

**OPEN HEARTS
OPEN MINDS
OPEN DOORS**

*CREATING ACCESS AND
INCLUSION IN WORSHIP*

**INCLUSION AWARENESS
SHABBAT
W O R K B O O K**

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Acknowledgement

The Inclusion Awareness Shabbat Workbook for Jewish Congregations is adapted from materials from “Opening the Gates of the Torah”, a project of:

The Board of Jewish Education of Greater Washington
Special Needs Department

Partnership for Jewish Life and Learning

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unless noted otherwise. We wish to thank Lenore Layman, Director, Special Needs Department, for sharing materials with us.

A LETTER FROM PATHWAYS AWARENESS



Dear Religious Leader:

Since we inaugurated the Pathways Awareness *Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors* inclusion movement in 1996, more congregations than ever are providing accommodations so that worshippers of all abilities can participate in worship, ministry and leadership roles in houses of faith.

An integral part of the *Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors* movement is the annual celebration of Inclusion Awareness Day. Pathways Awareness Foundation invites congregations of the Jewish Faith to observe Inclusion Awareness Day on a date convenient for their faith community. The Inclusion Awareness Shabbat Workbook is provided to encourage your participation.

Many congregations tell us that they use Inclusion Awareness Day to raise awareness to the need for access and inclusion. Others celebrate their progress on providing accommodations so that all may participate.

Our faith communities are strengthened when we come together to meet the needs of our members. Please join us in celebrating an Inclusion Awareness Shabbat in your faith community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shirley W. Ryan".

Shirley W. Ryan
Chairman

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COUNTDOWN TO INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY

Begin planning now for Inclusion Awareness Shabbat! Use the checklist below to get started. Information about the underlined items is available for downloading at www.inclusioninworship.org.

- Select a date and mark your congregation's calendar for your celebration of Inclusion Awareness Shabbat.
- Recruit an inclusion committee to raise awareness to the need for access and inclusion. Introduce committee members to the congregation on Inclusion Awareness Shabbat. Use [tips on starting an inclusion committee](#) at www.inclusioninworship.org.
- Plan a series of bulletin articles and special events for Inclusion Awareness Shabbat. Use this workbook and [workbooks](#) on www.inclusioninworship.org for suggestions.
- Survey your congregation on Inclusion Awareness Shabbat to find out the needs of your members. Use our [access survey](#) or [facilities survey](#) available at www.inclusioninworship.org.
- Invite members of your congregation who happen to have disabilities to participate on Inclusion Awareness Shabbat. Provide accommodations and continue their participation throughout the year.
- Invite members of your congregation who happen to have disabilities to speak on Inclusion Awareness Shabbat about what inclusion means to them.

Pathways Awareness will announce the [Open Hearts Awards](#) on Inclusion Awareness Day to recognize outstanding congregational inclusion efforts with cash grants of up to \$1,000. Recipients have submitted completed nomination forms to Pathways Awareness to be eligible for an award. For more information visit www.inclusioninworship.org.

From Pathways Awareness Countdown to Inclusion Awareness Day

ACTIVITIES FOR INCLUSION AWARENESS SHABBAT AND EVERY DAY OF THE YEAR!

The following list is a starting point of ways in which your congregation might participate in Inclusion Awareness Day and act throughout the year to make your community accessible to people of the Jewish faith who happen to have disabilities.

- Involve people with disabilities and parents of children with special needs in the development of policies and programs that will include everyone.
- If your congregation hasn't already done so, join the National Organization on Disability's Accessible Congregations Campaign (information available at www.NOD.org).
- Use people first language in all synagogue publications and other communications.
- Invite members of the congregation with disabilities to participate in services and provide necessary accommodations.
- Dedicate a Kiddush or Oneg Shabbat in honor of Inclusion Awareness Day.
- Provide large print Siddurim and Chumashim and other materials in Braille.
- Make print and taped versions of sermons and other materials available.
- Clear space in different parts of the sanctuary for people who use wheelchairs.
- Welcome members of the Jewish community who are deaf by publicizing interpreted services and hire a qualified Judaic interpreter to make those services accessible.

