

JDAIM is 13!



Jewish Disability
Awareness, Acceptance &
Inclusion Month

2022 PROGRAM GUIDE

Written & Produced by
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www.jdaim.org

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We All Belong

Included
Valued
Respected
Honored
Accepted
Loved

Online and Social Media Resources

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#JDAIM22



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**Please use the Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month
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JDAIM is Thirteen!

Dear Friends,

Can you believe that 2022 marks the 13th JDAIM! The number of Jewish organizations participating grows every year. I feel remarkably fortunate that I've been part of JDAIM since the beginning. JDAIM started in 2009 with just six communities. JDAIM is now recognized in synagogues, schools, youth programs and community and national/international organizations around the world.

JDAIM was never intended to be a one and done situation. JDAIM has elevated inclusion of people with disabilities and mental health conditions well beyond February. Many organizations have created formal structures to address inclusion concerns, hired professional staff and created lay committees. The result is an ever-emerging field of research, practices, and a unifying approach to inclusion which we call "Belonging."

In Parshah Bo when Pharaoh asks Moses who is leaving Egypt with him after the locust plague, (Shemot Ch. 10:8-9) "Who are the ones to go?" Moses responds, "We will all go, regardless of social station. We will go with our sons, our daughters, our flocks, our herds—for we must observe God's festival."

Torah teaches that everyone belongs simply because we are human. We don't include some people and leave others behind. Yet there are many people who long to belong, people who are shut out because there are still the doors to our communities that are guarded. We can do better.

As JDAIM is recognized during its "b'nai mitvah" year, let's reflect on what comes next. Being committed to accepting, including and supporting all people to find that incredible and universal sense of belonging, there is a "next."

Just as our young people make the transition to fulfill the obligations and responsibilities of Jewish adulthood, so must every Jewish organization pause and reflect on the attitudes, beliefs and practices that prevent belonging. Organizations also must acknowledge and build upon attitudes, beliefs and practices that promote a diverse, equitable and inclusive culture. Make JDAIM the time to have conversations about belonging within your organizations and communities. These are the conversations that get to the heart of who we want to be and who we can be.

A sense of belonging *is* the heartbeat of a community.

With deep appreciation,

Shelly Christensen, MA, FAAIDD

Co-founder of [JDAIM](#)

2021 Recipient of the [Reimagining Spirituality Leadership Award](#), American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Religion and Spirituality Network

Author [From Longing to Belonging](#)—A Practical Guide to Including People with Disabilities and Mental Health Conditions in Your Faith Community

Shelly@inclusioninnovations.com

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 make a commitment to foster acceptance and inclusion so people with disabilities and mental health conditions and those who love them feel a sense of belonging. JDAIM is a call to action to each one of us to 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.

Mission Statement

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 and community life like anyone else.

Why You Should Participate in JDAIM

- Raise awareness and affirm that inclusion and belonging are essential to well-being and quality of life of all people, including people with disabilities, mental health conditions and those who love them.
- Underscore the importance of choosing one's own Jewish journey.
- Support people with disabilities and mental health conditions to participate in *all* aspects of community life—as they choose.
- Be part of a global initiative to support participation and involvement in Jewish life.
- Advocate for the civil rights of people with disabilities and mental health conditions.
- Understand and overcome stigma, prejudice, biases, stereotypes, and myths about disability and mental health conditions.

Use the JDAIM Logo



Please use the Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month logo on all of your communications & events. Available at www.jdaim.org

JDAIM and Technology Streaming Events and Services

Since March 2020 we have adapted to new ways of connecting—and belonging. JDAIM 2022 programs, services and events will mostly be streamed on Zoom, FaceBook Live, YouTube and other virtual platforms. Now more people than ever before can participate in JDAIM! This section briefly reviews accessibility and inclusion considerations for virtual services and events.

*****Free Live Captioning on Zoom*****

Did you know that you can add captions now to Zoom meetings and webinars? It's free!

Make Devices Available

- Make Chromebooks and tablets available for people to check out.
- Ask people to donate their extra working laptops and tablets. Publicize the need. Encourage people to update their devices with the meeting platform you use.
- Make sure Zoom or the streaming platform you are using is easy to access.

Access to Technology

- Call people to find out if they have access to email so you can send links to programming.
- If someone doesn't have access to the internet, you can pre-pay hot spots for them to use.
- Not everyone is familiar with how to use Zoom. Help them connect.
- Many people have Facebook accounts and are more comfortable using Facebook than a streaming service. Stream live events on Facebook Live.

Include an Accommodation Statement

Accommodation statements belong in all your written and electronic communications, including all emails, the front page of your website, and invitations to all programs and events.

These statements invite individuals to tell you what they need to participate. Always include contact information and a due date for requests to be made.

Sample Language

“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.

Accessible Communication on Streaming Platforms

The same considerations for making services and programs accessible to all participants before the pandemic haven't changed.

Captioning

Captioning is an essential protocol for streaming in general. Captioning is gaining in popularity among many different segments of the community, including some deaf people and those who are hard of hearing.

American Sign Language Interpreters

ASL interpreters can be on screen when streaming. Be sure to include an accommodation request option for any webinar and meeting registrations so anyone needing an ASL interpreter can make that request.

Audio Description

Remember to announce page numbers regularly. Double check the page numbers in the version of a book you are using with the e-book and flipbook versions beforehand.

As a matter of course, describe what you are doing for blind people and people with low-vision. Remarks can be conversational.

“Rabbi A and Rabbi B, along with Chazzan C are on the bimah this morning. Rabbi A is standing at the left podium, Chazzan C is standing at the middle podium, and Rabbi B is standing at the left podium. They are spread about 8 feet apart from each other.”

