

# NOISY SHULS

*by Rabbi Daniel Travis*

Non-Jews have reported that during their prayer services absolute silence reigns. A Jew, on the other hand, tends to feel at home in shul, and at times may feel comfortable enough to talk with his friends. Yet we should always remember that the mitzva to feel awe of the Mikdash applies in a shul, and we should be aware of Hashem's Presence at every moment.

The Torah instructs us to bring children to the mitzva of hakhel, the reading of the Torah by the king before the entire nation once every seven years, in order that they will be awed by the grandeur of this experience. Bringing children to shul can have the same effect, and can imbue within them a love and awe for the experience. While there, children should be taught to answer amen and to participate in the services as much as possible.

All this is on condition that the children are mature enough to appreciate the experience. Very young children run around in shul and disturb the rest of the congregation. Whoever brings them has taught them only that a shul is a playground and not a serious place of prayer (Mishna Berura 124: 27-28).

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