- Place a portable or permanent reading table on the sanctuary floor so that people with physical disabilities have greater access for Torah reading and honors.
- Place second mezuzot at wheelchair height on doorways throughout the synagogue.
- Make large print resources available to your congregation.
- Ensure that people with disabilities are included in regular synagogue activities – Sisterhood, Men’s Club/Brotherhood, youth groups, fundraising, social action, minyanim, adult and children’s education, volunteer activities, aliyot, etc.- and provide accommodations to facilitate their participation.

BULLETIN ARTICLE

Following is a short sample synagogue bulletin article announcing a congregation’s participation in Inclusion Awareness Day. Congregations should feel free to edit it to specifically reflect how they are participating in Inclusion Awareness Day and to describe their efforts toward making their synagogues more accessible to people with disabilities.

Inclusion Awareness Shabbat

Inclusion Awareness Shabbat is dedicated to focusing on issues of awareness, acceptance and inclusion of people with disabilities in congregational life. Our participation in Inclusion Awareness Day affirms our commitment to making Judaism accessible to all Jews in our community.

We have chosen the Shabbat of Friday, November ____ and Saturday, November ____ (____ Cheshvan or ____ Kislev) as Inclusion Awareness Shabbat. That Shabbat we will focus on access and inclusion through prayer, discussion, and Torah study. Participating in Inclusion Awareness Day is just one step toward making our congregation more accessible. To have a real and lasting impact, we must extend our programming and efforts beyond this special day to truly open the gates of Torah to people with disabilities in our community

HOW YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

There are many things that you, as an individual, can do to help people with disabilities feel welcome in your house of faith.

- 1. I will treat ALL people as PEOPLE FIRST – as I would like to be treated.**
- 2. I will SPEAK DIRECTLY to the person with a disability, not only to the nearby family member, companion, interpreter, or the canine companion.**
- 3. I will offer to SHAKE HANDS when introduced to a person with a disability. (Persons with limited hand use or who wear an artificial limb may shake hands. Shaking the left hand is okay, too.)**
- 4. I will place myself at EYE LEVEL, in front, for easy conversation with a person in a wheelchair, with crutches, or with a walking frame.**
- 5. I will OFFER ASSISTANCE AND WAIT until the offer is accepted. I will wait and then ask for instructions.**
- 6. I will be PATIENT AND WAIT for the person with difficulty speaking, rather than speaking for the person. I may help by asking short questions that require short answers, a nod, or a shake of the head.**
- 7. I will see the WHOLENESS OF SPIRIT beneath the surface of someone with a disability and overcome the tendency to turn away or ignore the person.**
- 8. I will TREAT ADULTS with developmental disabilities AS ADULTS, not as children. I will use first names only when using the same familiarity for all persons.**
- 9. I will get the attention of someone who is hearing-impaired by LIGHTLY TAPPING their elbow or shoulder, or by WAVING MY HAND. I will look directly at the person and speak clearly, slowly, and expressively to establish if the person can read my lips.**
- 10. I will guide a person with visual impairments by GIVING VERBAL CLUES to steps, curbs, escalators or doors.**

From The Inclusive Congregation Toolkit by Pathways Awareness

BIBLICAL HEROES

The major figures of the Bible were far from physically perfect. Among other possible disabilities, Isaac was blind at least part of his life:

“When Isaac was old and his eyes were too dim to see...”

-Genesis 27:1

Jacob was certainly not the heroic type, socially or physically. Jacob had difficulty walking for much of his life, and becomes blind later in life as his father, Isaac did. Jacob’s brother Esau is the stronger, more “manly” son, yet, in the eyes of the Bible, it is Jacob who is superior and destined to carry on the Jewish line. Nor were the patriarchs pictured as being perfect or unblemished. “Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel are all barren... (and) Leah, while not barren, has weak eyes.”

Even more astonishing is that perhaps the greatest biblical hero of them all, Moses, is described as having a limitation connected with his speech:

God’s answer to Moses is most instructive:

“Who gives man speech? Who makes him deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now go, and I will be with you as you speak and instruct you what to say.”