“We are taking the Torah scroll out of the Aron Kodesh. The mantle, or cover, is pale blue velvet with silver threads woven in.”

JDAIM 2022 National Programs and Resources

JDAIM 2022 will be the most far-reaching call to action to date. With an enduring commitment toward supporting people with disabilities, mental health conditions and allies to be full participants in all of life domains, including faith community participation, these organizations have embraced innovation and provide free resources for JDAIM.

Look for ways to engage your organization or community in the many offerings. You'll find webinars, discussions, entertainment, and free resources during JDAIM.



12th Annual [Jewish Disability Advocacy Day](#) (JDAD)

February 23-24, 2022

[Register](#)

Join us for JDAD as we come together virtually from diverse communities across North America to harness our collective power and break down barriers to opportunity and inclusion. Help us advance policies that will empower millions of individuals with disabilities to lead more independent and fulfilling lives. Together we'll learn, take action and be inspired.

Presented by the Jewish Federation of North America & the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism

Accommodations Provided: *We are committed to making JDAD inclusive and accessible to all.*



ShabbaTTogether

ShabbaTTogether
February 18 and 19, 2022 17-18 Adar
www.shabbaTTogether.com



ShabbaTTogether is a global weekend event occurring in over 800 communities on 6 continents highlighting disability inclusion and mental wellness. ShabbaTTogether takes place in February to coincide with Jewish Disability Awareness and Inclusion Month (JDAIM).

This year, on February 18th, the 4th annual ShabbaTTogether event shines a spotlight on mental health, disability belonging, and diversity.

“One Thing I Wish You Knew”

“One Thing I Wish You Knew,” invites participants from across the mental health and disability communities to share their journeys, struggles, personal experiences while offering words of hope, change, and empowerment in their communities. The aim is to encourage diverse perspectives and to foster discussions on how our communities can come together to create a more inclusive environment where every person feels valued and that they belong. Together we can create systemic change.

This program can be leveraged for all audiences on any topic that is of importance to that group. The shared perspectives are the foundation for building a culture of belonging in our communities and the resultant changes are exponential.

Our ShabbaTTogether team provides all participants with the resources they need to make your weekend and activities successful in your community. No effort is too big or too small!

We invite your community to join. [Get involved!](#) The Chabad Inclusion Network is led by [Machne Israel](#) and [Friendship Circle International](#).



The Faith Inclusion Network Community for ALL (C4A) Conference

[Community for All](#) (C4A), an interfaith awareness campaign is partnering again this year with JDAIM as the Kick-off for [its 2022 virtual](#) conference. The [2022 in-person](#) conference is scheduled for March 11 in Norfolk VA.

SAVE the DATE!!

Tuesday, February 22, 2022

13 Years of Grassroots Change

A Conversation About Collaboration and Community

With Gabby Kaplan-Mayer and Shelly Christensen

[Everyone's Welcome](#)-A Fresh Conversation About Disability co-hosts Gabby Kaplan-Mayer and Shelly Christensen will lead a conversation on what they've learned since Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month (JDAIM) and Faith Inclusion Network (FIN) were founded 13 years ago. Learn the backstories of these two important contributions to faith community disability inclusion and belonging and the impact they've made.

Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project



[The Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project \(RSIP\)](#) is a partnership between CJP in Boston and the Ruderman Family Foundation that supports synagogues in creating communities where people of all abilities are valued equally and participate fully. Our resources include the following:

Getting Started. Inclusion can seem like an overwhelming challenge. We've got good news: there are many steps that you can take today that will make a difference. And we've got even better news: your congregation is not alone. RSIP can help you access consultants and network with other congregations who have undertaken this important work. Start by reading the resources on this page.

Covid-19 Inclusion Resources. COVID-19 has caused many of us to experience isolation, loneliness, and anxiety. It's important that we keep our mental health top of mind and keep our synagogue communities inclusive.

Jewish Learning. What do Jewish sacred texts have to teach us about inclusion? How can reading familiar words from a different perspective change and benefit us all? These discussions of curated readings can help us hear truth, find our own way, and see the image of God reflected in the faces of our congregations.

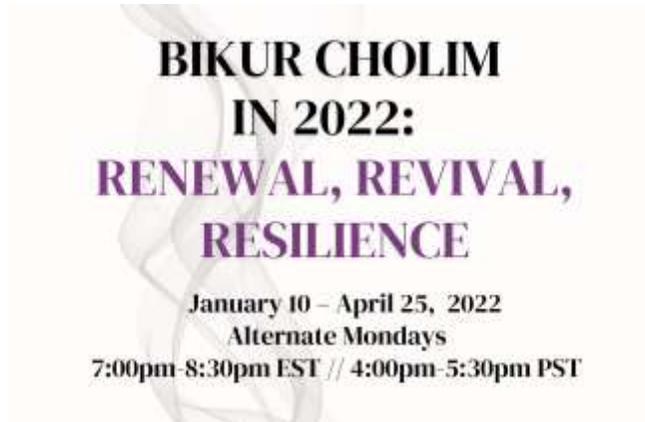
Resources and Solutions. Becoming more inclusive involves changing how we think, how we act, and how we use our physical space and other resources. Here, you'll find articles and policies authored by inclusion experts as well as best practice examples from other congregations. We've got helpful advice on everything from learning how to get feedback on your inclusion efforts, how to address food allergies, and how to create inclusive b'nei mitzvahs to how to welcome people of all abilities.

Reflections. Our differences can challenge, strengthen, and even inspire us. See what you can learn from these thoughtful writers, parents, professionals, and congregants who have experienced the difference that an inclusive synagogue can make for everyone.



