

1. What goals do you have as Religious and Cultural VP for the 2020-2021 year? As Religious and Cultural Vice President, I will work with the songleading team to create fun, meaningful, and engaging services for all to enjoy. I plan to ensure we are a fluid team working together to give NFTY-STR memorable Jewish experiences with every event, furthering our *kehillah kedoshah* (holy community). I will be a resource, an open-book, for TYG RCVPs *and* songleaders to ask questions to, get resources from, and create meaningful service experiences with. Throughout the year, I will also work with the regional CVP to have a monthly Hebrew word and Israel related fact distributed through the Instagram and NFTY-STR's Chai Five Newsletter. I wish to implement a *middah* (Jewish value) of each event that participants will be encouraged to exhibit throughout the weekend. With this in mind, a new event award will be given at the end of each event to a participant who has lived by this value throughout the weekend. My main goal for the entire year is to ensure that each and every STRite has found their own unique connection to Judaism and continue giving those who have already found theirs a space to explore it.

2. Why have you chosen to run for Religious and Cultural VP? I have chosen to run for this position because of my love and passion for Judaism and the many paths one can take to explore it. When I first arrived at URJ Camp Harlam the summer between 4th and 5th grade year, I got my first look at how the Jewish people can worship in personal ways. This is where I found my true passion for Judaism: music. This life changing revelation moved me to pursue songleading with the hope that I could bring other Jewish teens a similar moving moment of finding their way of meaningful prayer while also continuing to bring music to those that already have that connection. I am running for RCVP to continue this journey I have begun through songleading, to continue giving those in NFTY an engaging way of prayer, and to continue showing Jewish teens that there are numerous ways to pray and connect to one's Judaism.

3. List what experiences make you qualified to be Religious and Cultural VP? I have a large variety of experiences and skills that make me an extremely well-qualified candidate for this position. My very first service leading experience was at Temple Beth Am elementary school in 5th grade when I led the elementary school's Kabbalat Shabbat every Friday morning. Since then, I have continued building on my songleading skills at URJ Camp Harlam and URJ Six Points Sci-Tech Academy, Temple Beth Am, Temple Beth Am's youth group BAFTY, and in NFTY-STR as a regional songleader for the past two years. I have also received songleading and service leading training at Songleader Boot Camp 2016 (which I look

forward to attending again in February 2020), and through classes at both URJ camps stated above and NFTY-STR LLTI 2018 and 2019. As for direct RCVP experience, this is my second year as BAFTY RCVP, through which I have created and led numerous services, facilitated Jewish learning during programs and events, and participated in the NFTY-STR LLTI 2019 RCVP track. These experiences have ensured I have the skills to lead and create engaging and meaningful services. Additionally, songleading in NFTY-STR has given me a detailed inside look at how two regional RCVPs have created services and run the songleading team. This knowledge will allow me to work well with the songleading team to create amazing worship experiences for NFTY-STR. For the cultural side of this position, I traveled to Israel this past summer where I learned so much about our Jewish homeland. This gives me the ability to share information I learned firsthand about the country of our people and incorporate that knowledge into programs.

4. Write a D'var Torah for a Torah portion that occurs during Winter Regional. With the secular New Year coming up, some of us may already be thinking about New Year's resolutions. This time of year gives us an opportunity to better ourselves and a chance to make amends to things we have done wrong. Sounds like the time from Rosh Hashana through Yom Kippur, doesn't it? As modern Jews, we are lucky enough to be given a second chance at making amends, even if we did not during Yom Kippur or the ten days of repentance. This week's Torah portion is *Mikeitz*, which directly translates "After." This "After" is referring to the time after Joseph's enslavement, the time when he becomes Pharaoh's closest advisor after interpreting Pharaoh's dream as foreshadowing seven years of prosperity followed by seven years of famine. While in this position, Joseph was able to do a lot of good for the land by ensuring everyone would be fed during these seven years of famine. However, when his brothers who betrayed him and sold him into slavery arrive in Egypt to buy food, Joseph decides to test the brothers and see if they have abandoned their old, traitorous ways. He does so by holding one of the brothers, Simeon, hostage while the others return home to retrieve their youngest brother, Benjamin, and bring him to Egypt. Once the siblings returned, Joseph frees Simeon just to then enslave Benjamin. This begs the question: why would Joseph continue testing his brothers when they already returned for their brother Simeon? The answer: after being betrayed once, Joseph is doing all in his power to ensure it never happens again. His brothers were very lucky just to have a second chance. Thus, we should be very grateful for not only the time from Rosh Hashana through Yom Kippur, but also the second chance to make amends and improve ourselves that the secular New Year affords us.