

**Jewish Disability  
Awareness,  
Acceptance and  
Inclusion Month**

# Program Guide

**#JDAIM19 | @Inclusioninnova**

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**Inclusion Innovations**

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**Please use the Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month  
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worldwide to foster inclusion of people with disabilities in community life.

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## **JDAIM 2019—More Than Awareness and Inclusion**

Over ten years JDAIM has focused on awareness and inclusion. Every February, Jewish communities worldwide join to advocate for inclusion of people with disabilities and mental health conditions to be active participants in Jewish life.

But inclusion is a term that is interpreted along a spectrum. To some, it means that any program or service for people is inclusive. Others go well beyond programs and services to encourage and support people with disabilities, mental health conditions, and those who love them, so that they participate in Jewish life as they wish. And there are many variations of “inclusion” in between.

The truth is, people with disabilities and mental health conditions just want what everyone else wants—to belong!

That’s why we’ve incorporated ACCEPTANCE into the JDAIM name. The logos reflect this, and I ask that you promote the new language, Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month, this February.

**Acceptance is not just a change in a name.  
It’s a change in attitude and practice.**

Genuine acceptance is rooted in the inherent value of Judaism—that we are all created in the Divine image. Acceptance is based on two key concepts. First, each one of us has something to contribute to our communities and our world, and second, our communities are not whole until all of us belong.

We can only go so far if we focus only on awareness and inclusion. This year, let’s join with communities all around the world to focus on genuine acceptance by making our synagogues and our organizations places where people know they belong!

*B’Hatzlacha,*

*Shelly Christensen, MA, FAAIDD*

Author, Speaker, Consultant

Co-founder of JDAIM with the Jewish Special Education International Consortium

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## **About Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month**

**Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month (JDAIM)** is a unified effort among Jewish organizations worldwide to raise awareness and foster acceptance and inclusion of people with disabilities and mental health conditions and those who love them. JDAIM is a call to action for all of us as we act in accordance with our Jewish values, honoring the gifts and strengths that we each possess. Established in 2009 by the Jewish Special Education International Consortium, JDAIM is observed each February.

### **The Mission of JDAIM**

*The mission of Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month is to unite Jewish communities worldwide to raise awareness and champion the rights of all Jews to be accepted and included in all aspects of Jewish life like anyone else.*

### **Why You Should Participate in JDAIM**

- Raise awareness of how people with disabilities and mental health conditions have been regarded by Jewish and secular society and how that impacts our own actions.
- Underscore the importance of choosing one's own Jewish journey.
- Encourage Jews around the world to become genuinely empathetic and welcoming toward people with disabilities and mental health conditions.
- Urge Jews to welcome people with disabilities and mental health conditions into their communities and personal lives.
- Include people with disabilities and mental health conditions in *all* aspects of communal life.
- Advocate for the rights of people with disabilities and mental health conditions.
- Support people with disabilities and mental health conditions to make their own decisions about how they want to belong to their Jewish community.



## Why is JDAIM in February?

In May 2008 the Jewish Special Education International Consortium held its annual Colloquium in Minneapolis, MN. Two members, Lenore Layman, of the Partnership of Jewish Life and Living in Washington, DC, and Shelly Christensen, of the Jewish Inclusion Program for People with Disabilities at Jewish Family and Children’s Service in Minneapolis presented the idea of selecting a specific month in which all of our communities, far and wide, would hold conferences, events and community wide programming. Lenore and Shelly thought that if we all came together for one month, we could raise awareness to a broader extent as well as share resources and ideas for programs.

All members thought this made tremendous sense. “What would be a good month?” they asked. The members looked through the calendar and concluded that a month that doesn’t follow or precede the High Holidays, Pesach, Shavuot, the start or end of the school year, or summer could work. February seemed to be the best option, and that is why JDAIM is recognized every February.

## What is the history and significance of the JDAIM ribbon?

The blue and gold intertwined ribbon that forms the *Magen David* was created for the second Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month in 2010. Seeking a logo that could link communities and create visual awareness about JDAIM, Shelly asked graphic designer Janice Goldstein, of Jewish Family and Children’s Service of Minneapolis, to create a design that would signify how inclusion is woven into every single aspect of Jewish life and community. [Click here](#) to get your free JDAIM logo file. Please use the logo\* in all JDAIM events and programs.

## JDAIM Pin

This year [Small Change Company](#) created a beautiful pin to commemorate JDAIM. Pins can be ordered individually or they can be ordered in larger quantities for fundraising opportunities and gifts at a special price. Learn [more](#).

**\*The JDAIM logo is the trademark of Inclusion Innovations. Please use it freely and share.**



## **United States Jewish Disability Advocacy Day**

### **February 26, 2019**

### **Join Us in Washington, DC**

The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC) and Jewish Federations of North America co-chair the Jewish Disability Network, a coalition of over two dozen Jewish organizations advocating for disability rights), and coordinate Jewish Disability Advocacy Day (JDAD) to coincide with JDAIM.