RespectAbility fights stigmas and advances opportunities so that people with disabilities can fully participate in all aspects of community. We do this by promoting authentic portrayals of people with disabilities, promoting best practices in education, jobs & accessibility, and strengthening a diverse talent pipeline of people with disabilities. Specifically, we provide a full complement of webinars and toolkits to meet all of your access and inclusion needs and collaborate to help you become more inclusive. Additionally, we provide training to leaders and speakers with disabilities who seek to serve the Jewish world, and through our Speakers Bureau, provide access to those speakers to Jewish organizations so the Jewish world can benefit from their talent. Visit the [Solutions Center](#) for resources on many different topics.

Bikur Cholim Conference JDAIM Presentation
Monday, February 7, 2022
7:00-8:30 EST



At Intersection of Spirituality and Disability — How to Support Individuals and Families with Shelly Christensen

February is Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance, and Inclusion Month (JDAIM). JDAIM founder and award-winning expert on inclusion and belonging in Jewish life taps into ways to understand disability and mental health and the intersection with spirituality, Torah, and support for individuals and those who love them. Shelly will also share her experiences, insights and knowledge of parenting an individual with a disability or mental health condition, focusing on four specific needs that parents have as they navigate the journey. Over 20% of the population live with a disability or mental health diagnosis and recent data indicate that one in 44 children are diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder, making the need for support greater than ever.

Learn more about the [Bikur Cholim conference](#).

Explore a **wide range of topics including:**

Caring for the Caregiver

Compassion Fatigue

Unresolved Loss

Attending to Mental Health

The Intersection of Spirituality and Disability

[Register here.](#)



THE JEWISH MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE CONVERSATION

When communities seek to become beacons of mental wellness, they promote an atmosphere of honesty, authenticity, and dignity. But shame and stigma frequently prevent us from living up to our fullest potential. The Jewish community has the power to move toward becoming a more inclusive, stigma-free space that uplifts us all. Doing so will encourage people to seek the aid they need and promote the overall well-being of everyone.

The Blue Dove Foundation envisions a greater Jewish community where authenticity is valued, where support is accessible without fear or shame, and where we can offer effective and affirming responses to the needs of organizations, individuals, and families.

*You do not need to be an expert to make a substantial impact.
You just need to be caring and informed.
But you also need to be aware of your limits.*

Jewish literature and discussion have focused on healing, wellness, and community for years, yet we often shroud mental health in a cone of silence. To emphasize the role the Jewish community plays in promoting mental wellness, the Blue Dove Foundation focuses mental health and addiction education through a Jewish lens. We look at our Judaism and spirituality as a guide.

Visit us online at thebluedovefoundation.org for additional tools and resources to bring a Jewish mental health conversation to your community, organization or congregation.

About the Blue Dove Foundation

The Blue Dove Foundation was created to help address the issues of mental illness and addiction in the Jewish community and beyond. Based in Atlanta, we work with people and organizations across the United States and around the world.

Our mission is to educate, equip, and ignite our global Jewish community with tools to understand and overcome the challenges presented by mental illness and substance abuse.

THEBLUEDOVEFOUNDATION.ORG // #QUIETINGTHESILENCE // @BLUEDOVEFOUNDATION

Free Resources for JDAIM and Beyond



Jewish Learning Venture's new website jkidACCESS.org is a virtual space for resources and information for families raising Jewish children with disabilities. We are here to be a resource for YOU to find the support and accommodations needed for full inclusion in Jewish life.

- Check out our [downloadable resources](#) to help your family adapt Jewish practices and rituals to meet your child's needs.
- Join us for [jkidphilly's sensory-friendly programs and parent seminars](#) on adapting Jewish home rituals.
- Learn more about how to receive [PJ Library books](#) that best match your child's developmental level.
- [Sign up](#) to receive resources and event updates by email.
- Contact us to receive [one-on-one support and guidance](#) to support your family's accessible Jewish journey.

Jewish Learning Venture's [Whole Community Inclusion](#) initiative helps to ensure that families raising Jewish children with disabilities find the support and accommodations needed for full inclusion in Jewish life. [JDAIM values-based lesson plans](#) for preschool, elementary and teens are free.



Mission: One in five. That's the number of people with disabilities in the United States today. Matan enables Jewish professionals, communities and families to create and sustain inclusive settings in educational, communal and spiritual aspects of Jewish life.

Matan offers curricular materials and resources, webinars, live training opportunities, cohort experiences, community consultations and more. Follow the links below to expand your inclusive practices.

FREE:

- Classroom and at-home [resources](#) for various Jewish holidays and experiences!
- Comprehensive [lesson plans](#) for JDAIM for grades K-12!
- [Hear Our Voices Teen Blog](#) highlights first-person perspectives of teens navigating a range of disabilities, from Autism and Tourette's Syndrome to Mental Illness and Blindness.
- [Webinar Library](#) featuring Rabbi Ruti Regan and Rabbi Lauren Tuchman

LOW-COST:

- One-of-a-kind [Teen Training](#) curriculum, enhancing the work of classroom assistants in congregational schools, and implemented in over 100 congregations.
- Matan's [B'nai Mitzvah Inclusion Guide](#) for tutors, currently utilized in 24 different communities.

