COMMUNITY FOR POSITIVE CHANGE
By Eden Pearlstein & Rabbi Avi Katz Orlow

PSHAT
There comes a time - This song was written in 1985 to raise money and awareness about the deadly famine in Africa. When the world must come together as one - The project brought together a racially and religiously diverse group of stars in the music industry to work together and make a powerful statement about a pressing humanitarian issue. This resulted in the creation of a community of artists unified by a common cause to make positive change. There are people dying - Following decades of civil war, a severe famine struck Africa in 1983-85, claiming over half a million lives. And it's time to lend a hand - Quincy Jones sent a personal invitation to every musician that read: "In the years to come, when your children ask: 'What did mommy and daddy do for the war against world famine?', you can say proudly, this was your contribution." So let's start giving - Sales from the song generated $63 million in humanitarian aid; as well as inspired countless others to give in their own ways. Send them your heart - In addition to all the money raised, the song itself sent a message to those starving in Africa that they were not alone, they were part of a larger community who cared about them. When you're down and out - When it's you alone, things can seem hopeless. A change can only come - Humans are communal by nature. We have mirror neurons that allow us to experience empathy and compassion. "The way mirror neurons likely let us understand others is by providing some kind of inner imitation of the actions of other people, which in turn leads us to (inwardly) 'simulate' the intentions and emotions associated with those actions" (Marco Lacoboni, neuroscientist). We need each other; we are stronger together; we truly are interdependent. Community is key to our survival. Awareness and funds for various issues. There's a choice we're making - We each have the power to choose to make the world a better, more just and loving place, or the opposite: "Today I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; choose life so that you and your children may live" (Deut. 30:19). We're saving our own lives - We are each unique, a world unto ourselves, and yet, we are all part of something bigger. This is the essence of community: seeing the plight of others as our plight and the success of others as our success. This leads to cooperation rather than competition. When you're down and out - "A prisoner cannot free himself from prison" (Talmud, Brachot 5b). According to this teaching, we all need others to care about us and help us out of our own problems and predicaments. When we stand together as one - This is an evolutionary survival call for the human community to come together in order to address the many (often human-initiated) disasters or threats we are facing. Indeed, our inability to function as a compassionate collective may be our very downfall, especially given the capacities we now have for destruction, as well as building and healing. This sentiment is echoed in an ancient Jewish teaching: "All of Israel are responsible for one another" (Talmud, Shavuot 39a); as well as in this contemporary call to community by Rabbi Zalman Schachter Shalomi: "The only way to get it together, is together."