

Disability Justice Discussion Group 2/20/25

Notes:

- This Shabbat I am giving a d'var for JDAIM (Jewish Disability Awareness, Acceptance, and Inclusion Month) and starting the services with my [Disability Justice Morning Blessings](#)
- Please view and contribute: General Jewish disability resources <https://bit.ly/JewishDisability>
- I want to acknowledge that in this space we are bringing fear, pain, heartbreak, anger, outrage. It is all welcome. You don't have to leave any of it behind. You also don't have to leave the good, funny things behind. So let's start with a check-in.

Torah study blessing

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ לְעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה

Barukh atah adonai eloheinu melekh ha'olam asher kid'shanu b'mitzvotav v'tzivanu la'asok b'divrei torah

Tonight we are talking about an essay by my teacher Rabbi Lauren Tuchman published in Lillith <https://lillith.org/2024/08/rabbi-tuchman/>, About Being disabled, jewish, and finding community.

If we have time, I also want to offer this discussion that we have recently had in Disability Wisdom as Soul Care, a Mussar Vaad that Rabbi Tuchman Leads. The following discussion is

The below practice is based on the following teaching from Julia Watts Belser

***Left to my own devices**, I would eat up my life with worry and work and fear. It's Shabbat that reminds me: I am more than my "to-do" list. My work is not my worth. My humanity is not dependent on my ability to get things done.*

...One of the ways ableism operates? It fashions speed and stamina as a threshold condition for basic belonging. Ableist values intertwine with capitalist pressures to laud those who work at a punishing pace. One of the lies ableism tells us? You only matter if you can keep up.

...Consider the words of Patty Berne, the cofounder and artistic director of the disability justice performance collective Sins Invalid: "We don't believe human worth is dependent on what and how much a person can produce. We value our people as they are, for who they are, and we understand that people have inherent worth outside of capitalist notions of productivity."

Berne's words resonate with me profoundly, as a Jew. A cornerstone of Jewish ethical commitment is the recognition that we are all made b'tselem Elohim, in the image of God. To be b'tselem Elohim isn't dependent on speech or smarts or your ability to work the system. God doesn't see Herself just in the clever or the quick, in the lives we hold up as billboards of accomplishment.

...This lie that work is all we are? This is what Shabbos comes to shatter

Discussion/practice:

- *...This lie that work is all we are? This is what Shabbos comes to shatter.* How has the idea that work is all we are shown up for you in your life? Do you notice this arising in your spiritual practice? If so, how?
- Can you take a few minutes in a day to bring some sense of shabbat into your life -- wholeness, hope, healing.