community, give a *d’var Torah*, or teach a class; congregants indicate if they might join a working group on different community issues or host a house meeting. Congregants complete this form every year, and on it they indicate their financial “pledge” for the coming year. They offer no proof of income, nor do they need to ask for dues relief. The income guide is just that: a guide. In total, congregants offer a financial pledge that they believe in as part of a larger picture of what they will give that year to their community. They do so through a process that, again, emphasizes not the transaction of giving funds but the interaction around a congregant helping to make the community happen. President Cindy Greenberg explains that the process is “welcoming and embracing, and they can decide for themselves what’s manageable for them.”

At Congregation Shirat Hayam in Swampscott, Massachusetts, funds come second to a congregant’s engagement in the congregation. Rabbi Baruch HaLevi explains, “We open doors to Jews and put a price tag on it on the back end.” Shabbat prayer services and a weekly *Kiddush* lunch are free, as are various other activities that include alternative services, Torah yoga, study, and the opening “*boker tov* breakfast.” The intent is to create a vibrant community, a series of opportunities to engage in unique ways and then come together to celebrate, and to help those so far unengaged in Jewish life to be compelled by the content and people to participate. The congregation raises revenue from those already involved: “We ask people on the other side of the experience to contribute, which is more of an investment.” After “they go through the yoga minyan,” synagogue leaders ask, “Will you make a contribution?”

In truth, many synagogues operate in a similar way, with programs open to all. Shirat Hayam is unusual because of its expectations, language, and marketing. The synagogue proclaims near its online schedule of Shabbat events: “Attire is casual. We practice radical hospitality.” Barriers are down; everyone is welcome and expected to come regardless of membership; the synagogue serves all. The synagogue’s financial campaign talks about contributions from the heart: “Just as the original Temple was built with fixed dues as well as *nadiv lev*, offerings from the heart, so too

do healthy, growing modern synagogues need to be supported by dues as well as heartfelt offerings. . . . In short, the Lev Initiative will make it possible for our members and supporters to find areas in which they are interested . . . and, with their hearts, invest in their passion.” Shirat Hayam’s is a free will system that emphasizes participation, and then gifts and responsibilities.

Temple Beth-El and Kolot Chayeinu have benefited from their implemented revenue systems. Beth-El Rabbi Debbie Hachen believes that the number of members they attracted rose as a result, particularly because the system allows them to ask for an individual meeting with potential congregants, establishing a pattern of relationship and engagement as congregants begin their time at Beth-El. It also lets them say in that meeting, It’s okay if you do not have the capacity to join now; participate, give what you can, and we can revisit this next year. Younger members in particular were compelled to the congregation, likely as a result of this process and message.

In each of these cases, free will and fair-share revenue systems only raise so much for the congregation. Additional fundraising, often purpose-specific, is necessary, as are additional sources of revenue. Beth-El in Jersey City, for example, created a campaign focused on its building when it became evident that repairs were immediately mandatory in order for the building to continue being used; revenue to address building maintenance was not in its budget. Yom Kippur appeals continue, and High Holiday donations are requested.

Ultimately, the success of the free will or fair-share systems rests on nuanced, personal relationships with congregants, where they are involved in setting what they will give to the congregation in order to sustain the congregation. Their contributions are related not to a membership rule but to their belief in the health of their community. Within that fluid context, there is room for negotiation, experimentation, and conversations with congregants — or partners — about the synagogue’s fiscal situation. When this can happen, Judaism can mean more to congregants; the synagogue can mean more to congregants; and congregants can — as in the case of the *mishkan* — follow their hearts to give.

Journey: Each Participant on His or Her Own Path

In the journey model of community, communities comprise many separate opportunities in which any individual can choose to engage. Community leaders help those participating in à la carte opportunities grow in their Jewishness by connecting the opportunities in a larger Jewish journey. Communities generate revenue per opportunity, and individual decide opportunity by opportunity which will fit together to compose

their Jewish journeys. Communities do not impose membership in order to participate, and members and nonmembers are treated equally in the community. The journey model requires transparency about financial needs and community leaders eager to engage one-on-one with participants around their Jewish growth and interests.

Many American Jews put together their own Jewish experience, pulling from the events offered by different synagogues and organizations, participating in Purim services at their friends’ congregations and wanting the religious school for their children that is just down the street. They approach Jewish life on their own terms, working from what appeals to them. They feel little loyalty to one community because they participate occasionally in many communities.

Others are not ready to be contributors to congregations. They do not necessarily see the value in supporting Jewish community. Moreover, they approach community from a value perspective. They pay into a community expecting to receive a personal return, and they will pay into a community only if they perceive the opportunity for that return. When they pay fees for Jewish life, they are making purchases: even when they pay a membership fee, they are purchasing a bar or bat mitzvah celebration for their child, enrollment in school, or a wedding ceremony. One survey respondent expresses the relationship between products and membership fees well: “I know several families that want their kids to attend religious school but don’t send them because of the cost of the dues. They feel that it is too expensive, and they choose not to send their kids. You should be able to send kids for religious education without becoming a member of a synagogue, if that fits your needs.” The members she mentions seem to see synagogues as the purveyors of services, and membership as the entrance fee to purchase those services. Dues are not necessarily too high, rather they are more than these families are willing to pay for the product they want.

A second survey respondent echoes and adds to these ideas: “I’m not likely to live in the same city more than three years. [It’s] hard to make the investment in a community. I don’t need a cemetery plot, preschool slot, etc.” She declines to pay synagogue dues rather than support the synagogue for the sake of its role in the lives of people important to her — those in her community who are using “a cemetery plot, preschool slot, etc.” We can imagine that increasingly there will be only more similarly mobile individuals: emerging and older adults following jobs and curiosities around the country; baby boomers wintering in warmer climates. Many may feel loyalties to many communities, or to none at all.

Rabbi Daniel Gropper further complicates this scenario, describing a recent call from a father looking for his 12-year-old son to become a bar mitzvah in the coming year. The child's mother is not Jewish, and the family does not belong to a synagogue. Stories like these are rampant. Do synagogues turn these families away? Is the service of bar mitzvah not able to be purchased? The answers to these questions might be "yes," but it is significant, as Gropper explains, that "everyone isn't fitting into the cookie-cutter mold of joining when the kid is 7." How can we create a Jewish community model that involves families in this situation in Jewish life? How can we open Jewish life to as many as possible?

In contrast to the *mishkan* model, which intensifies the engagement of congregants in the community, Jewish community can approach Jewish life from the individual's perspective, removing barriers to Jewish life in his or her way. In this paradigm, journey making as a central task of a participant's Jewishness becomes elevated, with participants challenged to experiment with Jewish life, deepen their engagement, and find their way. The "Jewish journey" is now an active part of Jewish educational and communal work. Rather than seeing individuals as wanting "fee-for-service" Judaism, we can help individuals engage in Jewish life from their own starting points, and then help them cultivate their Jewish journeys. This model significantly depends on the strong Jewish engagement of individuals by rabbis and synagogue leaders — synagogues learning from best-practice engagement in use by Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life and the Jewish Outreach Institute. The journey model almost mandates the use of customer-relationship-management software to follow and record the Jewish growth of individuals, allowing a synagogue leader to understand how these individuals have engaged over time and, with good use of notes, how they have grown. With this model, the community's success is not measured by number of participants but by the increased Jewish involvement and connections of individuals.¹⁸ Ultimately, as they build relationships with synagogue leaders and explore Jewish life for themselves and their families, individuals can purchase Jewish services appropriate for their journey. Revenue for the congregation or community comes through these services.¹⁹

18 UJA-Federation of New York, working with Idealware, explored the potential use of customer-relationship-management software in *A Guide to Synagogue Management Systems: Research and Recommendations* by Elizabeth Pope, Laura Quinn, and Chris Bernard (New York: UJA-Federation of New York: 2013).

