



# ASK HERZL

Program Title: Adapting for Special Needs

Program Tagline: Have your student re-imagine how to make the inaccessible accessible

Target Audience: Middle School

Grade: 5, 6, 7, 8

Length of Program: 30 minutes

Goal: Created by Congregation Beth El in Bethesda, Maryland, this program gives students the opportunity to think of how to make inaccessible locations like national parks to be special-needs inclusive. We also learn about two separate organizations that are doing this important work daily.

Implementation:

Begin with this video from YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IkEpaysMpzw>

Then Read:

Like every country, Israel has a population of individuals with special needs. There are many organizations that focus on this community.

One organization is LOTEM, an organization that works to make national parks and other natural spaces accessible to people with special needs. Hiking is a national pastime in Israel, which unites all who participate. Jewish National Fund understands the vital role that hiking plays in Israelis' lives, and the immeasurable impact making nature accessible has, not just on the individual with a special need but on their family and the community as well. In partnership with LOTEM, JNF offers field trips, accessible hikes, and creative workshops in nature for people of all ages with physical, mental, and emotional disabilities.

The second organization is Aleh Negev, which provides unparalleled rehabilitative services, medical care, and special education for people with severe disabilities, helping them reach their potential for communication and development. This is a safe environment for individuals with special needs to heal, learn, and grow.

These two organizations have different strategies and focuses of working with individuals with special needs. LOTEM works to help differently-abled people access the opportunities that the rest of society can enjoy – for example, helping them access national parks. Aleh Negev works to support these individuals in a safe space specifically made for and



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dedicated to them. The Red Mountain Therapeutic Riding Center, which you saw in the video, is another example of a space designed specifically for individuals with special needs.

Our activity is an exercise that asks you to think creatively about how different places or environments can be challenging for people with special needs, and what could be done to fix the problem so that differently abled individuals have the same opportunities everyone else has.

## **LOTEM and Aleh Negev Activity Instructions**

Split the group into two or three groups, depending on class size.

Then share the below scenario with the teams.

Each team should work together to:

1. Come up with a list of the possible challenges the context/location might present differently-abled individuals as presented in the scenario and
2. Come up with a list of possible creative solutions to make that space accessible for those individuals (either temporarily or permanently).

The scenarios:

1. An organization that works with wheelchair-bound children wants to find a way to let them experience hiking trails at a popular national park. The trails in question are mostly flat, but the trails are rugged dirt paths through wooded areas. There may be trees or branches and stone on the path. At one or two points along the path, there are bridges over water, which are only accessible by stairs.

Give each group time to come up with the possible challenges this group might face and creative solutions to make the hiking trail accessible or otherwise allow this group of children to experience this part of the national park.

When all the groups are done, or when there are only five minutes left, ask the groups to present what they came up with.



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