JDAD is an action-packed day of learning about critical policy issues around disability, networking, and meeting with Congressional representatives to bring Jewish organizations together as one voice.

Learn more about the 2019 JDAD and how you can join Jews from across the United States in this important work.

## **Canadian Jewish Disability Advocacy Day**

### **February 5, 2019**

### **Join us in Ottawa, Ontario**

Jewish communities across Canada meet in Ottawa to meet with government officials to advocate for the rights of people with disabilities. JDAD Canada is organized by Jewish Federations of Canada-UIA.

Contact [Steve McDonald](#) or [Liv Mendelsohn](#) to learn more about 2019 JDAD and how you can join Jewish communities from across Canada in this important work.



## With a Jewish Lens

**A human being mints many coins from the same mold but the Holy One, Blessed be God, strikes us all from the mold of the first human and each one of us is unique. Therefore, every single person is obligated to say, “The world was created for my sake.”**

*Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5*

The relationship between Judaism and disability goes back to our roots, and there are many different texts that give us food for thought. There are a number of resources out there to guide discussions, sermons, and Torah study.

Below are several concepts that may generate discussion:

- Having a disability is not and should never be used as a reason to exclude someone from meaningful participation and contribution to this wonderful place we call “The Jewish Community.” Everyone has gifts to share as well as needs for comfort and community.
- Inclusion is the opportunity for every person to participate in meaningful ways in the life of the Jewish community. How do we know what is meaningful and important to another person? We open our doors, we ask, listen and we take the journey together.
- We do not do things **for** people with disabilities. We do things **with** people with disabilities. JDAIM is a time to teach our organizations that Inclusion (with a capital I) is simply treating people as individuals, not as a group of “those” people whose needs can be met through special programs or occasional visits to synagogues. Just like you, people with disabilities can and should make decisions about how they participate in Jewish life.
- Inclusion is not an end. It leads to Acceptance.
- Recognizing Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month is only the first step. What your organization does in the next eleven months will determine your commitment to ensuring that all people feel that they belong.
- What is it that we “get” when we belong to the Jewish community? What is it that we “give” when we belong?



## JDAIM Planning Tips

- Establish a planning group for JDAIM. Invite:
  - Your inclusion committee
  - Representatives from other committees
  - Clergy and professional staff
  - People with disabilities and mental health conditions and family members.  
“Nothing about us without us!”
- Determine what you can accomplish during JDAIM.
- Brainstorm activities and programs. Ask how each activity will have an impact **AFTER JDAIM.**
- Use #JDAIM to share on Instagram, Twitter and Facebook
- Display a banner or placard in your lobby announcing Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month. (Yes, you can use the [logo!](#))
- Holidays! Depending on the calendar Tu B’shevat or Purim fall during JDAIM. There’s a seder in that—or a Purim spiel. Be creative!
- Make JDAIM the springboard for what you can do the rest of the year! See the JDAIM Reads section for a new book on how you can create a more inclusive and accepting community.
- Collaborate on a Jewish community-wide event for JDAIM. Films, book clubs, and Havdalah gatherings are just a few ideas.



## 15 Practical Ways to Recognize JDAIM in Your Synagogue

1. Start each service with the opportunity for congregants to introduce themselves to each other.
2. Give the sermon on inclusion.
3. Offer tours of the sanctuary to people who are new or visiting. They can see and touch ritual items, stand on the *bimah*, hold the Torah, and find a seat where they will be comfortable sitting. A tour can help ease anxiety about a new situation.
4. Announce page numbers often. Describe the prayer book and commentary by color and size, in addition to name. Use a manual scoreboard to show page numbers.
5. Invite people with disabilities and mental health conditions ahead of time to participate in a service. Honor them by being called to the Torah and help them practice the blessings. Ask people and their family members to offer a *d'var* Torah, carry the Torah, light Shabbat candles, and lead the *Kiddush*.
6. If your *bimah* is not accessible, move the lectern to the main level of the sanctuary so the Torah itself is accessible to all.
7. Offer usher training so they are familiar with how to support people with disabilities. Know where *working* assistive listening devices and large print prayer books and Torah commentaries are located. If an ASL interpreter is involved, reserve seating in the front row.
8. Hold a discussion during services on ways the synagogue can support life cycle events for people with disabilities.
9. Encourage families to hold the ceremony for a child with a disability at Shabbat morning services, or as is customary at your synagogue.
10. During this month, engage in conversations about inclusion in Torah study and sermons. Extend the discussion to your board and committee meetings.
11. Use social media to promote inclusion. Post about your events, quote text that resonates with Jewish values about inclusion. YouTube a short Torah commentary about inclusion. #JDAIM2019 is the hashtag we use in social media.
12. Provide prayer books and Torah commentaries in accessible format (i.e. Braille, large print, audio versions).
13. Make your worship service accessible to people who have diverse sensory needs, such as sign language interpretation. Reserve seats people can see the interpreter clearly.
14. Explore using visual *tefila*, where images are shown on a screen or tablet, and a picture schedule of the service order.
15. Announce the agenda for the service, including when the service will end, and what will follow the service. Also announce the location of accessible restrooms and drinking fountains.