19 For a discussion of smart practices related to relationship-based engagement, see *Emerging Adults: The Hillel Model for Jewish Engagement* (Washington, D.C.: Hillel: The Foundation for Jewish Campus Life, 2010) and the Jewish Outreach Institute at <http://www.joi.org>.

To some extent, this model is not new for synagogues. Synagogues have long tried to act as a gateway to greater involvement for those wanting a Jewish product. In some synagogues, nursery school families do not pay membership fees and even have reduced tuition for school enrollment for younger grades. At the Community Synagogue of Rye, for example, families can enroll their children in the school until the third grade without paying membership fees, and High Holiday participation is now available to nonmembers with the caveat that those participating in these services should meet with staff so all can begin to know one another. Synagogues try to make connections, helping people move from one point of engagement to the next.

At the same time, synagogues often focus more on building community rather than on the individual Jewish growth of participants. Moreover, membership is often the primary paradigm offered for participation; events are marketed to members, not the community.

Pictures of emerging communities demonstrate how the journey model can work. The Kavana Cooperative in Seattle, Washington, has a philosophy of "partnership." However, Rabbi Rachel Nussbaum explains: "You don't have to be a partner to participate in anything that Kavana does. There is always a nonmember price, . . . and people put together an à la carte menu of what they want." The number of people who use Kavana as their Jewish community, dropping in and out and paying accordingly, is almost twice that of Kavana's partners. These individuals engage with Kavana on their own terms. Some participants "are pay-as-you-go participants for a few years and then become partners," says Nussbaum, when they become ready to be an ongoing part of building the community. Nussbaum notes, though, that there is no arm-twisting involved in partnership conversations. While she and Kavana are there as Jewish coach, support network, and inspiration, participants can remain pay-as-you-go. They are not overtly or repeatedly asked to become partners, even while partnership is discussed as a sacred model of Jewish community. Kavana leaders manage to elevate partnership as a concept without creating barriers to participating in the community as nonpartners. As a result, individuals are free to engage in Jewish life on their own terms. From a revenue perspective, the congregation is able to collect revenue from them when they do use services.

The Kitchen in San Francisco also offers opportunities to drop in as well as to join as members. The Kitchen comprises a series of opportunities: Shabbat prayer and dinner on alternate Friday nights, Shabbat services and lunch on alternate Saturday mornings, holiday celebrations, an Introduction to Judaism, and a children's school. Nonmembers can participate in any

of these and pay a fee, joining some or all of these opportunities.²⁰

At the Kitchen, even membership is à la carte. Appropriate to its journey-based philosophy, the Kitchen charges members not annual but monthly dues. Those interested in contributing to the Kitchen without calling themselves members, or who want to give something but not too much, can pay for a month or two without creating for themselves a significant financial or emotional obligation. It should be noted that while this flexibility exists, the Kitchen has not had “a lot of people dropping and joining and dropping and joining,” according to the community’s rabbi and founder, Noa Kushner. Instead, it seems that the psychological aspect of making a monthly choice to rejoin the community is important to some: they can walk away at any point if they want a new direction on their journey, which allows them to be in the community as members. The freedom allows them to be present.

Both Kavana and the Kitchen make significant space for those looking to drop into Jewish life and pay for what they perceive they use. They offer users a way to have a stake in the community and to test community and Jewish life, to explore Jewish life individually without needing to make a commitment that feels like too big a leap.

Hybrid

It seems possible that no Jewish community can be entirely journey-based. (While individuals can drop into any Shabbat service, how could fees be paid for each service?) Kavana and the Kitchen are, in fact, examples of hybrid models: communities that are focused both on the Jewish journeys of members and on building interdependent community, communities supported by membership and fee revenue. How does this work?

- Both communities keep barriers to participation as low as possible. Membership and partnership are opportunities but not requirements for participation; they are mentioned but not emphasized as mandatory to be part of Kavana or the Kitchen. Specifically, marketing materials that discuss membership emphasize participation without membership. The communities are clearly about Jewish celebration for all, not only for members.
- Both communities also stress that membership and partnership resemble the building of the *mishkan* and require contributions of all kinds from participants. Membership involves something more than just paying a fee. And it is implied that when individuals are ready, they can step into membership.

- When asked a question of value — what one receives for membership — the Kitchen website answers with both a fee for service and a *mishkan* response (see boxed copy on next page). The Kitchen finds a way to speak to the desire of individuals to purchase something but also emphasizes the importance of becoming part of a community.
- Both communities consistently note the fees associated with all programs, moving seamlessly between fees for members and nonmembers. For its Coffee Shop Shabbat, Kavana explains: “This program is free for partners, and we ask that nonpartners consider making a \$5 to \$10 donation to help cover the cost of the rental fee.” This statement is matter-of-fact and transparent: both partners and nonpartners are welcome, neither is more welcome, and it is made clear to nonpartners why they are asked to pay a fee.
- Most significantly, neither community mistakes a membership fee for the purchase of services. When individuals become members of the Kitchen or Kavana, they become investors in a community. If they want only a product that the community offers, they can purchase that product. This clarity is imperative to success: those who become members are those who value membership.

In sum, each community’s membership guidelines require thought and reflection. Both communities make space for individuals to become stakeholders in building the community, and for individuals to enter in and out of the community as they see fit. Together, these individuals make up the community of the Kitchen and Kavana. Members and nonmembers give different revenue and may feel differently about each community, but each community has space for both means of creating community connection, and all are treated the same. Members and nonmembers understand what each community is about and the community’s expectations of them — as members or as fee-for-service participants — and the community’s business can, as a result, focus more on Jewish life and less on transactions.

Most significantly, neither community mistakes a membership fee for the purchase of services. When individuals become members of the Kitchen or Kavana, they become investors in a community. This clarity is imperative to success: those who become members are those who value membership.

²⁰ Interestingly, members pay for most of these opportunities too, particularly when food is involved. This allows the Kitchen to cover its food costs.

Examples of Hybrid-Model Language

The websites of both the Kitchen and Kavana include language that offers clear examples of how to be a hybrid.

From the Kitchen's FAQ

What if I'm not ready to join? Can I still come to Shabbat?

Of course. We'd love to have you.

From Kavana's FAQ

Do I have to be a partner to participate in Kavana?

No. One of Kavana's core values is to welcome everybody, and you are invited to participate and to explore the community.

From the Kitchen's FAQ

What do you get when you join the Kitchen?

Yes, you get unlimited access to our now infamous Shabbats, first pick at those over-the-top feasts and holidays you've heard about, an opportunity to participate in our groundbreaking Freedom School, and a meaningfully modern approach to life cycle events from the cradle on up. Sure you get all that, but really, joining the Kitchen means stepping it up and connecting with a community of folks like you. We want people who can see where we're going and are willing to get us there. If you're ready to be counted in and counted on, this is for you.

What do you get when you join the Kitchen?

You get to build something that matters.

