

Blessing Each Other

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BSS Chaverim June/July 2023

One privilege that I have as rabbi is the ability to provide a blessing. These moments come and go sometimes daily or weekly, sometimes sporadically, but they are always an honor. Whether it's welcoming a new baby, standing beneath the chuppah with a wedding couple, celebrating a B'nai Mitzvah, or marking a special occasion, it's always powerful to share words of our ancient tradition and to provide a blessing.

Unfortunately, most of us seem nervous about blessings. That might seem something that a more religious person would do! It might be something outside of your wheelhouse. But, it is a very Jewish thing to bless. We are actually expected to recite over 100 blessings each day. Plus, we have a special blessing, the *shehechyanu*, our blessing of gratitude, for all of the milestones and first events that occur each calendar year.

For me, blessings are all about marking the occasion, reminding ourselves that this moment is special and unique. Our celebrations come and go so quickly. The event seems to come out of nowhere and disappear just as quickly. When we refrain from blessing, we seemingly ignore this special event. A blessing utters out loud that something unique, even extraordinary, has happened to our lives.

And let me tell you, almost all of the time, a blessing occurs in community. That community might be at Bolton Street Synagogue, or it might be in the company of friends and family. Blessings are seemingly shared with loved ones and those we care about.

One of our first blessings brought together the entire Israelite Community. Aaron and his sons, the cohenim, gathered the people and recited these still famous words:

May God bless you and protect you!

May God deal kindly and graciously with you!

May God bestow favor upon you and grant you peace!

These words of the *birkat cohenim*, the priestly benediction, are uttered at synagogue for those peak life cycles, but also in our homes for Shabbat and holidays. I urge you to find someone you care about and to share these words with them. Tell them how much you care by reciting a blessing.

Finally, our Jewish tradition doesn't require us to recite a blessing in Hebrew. Our blessings can be of our own volition and from the heart. Our rabbis call this *kavanah*, which means words of our own intention. So, whenever, you find that moment of miracle, a milestone, a first of the year, please take a moment for a *Shehechyanu Moment*. Take time to recite a blessing. Do it with words from your heart and with people that you love. May we all find a little bit of extra blessing this summer!