

# Our Suburb Family

by Rabbi Kaplan



**U**pon his return to the Land, our patriarch Jacob is addressed by G-d who confirms his new name, Israel. He also promises Jacob that his offspring will become a Kahal Goyim, an assembly of nations. We, the Jewish People, are that assembly, that Kahal of which Hashem was speaking.

For hundreds of years, we have referred to a synagogue community as a kehilla.

There is a fine distinction between the terms community and kehilla. When we speak of a community, we refer to a group of people living together without, necessarily, any consideration of the reason for that community's existence – they just happen to be living in the same vicinity or neighbourhood. It might be completely incidental. However, when we speak of an assembly, a kehilla, we recognise that this group of people have chosen to live together. They have a reason for joining together and aspire to achieving something by banding together.

Recently, a member of our kehilla commented to me that, sometimes, siblings are so different from each other that one is amazed to think that they were born of the same parents. She was speaking of her recently departed brother whom she loved dearly. "We were very different in many ways but we always treated each other lovingly."

A kehilla is like an extended family. We choose to live together with people who may behave quite differently from the way to which we are accustomed. However, we know that we can accomplish much more by combining efforts.

Having to allow for other people's ways is not always easy but, as with the love and support we experience and enjoy in our families, we should appreciate the value of living together in a kehilla. This awareness will encourage us to practise more patience and tolerance. We will join happily in family celebrations and lend support in times of need.

Wishing to strengthen our kehilla here in the Suburb, we must not be active solely when it suits us. We should participate and share because it helps us advance our goals.

We need to work together as a family.