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Lesson Plan: B'Tzelem Elohim for Learning Disability Awareness Month

Learning Disability Awareness Month Lesson – B'tzelem Elohim

Grades: K-5, can be adapted for middle/high school

Length: 45–60 minutes

Goals / Objectives

- Students will explore Jewish texts and stories that highlight the value of every person.
 - Students will learn simple, age-appropriate strategies for supporting peers with learning differences.
 - Students will practice empathy and respect by connecting text/stories to their own classroom and community.
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Jewish Text Anchor

- *Pirkei Avot 4:1*: “Who is wise? One who learns from every person.”
- *Genesis 1:27*: “And God created the human being in God’s image” (*b'tzelem Elohim*).

Discussion prompt:

- What do these texts teach us about the value of every person in our community?
 - How might these ideas connect to students who learn or focus differently?
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Story Anchor

- **“My Brother Charlie”** by Holly Robinson Peete & Ryan Elizabeth Peete (about autism, also relates to neurodiversity and valuing differences).
- **“Nathan Blows Out the Hanukkah Candles”** by Tami Lehman-Wilzig (siblings with different learning and social needs) – PJ Library Book
- **“It’s Too Crowded in Here!”** by Naama Benziman (illustrates the feeling of overwhelm and needing space—relatable for ADHD/dyslexia).

After reading:

- Ask: What makes each character special? What challenges do they face? How do their families/communities help them?
 - Draw connections back to *b'tzelem Elohim*.
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This resource is created by Sasone, a program of the Jewish Federation of Greater Kansas City, visit www.sasone.org for more resources and information



Activity Ideas

1. Value Circles

- Give students a paper circle. Inside, they write/draw one unique strength they bring to the classroom (e.g., kindness, creativity, curiosity).
- Put all circles together to form a “community circle” wall display.

2. Empathy Role-Play

- Try a short simulation: give students a text with some letters missing, or ask them to follow instructions while music is playing.
 - Reflect: How did that feel? How can we support someone who learns differently?
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Jewish Classroom Tie-In

- Emphasize that in Hebrew school, tefillah, and holiday celebrations, every child contributes in their own way.
 - Encourage teachers to highlight ADHD/dyslexia strengths — creativity, big ideas, enthusiasm, persistence — as essential to Jewish life.
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Closing / Reflection

- Ask: “How can we make sure everyone feels valued in our class and synagogue?”
 - Invite students to share one action they can take this week (e.g., helping a friend remember materials, including someone in a game, noticing effort instead of mistakes).
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Educator Note

This lesson supports **Learning Disabilities & ADHD Awareness Month** (October) by teaching empathy and belonging. It reinforces core Jewish values: *b'tzelem Elohim* (divine image), *derech erez* (respect), and *areivut* (responsibility for one another).

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