-Exodus 4: 11-12

God tells Moses not to regard his disability as a barrier to his mission; indeed it is just the opposite. There is a hidden purpose to the impairment and Moses must fulfill his destiny. The disability is no disgrace or shame: it is a challenge with a purpose. Moses is destined to rise up above his peers, above all of Egypt, and it will eventually be his speech limitation that may be one of the few factors which keep his people from mistaking him for God himself.

Source: *Who Makes People Different?: Jewish Perspectives on Disabilities* by Carl Astor, United Synagogue of America, Department of Youth Activities, 1985.

HUMANITY'S UNFORESEEN SPECIAL NEEDS

The description of God's creation in the first chapter of Genesis portrays a world of beauty and completeness. Each element of creation is seen as having a proper place, part of the grand design. The structure of the work, the beauty of the language, and the repetition of "God saw that it was good" all combine to emphasize the rightness of the world as it was created. The animals and the humans play their respective roles in maintaining an orderly cosmos.

This picture of the world, however, does not last long after the first chapter of Genesis. Immediately, in the second chapter of the book, the course of events seems to diverge from God's original plan with its introduction of the uncertainty of human development and decision-making. The relationship between God and humanity is further challenged after the flood. God, thinking that there was too much evil in the world, decided that a new beginning was necessary.

After the flood, as Noah, his family, and the animals disembarked from the ark, God recognized that human beings had significant moral limitations, and God's original, lofty expectations for humanity would need to be reconsidered (Genesis 8:21ff). God had to redefine what could and could not be expected of humans.

God models an accepting and loving stance toward humanity, lowering the bar while still maintaining realistically high standards. God never gives up on people or their ability to accomplish, but rather accepts that the vision needs to be changed. God's relationship to the first generation of humanity thus begins with anticipation of a beautiful and orderly creation, and quickly unfolds as that of a loving parent, sensitively confronting a child's unforeseen special needs.

By Ora Horn Prouser, Dean, Academy for Jewish Religion, Riverdale, New York

SCRIPTURE QUOTES FOR INCLUSION AWARENESS DAY

“Rabbi Eliezer says: Let other people’s dignity be as precious to you as your own”.

Pirkei Avot 2:15

“So God created Man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them”. (Genesis, 1:27)

Ben Azzai taught: “Do not disdain any person; do not underrate the importance of anything - for there is no person who does not have his hour and there is no thing without its place in the sun”. (Pirkei Avot 4:3)

“Do not look at the container but what is in it”. (Pirkei Avot 4:27)

“Blessed are You, Eternal God, who makes Your creations different”.
(Traditional liturgy)

“O God, may all created in your image recognize that they are kin, so that in one spirit and in one friendship, they may be forever united before You”.
(Traditional liturgy)

Hillel stated: “What is hateful to you, do not unto your neighbor. This is the entire Torah; all the rest is commentary. (Shabbat 31a)

“All of Israel is responsible for one another.” - Shavuot 39a

RELATED JEWISH CONCEPTS FOR INCLUSION SHABBAT

We are all created in God’s image and so Judaism teaches us to treat every person with dignity and respect. (Genesis 1:27)

The transmission of Torah is a mitzvah for the learner as well as for those who enable that learning. As expressed in Pirkei Avot 1:12, “Hillel said: Be like the disciples of Aaron, love peace and pursue peace, love human beings and bring them near to the Torah.” When we bring people with disabilities into our community we enable them to learn about their tradition and participate in Jewish life.

CHANGING ENVIRONMENTS, CHANGING ATTITUDES

Thoughts on “Hinei Ma Tov”

By Hope Bard

“Hinei ma tov u’ma na’im shevet achim gam yachad... Behold how good and pleasant it is when all people live together as one.” These words, translated from the first line of an ancient Biblical psalm capture the essence of a world in which all people are included, in which all are connected. The remainder of the psalm discusses the flowing down of blessings, as oil flows when one is anointed, or waters flow down the mountain. But what did King David mean by the words ALL people when he wrote this psalm? According to renowned author and speaker, Danny Siegel, “When the Torah states that God spoke to all the children of Israel, it means ALL of them.” So we can infer that this statement is inclusive of people of different ages and socio-economic status, people who might believe differently than we do, people from other backgrounds and cultures and certainly, people with disabilities, just to name a few.

