

# Union for Reform Judaism Launches Two New Special Needs Jewish Summer Programs

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January 6, 2011 -- The Union for Reform Judaism (URJ) is committed to providing a Reform Jewish camping experience to all children, including those with special needs. In addition to the highly successful special needs programs at Reform Jewish Camps Kutz and Newman, URJ will be launching two additional special needs programs, Israel in a Special Way and Camp Chazak.

The Mitzvah Corps program at Camp Kutz in Warwick, NY and the Camp Nefesh program at Camp Newman in Santa Rosa, CA, were both created for Autistic teens. The two new programs, Israel in a Special Way and Camp Chazak, will pick up where these existing programs leave off and reach special needs children both inside and outside the autism spectrum.

Israel in a Special Way, URJ's first Israel experience special needs program, is offered to teens between the ages of 16 and 19 with ADD, ADHD, Asperger's Syndrome, learning disabilities and/or mild social or emotional difficulties. This unique Israel travel program will integrate spiritual, adventure and learning experiences.

Camp Chazak, located at Eisner and Crane Lake Camps in Massachusetts, was developed for kids from fifth through eighth grades with communication and social delays. Functioning as a therapeutic and recreational camp, Chazak is equipped with a clinically trained staff and utilizes a research-based program. Campers receive all the recreational benefits of a mainstream camp, but are given additional resources to help them improve their skills and grow their confidence.

"These new programs offer invaluable experiences for Jewish youth who may have been otherwise excluded from Israel and camp programs," said Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie, president of the Union for Reform Judaism. "We hope to offer similar programs in the future so that every Jewish child and teen has the opportunity to attend a Jewish summer program."

For more information about URJ's camp and Israel special needs programs, visit <http://www.urjcamps.org/programs/specialneeds/>.