Additional Success Factors for Every Model

A community's membership and revenue models will be all the stronger when individuals understand the membership and revenue models, why the model has been chosen, and what it stands for in the congregation. The synagogue purpose and membership model are entirely consistent; members know in what they are investing and can explain why they are making this investment. The membership and revenue models become authentic, supported by the congregation's activities and language — part of the "cultural fabric," in Rabbi Dan Judson's words. This is a primary success factor for any synagogue's membership or revenue model.

A community's membership and revenue models will be all the stronger when individuals understand the membership and revenue models, why the model has been chosen, and what it stands for in the congregation.

There are additional success factors and opportunities to maximize congregational life — engagement and revenue collection — that help facilitate this authenticity, whichever membership or revenue model is chosen.

1. Be transparent about cost. As noted earlier, few congregations explain to congregants where their dollars go. Reverend John Wimberly, a coach to many churches and synagogues, emphasizes the importance of transparency in building a relationship with members. "Embrace the idea," he suggests, that congregants want to buy "services for the soul," and help them understand what these cost. He emphasizes: "We always hear people are doing bad things with money. Every day. No reason why they should trust us." He recommends moving to a cost-center budget model, with overhead and program fees allocated to congregational purposes: a synagogue might have a cost center called pastoral care, estimating the clergy members' time and expenses spent on pastoral care, and the cost of this care made clear alongside the purpose and role of pastoral care in the community. In this way, through its publication of expenditures, the synagogue can make evident what it does, why it does so, and what happens to a congregant's synagogue contribution.²¹

2. Create a positive, open conversation about money. At Congregation Dorshei Tzedek in Boston, led by Rabbi Toba Spitzer, conversations about membership and dues have begun with conversations about money. This began almost at the community's inception, but it is also a live conversation. Founding members crafted a values statement at the community's launch, including comments about the need for egalitarianism and the contributions of community members. This statement has always guided the community's decisions about funds. When Spitzer was hired as the community's first rabbi and dues were needed to support her salary, she expanded on that values statement to create a "Torah of money" process. Members of the congregation, including board members, studied a selection of texts about the role of money and

²¹ John W. Wimberly, Jr., *The Business of the Church: The Uncomfortable Truth that Faithful Ministry Requires Effective Management* (Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 2010).

economic justice in communities. When a group was formed to study and make recommendations about the dues process, six of its members had been in the “Torah of money” conversations, bringing a common language to the decision-making process. Rooted in that conversation, these leaders identified the values they wanted represented in their dues process, emphasizing an “inclusive” process that “included a representation of different folks, different interests.” When they had a recommendation — a fair-share dues structure based on the incomes of congregants — they brought their recommendation to a series of member meetings, where members studied Jewish texts together and then discussed the recommended structure. From within a process of values clarification, congregants could consider the importance of money to their sacred community, and so could think about their financial responsibilities to their community.

Ultimately, Dorshei Tzedek chose a combination of free will and fair-share revenue models, with a basic membership fee of \$100 and a sliding scale above that offering income-based recommendations for additional dues payments. Dorshei Tzedek also conducts a “*Nadiv Lev*” campaign that asks for “offerings of the heart,” or donations, from congregants. More than two-thirds of the congregation participates in this campaign.

In talking about reasons to make money transparent, Rabbi Shawn Zevit discusses our emotions around money, particularly the fear that we often bring to such conversations. He emphasizes “abundance and faith” over “scarcity.”²² He challenges congregations to ask:

- Do we discuss money issues in an ongoing way in our faith community, or only when we are in financial crises?
- Where in our congregational or organizational system do we deal with money openly, and where only when there is a real problem?
- Do we feel trust in our leadership and their allocation of funds, or do we question how money is being taken in and spent?

Resolution of these questions are the keys to open and productive conversations about congregational resources, which can lead to congregants feeling positively about their financial contributions.

22 Shawn Israel Zevit, *Offerings of the Heart: Money and Values in Faith Communities* (Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 2005), xiv.

3. Practice radical hospitality. Being warm and welcoming has long been part of congregational rhetoric, and many congregations work hard on being welcoming. Radical hospitality, though, takes these ideas further. Radical hospitality “brings people closer to each other, community, Judaism, and God,” says Rabbi Ron Wolfson. Radical hospitality asks that synagogue leaders love guests. The practice suggests that every single person participating in the community has the chance to be recognized, engaged in conversation about their story, and invited into something more, no matter where they came from or what brings them to synagogue. In a place of radical hospitality, all feel comfortable reaching out to offer something or ask a question; and the focus is on the content of what is happening, not on who belongs and who does not.²³

Yet, boundaries — preventing non-Jews from joining, using gendered language on membership forms, asking single adults to pay the same as two adults, or asking for an exception to the rule — continue to put obstacles in front of potential congregants. There is a direct relationship between the emotional feeling of being part of the community and congregants’ feelings about the dues they pay.

Radical hospitality in relation to membership attrition or engagement involves a congregation’s interfaith work. While Jewish law and tradition continue to guide their work, some congregations have found ways to create membership categories for non-Jews, even while they continue to hold a different status in the congregation. After a lengthy study process, Beacon Hebrew Alliance in Beacon, New York, has created a “*mishpacha* membership” for non-Jewish relatives of Jewish congregants. Elaine Hofstetter, chair of the community’s study process and a congregation member for more than 40 years, suggests: “Because of way things are, of changes in families today, families are participating differently now. When my daughter was young, we didn’t have as many non-Jewish spouses participating, even if they were in the congregation. . . . We wanted to make sure that they feel welcome. It never dawned on us that they didn’t feel welcome. But it was clear that this was a better way of doing things.” Co-chair Alison Chi explains that while her husband does not want to convert and is not interested in praying with the community, this is his central community, for which he has even organized cultural events. They are “happy to pay for a community in which he participates,” and felt uncomfortable that he engaged in the community independently and with his family but not as a member — not on equal footing with others. Making

23 Ron Wolfson, *The Spirituality of Welcoming: How to Transform Your Congregation Into A Sacred Community* (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2006), 50–52.

legitimate space within a membership framework for individuals who already participate as members do adds integrity to the concept of membership.

Radical hospitality with non-Jewish partners is a first step toward changing the boundaries of Jewish community. Communities similarly need to make their membership structure feasible for partners in LGBT relationships, those raising children on their own, and those in other types of Jewish households. In an effort to erase these boundaries, Kolot Chayeinu uses individual memberships, not household or family memberships. Any adult can join the community, and in the case of a family with two adults who each want to be members, each must join separately. This feeds into the community's *mishkan* model of engagement, where each individual member pledges time, talents, and resources as part of a personal membership.

Language around membership and membership practices also matters deeply. Congregation Rodeph Shalom in Philadelphia has a director of membership and programming, Catherine Fischer, who focuses on shaping the culture of the congregation to become genuinely welcoming. Fischer works to build a membership culture that leads to high recruitment, the active integration of members into the synagogue community, and high retention. In her experience, many have seen synagogues as “country clubs: unless you have a lot of money you can't be part of it, and if they make an allowance for you to be a part of it, it's a humiliating experience, which are already two values which are not part of what we're about.” In response, she is leading efforts to help Rodeph Shalom adapt all of its materials and processes to assume the best of congregants and potential members, thank them for their investment in the community, and engage them as human beings in Jewish life and their Jewish community. In her ideal, the “membership commitment” that congregants make — the congregation's language for dues — will be “a profound connection.” Fischer explains that “this should be a holy mission for people”; they should “feel that they are a vital piece of the community, and the congregation should have language that expresses that.” Fischer meets with members and potential members of the congregation to talk about the synagogue's purpose and life. She describes her conversations this way: “What I'm trying to do is hear everyone's story and bring them in with a sense of honor and *kavod*. They come in here, and they feel like this is their home, and they feel like part of this family. They think, I feel safe here: what I'm contributing to is valued, and I understand where my money is going. It's going to support the values of this institution.”

