

## ***Kehillah* (Community) - Finding Our Village**

**By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director**

Finding your *Kehillah* (community in Hebrew) is often one of the first things that a new parent tackles once they move to a new place. Who will be my support? Who will be my friends? Where will my baby go to school? But like many words that carry deep meaning, its true essence goes far beyond a simple definition. *Kehillah* isn't just about a group of people; it's about a shared journey, a tapestry woven from mutual support, shared values, and a sense of belonging that provides a foundation for each individual to thrive. In our increasingly connected yet often isolating world, understanding and building our own *Kehillah*—our village—is more crucial than ever.

Think about the first people you turn to in times of joy and sorrow. It's almost always a loved one—a parent, a sibling, a lifelong friend, or a partner. These are the individuals who know us best, often understanding our unspoken thoughts and feelings. This core group, whether related by blood or by choice, is our first and most vital community. They are the ones who cheer for our successes with genuine excitement and offer a shoulder to cry on without judgment. This foundational support provides a safe harbor from the storms of life and a home base from which we can venture out and explore the world.

The importance of family and friends goes beyond emotional support. They are our accountability partners, our mirrors, and our champions. A good friend will challenge us to be better, while a loving family member will remind us of our inherent worth. They are the ones who celebrate our victories, big or small, and remind us of our resilience when we face setbacks. This is the essence of a true village: a network of people who not only love you for who you are but also believe in who you can become. It's in these relationships that we learn the give and take of life, the art of empathy, and the power of forgiveness.

Building this village, this *Kehillah*, is an active process. It's not something that happens by chance; it requires intention and effort. It's about being present—truly listening when a friend needs to talk, celebrating their achievements as if they were your own, and showing up when they need you most. It's about nurturing the relationships that matter, even when life gets busy. In an age of digital connections, we must remember that an authentic community is built through shared experiences, vulnerability, and face-to-face interaction. The late-night talks, the shared meals, the simple acts of kindness—these are the threads that bind us together.

The friends we choose are just as important as the family we are given. As the saying goes, "Show me your friends, and I'll show you your future." Our closest relationships have a profound impact on our well-being, our habits, and our outlook on life. Surrounding ourselves with people who uplift, inspire, and genuinely care about us is a form of self-care. It protects our mental and emotional health, giving us the strength to navigate life's challenges. In a



world that can feel chaotic and overwhelming, our village offers stability and a sense of belonging.

The beauty of *Kehillah* is that it can start small. It begins with the two or three people you can count on for anything. It grows as you open your heart and your life to new connections, expanding your circle of trust and support. Each person you welcome into your village brings a new perspective, a different strength, and another source of love. In the end, our village is not a physical place but a collection of souls who see us, accept us, and love us unconditionally. They are the people who remind us that we are never truly alone.

Who makes up your *Kehillah*? For me, it is of course my family and friends and all of you. Each one of you plays an important role in adding sparks of joy, beauty and serenity into my *Kehillah*. Won't you join me in welcoming others into our Early Learning Center *Kehillah*?

#ShabbatShalom