

Balsamic Apple Cheddar Scones



**The bit o'rant below was submitted to Kveller, who said they liked it (maybe that's true?) but ultimately, apparently, was not selected for publication as it's too similar to another post they published last year, which makes me sad not because I got denied (ugh), but because as a community, we are no*

where close to answering this question of connection. Anywho, I decided I'd post it on my own blog, so there.

Recently, Kveller posted two incredibly intriguing blog posts regarding whether or not one should force their kids to attend synagogue during the High Holidays. I found these posts intriguing not because this question of whether or not someone should force their child to attend synagogue is particularly interesting to me at this stage of my parenting life (I have a 2 year-old. There's no way she'd make it past the first self-inflicted chest pound of Yom Kippur). Rather, I found these posts interesting because lately, as I'm adding up the costs of my child's preschool attendance at a local synagogue's Early Childhood Center with the costs of other Jewish community memberships (i.e. Jewish summer camp, women's mikvah in LA, synagogue, and/or JCC), I realized, we can't afford the High Holidays this year so it doesn't matter if we are a family who would force our kids to attend synagogue, we can't afford to have an opinion on the matter.

Eileen Price wrote in her post, ". . . practicing Judaism is not a punishment; it is a privilege and a gift." It certainly is a privilege. My family lives in Los Angeles. I work at a private Jewish Day school as an administrator. I make a pretty decent salary. My husband currently lives in Miami where he is finishing his Ph.D. He does not make a pretty decent salary. Our budget for the year includes rent for 2 apartments, 2 grocery bills, 2 utility bills, you get the point. This year is tough for us in many ways, not just financially. That being said, we are in no way NOT privileged. Our apartment in LA is in Beverly Hills, for crying out loud (90212, technically the 'slums' of Beverly Hills)! We knew going into this year that things were going to be tight and we would need to account for every penny. What we did not take into account for our budget this year was the astronomical costs of attempting to pray with a community during the High Holidays.



When we first moved to LA in July, my husband found a synagogue in walking distance that offered him all the comforts of home (home being Teaneck, New Jersey) while also having play groups for our kiddo and a women's section that was almost the same size as the men's section. I was in. So when he looked into tickets for High Holidays we were floored when we found out the costs: \$500 for membership (young adult discount!) plus an addition \$175/person for High Holiday tickets (more discounts!). Yes! For the discounted cost of \$800 we could be a part of a community for the High Holidays. When that was immediately vetoed, I called Chabad. Here's how that went:

Me: "Hi. Do you require tickets to attend your Rosh Hashanah services?"

Chabad: "Not at all!"

Me: "Wonderful! What time do services start?"

Chabad: "You can, however, reserve a seat for \$300 otherwise, you can stand."

Me: "Kthanksbye"



It's now the Tuesday post-Rosh Hashanah and my husband ended up davening alone in our apartment. He did walk to that Chabad but there were so many people crowding the entrance he couldn't hear a thing. He finally made his way to another shul where they literally had a velvet rope affixed in front of the door and a person with a clipboard checking names. After consulting with a ~~club~~ membership director, they actually let my hubby in to hear the shofar (I think it helped that he had our 2 year-old with him) and then left. He came home feeling humiliated and let down by our community, which, of course, brought me back to those previous Kveller High Holiday posts.



5775 Family Photo

We're at a turning point in our community. We keep asking the question of why our young people are marrying outside the religion and why our young couples are unengaged. Maybe the answer to that question is because it's too dang expensive to be a part of the community. Maybe it's because practicing Judaism really is a privilege when, in fact, it should be a given. Families like mine are having to make choices between saving for retirement and paying for a day school education. I'm not saying I have the answer to this. My husband suggested maybe an exchange of goods. Rather than have synagogues pay out the nose for guest cantors and Rabbis, he'd be happy to lein Torah in exchange for High Holiday tickets.

I'd be happy to provide childcare several times or cater a kiddish lunch or two throughout the year in exchange for tickets. Whatever the answer, I'd like to see conferences and workshops dedicated to figuring out how practicing Judaism can be something that doesn't require membership to a certain tax bracket. Or how synagogues can meet their budget requirements without alienating the community. It's time, y'all.



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