

**1. What goals do you have as Religious and Cultural VP for the 2017-2018 year?**

I hope to be able to engage more NFTY-ites in interactive, creative services. I want NFTY-ites to be able to feel connected to their NFTY community through prayer and feel comfortable in their own brand of Judaism. I want to design new services that create excitement about shabbat, such as going deeper into prayer meanings, Yoga Shabbat, and Coloring Shabbat.

**2. Why have you chosen to run for Religious and Cultural VP?**

This past summer, I went to Israel with Alexander Muss High School in Israel, and I not only learned about the history of the Jewish people, but I also had my Bat Mitzvah. While I was there I realized that my connection to Judaism was changing. I went to a service, and even though I wasn't able to understand what they were saying, I still felt part of the community because the prayers were the same. No matter where you are the Hebrews prayers are the same and you can still sing along and feel like you belong. Knowing the impact that the prayers have on someones comfort in a new place, I want to be able to help new NFTY-ites feel that immediate connection to our community.

**3. List what experiences make you qualified to be Religious and Cultural VP?**

- 5 years at Camp Coleman
- Alexander Muss High School in Israel
- Communications Vice President and Fundraiser of BAFTY
- Social Justice Teen Fellowship
- Jewish Student Union
- Historian of Ocean Conservation
- Health Information Program (HIP)
- National Ocean Science Bowl
- French Honor Society
- National Social Studies Honor Society

**4. Write a D'var Torah for a Torah portion that occurs during Winter Regional.**

This weeks Torah portion, Vayechi, we learn that Jacob has asked Joseph, when he dies, to move him and bury him in the place where his fathers reside, the Machpelah cave. As Jacob is

dying he requests that Joseph bring his children, Manasseh and Ephraim. Jacob blesses Manasseh and Ephraim saying “The God in whose ways my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has been my shepherd from my birth to this day—The Angel who has redeemed me from all harm— Bless the lads. In them may my name be recalled, And the names of my fathers Abraham and Isaac, And may they be teeming multitudes upon the earth.” (Genesis 48:15-16). Jacobs request of being buried in the Machpelah cave is his way of returning to his roots. He wants to be in the place where his ancestors are buried. Why do we travel to Israel? What is the importance of being able to say that you walked on the same land that our fathers walk on? Why do we feel a need to spend summers or breaks in Israel? The answer is simple, we feel a need to be connected to our roots. Our roots have pushed us to create programs to send Jewish adults to Israel for free so they can feel the connection to their roots. This summer I spent my time learning about the history of our people and walking in their foot steps. I also had my Bat Mitzvah. While I was a little late to the party having it made me feel so much more connected to the community. I didn’t feel any different in the way I acted, but I could feel my soul start to weave its way into the web of every other soul that was called to Torah for the first time. Being in Israel I was able to understand fully why Jacob wanted to be buried in the same place as his fathers and mothers; he wanted to be able to travel back to where he was from and be one with his ancestors. Our theme the past Fall Kallah was “Return to our Roots”. I would like you to think about how your roots shape who you are as a person, and how they shape your life. We are all connected to each other by our Judaism, and I believe that because we all attend Kallahs, Jacob would be proud of our community and our dedication to discovering our roots. Shabbat Shalom!