

The simplest of gestures can be the most profound. I found myself standing next to my fellow clergy in the afternoon heat at our Interfaith Blessings Booth. A pastor had hitched a bubble machine to the awning of our booth and iridescent bubbles danced on the breeze. When people were happy and willing, they would allow us to offer them blessings and prayers through an LGBTQ-affirming lens. I gently held their hands and did something we rabbis aren't really trained to do: I prayed with them extemporaneously. They would offer me their worries, hopes and concerns, a snippet of a life story here and there. 'Pray for my marriage. Bless me to have a better relationship with my family. I need strength for a health condition. I am transitioning and want to know that this is the right path and that God loves me.' I brought my words and the words of the tradition to them; but most of all, I brought my heart. Just as much as I blessed them; they blessed me.

Blessing in our tradition has a distinguished and

thing. Holding the person in your heart who you wish to bless is utterly transformative.

'Count your blessings' is of course an oft-used admonition. We have to be grateful, right? For the blessings in our lives. Here is where it gets a little more complicated; both in affirming or rejecting a belief that there is such a thing as interventionist blessings (ie. God chooses who to favor; I do not believe that) and whether we can see the circumstances in our lives as blessings. Sometimes it is harder than other times. Certainly, these last three years I have not felt terribly blessed to live through a pandemic. On the other hand, I have also felt incredibly blessed to make it through with my family, with my health intact.

If we psychologize the notion of blessings a little (to make it more palpable to the rational, modern mind, perhaps), then perhaps the beauty of blessings lies in a mindset of abundance, rather than scarcity. What a powerful gift to believe that