Fischer also spends significant time working with synagogue leaders, including those in the development and finance committees, to help them understand

how to adapt to a welcoming culture and to change the synagogue's operations to be more welcoming. She is working to avoid congregants thinking, “I feel so good about the process — and then I receive my bill, and I feel like a pea.” She emphasizes, “We should be thanking people in every interaction we have.” Ultimately, she says about potential members and members who resign: “Where there is skepticism, our job is to build a relationship, convey our vision, and be true to it every step of the way. When you do that, people will respond well. They're dying for us to succeed and to be what we say we are.” In Rodeph Shalom, as a result of Fischer's efforts and the synagogue's work, energy is high, member engagement has increased, membership has increased, and the congregation's vision, values, and membership culture are aligned.

4. Make the purpose of the congregation clear and compelling. Many congregants join congregations that are down the street or where their children's friends are enrolled. The purpose and culture of the synagogue — or how synagogues might differ from one another — do not come across. Congregants do not understand the opportunities for them in the congregation, what is expected of them spiritually, or how the congregation can help them grow and live a vibrant Jewish life.

When congregants believe in a synagogue's mission, they can respond to a clear congregational purpose, engaging in programs that seem compelling and supporting the congregation. Congregation Shir Ha-Ma'alot, in Irvine, California, is an example of a congregation with a deep purpose and matching program. Its purpose can be encapsulated in its “four Ms”: making memories and remembering the Jewish past; engaging in mitzvot; making meaning together and feeling better than when they first came to the congregation; and becoming *menschen*, or good people. A congregation with a mission this specific and deep might not attract all Jews in the neighborhood. However, because the congregation makes it clear what it is, congregants can understand what they are investing in when they become members. Moreover, rather than simply investing in a congregation or even a building, members can invest in and advance a vision of Judaism, a way of living and engaging with tradition.

Membership and engagement work is more authentic and, therefore, easier in a congregation with a deep and clear vision, where the vision responds to the needs and stories of congregants and the synagogue's activities and materials are aligned with the vision.²⁴

24 This idea is a significant finding described in UJA-Federation of New York's report *Vision and Data: Essential Building Blocks for Synagogue Change* (New York: UJA-Federation of New York, 2012).

5. Build a relationship-based congregation. In interviews, congregational leaders agree that even when an individual states a lack of funds as their reason for leaving the congregation, the primary reason they leave is loneliness. A synagogue president explains: “Every complaint I get about Temple, regardless of what the presenting problem is . . . Everything is about ‘I don’t matter here; I thought I mattered, I thought you cared for me, and you don’t. I am just a faceless, nameless congregant . . . and the only time you care about me is when I’m late paying my dues.’” The counterpoint is equally true, as Rabbi Daniel Gropper’s explains: “Who are the people that stay? People who have friends here. The key just is making relationships.” The essence of Jewish community is the connections we make with one another. In Martin Buber’s framework, God is found in the relationship.²⁵

The essence of Jewish community is the connections we make with one another. God is found in the relationship.

Relationships need to be cultivated. Congregations have experimented with varied strategies in helping to create connections. At Congregation Emanu-El in San Francisco, congregants participate in *havurot*, small neighborhood-based communities, in a program called “Emanu-El in the Neighborhood.” *Havurot* meet for havdalah ceremonies, Shabbat dinners, and holiday events, and each *havurah* is led by a neighborhood liaison who becomes for congregants another primary relationship at their synagogue. At Shir Ha-Ma’alot, similarly crafted *havurot* meet around interest areas: sports, or study, or life-stage-related conversations. Congregations take on the project of connecting with each congregant. At the Community Synagogue of Rye, Rabbi Daniel Gropper says that board members each have a group of congregants they reach out to twice a year. He explains that they “hold on to that list,” and each board member comes to “feel responsible for those people.” Similarly, when Allison Fine became president of her congregation and was presented with dues and revenue challenges, she responded not by moving to change the amount of dues paid but by creating an initiative in which board members call congregants simply to wish them a happy new year. Fine writes about this process:

Every board member was given a list of congregants to call immediately before the High Holydays. The purpose of the call was to wish everyone a happy, healthy New Year and thank them for being members

25 Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Scribner, 1970).

of our congregation. That was it. We didn’t ask them to do anything or give anything. We just thanked them. During many of the calls there was a pause while congregants waited for the donation request, but there was none. It was energizing for board members to hear how happy people were to receive the calls and gratifying for congregants to hear that their continued membership in our community is greatly appreciated. Of course, there were a few complaints, but not a significant number of them, and we need to hear them anyway so we can try to fix them. But, overall, people were very happy to receive the calls.²⁶

At Temple Israel of Boston’s Riverway Project, something as simple as sharing names and neighborhoods during all formal activities has been central to the activities. Learning one another’s names opens conversations, which builds relationships, which builds connections both in and out of the synagogue, which ultimately builds Jewish life.

Ultimately, synagogue life must rely on and facilitate these kinds of connections, and a congregant’s synagogue experience can become relational, rather than transactional.

We all want to be recognized in the deepest of ways. Rabbi Ron Wolfson summarizes this well: “[I]t is this notion of trust that is the reward for the investment in building relationships with others. You trust that your dearest family and friends will be there with you in good times and be there for you in bad. You trust that the challenges you encounter in life will not be faced alone. You know that those who know you, who have shared life with you, who love you, will be there to offer support, comfort, care, and help. For those who believe in a power beyond the self, the reward of being in relationship with God is similar. A reciprocal relationship with God, rooted in the notion of mutual covenant, can give a sense of assurance . . . The ultimate payoff for investing in relationships with others and with The Other is the knowledge that you are not alone.”²⁷

These kinds of relationships are a product of synagogue life. Ultimately, synagogue life must rely on and facilitate these kinds of connections, and a congregant’s synagogue experience can become relational, rather than transactional.

26 Allison Fine, “The Networked Nonprofit: A Prequel” (November 2012 unpublished case study available at <http://www.allisonfine.com/2012/11/08/the-networked-nonprofit-a-prequel>), 10.

27 Ron Wolfson, *Relational Judaism: Using the Power of Relationships to Transform the Jewish Community* (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2013), 44.

Increasing Revenue, Decreasing Consumption

A synagogue's membership structure cannot be the only source of revenue. The synagogues described here, both those experimenting with new dues systems and those with a more traditional dues model, rely on other revenue streams to meet their expenses. Synagogue leaders note that whatever the future of membership, dues cannot provide for 100 percent of the funds that congregational leaders choose to spend. Synagogues will need to find a way to increase revenue in other ways.

A primary way in which some synagogues have begun to raise revenue is through financial resource development. While larger synagogues often have directors of development and development practices — mechanisms for soliciting and acknowledging donors — medium and smaller congregations often do not have such practices. Rabbi Daniel Gropper notes that in these smaller congregations, the responsibility for fund development is not clear: "We need to do a better job of telling people, This is a place where you can invest your charitable dollars. Whose role is that? That's a challenge. Is it the board? The E.D.? They're up to their eyeballs . . . Is it the senior rabbi? That confuses the relationship a little bit. . . . We have incredible wealth and means, but we don't do a good job asking for money." Allison Fine adds that the clergy needs to be retrained, that their previous emphasis on teaching and study should transition to include teaching and study but focus on management, fund development, and pastoral care.

