

Shira Jones, DC Beit Midrash, DC JCC, 6 June 2011, EREV Erev Shavuot

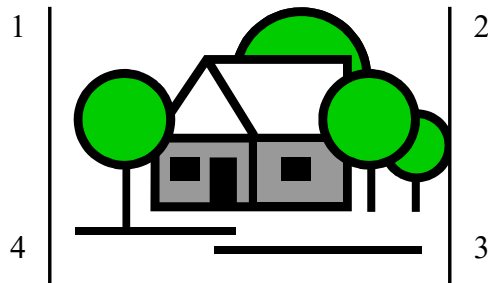
Community is built pillar by pillar, and the 12 Tribes become a Community, Klal Yisrael, on Shavuot via four pillars.

What do you think of when you hear the word “Community”?

Discuss with your neighbor and share your ideas on Community. (Pairs talk 5 minutes, 7 minutes to share...)

Draw a MIND MAP...

What image represents Community to you?



1. Na'aseh ve Nishmah: {Laws = formal rules; Minhagim = informal norms}
1. Rewards and consequences of unity and cooperation vs. separation from the community: {holding the mountain over our heads}
1. Consensus based buy in from all of the people: {*Every* Jewish Neshamah was there}
1. Intergenerational endurance: {from the Morning Brachot: “Elohai neshamah she natata bi tehora hi” and the soul each of us was given was also present to say “Na’aseh ve Nishmah”}

Looking more closely at the sources of each of the four pillars:

1. The first comes directly from the written Torah, and draws some interesting commentary from Rashi:

**7. And he took the Book of the Covenant and read it within the hearing of the people, and they said, "All that the Lord spoke we will do and we will hear."**

**ז. ויקח ספר הברית ויקרא באזני העם ויאמרו כל אשר דבר יהוה נעשה ונשמע  
ספר הברית: מבראשית ועד מתן תורה ומצות שנצטוו במרה**

(Shemot - Exodus - Chapter 24

taken from [http://www.chabad.org/library/bible\\_cdo/aid/9885/showrashi/true](http://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/9885/showrashi/true)) with apologies for backwards Hebrew text...

(My poor Rashi translation, corrections welcomed):

***Book of Creation From the Beginning until the Giving of Torah and the Commandments, we were***

*commanded in “bitterness”??*

Could this refer back to Rashi’s comments regarding “Yom *haShishi*” in Bereshit 1:31, in which one of his alternative suggestions is that the word Ha in Ha Shishi refers to THE 6<sup>th</sup> of Sivan, or Shavuot, as the 6<sup>th</sup> day referenced by the text, and adds that from the 5<sup>th</sup> day of Creation until the giving of Torah, the world had not been fully completed? Why or how could this be, and why would community acceptance of Torah be necessary to complete a physical act of creation? Thoughts?

2. Coercing cooperation? Well, [Rabbi Jill Jacobs](#) points out that:

*According to the Bible, at the moment of revelation, “[the people] stood underneath the mountain.” According to the traditional interpretation of this strange biblical locution, God uproots Mount Sinai from the ground and holds it over the people, saying, “If you accept the Torah, fine; if not, here shall be your grave” (Talmud, Tractate Avodah Zarah 2b). The implication seems to be that the Jews accepted Torah only through coercion. The Rabbis eliminate this possibility by insisting that the people said “na’aseh v’nishma” before the revelation. Further emphasizing the voluntary nature of the Jewish submission to God and Torah, the Rabbis teach that the Jews accepted the Torah again at the time of the Purim.*

(from “Do First, Understand Later: The Jews accepted the Torah with the statement *naaseh v’nishma*--we will do and we will hear“ at [http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish\\_Holidays/Shavuot/Themes\\_and\\_Theology/Celebrating\\_Submission/Accepting\\_the\\_Torah.shtml](http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish_Holidays/Shavuot/Themes_and_Theology/Celebrating_Submission/Accepting_the_Torah.shtml))

3. Total buy in from every Jewish neshamah to be born: Whether true or not that every soul, even those yet to be born, was there to accept Torah, with our own acceptance of Torah, we renew each day the intergenerational covenant between the Creator and the People.

4. From the preliminary Morning Prayers, before the Birchot haShachar, one of the Passages from the Talmud, Talmud Berakhot 60b We give thanks for our souls and acknowledge the tradition of our ancestors. In so doing we renew for ourselves this intergenerational compact.

Thus, each of us was there at Mt. Sinai and bought into this communal cooperation by saying “Na’aseh ve Nishmah” and renewing the covenant through doing mitzvot each day. In this way, Shavuot as the middle festival of the Shalosh Regalim (Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot) makes a perfectly symmetrical centerpiece to the Pilgrimage Festivals which puts Community and the building of community solidly at the center of Jewish practice.

Chag Sameach l’Shavuot,  
Shira