THE MATAN INSTITUTE:

Now in its 18th cohort (including 6 early childhood cohorts), The Matan Institute provides one-of-a-kind intensive training for various groups of Jewish educators. These Institutes, which have attracted participants from 30 different states, are an innovation in the field. Rather than providing one-time professional development, we create cohorts that are supported by mentors, webinars and ongoing consultation over an entire year and beyond. Be the first to know about our [next cohort!](#)

COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS:

Matan works with stakeholders across organizations in a particular community or region in order to understand the inner workings of that community, their priorities, the local expertise that exists and the current challenges to inclusion. Matan staff produces a report and maintains ongoing communication until the community's goals are set and "next steps" are in place. Subsidized pricing now available for small/medium sized communities through a generous grant from the Covenant Foundation. [Find out more now!](#)

www.matankids.org



Remote Learning Resources

Gateways: Access to Jewish Education presents recordings of two virtual workshops 2020 which provide strategies that religious school educators can use to ensure that remote learning programs remain accessible and meaningful to students with diverse learning needs. The first workshop, a collaboration with Maimonides and the Prizmah Center for Jewish Day Schools, is [“Effective Practices Engaging and Supporting Diverse Learners in a COVID-19 Virtual Environment,”](#) and the second is [“How to Effectively Support Diverse Learners Remotely.”](#)

Building Inclusive Virtual Communities:

As part of the Ruderman Synagogue Inclusion Project, Gateways offers [a video](#) on how synagogues can include congregants of all abilities and needs in their virtual communities in a time of social distancing.

Gateways Haggadah: A Seder for the Whole Family

Gateways: Access to Jewish Education offers an accessible [Haggadah](#), empowering children with special needs to participate in the Passover seder. This first-of-its kind Haggadah contains over 150 Boardmaker symbols® to assist those with speech, language, and learning challenges, and features step-by-step photographs that illustrate what to do throughout the Seder.

High Holiday Resources:

Gateways: Access to Jewish Education has an extensive collection of [High Holiday resources](#) to help children with special needs engage meaningfully in services and rituals for the Jewish High Holidays. These free, downloadable resources include High Holiday blessings with Boardmaker symbols®, creative ideas for adaptable High Holiday crafts, and customizable High Holiday social stories and social skills supports.



[The Miracle Project](#) is a fully inclusive theater, film and expressive arts program that builds communication, self-esteem, job and social skills for individuals with autism and other disabilities – speaking and non-speaking. Offering programs both remotely and hybrid, TMP uses groundbreaking and evidence-based methods developed by founder, Elaine Hall. TMP focuses on the strengths and abilities inherent in each participant while developing a unique neurodiverse community. TMP’s cornerstone initiatives include evidence-based social skills classes, musical theater programs, job-training programs and community events.

Among TMP's award-winning programs is a fully virtual social skills program that uses Jewish music, text and ritual to help foster and build Jewish identity and community for non-speaking Jewish adults. Additionally, TMP has recently launched a first of a kind expressive arts program for non-speakers and a professional acting program aimed at helping young adults with disabilities pursue and build careers in the TV and film industry.

In celebration of JDAIM in February 2022, TMP will be re-releasing an original musical prayer created at the beginning of the pandemic, "of One Breath." This original song - featuring those with and without disabilities including Broadway stars and top recording artists such as Peter Yarrow - is a celebration of how we are all *b'tzelem elohim*, made in the image of G-d and made of one breath. Additionally, The Miracle Project recently completed an original 40-minute musical film *Journey to Namuh* written with and starring neurodiverse individuals with and without disabilities. To receive information on future screenings, sign up on our website.

For more information about The Miracle Project and for all JDAIM events - visit our website www.themiracleproject.org

 JCC Association
of North America

JDAAIM

Jewish Disability
Awareness, Acceptance,
and Inclusion Month

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

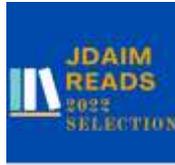
Submit your programs to the [JCCA community calendar](#).

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!”
- Set goals for what you can accomplish during JDAIM.
- Brainstorm activities and programs. Ask how each activity will have an impact **AFTER JDAIM**.
- Use #JDAIM2021 to share on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and Pinterest
- Make JDAIM the springboard for what you can do the rest of the year.
- Advertise and join the many great offerings available online from our JDAIM Community Without Walls Partners and in your community!
- Discuss the weekly Torah parshiot with an inclusion lens in board and committee meetings, religious school classes, Shabbat sermons, and in Torah study.
- Use social media to promote inclusion.

Events and Programs for JDAIM

- Host a congregational *Havdalah* service on Zoom. Advertise this to your entire community and encourage people with disabilities and their families to participate.
- Choose one of the films in this guide and do a “movie night.” Choose a film that people can stream and host a discussion. Have a thoughtful discussion about how people with disabilities and mental health conditions are portrayed in Hollywood.
- Coordinate a program for parents of children with disabilities. Invite a speaker from Jewish Family Services to lead a parent education group.
- Schedule a Shabbat afternoon conversation on Zoom. Invite a speaker to discuss employment, housing, or policy issues around disability and mental health conditions.
- Start a book group and read one of the 2021 JDAIM Reads! selections. We’ve also included great selections from past years.
- Host a bedtime story event on Zoom. Read a JDAIM Reads for Kids selection. Make sure to have hot chocolate and marshmallows at the ready.
- Create a calendar of events in your community.
- 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



JDAIM Reads! Book Club

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 history. We have chosen **two amazing selections** for your book groups or to read on your own.



[Running Naked in the Snow](#) **the debut collection of poems by Linda Joy Walder**

Linda Joy Walder's debut collection of poetry, *Running Naked in the Snow*, will wow your senses, your spirit, and your soul!

