

Madison Rosenfield- Religious and Cultural VP

What goals do you have as Religious and Cultural VP for the 2018-2019 year?: As the aspirant Religious and Cultural VP (RCVP) of NFTY-STR in the 2018-2019 year, I hope to strengthen NFTY-STRites' ties to both Israel and their Jewish culture at various interpersonal levels. To maintain a strong connection to Judaism, I find it vital to actively utilize specific core Jewish values in a variety of inventive ways, which I will do upon my election as RCVP. First and foremost, the value of **Kol Yisrael – All of Israel/Unity of the Jewish people:** In a world where we make up a miniscule fraction of the population, I think it's necessary to bond together with other Jews across the country and the world. I plan on linking STR to the 18 other amazing regions of NFTY through prayer and religious-based programming, as well as keeping STR informed of the happenings within the other regions. Also, I plan on working to strengthen our relationship with the other branches of Netzer Olami, as NFTY is the North American *snifim* (or branch) of the organization. Secondly, **Eretz Yisrael – Land of Israel/Connection to the land of Israel:** Generations of Jews before us fought hard so we today can have a homeland, Israel, and it would be an honor and a privilege to allow STRites to realize and appreciate this. I plan on creating an open dialogue between NFTY-STR and a specific sister organization/school in Israel with which we can exchange traditions and knowledge as a community. I would also like to create a NFTY-STR community that is well-versed in the realm of Israeli affairs and current events, which I find tends to be overlooked. Finally, **Kehillah – Community/Building a supportive social environment:** NFTY-STR strives to be--and succeeds in being--a *kehillah kedoshah* or "holy community." As RCVP, I plan on strengthening the support of our special community through creative and engaging Jewish religion-and-culture-based programs and events. Essentially, as RCVP, I would like to enhance our everyday connection to Judaism, give STRites a platform to express themselves through Judaism, and make participants' NFTY-STR experiences just that much more meaningful.

Why have you chosen to run for Religious and Cultural VP?: For a while, I was one of those Jews that didn't really know *why* I was Jewish--I just was. Reform Jewish customs, like sitting through high holy day services and attending religious school were things I assumed every reform Jew **had** to go through. After serving two terms as BISY's RCVP and attending seven NFTY-STR events to date, I've come to realize that those Jewish actions and events that used to feel like chores have become a major lifeblood for me. As soon as I realized that I could help others have this same "aha moment" that I did, I knew I had to run for RCVP of NFTY-STR.

List what experiences make you qualified to be Religious and Cultural VP: Throughout my life, I've had so many chances to develop both as a leader and as a Jew. In terms of the former, my passion for leadership was ignited in middle school, when I had the chance to serve as student body President. From then on, I was hooked. I'm now very active in my high school's Student Government Association, where I serve as the current Vice President of the Class of 2020. I have also attended multiple student leadership

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conferences at the state and national levels through my SGA, and I'm confident I can apply many of the skills I've learned from them to NFTY-STR. I'm also very involved in DECA (an organization that prepares leaders and entrepreneurs for careers in various business areas), I'm a varsity lacrosse player, and I write for my school's yearbook--all activities through which I've learned invaluable decision-making, teamwork, and time-management skills that I can bring to our region. In terms of the latter, I helped to plan and execute this year's Fall Kallah, and learned the ins-and-outs of programming a NFTY-STR event in doing so. Also, I'm very involved in my school's Jewish Student Union and I was very involved in AIPAC On Campus' NGauge program at the high school level before it was dissolved! Finally, serving on BISO's board (2015-2016 as SAVP, 2016-2017 as RCVP, and 2017-2018 as RCVP) has shaped me into the person I am today and really rounds out why I'm qualified to be NFTY-STR's 2018-2019 Religious and Cultural VP.

Write a D'var Torah for a Torah portion that occurs during Winter Regional: I'm a firm believer in the butterfly effect. The butterfly effect can simply be defined as "the theory that even the smallest step one takes in his/her life can change the course of said life immensely." Every decision we make, every event we attend, every activity we participate in grows us as human beings and has the ability to alter our lives in immeasurable ways. The parsha *Vayigash*, which means "and he dwelled," tells the tale of Joseph and his brothers and the immense changes they went through. 20 years prior to *Vayigash*, Joseph's brothers tried to kill him and instead sold him into slavery. In this particular Torah portion, however, Joseph's brothers travel to Egypt to plead to the viceroy to aid them in surviving the forthcoming famine. What doesn't occur to them is that they are face to face, *panim el panim*, with their own brother, Joseph! Joseph chooses not to divulge his identity so soon, and further demands that their youngest brother, Benjamin, be cast into servitude, much like Joseph 20 years ago. Judah steps up, refuses to let his youngest brother become a slave, and even declares that he will become a slave himself in order to save Benjamin. Judah then announces that he is his brother's keeper and will do whatever it takes to help Benjamin, an act that he couldn't quite bring himself to complete while standing up for Joseph 20 years before. Joseph is overcome with emotions and reveals himself to his brothers, ultimately patching up their relationship and changing things for the better. An overarching theme found throughout *Vayigash* is that of growth. Judah's choice to become Benjamin's keeper and Joseph's choice of forgiveness exemplified the growth both brothers experienced. If either of them had made a different choice, their lives would have ended up totally different. Growth is a necessary facet of life; without it, you do not have the opportunity to truly process emotions and become a better person in doing so. So many things have grown me as a person and have gotten me to where I am today; some good experiences, some bad experiences, though I wouldn't trade any of them for the world--and I hope the same for all of you.