

## Makom BaLev is a Success

Indeed, our success is such that we have gained the cooperation and admiration of local bodies in all the places where there are Makom BaLev chapters. Makom BaLev is a success. The key to this success lies in the close relationship and camaraderie between the dedicated and talented staff of advisors and the young people who participate in Makom BaLev.

And success means to positively affect the lives of the participants. The young people grow in their religious observance. They Daven better; they attend school more regularly; they are less and less involved in problems of the street. More and more of them are continuing their education in Torah schools. Without a doubt, each and every one of them has a special place in our heart - Makom BaLev.



# Makom BaLev

## The NCSY of Israel

Children growing up in Israel today are in crisis. Thousands of traditional / religious children do not participate in religious youth groups, such as Bnei Akiva. They and thousands of non-religious children exist in a spiritual wasteland. So, who is out there strengthening the religiosity of children from religious homes? Which youth movement is reaching out to non-religious children to introduce them to Judaism and to create an appreciation for and involvement in religious observance?

Just three short years ago, the OU Israel Center Youth Department began to provide a new answer to these questions. That answer is called Makom BaLev.

The very name of the organization says it all. Makom BaLev means a place in the heart. When used conversationally in Hebrew, the phrase leaves a warm, fuzzy feeling. It implies that there is a place for you in my heart. This is what the activities of Makom BaLev are all about: No matter who you are or where you come from or how religious you are or aren't, you are welcome to join us, for we have a place in our hearts for you. This open, accepting and warm attitude defines all the activities provided by Makom BaLev for over 2,000 youngsters in 38 chapters in 25 different towns throughout Israel.

Organizationally, Makom BaLev has a very unique perspective. Each chapter offers its own array of activity to properly meet the needs of the chapter's participants. Nevertheless, we can describe Makom BaLev activities overall as including:

- Group discussions and learning featuring subjects such as the holidays, Shabbat, Tefilah, Mitzvot
- Weekly Chugim (enrichment activities, such as Jewish art and music)
- Leisure activities, which include board games, ping pong and basketball
- Assistance with homework
- Tiyulim (field trips) once every 3 months
- Periodic Shabbatonim (weekend retreats)
- Summer day camp
- Social action - Chessed - activities
- Leadership training

The open, accepting and warm attitude also defines the success of Makom BaLev in achieving its goals: Enhancing religious commitment, strengthening Jewish identity and increasing connection with the community. Even though the name does not say NCSY, Makom BaLev is the spiritual brother of NCSY and is involved in the very same outreach work as NCSY in North America, except that the language spoken is Hebrew and the country is Israel.