At the same time, campaigns like Dorshei Tzedek's *Nadiv Lev* make it clear that annual giving already plays a significant role as a means of building community and raising funds, and that every gift from a congregant at any level can be important. With creativity and an approach that emphasizes a collaborative building of the community, fund development can work.

Revenue can come from outside streams as well. Rabbi Baruch HaLevi at Congregation Shirat Hayam in Swampscott, Massachusetts, suggests that the financial model of the congregation will have to change in the future if congregations want to do significant outreach, spending resources before participants are ready to contribute. "The traditional dues model doesn't come close to being enough," he says. Shirat Hayam is experimenting with approaching its work from a revenue perspective. Rather than employing an executive director, the congregation has hired a CEO who has experience with entrepreneurship and startup organizations. Board members are encouraged to approach their work as they approach their businesses, maximizing revenue opportunities while being true to the

synagogue's purpose and mission. HaLevi has built relationships with local homes for older adults and is streaming prayer services into these homes; a corporate sponsor, someone with a grandparent in one of the homes, is now interested in contributing to the project, and HaLevi is hoping that the senior homes also contribute toward this service. HaLevi notes that synagogues have a number of businesses they can develop into revenue-generating opportunities — catering, for example. He suggests that there is a way to raise funds for Jewish life by exercising and spreading Jewish values, and that reshaping revenue is the future of synagogue life.

At the same time that synagogues can create new revenue streams, they can lower their consumption and their expenses. Rabbi Hayim Herring has called for synagogues to merge resources, close buildings, and ultimately recognize that each synagogue's large and ornate building may be an artifact of a previous era. Rabbi Fred Dobb has also experimented with lowering consumption at Congregation Adat Shalom. The building is dark on Thursdays, saving expenses and also lowering its carbon footprint. As part of the education program, congregants offer learning opportunities several days during the year, which saves the congregation part of its teacher salaries, involves congregants in unique ways in the community, and makes valuable connections between congregants and students. Raising revenue and lowering consumption asks synagogue leaders to "be inspired to challenge assumptions," in Rabbi Baruch HaLevi's words, about how synagogue life operates, about which aspects of synagogue life are necessary to purpose and which can be shifted or gone without. Working on revenue begins with examining the alignment of resources with vision: Do tasks, activities, programs, and projects help the synagogue achieve its purpose? Are they focused on membership engagement?¹ Many synagogues were built during the 1950s, when American congregations were overflowing, or earlier, when American Jews were demonstrating to other Americans their capacity to contribute to their community. Today, we may need different models through which synagogues conserve resources, focusing on products and services offered rather than beautification and productivity. Less may be more.

1 Alignment of synagogue purpose and expense is discussed in UJA-Federation of New York, *Vision and Data: Essential Building Blocks for Synagogue Change* (New York: UJA-Federation of New York, 2012).

Building Connected Congregations

In its membership models, revenue frameworks, and emphasis on factors for success, this paper presents a picture of a certain kind of congregation: the connected congregation, where members become engaged in synagogue life — and, therefore, in Judaism — because they connect to the synagogue’s vision and purpose, others in the congregation, and the clergy, and the synagogue builds their Jewish journey and their Jewish engagement or exploration. In a connected congregation, engagement in Jewish life is rooted in these connections. The pieces are interconnected: the *why* drives the *how* and then the *what*. As a result, “dues” evolve into something else, with a different language and a different structure, and membership connotes real stakes in the synagogue’s health and happenings. Congregants benefit from and are responsible for the congregation’s connections.

This is a strong vision. Getting to and implementing this vision is an evolving process. Vice President of Membership Scott Roseman at Temple Beth El of Aptos, California, calls his congregation’s free will dues system a “stopgap.” He asks that we “move away from membership as a concept,” suggesting it’s “the wrong concept for a place of spirituality. It shouldn’t be based on ‘You’re a member of a club.’” Leadership at Kolot Chayeinu explains that they are moving into their next phase of membership planning, where they will ask: Does membership matter? What does it mean for us? In a comment on a blog post, Kerry Olitzky suggests that the synagogue begin to turn itself inside out, serving not a small, select portion of the community but the community itself. The synagogue business model, in Cindy Greenberg’s words, will likely need to change as American religious life changes, making revenue and membership experimentation only more important as synagogues continue to inspire rich engagement in Jewish life. The models themselves are not from Sinai, but we have an opportunity in this experimentation and in a return to our purpose to continue our age-old, inspiring, and relevant tradition, from Sinai on. The *what* might change, but the *why* remains the same: the living, in Rabbi Rachel Nussbaum’s words, within a “collective” and “an identity with thousands of years of weight” and deep relevance today.

The Practical: A Summary of Steps

Congregational leaders have a number of recommended practices and pieces of guidance when engaging in this work.

Foremost, leaders note that membership experimentation is a continual effort, not a quick change to be made. Catherine Fischer of Congregation Rodeph Shalom in Philadelphia emphasizes: “This isn’t, ‘Okay, we’ll be done in a week.’ . . . It is an ongoing thought process. . . . How does membership commitment become part of our vision? How do we

create this membership commitment piece to be a profound connection?” The project needs to be thoughtful, intentional, and driven by values, receiving continual attention, the revisiting of goals, evidence of progress, and work on changes that can be made to be more effective. This attention must happen through listening to congregants; the essence of any community, they are the most critical source of feedback.

Similarly, to prepare for this kind of work, congregational leaders recommend:

Emphasize purpose. Strengthen your sense of purpose and how this is communicated as a congregation. Study what congregants want from and how they think about the congregation. Consolidate programs: focus on what you want to be, and help give congregants that experience. (For more on this, see UJA-Federation of New York’s *Vision and Data: Essential Building Blocks for Synagogue Change*.)²⁸

Change the conversation about money. Study and talk together as a community. Create house meetings with a focus on Jewish texts about giving and a focus on difficult conversations about money. In Congregation Dorshei Tzedek, the 18-month “process was more important than the product.”

Change the conversation about membership. Look at artifacts related to membership. How are the values of the congregation expressed on the bill or other artifacts? Do these artifacts express gratitude and connection? How else can you talk about the role that members play in making the community happen?

Build and strengthen relationships. Before revenue transition can occur, connections must be made among congregants and between the congregation and congregants.

Meet with congregants to understand their ideas about giving to the congregation. Ask them: What might you give in a different dues situation? What would you be comfortable and uncomfortable with?

Create an inclusive study team. Recruit congregants who are more and less engaged in the congregation, with greater and fewer resources, to look into revenue and partnership models for the congregation.

Create a safety net. Recruit families who might help in a transition.

28 UJA-Federation of New York, *Vision and Data: Essential Building Blocks for Synagogue Change* (New York: UJA-Federation of New York, 2012).

Hold member meetings before and when a transition plan is chosen. Study the sources together. Talk together about money, dues, synagogue engagement, and purpose. Use these meetings to engage the congregation.

Consider staff changes. Study membership director or engagement positions, and consider how such a position or responsibilities would strengthen your congregation's work.