## 15 Events and Programs for JDAIM

1. Host a congregational Shabbat dinner to kick-off Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month. Invite all members of your congregation, as well as other members of the Jewish community to join you. Put requests for accommodations on the invitation. If someone requests that food be cut for them, do that in the kitchen, not in the dining area. Continue the Shabbat celebration with a unique *Erev Shabbat* service recognizing that we are all created in the Divine Image—*B'zelem Elohim*.
2. Host a congregational *Havdalah* service with activities. Advertise this to your entire community and encourage people with disabilities and their families to attend. The music and the scents of *Havdalah* provide a beautiful setting for art activities, games and stories.
3. Integrate Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month into other activities:
  - The youth group can provide afternoon activities for children with disabilities, so parents and siblings have special time together.
  - The Men's Club or Brotherhood could sponsor a breakfast and invite a speaker from the community to talk about disability services (such as training service dogs).
  - Coordinate a program for parents of children with disabilities to bring them together and minimize isolation. Invite a speaker from Jewish Family Services to lead a parent education group. Provide childcare.
  - Organize a program for siblings, such as SibShops, or invite a family life educator to come talk about sibling needs.
  - Torah Study can include other citations in our text that help us wrestle with inclusion.
  - Lunch and Learn following Shabbat morning services or on Sunday afternoon brings people together to process what they have learned and experienced from the weekend.
4. Your religious school can have age appropriate programming for students focused on the concept of *B'zelem Elohim*—we are created in the Divine Image. Read books and stories written about children with a diverse range of abilities. Prepare teachers to try a different teaching strategy to engage all learners. Invite parents of students who have disabilities to come to class and share their family's story.
5. Be responsive to concerns expressed by people with disabilities and their families. Is there something that would be appropriate to address with programming during the month?
6. This is a time for your organization to do some self-examination and self-discovery.



*Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month Program Guide*

7. Start a book group and read one of the 2019 JDAIM Reads! selections. ALL selections since 2012 are listed in this Guide.
8. Saturday Night at the Movies. Select Autism: the Musical, or Front of the Class, films related to several JDAIM Reads! selections. Choose the 2019 selections, IAN or Keep the Change (see page 24) or hold a ReelAbilities Film Festival in your city or community in February.
9. A day school in Florida has the idea to dress in blue and gold for a day in solidarity for JDAIM.
10. Hold discussions about the difference between awareness and acceptance and inclusion. What does each one mean? Does one lead to another or are they all part of one movement?
11. Invite a speaker talk about civil rights for people with disabilities and mental health conditions.
12. Create a mural that reflects the Jewish or secular communities when everyone is included. Broaden inclusion to reflect people who are or have been on the margins of the community.
13. Learn what is happening in Israel to encourage inclusion and support people there. Look at the military, housing, education, employment, and community participation.
14. The *parshiot* during February are aligned with inclusion, belonging, seeing each person as a contributor to the community and society, created in God's image, and so much more. Have a different group lead services or incorporate the *parshah* of the week in a short *d'var Torah*.
15. Make a class project for students to write their own *b'rachot*.



## A Prayer for All People to Belong

One practical way to highlight belonging and inclusion is to add a prayer to your service that opens hearts and minds to appreciate how unique and valued each person is. One of my favorite prayers can be offered in any faith tradition. Written by the Reverend Kate Chips, this prayer was adapted by a pioneer in faith community inclusion, Ginny Thornburgh. It was published in *That All May Worship: An Interfaith Welcome to People with Disabilities*. May you be blessed as you go on your journey of belonging and inclusion for all people.

### An Interfaith Litany for Wholeness

Written by the Reverend Kate Chips and adapted by Ginny Thornburgh

**Leader:** Let us pray for all of God's people.

For people who are blind and cannot see, and for those who can see but are blind to the people around them.

**Response:** *God, in your mercy, help us touch each other.*

**Leader:** For people who move slowly because of accident, illness or disability, and for those who move too fast to be aware of the world in which they live.

**Response:** *God, in your mercy, help us work together.*

**Leader:** For people who are deaf and cannot hear, and for those who can hear but ignore the cries of others.

**Response:** *God, in your mercy, help us respond to each other.*

**Leader:** For people who learn slowly, for people who learn in different ways, and for people who learn quickly and easily but often choose ignorance.

**Response:** *God, in your mercy, help us to grow in your wisdom.*

**Leader:** For families, friends and caregivers who serve people with disabilities, and for those who feel awkward in their presence.

**Response:** *God, in your mercy, help us see each other with your eyes.*

**Leader:** For people who feel isolated by their disabilities, and for people who contribute to that sense of isolation.

**Response:** *God, in your mercy, change our lives.*

**Leader:** For all the people in your creation that we may learn to respect each other, and learn how to live together in peace.

