

Dear Narayever Community,

Our shul needs to become accessible.

I'm writing as a long time Narayever member, former Board member, and a parent of three daughters – Ashira and Eliana (8 yo twins), and Gavi (5 yo). As many of you are aware, Gavi has a muscle condition and can't walk. Though she is only five, she is already completely independent in her power wheelchair – the best 5 year old driver I know (I'm not kidding - she can back into tiny spaces like an expert). The literal little engine that could.

The thing about the powerchair is that not only does it give Gavi expected mobility independence, she is a different person when she's in it – more outgoing and sassy (previously her secrets revealed only to her family). Her favorite game is hide and seek. She hosts dance parties in the living room. She paces when she talks. Things we wouldn't have known had we not renovated our house to get her powerchair inside.

Anyways, as you all obviously also know, our shul is not accessible. When we come to shul now, we carry Gavi and she is confined to sitting wherever we put her. She is five. She doesn't want to be carried. She is also notably very quiet – with several unknowing people talking to us instead of to her as if she can't understand them (I'm sure you can imagine how that feels). The dynamic isn't unique and it is a result of having an environment that excludes, that isn't integrated.

Gavi needs to be able to come to shul in her power chair so she can be play like other kids. Many families in similar situations to ours are simply not joining or coming because the shul simply cannot accommodate them. So let us be the face for all those people and for ourselves.

If not now, when? It's time.