WOW WITH PAM
WORDS OF WISDOM

More Than a Feeling – *Gemilut Chasidim* in Action

By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director

"Use kind words with your friends." "Was that a kind thing that you just did?" The world is full of talk about kindness, good deeds, doing *mitzvot*. We see it on bumper stickers, in feel-good movies, and in countless social media posts. The phrase "Be Kind" has become a cultural mantra, a simple, yet powerful, suggestion. Even Harry Styles made it part of his mantra: Treat People With Kindness, or TPWK. But what happens after the feeling of kindness subsides? How do we move from the warm, fuzzies we get from a considerate thought to an actual, tangible act of kindness?

In Jewish tradition, this question is answered by the *mitzvah* of *Gemilut Chasadim*, "the giving of loving-kindness." *Chesed* is often defined as an act of selfless love or goodness, but it implies so much more. It's a love that is expressed through action. *Gemilut* is the verb, the action of giving. It's the difference between thinking, "I should help my neighbor," and actually raking their leaves.

The emphasis on action is a cornerstone of this concept. The Talmud teaches that there are three pillars upon which the world stands: *Torah* (learning), *Avodah* (service to G-d), and *Gemilut Chasadim*. What's remarkable about this trio is that *Gemilut Chasadim* is placed on the same level as the study of Torah and prayer. This elevates acts of kindness from mere social niceties to a fundamental religious and moral obligation.

Gemilut Chasadim is not a one-time event or a spontaneous gesture; it is a way of life. It's the conscious decision to look for opportunities to help others, to be a source of support, and to build a better world, one action at a time. It's proactive, not reactive. While a spontaneous act of kindness is wonderful, *Gemilut Chasadim* asks us to be intentional. It's about seeking out needs and filling them, even when it's inconvenient.

Think about the difference. A reactive act of kindness might be giving your umbrella to someone caught in the rain. An intentional act of *Gemilut Chasadim* would be checking on an elderly neighbor to see if they need help with groceries before the storm even begins. One is a response to an immediate need; the other is a proactive effort to prevent hardship.

The beauty of *Gemilut Chasadim* is that it is not limited to grand, heroic gestures. In fact, many of the most meaningful acts of kindness are small and seemingly insignificant. A genuine compliment, a listening ear, a note of encouragement – these small acts can have a profound impact on someone's day, and even their life.

The key is that these acts are performed with no expectation of reciprocation. *Chesed* is a gift given freely, without strings attached. When we act with the intention of *Gemilut Chasadim*, we aren't seeking praise, a thank-you, or a return favor. Our reward is the act itself, the

fulfillment of a moral and spiritual obligation to be a positive force in the world.

So, how do we put *Gemilut Chasadim* into action? It begins with a shift in perspective. Instead of viewing kindness as a feeling that comes and goes, we must see it as a practice, a discipline. It requires us to be present, to be aware of the people around us, and to be attuned to their needs. It means we have to step outside of our own bubble of self-interest and intentionally look outward.

The next time you hear the phrase "Be Kind," think about how you can move beyond the feeling and into the action. For now, take a moment to reflect: what's one small, intentional act of kindness you can perform today? It might be the start of a new, more meaningful way of living.

#ShabbatShalom