Make expenditures and revenue transparent. Hold an annual meeting to answer questions and talk about materials sent to the entire congregation.

Explore questions. What is “due” to you? Why are these called *dues*? What does it mean to be a member in your community? Why is membership — the category of belonging — important in your congregation? What do partners in your community accomplish? Why is your synagogue important? What purpose does it fulfill? Why does it matter?

Take your time. A process of change is itself a community-building process. Change happens over a decade. Begin to shape your community's story about the role each congregant plays in the community. Study and talk together. Become stronger as you learn from and about one another and your community.

Appendix A — More About Generational Attitudes

The American synagogue membership structure may have begun in the first decades of the 20th century, but it grew and solidified mid-century, in the context of the conservative 1950s, the Cold War, and suburban development. Specifically, congregational membership grew from 49 percent of the adult population in 1940 to 69 percent of the adult population in 1960.¹ The suburbs evolved around congregations, with congregations serving as the center, or the commons, of these new communities. The “Greatest Generation,” the generation that fought in World War II, led this wave of membership, seeing congregational participation as a sign of American identity and as a non-negotiable obligation to their community. For those who were creating the American suburbs, joining the congregation was de rigeur, what their peers were doing, and it was an act of egalitarianism. All were starting from a similar place — a similar house, a similar income, a similar pattern of commuting home from the city — with the same opportunities and the same obligations. Joining a synagogue was part of becoming equal to others.

The decades since this high point of congregational membership have created texture within this

religious or spiritual practice that followed their individual interests, easily switching denominations and settings.² *Havurot* were born out of this seeking and the desire of baby boomers to recreate Jewish worship according to their values and priorities. Many boomers learned an antipathy toward institutions as a result of their experiences during the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, and other change movements of the 1960s and 1970s.³ They joined congregations perhaps because of their parents’ pressure but also because they still prioritized their children becoming b’nai mitzvah, and synagogues were the primary vendors of this experience. Today, as they age and their children leave home, baby boomers are dropping their synagogue memberships. With decades of life left before them, they feel compelled to make changes and are more free to follow their current interests, which do not include their congregations.

Their children, primarily generation X and millennials, show even less loyalty to community. These generations are interested in religion and spirituality in even lower numbers: in 2009, almost 25 percent of first-year college students did not attend any

Understanding Generational Attitudes Toward Religion and Congregational Membership⁴

Greatest Generation	1901–1924	Led the nascent congregational membership in America.
Traditionalists	1925–1945	Followed their parents into suburban congregations and membership.
Baby Boomers	1946–1964	Joined congregations in lower numbers than their parents; now dropping congregational memberships.
Generation X	1965–1982	More interested in religiousness than in religion; has a distrust of institutions. Entering marriage and childbearing late in life.
Millennials	1983–2003	Still in emerging adulthood and determining adult patterns. Religious, but in even lower numbers than their parents.

⁴ Adapted from Neil Howe and William Strauss, *Generations: The History of America’s Future, 1584 to 2069* (New York: William Morrow, 1991); Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace*; and the author’s own work.

egalitarianism, and within communities more generally. Traditionalists, those now in their 70s and 80s — inherited their parents’ attitudes toward religion. But baby boomers came of age during the turbulent 1960s and 1970s. Many boomers developed an interest in religion and spirituality, but they were seekers eager to experiment and pull together a

¹ Robert D. Putnam and David E. Campbell, *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2010), 86.

² Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1994); Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace*, 91–133.

³ Mark Oppenheimer, *Knocking On Heaven’s Door: American Religion in the Age of Counterculture* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2003). It should be noted that a small number of Americans learned the opposite during this period: they were drawn to institutions and authorities, developing commitments to more strict religions in an effort to fight the liberalism of the day.

congregational services in the past year; in 1965, that number was around 8 percent. The number of those indicating no religious preference increased by 200 percent in the same period.⁴ Those who do have an interest in religious or spiritual activity, who are seeking meaning and purpose, often do not see synagogues as a place for their exploration; they are religious but without an interest in organized religion.⁵ Or they drop in and out of religious activity, their lives taking them from one place to another, from institution to institution. As they move throughout the country, changing jobs, building new communities, and testing identities, joining seems a sign of unfamiliar permanence. Sixth & I Historic Synagogue in Washington, D.C., offers a prime example of this pattern: at least one Friday night a month, the sanctuary fills primarily with twenty- and thirtysomethings, often those who have participated in Taglit-Birthright Israel and have come to see their friends. Some find their way to one of Sixth & I's two rabbis, who teach classes, offer pastoral counseling, and serve as Jewish coaches for those finding their way into adulthood. The faces are different each week and each month. The constant is the synagogue, rather than the synagogue community. Sixth & I asks only for participation from these individuals, knowing that barriers such as membership will simply stop its population from participating.

Today's population that is most ripe for synagogue membership are members of generation X and millennials, who are in their 30s and 40s. Additional aspects of their lifestyles and personalities lead them to join congregations in fewer numbers than their parents.

Generation X and millennials are marrying later (sometimes by a decade) than their parents, and they are having babies later or not at all. Synagogues, however, rely on children to draw individuals into synagogue membership. Vicky Farhi explains, "Congregations got into the habit over the last 20 years of viewing life cycles as a reason people will engage." In recent decades, synagogues have procured members by linking membership with religious or Hebrew school and bar or bat mitzvah celebration. American Jews have continued to be interested in bar and bat mitzvah, which has required religious training and a rabbi. Individuals join congregations when their children come of age — as do their Christian counterparts around their own life-cycle events — and when their children are finished with the bar or bat mitzvah cycle, parents drop their membership. Now, younger American Jews

are marrying and having children later or not at all. As a result, they will become members of a congregation later in their lives and, possibly, for less time.

"The question is, how to change the conversation. How do we go from being a place where people drop off for religious school and go for the High Holidays to a place where people enjoy learning, where there is a cultural connection?"

— Vicky Farhi
Union for Reform Judaism, New York City

Many believe that the idea of paying membership dues is "anathema to the younger generation," in Reverend John Wimberley's words. Rabbi Rachel Nussbaum suggests that, particularly for this generation, membership seems "arm-twisty . . . ridiculous, begrudging, coercive"; younger Jews hear membership as being a quid pro quo: "You have no interest in being part of a community, no relationship with the rabbis, but you need to join the synagogue to use the preschool." It is a message of "you have to buy in or else," in Nussbaum's words, while for older adults, "this is the way it is." Younger adults see other preschools and other communities as having possibility for them. The Jewish preschool is valued less. They are happier to walk away than to pay a meaningless synagogue membership, subvert their values, and participate in an "unseemly" process.

This is complicated by the fact that in larger Jewish communities, it is now feasible and perhaps easy to purchase Jewish services à la carte, particularly a child's Jewish education and bar or bat mitzvah preparation. One can engage fairly deeply in sophisticated ways in Jewish life without paying a membership fee or engaging with one specific community. The marketplace is changing, and many younger Jews who are less interested in membership will likely prefer this new marketplace.

These generational attitudes and trends suggest that membership attrition may be an inevitable part of synagogue life as it is structured today. Certainly, synagogue involvement for many seems to rise and fall with generational attitudes and with the involvement of a family's children. Vicky Farhi suggests: "The question is, how to change the conversation. How do we go from being a place where people drop off for religious school and go for the High Holidays to a place where people enjoy learning, where there is a cultural connection?" She asks: Can we help people become interested in synagogues, regardless of their ideas about membership?