**Response:** *God, in your mercy, bind us together.*

**All:** Amen



## 14 Community-Wide Programs

1. Hold a community-wide event inviting everyone to support inclusion of people with disabilities
  - a. Resource Fair
  - b. Keynote speaker
  - c. Conference with workshops
  - d. Film screenings
  - e. Concert featuring performers who have disabilities
  - f. Art exhibits by artists who have disabilities
2. Ask each organization in your community to contribute a small amount of funding to defray costs for film rentals, speakers and food.
3. Recognize every organization that contributes in some way to the community effort in your program, on your website and at the actual event.
4. Encourage your community to like the [JDAIM Facebook page](#), publicize webinars and online videos that are relevant.
5. Partner with your local Arc, parent training center, governors council or disability organization to sponsor specific topics that appeal to the community.
6. Create a community calendar of events that are open to the public.
7. Publicize all of the Jewish organizations that welcome and support people with disabilities and their families including housing, recreation, vocational and educational with links to those organizations.
8. Offer training to building committee chairs and staff on the Americans with Disabilities Act and what to look for to provide accessible spaces.
9. Offer training to congregations and organizations on how to become more inclusive and accessible, how to start an inclusion committee and begin an inclusion initiative.
10. Write press releases about JDAIM and the community programming.
11. Gather representatives from every Jewish organization to convene an inclusion roundtable that will meet regularly after JDAIM to discuss the needs and work toward building capacity in the community.
12. Publish a list of resources and promote on your community website and individual websites.
13. Remember that you are recognizing JDAIM to encourage and promote inclusive practices all year long.
14. Choose a theme such as “Person First” and live it through teaching and actions. Identify Jewish values that enhance understanding.



## Welcome People by Communicating Accessibility

An important way to let people know that they are welcome is to publicize accessibility and invite them to make requests for accommodations. Accessibility and accommodations statements belong in all of your written and electronic communications, on the front page of your website, invitations to events, and notices about programs you offer.

### Accessibility Statements

State your commitment to inclusion. Your statement can be general:

**We are an inclusive community that welcomes all people.**

Your statement can be specific:

**We are committed to working towards full participation and accessibility for all people with disabilities and mental health conditions.**

### Accommodation Statements

These statements invite individuals to tell you about their needs in order to participate. Always include contact information and a due date for requests to be made.

**If you require an accommodation in order to participate in (the meeting/services/event, etc.) please contact (name of individual who is responsible for taking requests, if applicable) at (phone and email) by (due date to make the request.)**

**We welcome and support children, teens, and adults with disabilities, mental health conditions, and their families and caregivers. We make every effort to ensure our programs, equipment, and facilities are accessible. Please phone or email us if you have any questions or would like to request an accommodation.**

Additional language may be added to state that requests for accommodations made after the advertised date will be honored to the maximum extent feasible.



## 12 Practical Ways to Further Inclusion in Your Organization

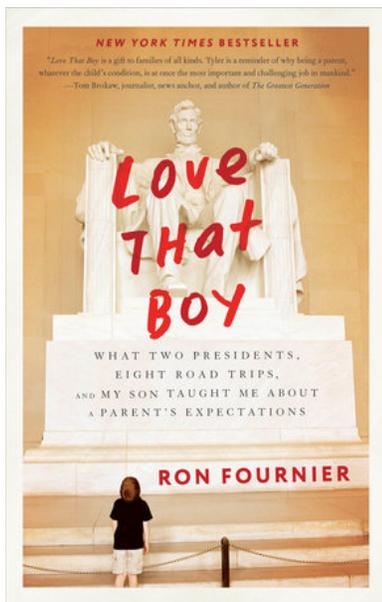
1. Plan a Shabbat for Inclusion and Acceptance and include people with disabilities on the planning committee.
2. Start your Inclusion Committee. This committee can help plan the activities for the Shabbat for Inclusion and Acceptance. An inclusion committee or interest group is a good way to engage lay and professional leadership in a long-term inclusion plan.
3. Identify barriers to participation within the organization. Examine:
  - Architectural barriers
  - Communication barriers
  - Attitudinal barriers
4. What does your organizational mission statement say about inclusion? Study it and determine what changes, if any, should be made.
5. Promote accessibility. Every time you advertise an event or program, let people know they can contact you to request an accommodation. Inform everyone about the location of accessible parking and entrances.
6. Incorporate Braille signage on elevators, and room and directional signs.
7. Review *halacha* on placement of *mezuzot* and if possible, move them so that people who use wheelchairs as well as children can reach them. Hold a *mezuzah* ceremony as part of religious school.
8. Start an inclusion or accessibility fund to help pay for accommodations, such as sign language interpreters, large print and Braille materials, and accessible transportation to events.
9. Evaluate each of the programming areas as well as architecture to identify barriers. Use evaluations to set priorities and goals for your organization.
10. Write a monthly column on different aspects of inclusion in your organization.
11. Use language that promotes respect and dignity. Some people prefer *Person First Language*, which puts the person before the disability. It does not define a person by their disability and implies that living with a disability is just one aspect of who they are. Some people prefer *Identity First Language* which emphasizes that one's disability is an important part of who they are. If you are unsure how to refer to people, just ask.
12. Launch an Inclusion Initiative that extends well past Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month!



