

---

## PRAYING WITH LIOR STUDY GUIDE

---

Thank you for sharing *Praying with Lior* with your community, school, or family! We hope you'll continue discussing the themes of the film after the lights come up, and take action to change *perceptions* about people with disabilities and their *reception* in communities.

A fuller, multi-faith study guide is on its way, but here are some resources, activities, and discussion questions to get you started.

**What does Judaism say about inclusion and disability?** *There are a wealth of Jewish references and writings promoting inclusion, education and tolerance. Here are some places to start your study:*

### **Jewish texts promoting inclusion**

- “And God created people in God’s Image.”  
*Genesis 1:27*
  
- “You shall not insult the deaf, or place a stumbling block before the blind.”  
*Leviticus: 19:14*
  
- “God’s house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.”  
*Isaiah 56:7*
  
- “Educate each child according to their way.”  
*Prov. 22:6*
  
- “Do not separate yourself from the community.”  
*Pirkei Avot 2:5*
  
- “All Israel is responsible for one another.”  
*Shavuot 39a*
  
- “Blessed are you, Eternal God, who makes your creations different.”  
*Traditional Liturgy*
  
- “Every member of the people of Israel is obligated to study Torah – whether one is rich or poor, physically able or with physical disability.”  
*Maimonides, Mishne Torah, Hilchot Talmud Torah, Chapter 10*

**Divrei torah by Rabbi Brad Artson about  
Judaism and disabilities and his son Jacob**  
[www.judaism.ajula.edu](http://www.judaism.ajula.edu) **Divrei torah ideas from Yesodot**  
[www.yesodot.org](http://www.yesodot.org) **Jewish Readings on Inclusion**  
[www.uscj.org](http://www.uscj.org) **Lenore Layman**  
[Opening the Gates of Torah: Including People  
with Disabilities in the Jewish Community](#)

---

**What are our own experiences with inclusion in faith communities?**

Foster discussion on every person's experiences of being excluded and of belonging, exploring the places of comfort and the conditions leading to discomfort.

---

**Activities and tools**

How can our community look more like Lior's, and how can we experience the gift of holiness that wholeness brings?

**50+ Programming and Action Ideas**

[Click Here](#) **How to do an inclusion assessment audit**  
[www.bje.org](http://www.bje.org) **How to communicate respectfully**  
[www.acils.com](http://www.acils.com) **More communication guidelines on disability**  
[www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org) **Planning a Special Bar/Bat Mitzvah**  
[www.jewishfamily.com](http://www.jewishfamily.com) **R-Word pledge**  
[www.r-word.org](http://www.r-word.org)

---

**Some questions for discussion:**

- In genesis, it says that man was created “b'tselem elohim” or “in the image of G-d.” What does that mean?
- If people come in all shapes and sizes and abilities and colors, and all are created in the “image of G-d,” what does that say about our understanding of G-d?
  - What are the theological/psychological reasons for the blessing we say when we see people who are different, “Blessed are you Barukh ata [adonai](#) elohaynu melekh ha-olam m'shaneh habriyot.” (Translated as: "Praised are you, Lord our G-d, who makes different creatures," or "Blessed are you, Lord our G-d, King of the universe, who makes people different.") How does saying this blessing affect our experience of disability?
- During Selichot, we traditionally recite the Thirteen Attributes of G-d's mercy. We say the passage from Exodus that is translated as: "The Lord! The Lord! A God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, rich in steadfast kindness, extending kindness to the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; yet He does not remit all punishment..." (Exodus 34:67). What does this passage mean in light of disability, and in light of Lior?
  - Identify the elements in Lior's life that help him to succeed.

- Identify the elements in Lior's community that allow them to benefit from Lior.
    - What does it mean for a building or a situation to be inclusive or accessible?
  - What could inclusion look like in a family? In a school? In a professional setting? In a social setting?
  - How was Lior's Bar Mitzvah like or unlike the B'nai Mitzvah of "typical" children?
    - What kinds of adaptations in your services or synagogue would make them more accessible? What kinds of departures from a traditional service or a traditional synagogue does your community already practice?
      - Why do you think Lior loves to daven so much?
    - Why do you think people in Lior's community call him a "hassidic master" or "spiritual genius?" What is the contribution that Lior makes to his community?
      - What is the relationship between prayer and intelligence?
  - One of the boys in Lior's class says that Lior's Down syndrome is a "test," both for Lior, and for his classmates. What does that mean? How would someone pass or fail this test? How about a community?
  - Who or what inspires your prayers? What can your community do to help your praying feel more inspired?
    - Lior's name means "My light." How is Lior a light to his family, his class, his community? What are the ways that each of us is a light?
-