

9 WAYS TO ENJOY ROSH HASHANA AND UPCOMING YOMIM TOVIM WITH SMALL KIDS

By Mushka Gopin, M. Ed for Neshamos

There's a lot that happens during the Yomim Tovim, from long davenings to stretched out meals. Here are some tips to help enjoy a smooth Yom Tov with little kids.

Yom Tov can be overwhelming even for us - and we have 2-3 decades, not 2-3 years, of experience!

1 Tell your child (even your infant, and especially your toddler!) what to expect: what the schedule is, which guests are coming over, when we will go to Shul, and what will happen there.. when the shofar will make a loud sound, etc..

2 The day might be off schedule, but your child doesn't have to be. Keep your eye on the clock and give snacks, lunchtime and naps at the usual times.

3 Fancy meals might have strange foods. Offer your kid's regular faves too. It might be Yom Tov but it's okay to eat a cream cheese sandwich!

4 Change them into cozy, comfortable clothing after shul and before the meal so that you don't have to stress about beautiful new outfits getting dirty.

5 You (mom), might also need a break from fancy new clothing that makes you say, "Don't touch me!"

6 Make a quiet corner if your house will be full and noisy so that kids can escape there or to their rooms with toys or books.

7 Make sure YOU get a full breakfast - not coffee and cake - so you don't get hangry. You can't fill your child's cup if you are an empty pitcher.

8 Create moments of down time where you consciously reconnect with your child, especially after the busyness of shul and meals. Ex: Play together for 5 minutes, read a book, or share a snack.

9 It's their Yom Tov, too! They don't have to be kept out of the way. Give a child a plastic knife and a vegetable and let them help out.



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4 MORE TIPS AND MINDSET

Tips for Play

Swap toys with a neighbor or friend so you each have something new and exciting to play with. And if you have a current favorite, put it away right now to bring out later.

If you will buy a new toy, choose something that extends play that they already enjoy. For example, Shapemag's specialty pieces to add to your Magnatile collection. (Download a free toy guide on my site.)

Make Shul Successful

Feed your child a real meal before going to shul, not just "Shabbos cereal". Bring books, toys, their school machzor or crafts, filling snacks and sandwiches, and plenty of water.

Do they have to sit in shul for so long? Do you - or is your avodah today to care for children instead of to daven?

Whatever your expectations are around sitting in shul or going to the kids' program, discuss it clearly in advance with your child.

And if after all that, they run around in shul... good job on the chinuch of bringing them. (Though you might have to leave!)

Keep Perspective

Imagine there was a parade as the king came through town... without any street vendors. A parade without cotton candy and snow cones? No juggler, no balloons, no street musicians? No spirit and excitement? That's not much of a parade!

There's a reason the seudah is a big part of our Yom Tov. And if you feel like you're handing out snacks on the hour, and all you did today was deal with food, just think that you are making the coronation merry.

Remember the Point

The mitzvah of the day is to crown Hashem as king. Well... there is no king without a nation! You are raising the nation. You are feeding, clothing, napping, and playing with the small future citizens. Hashem can be crowned... because of your work.

Remember your goal: happy, warm, positive memories surrounded by family and faith. Keep things positive. Take a chill pill. No amount of stress is worth it.

"Avinu Malkeinu" - first Father, then King. This Yom Tov is relationship, first!

Mushka teaches young mothers to parent intentionally in the early years, using textbook theories that work in real life, so baby gets the best start and mom feels confident in motherhood knowing what she's doing.

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