## JDAIM Reads! 2019

JDAIM Reads! is a popular program, providing organizations and communities another avenue to raise awareness and educate people about a wide variety of disability and mental health related topics, family concerns, Jewish community inclusion, and even history. JDAIM Reads started in 2012, and we've included popular titles from previous years in this guide.

JDAIM Reads! 2019 selections include a New York Times bestselling memoir, and a new book by JDAIM co-founder, Shelly Christensen.



### Love That Boy

Ron Fournier

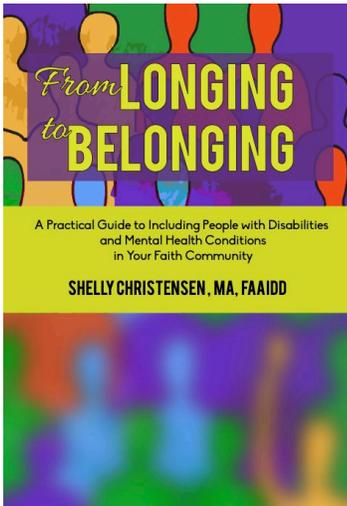
For journalist Ron Fournier, who was a White House reporter, connecting with his youngest child, Tyler, wasn't easy. Tyler hated sports, which his dad loved, and he was socially awkward, which made Fournier cringe. His warmhearted memoir, **Love That Boy**, details a father's journey to understand and bond with his son, who was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome at the relatively late age of 12.

Love That Boy is also a familiar meditation on parenting—our outsize expectations for our kids' success, popularity and happiness. To get at these issues, Fournier interviews other parents, some who have a child with Asperger's or depression, others who call themselves tiger moms. Fournier intersperses these with his family's story, including the slow path to Tyler's diagnosis and one daughter's adolescent struggles. He also describes visits he and Tyler made to two American Presidents.

This is the personal story of Fournier's transformation into a new father figure. It is also filled with research and interviews with parents and children on the expectations, hopes, and dreams they have for their children and the potential damage those pressures can cause. The desire to please the parent is so heavy that many children are "experiencing depression, anxiety, psychosomatic disorders and substance abuse." In a straightforward manner, Fournier outlines each of these issues and provides clues on how parents can tone down their hopes so their children can have happier childhoods and more fulfilling adulthoods.

Kirkus Review, February 2016





**NEW!!!**

**From Longing to Belonging—  
A Practical Guide to Including People  
with Disabilities and Mental Health  
Conditions in  
Your Faith Community  
By Shelly Christensen, MA FAAIDD**

Shelly is delighted to speak to your community via Zoom or Skype. Contact Shelly at [shelly@inclusioninnovations.com](mailto:shelly@inclusioninnovations.com)

***Inclusion is More Than Being  
a House of Prayer for All Peoples***

*Everyone wants to belong*--in their community at large and especially their religious community. Nearly 20 percent of people live with a disability or mental health condition, which means so many of us are impacted in some way. The one place everyone should feel like they belong is their synagogue and other Jewish community organizations.

*From Longing to Belonging* is a comprehensive approach to inclusion of people with disabilities and mental health conditions written by one of the leaders in the faith community disability inclusion movement and JDAIM co-founder, Shelly Christensen. Based on Shelly's personal experiences as the parent of a child with a disability, and her work with congregations and faith-based organizations, people with disabilities and mental health conditions, and those who love them, *From Longing to Belonging* gives synagogues and Jewish community the tools to become an even richer and more welcoming place—truly a house of prayer for all peoples.

"Shelly Christensen has literally written the book on inclusion. *From Longing to Belonging* is truly the bible that will guide us to create the sacred space where we all belong. Using personal and professional stories, Shelly illuminates the need for and the ease to which an organization can open its doors to becoming a more welcoming community."

***Elaine G.F. Hall, Award-winning author, Now I See the Moon  
Founder of The Miracle Project®  
Featured in the HBO film, Autism: The Musical***



## Previous JDAIM Reads! Selections

### **Ketchup is My Favorite Vegetable: A Family Grows Up with Autism.**

**By Liane Kupferberg Carter**

How do you create an ordinary family life, while dealing with the extraordinary needs of an autistic child? Meet Mickey - charming, funny, compassionate, and autistic. In this unflinching memoir, Liane delivers a mother's insight into what really goes on in the two decades after diagnosis. If you've ever wondered how families adapt and adjust to a diagnosis of autism or any other disability, you must read Liane's masterfully written, open-hearted book, [Ketchup is My Favorite Vegetable: A Family Grows Up with Autism](#). You will never look at parenting any child the same way.

### **Little Gate Crasher—the Life and Photos of Mace Bugen**

**By Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer**

Mace Bugen was 43 inches tall with an average-sized head and a torso set on small, twisted legs—but that didn't mean he was a pushover. In truth, he was smarter than most; over the years, he learned to effectively turn what society in those days called a handicap into a powerful tool he could use to his advantage.

Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer's [The Little Gate Crasher](#) is a memoir of her amazing Great-Uncle Mace Bugen, an unstoppable spirit, first generation Jewish American, self-made millionaire, celebrity gate-crasher. Mace's unstoppable spirit defied the challenges of his own physical limitations and society's prejudices towards people with dwarfism.

### **Uniquely Human: A Different Way of Seeing Autism**

**By Barry M. Prizant, PhD with Tom Fields-Meyer**

Essential reading! Dr. Prizant casts a spotlight on behavior and how it can be a way of communicating feelings or needs. [Uniquely Human](#) is not another "autism" book—rather, it's a book about what being human really is, sharing stories and providing insight for how we treat each other. Written with Tom Fields-Meyer.



**Following Ezra:  
What One Father Learned About Gumby, Otters, Autism, and Love From  
His Extraordinary Son  
By Tom Fields-Meyer**

[Following Ezra](#) will have you laughing and crying as author Tom Fields-Meyer engages you with his compelling memoir. The book is not about autism—it's about a family learning to adapt to the unexpected challenges and gifts of raising a child with a disability.

**Life, Animated  
By Ron Suskind**

This the [real-life story](#) of Owen Suskind, who is the son of the Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist Ron Suskind and his irrepressible wife, Cornelia. This brilliantly crafted narrative—written by the father but shaped by his wife and children—isn't about autism or Disney, though you'll never view either one quite the same, again. It's the story of a family's resilience when their world is turned upside down. It's about perseverance and hope. A child disappeared into confusion, frustration, and silence. But deep inside his dark cave of isolation, he and his family began to dig for diamonds, working year by year on a most improbable project: to find a way each of us can learn to animate our lives.

**A Life Not With Standing  
By Chava Willig Levy**

[A Life Not with Standing](#) chronicles the adventures—by turns exhilarating, agonizing and amorous—of an iron lung alumna. It shatters stereotypes about people with disabilities, enabling others to view disability with pride, not prejudice. It celebrates family, faith, music, perseverance, idealism and indignation. But most of all, *A Life Not with Standing* tells a story beyond Chava Willig Levy's polio chronicle: how calamities can befall innocent people and how those calamities can evolve into and, in fact, become ingredients of and prerequisites for ensuing joy.

**Hope Will Find You  
by Rabbi Naomi Levy**

***How can I get my life off hold? When will my life really begin?***

We all ask ourselves the same questions when we are struggling to move forward. As a rabbi, Naomi Levy frequently offered spiritual guidance to people seeking the answers. But when a doctor told her that her young daughter, Noa, had a fatal degenerative disease, Rabbi Levy's own insights could not prevent her whole life from unraveling.

In [Hope Will Find You](#), Naomi Levy shares her journey and the wisdom she gained. She describes with humor and honesty how she came through a time of uncertainty and fear and learned how to stop waiting for life to begin. A natural and engaging storyteller, Levy has written a book filled with invaluable lessons for living in the present and for opening the door to an extraordinary future.



## **Now I See the Moon: A Mother, A Son, A Miracle** by Elaine Hall

[Now I See the Moon](#) is the especially timely, painstakingly positive work of a children’s film coach who recounts her adoption of a troubled Russian toddler and her long, tortuous, ultimately enlightening journey to treat his nonverbal autism. Hall was a successful “baby wrangler” for Hollywood feature films, former actress, 40-something wife and active in her Jewish faith. You will be moved by Hall’s spiritual and emotional journey of resilience and tenacity as she raises her son Neal and helps others believe in their own possibilities.

Elaine is “Coach E,” the founder of The Miracle Project, which is featured in the award-winning film, “Autism the Musical.”

## **Front of the Class: How Tourette Syndrome Made Me the Teacher I Never Had** by Brad Cohen

As a child with Tourette syndrome, Brad Cohen was ridiculed, beaten, mocked, and shunned. Children, teachers, and even family members found it difficult to be around him. As a teen, he was viewed by many as purposefully misbehaving, even though he had little power over the twitches and noises he produced, especially under stress. But [Front of the Class](#) is not about self-pity. Brad Cohen’s unwavering determination and fiercely positive attitude conquered the difficulties he faced in life. His relationship with BBYO and Hillel provided opportunities to just be himself and to develop his talents on the road to the person he is today— a teacher, assistant principal, husband, father and author. “Front of the Class” is a Hallmark Hall of Fame Film.

