



Women's League for Conservative Judaism

Mishpachah: The Modern Jewish Family

THE NOAH SYNDROME

Hannah

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reserved for special occasions.

I have always wanted to be a mom. When I reached my mid-30s I made the decision to put a prolonged pause on my frenzied dating life, and instead, jump-started the process of becoming a “Single Mother by Choice.” After engaging in the many needed steps involved in working with a clinic and selecting an anonymous donor, I conceived my son via IUI (referred to commonly as artificial insemination).

I am fortunate that in my urban community there are many different types of family structures, and one-parent families are not anomalies at the synagogues and Friday night dinners that we attend. The challenges I met, most especially when he was younger (he is now three), were subtle and originated not from attendees, but from the unexamined assumptions that organizers had when they structured events, and were tied to tacit beliefs about families, income and socio-economic status. I would constantly need to explain that I could not attend evening adult-only committee meetings or programs because I did not have a spouse who could stay at home.

- When it was frequently suggested that I find a babysitter, I would be in the awkward position of explaining that as a single-income family, babysitters were a treat reserved for special occasions.
- When I was craving deeper connections in community and I suggested to my synagogue that they might create some smaller havurah-type gatherings so that young families could celebrate together at intimate Friday night dinners, I was told that the better route would be for me to step up and proactively invite families to my home for Shabbat lunch, again, with the unexamined belief that most families live within the affluent area surrounding the synagogue.
- While I would have loved to have sent my son to a Jewish early childhood program, their limited hours do not match my schedule as a single working mom.

As my son grows older, I find that the times of isolation and loneliness that I often felt when he was a newborn and I was a scared, new mom have abated. We are so fortunate to have incredible friends and family in our life. It would have been lovely, however, to have felt that our local Jewish community could have been a part of the process of providing emotional support.