



FINDING THE *Joy*

TEMMI HADAR

Yom Kippur 5780 done and dusted. On to the rest of the year, please G-d.

Last night at shul, it's *Kol Nidrei* and my husband gets up to address the congregation.

As if on cue, my son ambles into shul.

"I'm so thirsty," he moans, "I need a drink."

In the silent shul, with only my husband speaking from the front of the room, my son's faux whisper seems to boom across the whole shul.

I rush him off to a side room to pour him a cup of water from the fridge. Every sound I make, from opening the fridge to the water splashing in the cup seems to echo across the whole shul.

His thirst quenched, my son proceeds to hop into the seat next to mine, swinging his legs into the lady next to him and singing to himself.

I'm cringing at the noise while trying to listen to my husband.

Eventually, my son returns to the children's service.

Towards the end of *davening* my daughter wanders in.

"When is this thing over?" she demands. "I am *starving!*"

To me, it seems like she is shouting across the whole shul.

"Shh!" I whisper to her as I show her how many pages are left to *daven*.

"Don't show me how many pages! Give me a time!"

"Maybe ten minutes," I whisper to her.

"What's for supper?" she moans. "I am *starving!*"

"Supper? We had supper before we came to shul."

"We always have a meal again when we come home

from shul!" she whimpers.

"It's Yom Kippur."

"No meal even for the kids?"

She pouts as I silently pray that her voice is quieter than it seems to me.

Eventually she too wanders out.

At the end of *davening*, I apologize to the lady my son was sort of kicking.

"I hope my kids didn't disturb you."

"Oh, no! I love kids," she tells me with a smile.

Walking out of shul someone tells me how well behaved my kids were this evening.

"Really?" I say in surprise. "You didn't hear them coming in and talking in shul?"

"Nope. I didn't hear a word," she tells me.

As I am walking home from shul, I'm thinking about this.

To me, my kids' voices were thundering across shul. But this lady, only one row behind me and a little to the left, saw only the good in them.

That's a life lesson for me.

My kids are great. Amazing, in fact.

But sometimes I get so bogged down by the occasional (or in complete honesty, not so occasional) moan

and groan and sibling bickering that I don't see the goodness and kindness and genuine compassion my kids have as well.

It's true about all of life.

We focus on the aches and pains, the tough times and challenges.

But do we also notice the blessings?

I know I spend a lot of time focusing on what could be better in my life.

Tonight I sat thinking of how I wish I was a better faster, so that I wouldn't have this pounding headache that distracts me the whole Yom Kippur.

But that's a waste of my thoughts. Focus on the positive.

So here's to 5781, and may Hashem shower all of us with blessings so obvious they are impossible to ignore.



Temmi Hadar, born and raised on shlichus in Seattle, is now living about a million miles away in Johannesburg. In this new column, "Finding the Joy," she ponders the meaning of life while perpetually sleep-deprived and attempting to juggle the roles of mother, wife, shlucha, teacher, writer and human being.

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