



My Eyes

By Pam Morris, Early Learning Center director

This past weekend was the holy day of *Yom Kippur*. A time for forgiveness, for *teshuvah*. At My Jewish Learning.com, it says, In the Jewish tradition, repentance is called *teshuvah*, a Hebrew word translated as “returning.” One of the Hebrew words for sin is *chet*, which in Hebrew means “to go astray.” Thus the idea of repentance in Jewish thought is a return to the path of righteousness.

The day encompasses a 25-hour fast, refraining from eating or drinking, wearing leather and devoting the time to prayer, reflection and truly reconnecting with *HaShem*. There is a special prayer book that is used during *Yom Kippur* called a *Machzor*. We use this same book, but with different prayers and a different focus on *Rosh Hashanah*.

Once a year, reciting different prayers, focusing on ourselves, where we made a misstep and how we can turn it around – it is a weighty endeavor. And while I do try to stay in the moment and focus my attention on what I need to do better, I do take comfort in the words of the prayers, the order, the tradition.

So when I opened my purse on Saturday morning at synagogue and found no glasses, I panicked. Well, a little, I panicked. How was I going to read the prayers in the *Machzor*?

This didn't used to be a problem. For about 75% of my life, I have had 20/20 vision. In fact, I was the only person in my family that could say that. My dad, of blessed memory, my mom and my sister – all wore/wear glasses. My husband and middle daughter - glasses. But when I reached my 40s, I found that my arms weren't quite long enough to allow me to read. Driving, no prob! (*Baruch HaShem*) But reading, crocheting, those all require glasses. I always joke that the only reason I need glasses to read is because my arms are too short...



Those tools have become my eyes. My eyes, to write legibly so that someone else can read what I have to share. My eyes, to scan a text to see who needs assistance in the building. My eyes, to read the books I enjoy each Shabbat. My eyes, to *daven* and follow the spiritual guidelines in the *chumash* or *Machzor*.

These are all necessary things, positive things. But these are not all that my eyes see. My eyes read about the terrorist attacks in Israel. My eyes see the pictures of the “from the river to the sea” signs held up at protests in New York City, a place once known as a “great place for the Jewish community, if you can’t be in Israel.” My eyes, to witness the degradation of our college institutions; places meant for higher learning, where the next generation can learn and grow and be better than their parents.

My eyes see so many things and I wonder about the validity of, the need for some of them. Many a Pre-K class at the East Valley JCC heard Ms. Pam say, “You can sit on the table, only after you go to college.” It was my mantra. Not that I wanted the kids to sit on the table, but it was supposed to be a little added incentive to get a college education. To be honest, I don’t say that anymore. And while I am proud of my daughters who are furthering their education, each news report or post or video that I see with my eyes about what is occurring on campuses all over the United States, well, I wonder if my narrative needs to change because I am Jewish.

I could just stop using my eyes, but then my world would suffer. Is the answer that I need to stop seeing? I don’t think so. I think what I am seeing needs to change.

Shabbat Shalom.