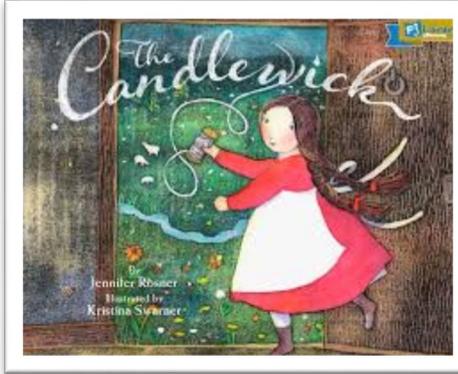
## **The Story of Beautiful Girl** By Rachel Simon

It is 1968. Linnie, a young white woman with a developmental disability, and Homan, an African American deaf man, are locked away in an institution, the School for the Incurable and Feebleminded, and have been left to languish, forgotten. Deeply in love, they escape, and find refuge in the farmhouse of Martha, a retired schoolteacher and widow. But the couple is not alone-Linnie has just given birth to a baby girl. When the authorities catch up to them that same night, Homan escapes into the darkness, and Linnie is caught. But before she is forced back into the institution, she whispers two words to Martha: "Hide her." And so begins the 40-year epic journey of Linnie, Homan, Martha, and baby Julia-lives divided by seemingly insurmountable obstacles, yet drawn together by a secret pact and extraordinary love. [The Story of Beautiful Girl](#) is a New York Times Bestseller.



# JDAIM Reads for Children!

## **Hachnasat Orchim is the Theme for 2019**



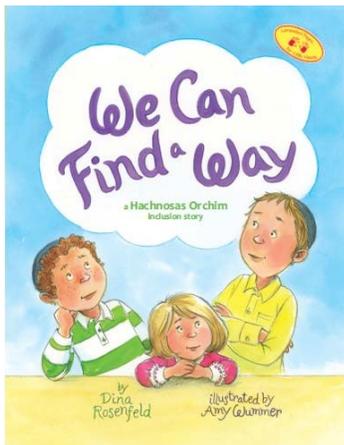
### **The Candlewick**

**Written by Jennifer Rosner**

**Illustrated by Kristina Swarner**

*The Candlewick* is a story of friendship and kindness. The two main characters, Ruthie and Bayla, clearly care for each other. As they live some distance from one another, Ruthie travels to Bayla's home for an extended visit.

Ruthie's friend Bayla is deaf, but Bayla has come up with ways to communicate with the hearing world. When Ruthie visits Bayla and realizes Bayla can't hear her doorbell, Ruthie thinks of another idea to help her stay connected to the world around her.



### **We Can Find a Way**

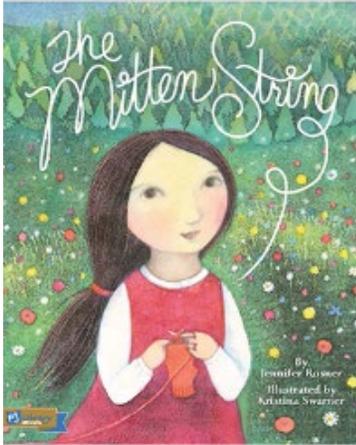
**Written by Dina Rosenfeld**

**Illustrated by Amy Wummer**

Hachnosas Orchim means inviting guests... but it also means making sure that those guests feel comfortable and included. In *We Can Find a Way*, Eli, Zev and Leah look forward to hosting a celebration for their Bubby's birthday. However, meeting the needs of every guest requires sensitivity and lots of creative thinking.

Two of the toddlers have food allergies. What kind of treats work for them? Their uncle is using a wheelchair. He can't use the front steps. One cousin has difficulty being at crowded, noisy events. How will Eli, Zev and Leah find a way to include everyone? Children ages 3-6 will love the suspense and the positive attitude of the main characters.





## **The Mitten String** Written by **Jennifer Rosen** Illustrated by **Kristina Swarner**

When her family invites a deaf woman and her baby to stay, Ruthie, a talented knitter of mittens, wonders how the mother will know if her child wakes in the night. The surprising answer inspires Ruthie to knit a special gift that offers great comfort to mother and baby—and to Ruthie herself.

**An original folktale about a girl who knits, a deaf woman, and a piece of blue yarn. The Mitten String is a previous JDAIM Reads for Children selection and begins the story that continues in The Candlewick.**

## **“I Have a Question” Book Series**

By

**Meredith Englander Polsky MSW, LCSW, MS**  
**Arlen Grad Gaines, MSW, LCSW-C, ACHP-SW**

How do you answer those difficult questions? These books address precisely that in a manner that young children will understand. Not just for children with special needs—but for any child with questions about difficult events in their lives.

### **I Have a Question about Death**

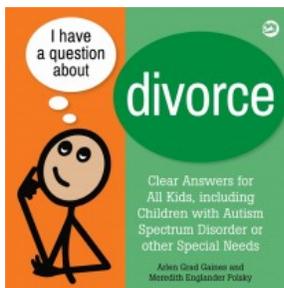
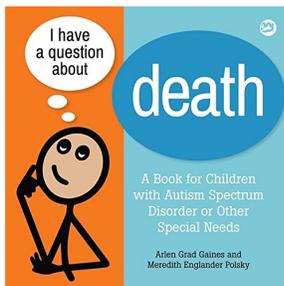
***A Book for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder or Other Special Needs***

"What does it mean when someone dies?" "Why did someone I love have to die?" This book asks questions like these that a child might have about death before offering answers. It uses straightforward text and clear illustrations to explain what death means specifically to children with ASD and other special needs aged 5-11.

