

## **New Paths Toward a Very Jewish Summer: Announcing Digital Summer Programming from the URJ**

Our world has been upended, and we all face so many painful challenges during this time. For Jewish organizations, one of the challenges of navigating this uncharted territory is how to innovate in the area of meaningful Jewish engagement while respecting the ongoing need for physical distancing.

Like all Jewish organizations, the URJ has been forced to think radically about what Jewish engagement might look like in the absence of large, in-person gatherings. How can we meet people quite literally where they are (quarantined at home) while staying true to our values around the importance of personal connections, experiential learning, and joyful Judaism?

While nothing can replace the feeling of being together in person, the [Union for Reform Judaism](#) is introducing several exciting opportunities to connect families to Jewish life in a new way this summer – one that is accessible to families who are already part of Reform synagogue and camp communities, as well as to the countless families who are not yet connected to the Reform Movement but who seek Jewish meaning, purpose, and joy in their homes and are drawn to our mission to build a world of wholeness, justice and compassion.

In that vein, the URJ is pleased to announce several new opportunities for people to live Jewishly this summer – and to help move our Reform Movement into a bold new future.

### ***RJ on the Go: An Interactive Platform for Jewish Engagement***

Building on successful examples of distance learning and virtual gatherings, [RJ on the Go](#) was born – a virtual space for people to spend time in live, interactive, communal experiences anchored in Jewish values, from the comfort of home and on a schedule that works for them.

Available to URJ congregations and their members as a value-add of URJ membership, RJ on the Go represents large-scale virtual programming that individual synagogues could not create or sustain on their own. What we learn from this summer's pilot will help congregations learn how to transform the ways they engage with their communities in the future.

RJ on the Go launches this summer with two tracks: Jewish Life in Your Family Life, designed for families of school-age children to participate in together, and the URJ Camps' Virtual Experiences, where camp-age young people can participate in programs run by URJ camps.

**Jewish Life in Your Family Life**, designed for families of children ages 5 – 12, will run for three weeks and provide short, structured activities that families and their children can join together. These daily activities will be streamed live, and each week will feature a different *middah* (Jewish value) focused on supporting character development:

- Week 1, June 29-July 3: *Sakranut* (Curiosity)
- Week 2, July 6-July 10: *Hakarat Hatov* (Gratitude)
- Week 3, July 13-July 17: *Netzach* (Perseverance)

Similarly, each weekday will have a theme of its own, each conducted through a Jewish lens:

- **Movement Monday:** Stay active with at-home sports, yoga, and more.
- **Sci-Tech Tuesday:** Get ready to conduct science experiments, make slime, get tech-savvy, and dive into engineering.
- **Wacky Wednesday:** Just have fun – because that's what summer is all about!
- **Tasty Thursday:** Whether practiced chefs or new to cooking, participants will create tasty treats, join virtual competitions, braid challah, and more.
- **Fun Friday:** Close out the week with creativity. Think: arts and crafts and creative writing.

**URJ Camps' Virtual Experiences**, designed for campers and their families, will allow campers to experience their favorite camp activities, along with new programming, from home. It will feature a variety of activities to suit all interests, including activities like interactive games, gardening, tie-dye, trivia, and more from all 15 URJ camps.

[Learn more and fill out this quick form](#) to be among the first to know when registration opens.

### ***Shabbat Morning Family Experiences***

Launched in April to connect families with young children to interactive Tot Shabbat programming, veteran educator-musicians Shira Kline and Ellen Allard host these weekly sessions for families who are joining from around the world for songs, stories, and more. [Past sessions are available for viewing on Facebook.](#)

These popular sessions, held each Saturday morning at 11a.m. ET, will continue throughout summer 2020 to bring Shabbat into the home of young families ready to celebrate Shabbat together. [Register for upcoming Zoom sessions.](#)

## ***Jewish Music All Summer Long with Campfire-Style Concerts***

Although Jewish music inspires year-round, there's no season like summer for musically rich experiences that keep Jewish communities bound together for a lifetime.

Many of today's most beloved Jewish composers and performers – whose talents and energy enliven congregations and communities around the world – have come from the Reform Movement, including our URJ camps, summer programs, and NFTY. This summer, when musicians and performing artists cannot take to the road, the music of the campfire is moving online to raise them up and to benefit URJ summer camps.

This summer of music will reach the community in two exciting ways. Sunday evenings at 8 PM ET each week from June 14 – August 23, “Campfire on Tour” concerts will feature an all-star rock star lineup: Nefesh Mountain, Dan Nichols, Rick Recht, Elana Arian, Julie Silver, Chava Mirel, Michelle Citrin, Alan Goodis, Rabbi Noam Katz, Josh Nelson, and Jacob “Spike” Kraus. [Learn more at urj.org/campfire](https://www.urj.org/campfire).

Additionally, every Monday through Thursday nights at 8p.m. ET, in between the “Campfire on Tour” concerts, current and veteran URJ camp songleaders will offer 15-20 minute nightly song sessions, enabling campers, families, and alumni to revisit the connectedness of singing together in a dining hall – a hallmark of Jewish camp and singing in community. [Watch each night on the URJ Facebook page](#).

This program has been underwritten by individual families with a deep passion for Jewish camping and Jewish music, who recognize, as Alan Goodis says, “The songs I grew up singing at GUCI taught me what it meant to be a part of community and shaped my Jewish identity. I sing to help people find their voices and to feel a part of something bigger than themselves.”

Although these online performances are free to attend, thanks to these generous families, attendees are invited to support and show their commitment to our camps and other URJ Youth programs by [making an online donation](#).