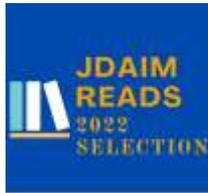
For the past 20 years, Linda Joy Walder has been a visionary and activist in the field of adult Autism. Her internationally recognized Foundation ([The Daniel Jordan Fiddle Foundation](#)) has led the global community in accepting, valuing, and supporting the diversity of adults diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. Linda's own story is one of courage and heart. She is the mother of an adult daughter and a son (who died of an Autism-related seizure at age 9, and in whose memory the Foundation is named). She is also a recent widow, navigating the crushing loss of her cherished husband. Her personal journey of resiliency and hope has inspired the Autism community and beyond who gravitate towards Linda's compassionate and innovative spirit.

Linda resides in Charleston, South Carolina, with her beloved family of human and furry beings. Her website, [LindaJWalderC](#), is sparking a creative revolution, inviting visitors to share her personal journey and to spark their own innate creativity by exploring imaginative new ways to cope with challenging times.

Follow Linda on Instagram [@lindajwalderc](#).

Published by Free Verse Press.

For more information about Linda Joy Walder [contact](#) Mann Media, Inc.



Moving Forward **By Jacki Edry**

Moving Forward presents an informative, emotional, and empowering account of the challenges and struggles on the road to recovery from complicated brain surgery – as well as the search for understanding, meaning, and faith. It enables you to step into the shoes of someone who has endured the types of sensory irregularities common in people with neurodiversity – including autism, ADHD, SPD, dyslexia, Irlen Syndrome, Auditory Processing Disorder, and more, and to gain understanding as to how to cope with these challenges and to compensate for them.

Moving Forward will enlighten parents, professionals, and family members to better understand and assist the neurodivergent people whom they work with and love.

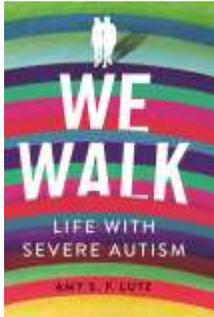
Jacki Edry is a survivor of complex brain surgery that left a lasting imprint on her body, as well as her neurological and perceptual abilities. She is also a parent of neurodivergent children. She has spent many years advocating for inclusion programs in the educational system and providing support for families of children with disabilities.

Jacki spends most of her time learning about how young minds discover and interpret the world. She enjoys integrating this knowledge into her work and creative ventures. She is particularly interested in the brain, Mindbody, and inclusion of people with disabilities in society and aims to integrate all of these different schools of knowledge in order to help better the world.

Jacki resides in Israel with her husband, children, and dog. Read Jacki's [blog!](#)

Favorite JDAIM Selections

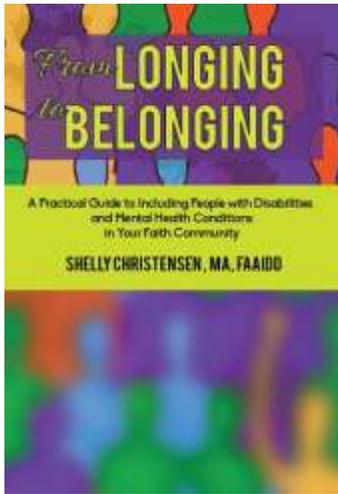
Each of these books are past JDAIM Reads selections that entertain, inspire, and promote great discussions to achieve a more inclusive community.



We Walk: Life with Severe Autism **By Amy Lutz**

In this collection of beautiful and raw essays, Amy S. F. Lutz writes openly about her experience—the positive and the negative—as a mother of a now twenty-one-year-old son with severe autism. Lutz's human emotion drives through each page and challenges commonly held ideas that define autism either as a disease or as neurodiversity. *We Walk* is inspired by her own questions: What is the place of intellectually and developmentally disabled people in society? What responsibilities do we, as citizens and human beings, have to one another? Who should decide for those who cannot decide for themselves? What is the meaning of religion to someone with no abstract language? Exploring these questions, *We Walk* directly—and humanly—examines social issues such as inclusion, religion, therapeutics, and friendship through the lens of severe autism.

In a world where public perception of autism is largely shaped by the "quirky geniuses" featured on television shows like *The Big Bang Theory* and *The Good Doctor*, *We Walk* demands that we center our debates about this disorder on those who are most affected by its impacts.



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

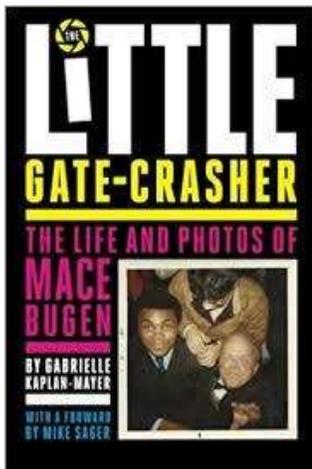
A perfect follow-up to JDAIM. All any of us want is to feel that we belong and that we matter. JDAIM co-founder and faith community disability inclusion leader Shelly Christensen will guide your organization toward achieving meaningful participation with all people who just want to belong—like anyone else!

“From Longing to Belonging is truly the bible that guides us to create the sacred space where we all belong. Shelly illuminates the need for and the ease with which to open congregational doors to becoming a more welcoming community.”

***Elaine G.F. Hall, Award-winning author, Founder of The Miracle Project®
Featured in the HBO films Autism The Musical and Autism The Sequel***

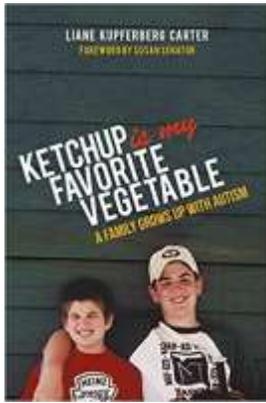
Shelly Christensen has created an invaluable "how to" guide for faith communities. She speaks to the personal challenges and possibilities of a parent of a child with disabilities and how that translated into a call to action for faith communities. The book stands on a powerful faith-based foundation—that key to all people is the basic need to belong and feel valued just because they exist. *From Longing to Belonging* is an essential tool.