4 Putnam and Campbell, *American Grace*, 124.

5 Richard W. Flory and Donald E. Miller, eds., *GenX Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2000); Tom Beaudoin, *Virtual Faith: The Irreverent Spiritual Quest of Generation X* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000).

Appendix B — More About the Psychology of Money

The synagogue dues system was not, as scholar Rabbi Dan Judson has said, handed down “from Sinai.” It developed as an egalitarian way of funding synagogues as the centers of community. Research on the history of the dues model is still evolving, but it seems evident that such a model was a reaction to a system where seats were sold and those willing to pay the most could purchase their status as defined by the seating chart. During this time, seats were like “season tickets, where the best seats were purchased by those with means,” according to Judson. There was a moment of transition, of urgency, where the seats-for-sale system evolved into a dues system that was seen as more desirable: rather than purchasing a specific seat, which dictated power, individuals could pay an equal amount and each receive an equal reward — “membership” in the synagogue. These concepts, then, both of synagogue dues and synagogue membership were invented, and they were invented recently.¹

The synagogue dues system was not, as scholar Rabbi Dan Judson has said, handed down “from Sinai.”

At the time, the dues system seemed egalitarian, particularly as suburban synagogues grew through the joining of young families. All were in a similar financial place and so all could be assessed equally. Today, we know this is not the case. Allowances to the system are made, for example, for the very young and the very old. However, these allowances, too, are not equitable: the very young may have sold a startup, and a 50-year-old may have children in college and parents to support. Congregations make other allowances for those needing “relief,” but this process can be, as described by one synagogue leader, “humiliating.” Vicky Farhi calls the process “anywhere from awkward to mortifying”: “Normally, you’re in the system. You pay your dues, you get your tickets, you register your kids for religious school. . . . Then, you just lost your job. You were making a quarter of a million dollars before; you have a mortgage, car payments, a kid in high school and a kid in college. . . . You want to stay in the synagogue. The first thing they ask you to do is fill out a form: Why do you need relief? Can you attach your tax return? And then you have to talk with somebody about how you can only pay \$18 to \$20 a month.” A survey respondent

commented similarly: “I’ve requested and received dues adjustments when my family has been in difficult financial circumstances; however, it’s embarrassing to have to ask.”

In addition, many synagogue bills come without any acknowledgement of the sacred relationship between congregant and community: no words of gratitude, or Torah, or community purpose. Even with the relief process, as congregational leader Allison Fine says, “Getting billed for being part of a congregation doesn’t feel good in any way.”

“Getting billed for being part of a congregation doesn’t feel good in any way.”

— Allison Fine, President
Temple Beth Abraham, Tarrytown, New York

Moreover, the very act of billing, being billed, and collecting dues has led to synagogues acting as collecting agencies, and to some congregational leaders seeing their congregants with distrust. Receiving a bill with a mandatory building assessment and no words of thanks from the congregation can seem, in Rabbi Fred Dobb’s words, like a scene in a Coen brothers movie: a farce of synagogue life. Allison Fine explains, “Synagogues have not always looked out at their congregations and seen kind, generous people . . .” Synagogue leaders are placed in the position of judging congregants, and vice presidents of membership spend their time, in the words of one congregational leader, “hondling,” or negotiating, with congregants rather than strengthening their connection to the congregation.

Some leaders see the entire dues process as lacking integrity. How can congregational leaders decide fairly who will receive an abatement, who will not, and how much they should receive? In addition, some families apply for relief while other families in the same situation might not apply. A survey respondent confirmed this: “I have been granted reduced dues at previous shuls in consideration of my being a rabbi. I’ve also found shuls flexible in the amount they actually require. On the one hand, this is very welcoming; on the other, it makes the whole dues figure seem like a fiction (as all such ‘tuition’ payments ultimately are) and can be disconcerting.” On the synagogue side, the process does not feel productive or seem like the right conversation to be having with stakeholders in their community. Allison Fine asks: “When families ask for special relief, are we having a conversation about the pain that family

¹ Ideas shared here are from a January 2013 interview with Rabbi Dan Judson in the Union for Reform Judaism webinar “New Models of Membership,” viewable at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UFL0b_edpRw&feature=youtu.be.

is in or the state of their finances? In other words, are we acting as agents of loving-kindness or as the IRS?”²

Finally, synagogues are not often transparent about finances. Few deliver annual reports that reveal how their funds are spent and what happens as a result of dollars given. As Reverend John Wimberley suggests, funds become a black box in which congregants do not understand how important they are in making this holy community happen, nor understand why their community costs so much. UJA-Federation of New York has found this to be true as well. In its Sustainable Synagogue Business Models pilot project, where the satisfaction of members with their synagogues was correlated to a variety of synagogue practices, it was found that member satisfaction and Jewish growth are related to a member’s sense that the synagogue “manages its budget effectively.”³ Those who were unhappy with their synagogue believed that the synagogue did not manage its budget effectively, proving the opposite of the “black box” truth. The more congregants understand and are brought inside, the more satisfied they can be.

Rabbi Shawn Zevit’s work on the cross-section of money and synagogue life describes how loaded ideas and processes related to money can be.⁴ He talks about the power of money to heal, such as when it serves as a contribution to a worthy cause, but also about the power of money to hurt, such as when it elevates an individual’s status for unclear reasons. American society is promised to be equal, a great melting pot where each has the opportunity to reinvent him- or herself. Yet how much money each of us has creates clear status markers and awards power to those who have been successful in raising money. For many of us, money serves as a cause of significant anxiety, no matter how much we have. We tend to see it as ours, and we see those who are trying to take it from us almost as the enemy. Often, our choices related to how we spend our money are quite personal. We do not talk about our salaries or our spending, even though there is great diversity among our spending patterns and we could learn from how each of us interacts with money, lessen power dynamics through transparency, and find support in one another.

Catherine Fischer, director of membership and engagement of Congregation Rodeph Shalom in Philadelphia, feels this in her work: “When people are talking around that [finance] table, they bring so much: they bring a whole childhood, they bring their fears, they bring their sense of worth. It’s so sensitive.” Yet many synagogues have not recognized that sensitivity. Fischer continues: “The response has been very black and white — this is what you pay; this is what you get. The person coming to you is bringing this very vulnerable side”; but, in her experience, synagogue leaders respond with a “culture of intolerance” and even disrespect.

All of these ideas underlie our conversations within our congregations about money. When congregants ask for dues relief, they bring ideas, hopes, and anxieties about money to the table, as do those from the congregation who are granting — or not granting — the relief. In addition to these feelings, there is the very real power imbalance between someone asking for something important to them and someone with the opportunity to say yes or no. Perhaps this is why congregational leader Scott Roseman describes the process his wife went through as a “horror story.” Before they were married, without any experience of congregational life, she became connected to a synagogue. After a few instances of participation, she asked about membership; hearing the amount required for dues was both shocking and untenable, and so she asked for dues relief. She was “given the third degree” about her finances. She walked away. This was her first synagogue experience.

Ultimately, the ideas that we carry about money make it important to create a transparent process where we can talk openly about our values and ideas. More significantly, we need to change the congregation from being in business transactions with members to being in relationships with members. Farhi asks: “How can we create a values-based process where people . . . invest what they can in the congregation? . . . The first thing should be engagement and the second thing should be finances.” Congregational president Stephen Rennick also emphasizes that there must be a way to integrate the membership process with Jewish values. With the current process, he suggests, we’re “actively living a value that’s counterintuitive to synagogue life.”

