

IMPORTANT - PLEASE READ

Joining and supporting the Shaarai Torah Family... a New Approach



To be sure, when you join a shul, especially when you join Congregation Shaarai Torah West, you get more than a Jewish community, you also become part of our family. Together we celebrate the holidays, we observe special occasions like birthdays, anniversaries, and yahrzeits. In addition, we are there for each other in the best of times and in the most challenging of times. At Shaarai Torah, we also have the opportunity to be part of something bigger than ourselves. We are the only Modern Orthodox synagogue (affiliated with New York's Yeshiva University and the Orthodox Union) in the greater Worcester area. Thus, we help complete the full spectrum of religious affiliation in the local Jewish community.

That Membership or support also includes maintaining our old and revered building on Pleasant Street and the services of Rabbi Yakov Blotner who is always ready, willing, and able to lead services, read Torah, teach, and help our members and all others in the community.



Since mid-Spring, the COVID-19 Pandemic has turned our worlds upside down. No one and no institution have been immune to the challenges, including our shul. A number of our members have risen to the occasion, extended themselves to financially help the shul beyond their normal level of giving while others have, in turn, needed some help from us.

This has led us to reevaluate how we ask our members and friends to support us while removing all barriers to membership. This year, we are introducing a new way of supporting our shul:

Rather than fixed dues rates based upon categories of membership, our Congregation will now rely on a voluntary system of support we call Terumah.

In the Torah, **TERUMAH** indicated a "free-will" offering, not a required one. Your Terumah is your membership pledge, an annual voluntary financial commitment that is used for our operating budget.

(over)

Terumah has no singles/family dues distinction. It is not based on how many in a household are active at the shul, or how often they use it. It is based on how much one's heart is moved to strengthen, celebrate, and grow Jewish life at Shaarai Torah and a household's own financial capacity.

Allowing members to set their own financial commitment opens the doors even wider to all, regardless of financial situation. We ask that everyone share their blessings and be as generous as possible, but at the same time, everyone gives as much as they are able, and no one need ask for reduced dues.

How should I determine my voluntary commitment to Shaarai Torah?

We suggest that you look back at what you gave to the shul this past year, evaluate your own capacity to share your financial resources and be as generous as possible. Consider that in a small congregation like ours every contribution is essential. Please keep in mind that while our dues levels have remained the same for at least a decade, at \$250, \$500, and \$1000, this year you can ask yourself; "Can I increase last year's dues by 10% or 20%? Should I remain at last year's amount? Or, should I donate a new amount which makes me more comfortable? The choice is yours and please know that all support of the shul will be very much appreciated. For those renewing members and supporters, we request you make your **Terumah** (pledge and payment) before the High Holidays on September 18th.

For so many reasons, Shaarai Torah needs and values your support and presence. We are thankful for every member or supporter in our congregational family and hope you will be a part of it.

Sincerely,

Bernie

Bernie Rotman

Board Chair,
Congregation Shaarai Torah West