Rabbi Richard F. Address, D.Min, Director: Jewish Sacred Aging



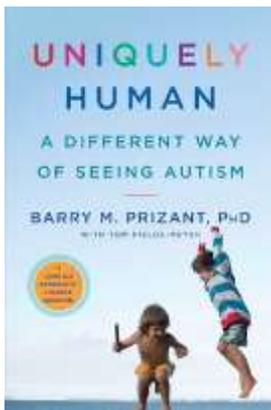
**The Little Gate Crasher—the Life and Photos of Mace Bugen
By Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer**

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.



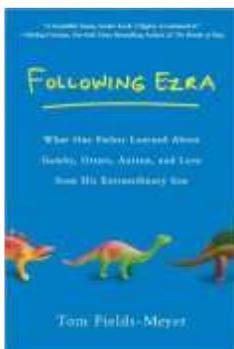
Ketchup is My Favorite Vegetable: A Family Grows Up with Autism. By Liane Kupferberg Carter

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.



Uniquely Human: A Different Way of Seeing Autism Barry M. Prizant, PhD, with Tom Fields-Meyer

"This is by far the most empathic, wise, and insightful book I have ever read about autism, and is one of the most empathic and wise books I've ever read about being human. I can't overstate the transformative power of this book: it breaks open the heart, extends vision where there was only fog, and inspires keen insight where there was only reflexive response." —**Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson, Dean's Chair and Vice-President, American Jewish University and parent**



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

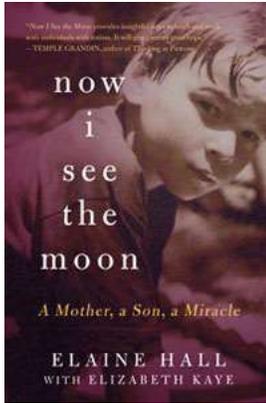
A heartwarming, intimate and amusing memoir of a father's experience raising his autistic son.

When Tom Fields-Meyer's son Ezra was three and showing early signs of autism, a therapist suggested that the father needed to grieve.

"For what?" he asked.

The answer: "For the child he didn't turn out to be."

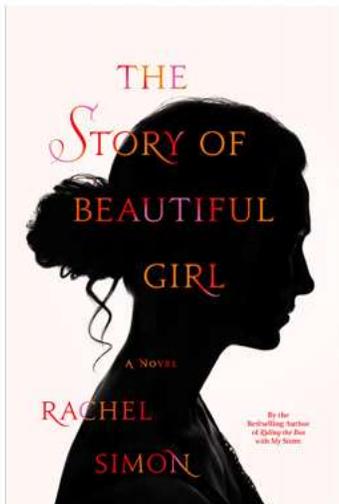
That moment helped strengthen the author's resolve to do just the opposite: to love the child Ezra was, a quirky boy with a fascinating and complex mind. Full of tender moments and unexpected humor, *Following Ezra* is the story of a father and son on a ten-year journey from Ezra's diagnosis to the dawn of his adolescence. It celebrates his growth from a remote toddler to an extraordinary young man, connected in his own remarkable ways to the world around him.



Now I See the Moon: A Mother, A Son, A Miracle **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” and the new HBO film, “[Autism the Sequel.](#)”



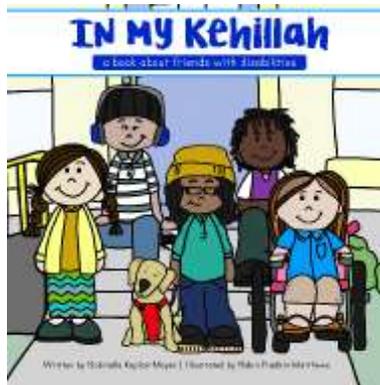
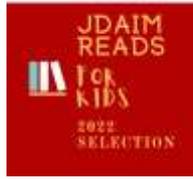
The Story of Beautiful Girl **Rachel Simon**

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 was the first selection of JDAIM Reads!

JDAIM Reads for Kids!



In My Kehillah-A Book About Jewish Friends with Disabilities Written by Gabrielle Kaplan-Mayer, Illustrated by Robin Fradken Matthews

“We are happy that we are all part of this kehillah. Together, we are making the world a better place.” Excerpt from *In My Kehillah*.

This delightful book encourages young learners (4 to 8 years old) to be inclusive of their peers with physical, cognitive, and learning disabilities. It’s a great book to read in preschool and early grade classes, and at home! Included are questions to ask and discuss.

Learn how four Jewish concepts teach us to be inclusive: *Adam Yechidi Nivra* (every person is a unique creation), *Chesed* (loving kindness), *Kavod* (respect), and *Kehillah* (community).

In My Kehillah can be purchased from [Jewish Learning Venture](#).

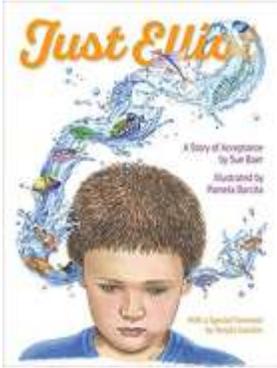
Previous JDAIM Reads for Kids!

JDAIM Reads for Kids selections are a great way to teach our youngest members of the community about belonging and inclusion. Some have activities for home and school to accompany the books for fun learning experiences!

