

What is Nadiv Lev?

And why do we ask Kadima members to consider a monthly Nadiv Lev offering?

By Rabbi David Basior

This spring (2016), we have been engaging in conversations with Kadima members around Nadiv Lev - a gift of the heart. What is Nadiv Lev? What are its origins in Judaism? And how does Nadiv Lev sustain our Kadima community?

Having left the narrow place behind, the Israelites traversed through the wilderness toward Sinai. They received the law *לפי כחו* (*l'fee cocho*) - personally, and according to their means, ability, and strength. And there they counted the omer - the days toward the revelation of Torah at the mountain.

And at Sinai, they learned their new instructions - in service not of Pharaoh, but of a “higher calling.”

They were told to build a sanctuary. They were to clear away sin, injustice, and disconnection in order to bring about the presence of G-d on Earth, or, as Reconstructionist, we might translate this as a call to create community in harmony with eternal values. Through doing this work collaboratively and accountable to one another, we, like our spiritual ancestors before us, can create sanctuary here and now.

And how. In June 2016, the Kadima members approved a radical change in membership policy to align the doors of our gates with our values. Previously, Kadima had been in line with the style of a majority of US Jewish communities asking prospective members to buy in with an ask of 1.5% of one's annual income as membership dues. This had been the prevailing model for at least seven decades of American Jewish communal life - one that began with the intention of inclusion, though in a new era, now falls short of this value in practice. Thus, we reconstruct.

The new, approved membership model created a single, annual membership of \$36, and in addition asked Kadima members to give a Nadiv Lev, a gift of the heart, according to their ability.

- 1) The new membership model reflects our core values: **No one should ever be turned away for financial hardship** from belonging to our Jewish community. **We ask everyone to give thoughtful consideration of their financial resources** - in making a decision to give to the community. **And no one should endanger their own health or wellbeing** by sharing their resources.

Here's how this membership model works:

Membership: **The Half-Shekel offering of \$36/year for each individual adult member.** Everybody counts. Their presence adds to the community. We ask that members of Kadima join with a flat membership fee of \$36/year. If one cannot afford a \$36/year membership fee, we ask they email office@kadima.org for request of a membership fee payment plan or waiver. This flat fee is modeled off of the half-shekel that the Israelites would contribute in order to be counted in the community (Exodus 30:15).

Nadiv Lev offering: a meaningful contribution based on ability, generosity, and need. From a place of vision, inspiration, and generosity, we ask that members of Kadima contribute a meaningful monthly financial offering beyond the flat annual membership fee. We request that the amount of this monthly offering be based on what they can afford, modeled on the nadiv lev offering - a monetary and physical resource ask of the Israelites to

give with a “generous heart” when they were charged with building sanctuary after their Exodus from Egypt (Exodus 25:2). In biblical times, this was everything from the Israelites’ gold nose rings to the dolphin skins (that they happen to have left Egypt with?) to acacia wood, and all of the financial and resource gifts it took to literally build the structure that created Sanctuary. At Kadima, we do not have an expensive edifice (thank G-d), but we certainly do have a *structure*. Paid staff, an office where they work, brilliant faculty, food for community building, space rental when needed, ritual materials, library resources for learning, and more. These are the physical resources that make up the *structure* of the project of sanctuary at Kadima.

Today, the single largest part of Kadima’s income, by far, is Nadiv Lev. So we ask you to consider what gift you can give - the equivalent of 1.5% of your income? More? Less? Nothing now, but perhaps something later? Every gift is welcomed and put to good use in building our sanctuary.

And we also ask Kadima members to consider making monthly Nadiv Lev gifts, which you can do easily through our website. Monthly giving - or predictable annual giving - allows us to plan and budget for the future.

Chochmat Lev offering: Your time, skill and labor. Everything we do requires volunteer support - communication, shlepping, cleaning, organizing, cooking, teaching, music making, membership care, governance, community relations, event planning, creating beauty, and more. Our ask for a contribution of time and skill is based on the model of a chochmat lev offering - a gift of time and wisdom asked of the Israelites to build sanctuary (Exodus 35:25).

As we seek liberation, we look to the models of the past and reconstruct accordingly. Asking of our community to create a sanctuary for ourselves, each other, and for all who may enter, may we be inspired to give generously, that we might say: “the people are bringing more than is needed for the tasks entailed in the work that Adonai has commanded to be done.” (Exodus 36:5) Let us build a sanctuary, so that Liberation may dwell among us all.