WOW WITH PAM
WORDS OF WISDOM

Pause, Pour, and Count Your Blessings

By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director

Education as a career path and life goal began for me in 1992 with my graduation with a BS in Psychology from Binghamton University. That fall, I entered my master's program in Early Childhood Education at the same university, different school and I never looked back! With many relevant degrees, over 3 decades of hands-on experience, Early Childhood Education is my passion, my raison d'etre, my tachlit, my reason for being.

Let's be honest: "stopping to focus on your blessings" sounds lovely in theory. In practice, the closest most of us get to a quiet moment is hiding in the pantry eating a granola bar our child specifically said they didn't want, and then specifically wanted the second we opened it.

But our tradition has a little secret for busy parents: you don't need a mountaintop retreat to find gratitude. Judaism builds it right into the everyday. We start each morning with *Modeh Ani*, thanking G-d for returning our souls to us (even if the soul came back at 5:12 a.m. because someone needed to tell you about a dream involving a purple dinosaur). The rabbis taught that we should aim to say 100 blessings a day. That sounds like a lot until you realize you can probably find 100 things to be grateful for before lunch, starting with the fact that the car seat buckle finally clicked on the first try.

That practice has a name: *hakarat hatov*, recognizing the good. Not ignoring the chaos, not pretending the laundry folded itself, but noticing the good that's tucked in between the spilled juice and the lost shoe. Pirkei Avot asks, "Who is rich?" and answers, "One who is happy with their portion." No mention of a clean kitchen. We checked.

And here's where the coffee comes in. Pirkei Avot also tells us, "Acquire for yourself a friend." Not "text a friend 'we should totally get together' and then disappear for four months." Actually sit down with one. Pour a cup, say a quick *shehakol* (the blessing over coffee, which conveniently thanks G-d for "everything," so it covers both the latte and the person sitting across from you), and talk about something other than nap schedules. Or talk entirely about nap schedules. No judgment. Friendship is its own blessing, and a shared cup of coffee might be the most underrated form of self-care out there.

So this week, we invite you to take a pause. Call a friend, grab a coffee, and name a few blessings out loud. Your children are watching, and when they see you stop to notice the good, they learn to do it too. *L'dor v'dor*, from generation to generation.

Now go drink your coffee while it's still hot. We know. We're laughing too.



#ShabbatShalom