### **I Have a Question about Divorce**

***A Book for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder or Other Special Needs***

Considering the questions a child might have about divorce, this book gently offers answers to them using straightforward text and clear illustrations. Perfect for children aged 5-11 with Autism Spectrum Disorder or other special needs, or for concrete or visual learners.



## JDAIM Films

### IAN



This JDAIM 2019 selection is an 8-minute film, [Ian](#). Ian was born with cerebral palsy. All he wants is to make friends, although it seems impossible to achieve when discrimination and bullying keep him away from his beloved playground. However, Ian is determined and won't give up easily. This stunning animated film from Abel Goldfarb moves us to feel Ian's loneliness as he imagines a place where he belongs. For all ages, and a powerful tool for discussion about belonging and inclusion.



### Keep the Change

When aspiring filmmaker David (Brandon Polansky) is mandated by a judge to attend a social program at the Jewish Community Center, he is sure of one thing: he doesn't belong there. But when he's assigned to visit the Brooklyn Bridge with the vivacious Sarah (Samantha Elisofon), sparks fly and his convictions are tested. Their budding relationship must weather Sarah's romantic past, David's judgmental mother (Jessica Walter), and their own pre-conceptions of what love is supposed to look like. Under the guise of an off-kilter New York romantic comedy, *Keep the Change* does something quite radical in casting actors with autism to play characters with autism, offering a refreshingly honest portrait of a community seldom depicted on the big screen. Rarely has a romcom felt so deep and poignant. Thoroughly charming and quite funny, the film's warmth and candor bring growth and transformation to the characters, and ultimately, to us.



## Free Resources for JDAIM

**Matan, The Jewish Federation of Greater Washington DC, and Gateways share a variety of free resources you can use for JDAIM activities. New this year—free JDAIM lesson plans created by Rabbi Ruti Reagan and Meredith Englander Polsky for Matan!**

**Matan** has created **NEW** JDAIM specific lesson plans for students in Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade, 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grades, and middle school in day and congregational schools. Each lesson plan guides educators in fun learning experiences that highlight inclusion and belonging through Jewish values.

The **Jewish Federation of Greater Washington DC** has many activities that cover different aspects of inclusion in synagogues and agencies including Jewish values, community advocacy, inspiring and empowering adults and teens, employment, and advocacy with and by children.

**Gateways** provides free resources for Shabbat and Jewish holidays on their website. “Our goal is to share user-friendly resources that will be helpful and effective when working with all types of learners. Resources are organized by thematic units, such as holidays, and by type, such as social stories. Please check back often as we will continue to post new resources.”



**Chabad Communities** are celebrating [ShabbaTTogether](#). A Global Shabbat of Disability Inclusion and Mental Health Awareness on February 8 and 9. Hundreds of Chabad communities around the world and on 6 continents are planning events and programs for a global Shabbat of unity focusing on Disability Inclusion and Mental Health Awareness. ShabbaTTogether presents a beautiful opportunity to celebrate the message of Torah and *Chassidut* - that each and every person is holy and valuable, an integral and celebrated member of our nation and community. Visit the [website](#) for practical resources you can use for JDAIM, or anytime and to learn more about ShabbaTTogether.

The Ruderman-Chabad Inclusion Initiative (RCII) is coordinating ShabbaTTogether.

**Orthodox Union/Yachad** North American Inclusion Month (NAIM) occurs every February focusing on the abilities and talents of individuals with disabilities. Sponsored by Yachad, communities and schools are engaged in concrete ways to include all members of their Jewish community activities and services. Resources are shared with synagogues and temples about strategies to make their environments and ideology inclusive. Examples are supplying members with visual impairments magnifying strips to help them read their siddurim or clip bookmarks to hold the place in their prayer books so that they are able to follow services. Schools participate in workshops and book clubs to help students understand disabilities. Working hand in hand with JDAIM, Yachad believes that we help the entire Jewish community grow and strengthen by enabling all individuals to be equal partners in *Klal Yisroel*.

**Union for Reform Judaism** Developed in partnership with the Ruderman Family Foundation, the Disabilities Inclusion Learning Center is an open resource for all to use. The website is a comprehensive source for information, resources, and webinars. Learn how URJ congregations that have excelled in one or more areas of inclusive practice do just that!

**United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism** has launched an initiative to transform Conservative congregations into truly inclusive communities for people with disabilities. The Ruderman Inclusion Action Community is advancing inclusion in congregations across North America. Contact [Jen Gendel](#) for more information.



## **Take the Pledge**

### **All Israel is Responsible for One Another**

Good intentions alone without action are without value for it is the action, which makes the intentions so profound.

*The Great Chassidic Master HaYehudi Hakadosh*

Complete this form with your good intentions and the actions to achieve meaningful inclusion of people with disabilities.

Ideas that will turn my good intentions into action are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I commit to take these actions:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

I will invite the following people to join me:

How do I think this will impact the lives of people with disabilities in my own community or organization?

Dated:

Thank you for joining us to ensure that people with disabilities and their families find warmth and welcoming waiting for them.

