

Dear Friends,

The pace of our world is such that I began reading “The Ten Best . . . of the Year” lists on the weekend following Thanksgiving. It’s as though nothing of note could possibly happen in the month of December. Indeed, we seem to mark our calendars with ‘what’s next’, rather than ‘what’s now’. Halloween stores open Labor Day weekend, and the solstice holiday shopping season begins with Election Day. This “living life in anticipation” is also reflected in the lives of our children. Though my granddaughter is not yet a year-and-a-half old, her parents have spreadsheets of kindergarten programs with their requirements for admission. (Nursery school was determined shortly after her birth.) I remember thinking about my daughters’ college education before they were enrolled in middle school, which made high school little more than a corridor to that end. Given our times, living in the future or in the past may well be a way to cope. Still, to seize the moment could be a goal that we might strive for as we approach a new secular year.

Our Sages taught that we should recite 100 blessings a day. The Talmud provides us with blessings enough to make this possible – blessings over bread and wine and fruits and pastries; blessings when seeing a mountain, or the ocean or a tree in blossom; blessings when meeting a scholar, a person of government authority, or someone of exceptional appearance; blessings upon washing hands or putting on new clothes; blessings when performing a *mitsva* – donning a *tallit* or *t’fillin*, or affixing a *mezuzah*; blessings upon hearing good news or bad news. Although it may have been our Sages’ intention to express gratitude to the deity for everything in the cosmos – in form and in time – I understand this practice of reciting blessings as giving us the opportunity to take in the wonder of the moment.

I know how fast the world now moves, and how fast we must move to keep up with it. But I am determined to find the time in the coming year to take in the moment, to pause to say ‘awesome’ or ‘oops’ or even ‘too bad’ before moving on to ‘next’. Perhaps then I will appreciate the possibility at hand and the wonder that is before me.

I wish you all a good year in which you will experience the fullness of ‘now’; a year of health, of happiness, and, I hope, of peace.

Warmly,
Lee