2 Allison Fine, “The Networked Nonprofit: A Prequel” (November 2012 unpublished case study available at <http://www.allisonfine.com/2012/11/08/the-networked-nonprofit-a-prequel>), 10.

3 UJA-Federation of New York, *Vision and Data: Essential Building Blocks for Synagogue Change* (New York: UJA-Federation of New York, 2012).

4 Shawn Israel Zevit, *Offerings of the Heart: Money and Values in Faith Communities* (Herndon, Virginia: The Alban Institute, 2005).

Appendix C — More About Inclusivity: The Role of Barriers

Increasingly, synagogues are hearing from congregants and potential congregants that the synagogues are too oriented toward male–female, Jewish–Jewish, two-partner families. Membership policies reflect this orientation, with gender used on membership forms and synagogues unprepared to work with nontraditional families. When individuals do not see themselves within the membership categories, they walk away.

A primary example of this is membership policies that allow only the Jewish partner to join. As Alison Chi explained, she was a “newbie” to synagogue life. With a non-Jewish partner, she “was shocked that he was treated as a non-entity.” They joined their synagogue regardless, and he became involved in a variety of aspects of congregational life, planning cultural events and attending services, even though he did not participate in prayer. Alison and her family remained in their congregation. However, for countless others, regardless of the *halachic*¹ appropriateness, these membership policies simply do not resonate with their multicultural lives where all are equal.

UJA-Federation of New York’s Jewish Community Study of New York: 2011 documents the diversity of Jews and Jewish life in New York. About half (52 percent) of the study’s respondents were found to be married.² The percentage of respondents that suggested there was someone in the home who identified as LGBT was 5 percent,³ and 12 percent of responding households included someone who identified as non-white.⁴ Jewish engagement for each of these populations was found to be lower than Jewish engagement for white Jews in heterosexual relationships. The Jewish face has changed, and new Jewish faces and families not only do not see themselves reflected on membership forms but also do not see themselves in sanctuaries. The more that such families do not participate in synagogue life, the more that synagogue life seems like something for traditional Jewish families only. Warm and welcoming

messages are conveyed by many systems, from the people in the synagogue, to the language used by the synagogue, to the activities chosen by the synagogue school, such as picture books and family trees.

The warmth of synagogues extends to the emphasis they place on their congregants and participants being recognized while at synagogue. Too often, an individual slips into a synagogue service and then slips out, escaping without saying anything to anyone, without sharing his or her name or details about his or her day. Recognition comes in different forms, from being acknowledged by another to sharing one’s name or story. Engaging in any of these actions allows an individual to become part of the community, to feel that they have invested a part of themselves in this space. Without these practices, the synagogue’s efforts can be undermined, in a sense, emphasizing a participant’s loneliness rather than helping him or her to make a connection.

1 “Halachic” refers to *halacha*, or Jewish law. Some synagogues have drawn from Jewish law and custom to create guidelines for many roles that congregants play in the synagogue.

These guidelines suggest, for example, that only Jews can be members of the congregation, can vote on congregational issues, can be called to the Torah during the synagogue’s Torah service, can give or receive a blessing during a prayer service, and so on.

2 Steven M. Cohen, Ph.D., Jack B. Ukeles, Ph.D., and Ron Miller, Ph.D., *The Jewish Community Study of New York: 2011 Comprehensive Report* (New York: UJA-Federation of New York, 2012), 64.

3 *Ibid.*, 247.

4 *Ibid.*, 21.

Appendix D — More About Fear of Change

Current membership policies often remain in place because they are known and comfortable. There is fear around the unknown — fear that any change will bring a threat, that the synagogue is losing a battle to keep members, that the synagogue will fail. One congregational leader tells the story of “being at a bar mitzvah . . . and hearing from a young person there, a graduate of their temple’s program, that she had told a board member that she went to Chabad sometimes while at college. ‘Why, because it was free?’ he snarled at her. She replied, ‘No, because it was joyous.’ ” This congregational leader thinks that the deep emotion of fear drove this board member’s response: fear that young people will leave a system that ensures that their synagogue — an institution whose fiscal and organizational health board members have slaved over — will endure. “They are the keepers of the flame,” this leader explains. “This is a generation of folks for whom life is seen through a scarcity lens. As they get older, things seem to get scarcer and scarcer, and as that happens they get angrier and angrier.” They become entrenched, frustrated with those they see as cheating a system they abided by their whole lives, believing that if others only followed this system, all will be fine. “Look at all the money we’re leaving on the table,” they exclaim, and they run to collect, pushing people away as they do.

Rabbi Sharon Brous adds more insight to this phenomenon. She calls this fear “an ethic of inevitability,” the belief that younger Jews are bound to ignore the synagogue for a while, the belief that they are “narcissists,” who will “come back to Hebrew school when they need it.” She emphasizes that those who practice this ethic of inevitability believe “None of this is our fault.” ‘They just don’t get it, those younger Jews.’ ” In Brous’s construction, fear keeps individuals inside of their current paradigms, inside their culture of scarcity and mistrust and away from change, which might lead to loss.¹

Brous emphasizes that when we look at our reality not out of a sense of loss but out of a sense of creativity and possibility, we begin to imagine: “What can we learn from what we are seeing? What can we do to shift the trends?” A new reality emerges.

1 Sharon Brous, “Synagogues: Reimagined,” in *Jewish Megatrends: Charting the Course of the American Jewish Future*, by Rabbi Sidney Schwarz (Woodstock, Vermont: Jewish Lights Publishing, 2013), 62.

Loss is a possibility: When a synagogue changes its membership systems, it could result in uncertainty from one year to the next. It may be hard to know what revenue will come in during the first year of the new system. Beloved programs could be cut. It is not easy to commit to an uncertain future. Our fear, though, is leading to a reduction in ideas about what is possible, and leading to a denial of real societal change. Our fear results in more members walking away, rather than growth and new opportunities for our congregations. Brous emphasizes that when we look at our reality not out of a sense of loss but out of a sense of creativity and possibility, we begin to imagine: “What can we learn from what we are seeing? What can we do to shift the trends?” A new reality emerges — a better and stronger reality.²

Rabbi Aaron Bisno has promoted the idea of “courageous conversations,” the kind of conversations that ask us to step through our typical behavior, identify unarticulated ideas at our cores, and work with others on these ideas — even without knowing the answers in advance and even within the context of uncertainty. Bisno pushes working together:

Are we so committed to outdated paradigms and our own institutional egos that we would sooner perpetuate what Sigmund Freud referred to as the “narcissism of small differences” than partner with our neighbors for the betterment of our community as a whole?³

In other words, can we focus more on how to enrich our product and better reach our goals, rather than protect our institution at all costs? “When fear is employed, facts are incidental,” Simon Sinek writes.⁴ Our environment has changed, threatening not just the vibrancy but also the very existence of our institutions — but our fear entrenches us in our assumptions about how synagogues have always worked. We ignore the facts out of fear that if we change, we will let down the institution we love.

2 Ibid.

3 Aaron Bisno, “It’s Time for a Courageous Conversation,” *e-Jewish Philanthropy*, May 8, 2011, <http://ejewishphilanthropy.com/itstimeforacourageousconversation>.

4 Simon Sinek, *Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action* (New York: Penguin, 2009), 21.

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