

קהילה

K'HILLAH

Family Schmooze # 1

Family Schmooze offers a set of open-ended questions that may be discussed around the dinner table, in the car, or anywhere you are together. If there is more than one child in your family, the discussion will bridge the learning and thinking between younger and older, older and younger.

In this module, we are exploring the concept of *k'hillah*, a special group to which members have a sense of belonging, with social connections between members, a reciprocity of responsibility, and a shared sense of purpose.

For example, those who ride on a bus or airplane are considered a group – there is no sense of belonging, no social connections, no shared responsibility, and other than getting to the same destination, no sense of shared purpose. On the other hand, a group of people who regularly gather to cook dinner for a homeless shelter more likely fit the definition of a *k'hillah*.

Consider sharing this video (or part of it) with your family:



<https://tinyurl.com/yxehr5q>.



Three thousand people who love to sing came together from all over Israel – they quickly learned to sing a song and perform it. Note that the singers are very diverse in background, with quite a few children spread throughout the audience. Does your family think this is a “group” or a “*k'hillah*?” Use the definition offered above to help focus your conversation. Enjoy!!



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Family Schmooze # 2

This week we began exploring different roles members of a *k'hillah* (a community) can play so as to uphold the *k'hillah* as a whole. We saw a very small segment of a video from one synagogue's family trip to Israel - it showed a very fun dinner prep activity where EVERYONE was involved. <https://tinyurl.com/y65u5yt4> (view 1:58-2:46)



We used the video to see that a *k'hillah* is helped when there are people who plan, lead, do, support/explain/help and encourage (great job!). This week, you might help your child notice the ways these roles are manifest in your family - *Who thinks through and shares a plan? Who gets in there to accomplish a task? Who keeps everyone's spirits up?*



BONUS: JUST FOR ADULTS! Just for fun (and definitely just for adults!) here's a parody from Temple Sholom in Cincinnati on the roles people take on when involved in synagogue decision making: <https://tinyurl.com/y4e8ouwX>. (Nope, there's no way we could have shared this with the children.)



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Family *Schmooze* # 3

This week, children expanded their understanding of a *k'hillah*, a community of people joined together for a common cause. Using a video that shares the broad *k'hillah* that is involved in, and supports Leket, Israel's national food bank, children saw that *k'hillah* members have responsibilities to each other. They also talked about times when we cannot see everyone involved in a *k'hillah*. <https://tinyurl.com/y4l9ghcy>.

In the case of Leket – the volunteers could not see the farmers, the donors, nor the recipients of Leket's work. But, they understood that the Leket *k'hillah* was larger than those who worked in the field the day that the video was filmed.

In the case of our own *k'hillah*, we talked about not always being able to see each other, but that we hopefully share a sense of community and a sense of responsibility to each other. It's a give and take.

Your child may now understand enough about the idea of a *k'hillah* to talk about ones that they belong to and consider the idea of reciprocity – that they give to others in their *k'hillah* and others give to them. In a true *k'hillah*, it's never tit-for-tat – one-for-one. As someone said in relation to marriage, no, it's not 50-50, it's more like 90-90.

In researching this module, we found this story that represents so well the reciprocity of obligations between a *k'hillah* and its individual members. This is for you; we did not share it with the children:

A story is told.... In a mountain village in Europe many centuries ago, there was a rich person who wondered what legacy he might be able to leave for his townspeople. At last he decided to build a synagogue. No one saw the plans for the building until it was finished.

When the people came for the first time they marveled at its beauty and completeness then someone asked, "Where are the lamps? How will it be lighted?" The rich person pointed to brackets which were all through the synagogue on the walls. Then he gave each family a lamp which they were to bring with them each time they came to the synagogue. "Each time you are not here," he said, "that part of the synagogue will be unlit. This is to remind you that whenever you fail to come here, especially when the community needs you, some part of God's house will be dark."

Our world needs light. And we are obligated to bring it. [No source]



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Family Schmooze # 4

We can underestimate the difficulty that it takes to join a new group, a new community, whether for ourselves or our children. This past session we learned the story of a non-Jewish person who came to two very famous teachers who lived 2000 years ago and asked each to teach him the Torah while he stood on one foot. In the original version (found in the Talmud, an ancient Jewish book), the man was portrayed as disrespectful in his request. In our retelling, we added our own spin and emphasized that he wanted to join the Jewish community. One of the rabbis (Shammai) swung a stick to chase him away, while the other (Hillel) told the man, "Do not do anything to another person that you wouldn't want them to do to you. The rest of the Torah's stories and Jewish laws explain that one teaching."

While this person's tactic was pretty unusual for joining a new *k'hillah* (community), it could be considered pretty creative! Our *k'vutzah* brainstormed steps to joining a new *k'hillah*, whether it be a sports team, youth group, new class of students, bunk at camp, or synagogue. In that vein, you may have seen a note attached to your child's shoe - that was our way of getting at the steps-to-join-a-new-*k'hillah*. 😊

Feel free to refer back to the Hillel story (also available as a book for 5-9 year olds by Linda Glaser, [On One Foot](#)) or keep an eye out for other stories that share strategies for joining new groups. It is a great opportunity to continue brainstorming strategies with your child. At whatever point the world returns to "normal" in-person gatherings, children will be challenged with the need to step forward and connect with others.



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Family Schmooze # 5

This is the last week of the *k'hillah* module. Throughout the five weeks, we not only focused on our Jewish value (community), but we also kept looking through the lens of a quote by Hillel (the bolded parts, below):

- **If I am not for myself, who will be for me?** - We want to empower children to realize that the strength they bring to a *k'hillah* starts with their sense of self-worth, that they have much to contribute to a larger whole. Even if they feel alone and isolated, they have one or more communities that can envelop and support them.
- **If I am only for myself, what am I?** - We want to empower children to actively engage with each important *k'hillah* in their lives, contributing to a shared sense of purpose. Staying connected to one another in new and creative ways is more crucial than ever before.
- **If not now when?** - We want to empower children to find ways to engage with their *k'hillah* now, and in meaningful and lasting ways.



There are all kinds of communities large and small. Our social connections give us purpose and support. Helping your child connect to *k'hillah*, especially when faced by the challenge of the pandemic, isn't easy. But looking for opportunities to weave connections to others creates strength and builds resiliency.

*What is your child taking from this module?
What are you taking from this module?*

