

1. What goals do you have as Religious and Cultural VP for the 2019-2020 year? As the hopeful RCVP of NFTY-STR, my goal is to strengthen the connection between each participant and their Jewish identity, in means of religious practices and cultural traditions. On a regional scale, I plan to design creative services that connect and appeal to a wide variety of participants. This will be done to engage participants while expanding the opportunities and learning experiences for TYG RCVP's as well as song leaders. My goal is to have the participants look forward to and enjoy services, with the hopes of furthering the connections made within our NFTY-STR kehillah kedosha (holy community). Secondly, I plan on fostering an environment that is based on the Jewish value of Eretz Yisrael (land of Israel/connection to the land of Israel). To do this, I plan on crafting creative and engaging activities that present a dialogue and atmosphere in which the participants are actively learning about and deepening their connection to Israel in terms of Israeli affairs and Israeli traditions and culture that differ from those practiced by the Jewish population in America. My goal is for the participants to open their eyes and discover the different ways Judaism is practiced and followed across the globe and specifically in our homeland of Israel. Finally, I plan to collaborate with the NFTY-STR PVP to create engaging and creative Jewish religion and culture based programs and activities. As RCVP, my ultimate goal is for the participants to form a deeper connection with their Jewish identity, through religious practices and cultural traditions, while making their Jewish experiences more meaningful and impactful.

2. Why have you chosen to run for Religious and Cultural VP? When I was younger, I despised going to services, religious school, or anything connected to my religion. I thought it was all extremely boring and my parents had forced me to go. When my family moved to Florida and learned about TYGs, and URJ Camp Coleman, my parents had forced me to try these things as well. It started with my first summer at URJ Camp Coleman, which was the summer before 6th grade. At this time, I still hadn't found a liking for my religion. I did not want to go at all, and I fought my parents on this till I arrived in my cabin. As the summer went on, I had discovered an interest in the fun, engaging services that camp provided me with. When I returned home, all I wished for was more camp style services. I then attended NFTY-STR Hatikvah Kallah 2015. At this event, I learned the meaning behind the prayers. It was at that time when something clicked. It no longer mattered what tune was being sung, or what form of service was going on, it was about the words and meaning of the prayer. Ever since that moment, I have had a love of and passion for my religion that gets stronger with every opportunity I get or create for myself to further my connection to my religion. Ever since I discovered this love of and

passion for my religion, I have felt a desire to share it with everybody that I can. This is something that I would love to get the chance to share with NFTY-STR, which I love almost as much as I love Judaism. Ultimately, I aspire to be a person that can help at least one other Jewish teen have their “aha” moment. I have a sincere ahava aza (passion) for prayer, services, and Judaism as a whole, and I want to share that with NFTY-STR.

3. List what experiences make you qualified to be Religious and Cultural VP? I have had numerous opportunities to grow both as a leader and a Jewish teen. During middle school I held multiple leadership roles within student government, national honor society, and best buddies. These leadership opportunities have taught me time-management, organizational skills and teamwork skills. Since then, I have attended five life-changing summers at URJ Camp Coleman. Additionally, I believe that my time on BiTTY board (2017-2018 as RCVP, 2018-2019 as RCVP) has provided me with the experience needed to be a successful NFTY-STR regional board member. Throughout my time as BiTTY RCVP I have, written and led innovative services and overseen the connection to Judaism in each of our programs and events. I have also, collaborated with the 2018-2019 NFTY-STR RCVP to plan NFTY-STR’s Hatikvah Kallah 2018, through which I learned the steps needed to successfully plan a regional event. Finally, this past summer I was honored to be ask by the NFTY-STR regional board to attend NFTY Mechina at URJ Kutz Camp. At this event, I was able to network with other RCVPs as well as other board members and future leaders, to learn more about what it truly means to be a leader, and effective board member. Through all of this, I have learned the significance of communication and teamwork that is needed.

4. Write a D'var Torah for a Torah portion that occurs during Winter Regional. What do we do if we are asked to do something we know is wrong? What if we are ordered to? In this week's Torah portion, Shifra and Puah, two Jewish midwives, are faced with a dilemma. Their job is to help the Jewish women give birth to healthy babies. Everything was going smoothly until Pharaoh called the two midwives into his palace. Here he told them his evil plan. "I want to kill all the new Jewish baby boys," he said, "and I order you to help me. From now on, whenever you go to deliver a Jewish baby boy I want you to kill it." The midwives were shocked. "How can we ever do such a terrible thing?" they asked themselves. "We're supposed to be helping people, not hurting them!" The midwives realized that Pharaoh could punish them if they didn't comply. But they also knew that what they were being asked to do was wrong, and they refused to compromise their values. They stood their ground and continued to help, and not hurt the mothers and babies. We learn from these brave women how to stand up for our values, even under pressure.