Just Elliot

By Sue Baer

Foreword by Temple Grandin



ages 5-9, grades K-4

Just Elliot is a simple but groundbreaking story about a six-year-old boy with autism attempting to explain the challenges of his life on the spectrum. From the sensation of stinging bees on his head as he gets his haircut, to his revulsion of certain colored foods, to the simple need to hum as he concentrates on his schoolwork - very real revelations certain to be eye opening to Just Elliot's intended audience of young, non-autistic readers. A Readers Guide for parents is presented at the back of the book.

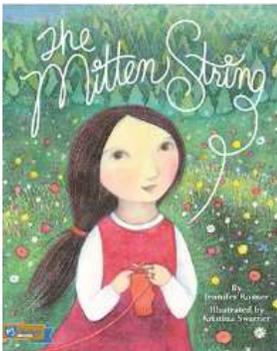
Based on the life of a real boy with autism, *Just Elliot* takes us on a journey, from his point of view, through the tough job of navigating the world on the autism spectrum. Beautifully illustrated, *Just Elliot* includes a resource guide and questions to facilitate starting the discussion. As Temple Grandin says in the foreword, "This book will help neurotypical children understand and empathize with a classmate who has sensory problems."

The Mitten String

Written by Jennifer Rosen

Illustrated by Kristina Swarner

A PJ Library Selection



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 begins the story continued in The Candlewick.

The Candlewick

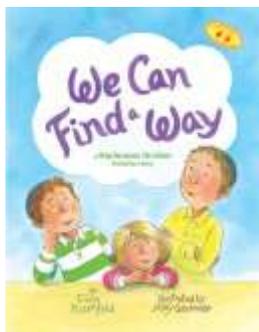
Written by Jennifer Rosen

Illustrated by Kristina Swarner

A PJ Library Selection

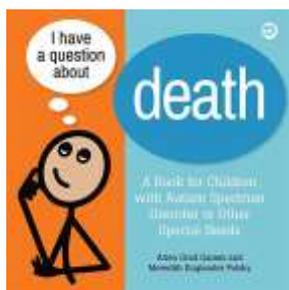


The Candlewick is a story of friendship and kindness. The two main characters, Ruthie and Bayla, clearly care for each other. As they live some distance from one another, Ruthie travels to Bayla's home for an extended visit. Ruthie's friend Bayla is deaf, but Bayla has come up with ways to communicate 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! 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. Can they eat birthday cake? Their uncle uses a wheelchair and there are stairs to get in. One of their cousins is sensitive to crowded noisy events. Will Eli Zev and Leah find a way to include everyone? Hopefully, when planning an activity or event of their own, young readers will understand the value of inclusion, and make sure to find a way!



"I Have a Question" Book Series

Books for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder or Other Special Needs

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 disabilities—but for any child with questions about difficult events in their lives. Ages 5-11.

I Have a Question about Death

"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 to children with ASD and other special needs.

I Have a Question About Divorce

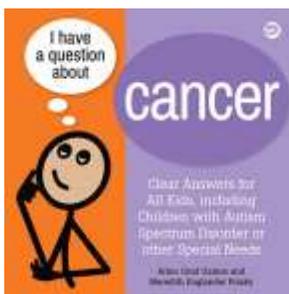
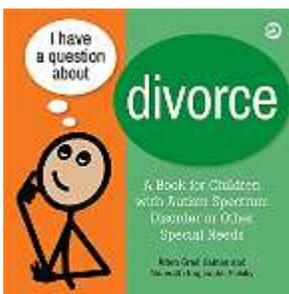
A Book for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder or Other Special Needs

Considering questions a child might have about divorce, this book gently offers answers to them using straightforward text and clear illustrations.

I Have a Question about Cancer

Clear Answers for All Kids, including Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder or other Special Needs

This book explores the life changes and feelings of uncertainty a child may experience if a loved one has cancer. Illustrated with SymbolStix, a symbol-based language for visual thinkers, this book explains a difficult topic to children who might otherwise struggle to understand it. The book also features a short picture story that repeats the complete story for children who process information best through visual cues. Additional guidance for parents and caregivers provides ideas to help children cope with this experience.



JDAIM Film Recommendations

We invited people to share their favorite films for JDAIM. Their comments are in italics. The films offer diverse perspectives on living with a disability or mental health condition. Let us know on our [JDAIM Facebook](#) page what films you are screening this year!

[Float](#) animated short 7 minutes. Appropriate for all ages. Disney/Pixar. Available on Disney Plus
We all have special gifts to share with our communities. Each and every one of us.

Dr. Madelaine Werier, co-founder of JOIN- Jewish Ottawa Inclusion Network

[Shoelaces](#) (Israel) *The ending is worth a discussion about better choices for a person's future.*

[Wedding Doll](#) (Israel) *another well-made Israeli film.*

[Anita](#) (Argentina). The story of a young woman with Down syndrome who lives a happy, routine life in Buenos Aires, meticulously cared for by her mother. One morning everything changes when Anita is left alone, confused and helpless after the nearby Argentine Israelite Mutual Association is bombed (the deadliest bombing in Argentina's history). As Anita wanders through the city, she learns not only to care for herself, but touches the lives of those around her. *Anita is my all-time favorite film. The main actress has Down Syndrome.*

Elliot Fix, Past Chair of the JCC Jewish International Film Festival Committee, Rochester, NY., Curator of the Jewish Film Series at the Everett Jewish Life Center Chautauqua Institute, Chautauqua, NY

We showed [Wonder](#) a few years ago, which is not Jewish, although in the book the main character's grandmother is Jewish. We framed the movie with the inclusive message of JDAIM, of course. I really liked being able to show a family movie for JDAIM and haven't really found another one that I thought would fit as well.