There are two ways to approach the inclusion of people with disabilities in Jewish life. One way is to modify the environment, improve accessibility, and solve problems. The other is to change our attitudes and the ways in which we approach individuals with disabilities. Both need to happen for real change to occur.

Jewish History is filled with individuals who had disabilities, including Moses, one of our greatest leaders and teachers. The disabilities of deafness, blindness, and problems with mobility are all mentioned in the Tannach and the Talmud. Some of our greatest Jewish leaders and thinkers throughout the ages have had disabilities. The Torah is specific about how we should treat people with disabilities, such as the commandment in Leviticus: “You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind.” This is an example of the first approach.

But what about attitudes? One can find hints in Jewish writings on how to change attitudes, and make a “keshner”, or a connection, between all Jews, both with and without disabilities. We read in Pirke Avot (The Ethics of the Fathers) that “other people’s dignity should be as precious to you as your own.” In the Book of Leviticus, we learn “you shall love others as you love yourself.” We are taught “all Jews are responsible for one another”.

One way of tying ourselves together more intimately with the rest of the Jewish people, Klal Yisrael, is to work toward being more inclusive of all. When we become more inclusive...when we can change our attitudes and our actions...everyone benefits.

At this time, when all of us need to stand together, let us all consider ways in which we can be more inclusive in our personal lives, in our workplaces, and in our community. Let us all have kavod, ahava, shalom and Klal Yisrael...dignity, love, peace and all Jews together. Then will all the blessings flow to ALL people of our land.

MAKING YOUR MEETING ACCESSIBLE

- √ A meeting is truly accessible when you:
- √ Use “people first language” in print materials and oral communication
- √ Ask on the registration form if accommodations are needed.
- √ Provide an accessible primary gathering place, rest rooms and eating areas.
- √ Provide information to attendees in multiple formats (tape recording, large print, e-mail, Braille, etc.) as needed.
- √ Provide a sign language interpreter as needed.
- √ Have a general attitude of welcoming all people without regard to their limitations.

Other helpful provisions might include:

- Personal assistants
- Video captioning/assisted note taking
- A guide dog “relief area”
- Audio description
- Assistive listening devices
- Loaned wheelchairs
- Special food preparation or dietary provision
- Free accessible transportation
- Personal readers
- Announce that your event is inclusive. Consider displaying the access logo in all advertising, flyers, posters, and mailings promoting the event.

Adapted from Inclusion Network, 312 Walnut Street, Suite 2060, Cincinnati, OH 45202, 513-345-1330, www.inclusion.org



The Inclusion Awareness Day Workbook is a publication of Pathways Awareness Foundation. Pathways Awareness Foundation is dedicated to raising awareness to the gifts received when faith communities include worshippers of all abilities. The “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors” program provides information and educational materials about access and inclusion in worship to congregations of all denominations. The mission of Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors is to include persons of all abilities into worship, ministries and leadership positions in Houses of Faith. This mission is carried out by:

- Explaining how to be inclusive in the “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors” video, Idea Guide, e-newsletter, and Inclusive Congregation Toolkit.
- Granting Open Hearts Awards to congregations to further inclusion efforts.
- Inviting congregations to celebrate Inclusion Awareness Day.
- Featuring on-line inclusion in worship resources at www.inclusioninworship.org

INCLUSION RESOURCES FROM PATHWAYS AWARENESS

Celebrating Inclusion in Worship: Seth’s Bar Mitzvah Video \$8

This video tells the story of Seth Goldberg, a young man who happens to have a hearing disability. The film depicts both Seth’s preparation for his Bar Mitzvah and Seth and his family’s determination to realize this milestone in his life.

To order Call 1-800-955-2445

Available for downloading at www.inclusioninworship.org

Inclusive Congregation Toolkit

Inclusion Awareness Day Workbook for Jewish Congregations