

## 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, Shevuot 39a); as well as in this contemporary call to community by Rabbi Zalman Schachter Shalomi "The only way to get it together, is together."

## DRASH

**We Are the World** - was a global rallying call from the community of American musicians (United Support of Artists (USA) for Africa) to respond to a specific situation at a specific time. However, the power of smaller, focused groups of people coming together to support individuals in need and tackle larger issues is a primary message of the song, that holds true in general across time. According to cultural anthropologist Margaret Mead: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only

thing that ever has." This song is a powerful echo of that sentiment, and a testament to the power of individuals to make meaningful change when they are united under a common cause. **There comes a time** - A sense of urgency, and the delicate balance between individuality and community is echoed in a well-known Rabbinic saying: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am only for myself, what am I? If not now, when?" (Pirkei Avot, 1:14). **There are people dying** - The sanctity of human life is beautifully expressed in this powerful Rabbinic statement: "Whoever saves a single life is considered by Scripture to have saved the whole world" (Sanhedrin 4:5). **We are the world** - This evocative refrain, which is the cornerstone of the song and encapsulates its core message of community, is a radical statement of existential unification and trans-self-identification, which is beautifully

## WE ARE THE WORLD

By Michael Jackson & Lionel Richie

There comes a time when we heed a certain call  
When the world must come together as one  
There are people dying  
And it's time to lend a hand  
To life — the greatest gift of all  
We can't go on pretending day by day  
That someone, somewhere will make a change  
We are all a part of God's great big family  
And the truth — you know  
Love is all we need  
We are the world, we are the children  
We are the ones who make a brighter day  
So let's start giving  
There's a choice we're making  
We're saving our own lives  
It's true we'll make a better day  
Just you and me  
Send them your heart so they'll know that someone cares  
And their lives will be stronger and free  
As God has shown us by turning stones to bread  
So we all must lend a helping hand  
When you're down and out, there seems no hope at all  
But if you just believe there's no way we can fall  
Let us realize that a change can only come  
When we stand together as one

echoed in the Kabbalistic saying: "Adam olam katan, olam Adam gadol / the human is a small world, the world is a big human." **So let's start giving** - Since the original song was released in 1985, it has inspired numerous other attempts at creatively-based community fund-raising: from the updated "We are the World 25 for Haiti" in 2010, responding to the disastrous earthquake in Haiti, to many smaller scale online iterations that all bring together communities of artists and fans to raise