Rachel Delman Turniansky, Director, Disability and Inclusion Services, Louise D. and Morton J. Macks Center for Jewish Education, Baltimore

[Hors Normes](#) (The Specials) (France) The story of two men, educators of children and adolescents with autism. The tale of Bruno and Malik, two friends who have lived for twenty years in a different world: that of autistic children and adolescents. With the support of two non-profit organizations, they train young people to care for people with severe autism. They create an exceptional association, removed from the traditional environments, for extraordinary characters. *Hors Normes* closed the Cannes Festival. In French with English subtitles.

Carly Goodman, Coordinator of Community Inclusion, Federation CJE , Montreal

[Fourteen-and-a-Half Collisions](#) (Germany) A documentary. Sensitive insights into an unusual wheelchair basketball team in Hamburg – and an unusual friendship. After a terrorist attack, 24-year old Asael becomes a wheelchair user. In the summer of 2017 he leaves his home in Israel to try his luck in Hamburg as a wheelchair basketball pro with the BG Baskets. The team consists of nine international top players and lives in the grounds of a casualty hospital. One of them is Ali, an Iranian. Through the sport, he and the Israeli Asael become close friends. *This film touches multiple topics, the athletes are talented and Asael story is compelling.* With English subtitles.

[Extra Innings](#) Set against the enchanting backdrop of 1960's Brooklyn, Extra Innings tells the story of David Sabah, a young man who is caught between pursuing his dream of playing baseball and staying devoted to his Syrian Jewish family that is afflicted with mental illness, but a tragic loss makes reconciling the two worlds impossible. *Based on a true story this is a powerful story that addresses mental health issues. There are scenes that are difficult to watch and not appropriate for all ages. This film can open up a needed discussion about mental health and the avoidance of talking about mental health issues within the Jewish community.*

**Lisa Handelman, Camp Director
Capitol Camps**

[Autism the Musical](#) Follow The Miracle Project founder, Coach E—the amazing Elaine Hall—and the kids and their families on a journey of discovery and community in this powerful and joyful testament to the spirit within each one of us. [Autism The Sequel](#) follows the lives of the original stars of Autism The Musical, who are now young adults. *The heart of these films is the cast. They will charm and educate audiences, helping find a space where everyone is valued just for being who they are.*

Shelly Christensen, co-founder of JDAIM, author of *From Longing to Belonging—A Practical Guide to Including People with Disabilities and Mental Health Conditions in Your Faith Community*

[Music Within](#) chronicles the true story of Richard Pimentel, a brilliant public speaker with a troubled past, who returns from Vietnam severely hearing-impaired and finds a new purpose in his landmark efforts on behalf of Americans with disabilities.

Karina Szulc, BMTA Inclusion Manager, Calgary Jewish Federation

The following films are recommended by Rebecca Wanatick, Manager, Community Inclusion & Program Services, Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest NJ.

Children and Teens

[Dolphin Tale](#) A lonely and friendless boy finds and untangles a hurt dolphin that is caught in a crab trap. He becomes very attached to the dolphin when the tail must be taken off to save the dolphin's life. The boy believes the dolphin would be able to swim normally if it was given a prosthetic tail.

[The Point](#) A father tells his son a bedtime story about young Oblio, who believes that having no point in the fantastical kingdom of pointed heads and things, still has a point.

[The Mighty](#) The story of a strong friendship between a young boy with Morquio's syndrome and an older boy who is always bullied because of his size. Adapted from the novel, *Freak the Mighty*, the film explores a building of trust and friendship.

A Teen's Guide to Understanding and Communicating with People with Autism

This video is a guide geared towards teens, described by experts as "Not your typical dry educational presentation." "Speaks to students of all ages."

Teens and Adults

[Angst](#) is a documentary designed to raise awareness around anxiety. The filmmakers' goal is to help people identify and understand the symptoms of anxiety and encourage them to reach out for help.. The film and corresponding materials provide tools, resources and above all, hope.

[Life Animated](#) A coming of age story about a boy and his family who overcame great challenges by turning Disney animated movies into a language to express love, loss, kinship and brotherhood

[Keep the Change](#) When aspiring filmmaker David 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, sparks fly and his convictions are tested. Their budding relationship must weather Sarah's romantic past, David's judgmental mother, and their own pre-conceptions of what love is supposed to look like.

[The Peanut Butter Falcon](#) The Peanut Butter Falcon is an adventure story set in the world of a modern Mark Twain that begins when Zak (22), a young man with Down syndrome, runs away from the nursing home where he lives to chase his dream of becoming a professional wrestler by attending the wrestling school. Through circumstances beyond their control Tyler (32), a small-time outlaw on the run, becomes Zak's unlikely coach and ally.

[Praying with Lior](#) Lior has Down syndrome and has spent his entire life praying with utter abandon. Is he a "spiritual genius" as many around him say? Or simply the vessel that contains everyone's unfulfilled wishes and expectations? As Lior approaches Bar Mitzvah different characters provide a window into life spent praying with Lior. The movie poses difficult questions such as what is "disability" and who really talks to God? Told with intimacy and humor, *Praying with Lior* is a family story, a triumph story, a grief story, a divinely-inspired story.

[My Hero Brother](#) A group of young Israelis with Down syndrome embark on a demanding trek through the Himalayas with their siblings. As they deal with physical and emotional challenges, unresolved conflicts come to surface and heartwarming friendships develop.

[Deaf Jam](#) Follow Aneta Brodski, an Israeli-born teenager living in Queens as one of the first deaf youth to participate in a major poetry slam event.

Do you have a coordinated initiative in your community or organization? Let us know on the [JDAIM Facebook](#) page