

Religious and Cultural Vice President

1. What goals do you have as Religious and Cultural VP for the 2020-2021 year?

My goals as RCVP for the 2020-2021 year are to make the religious experience at NFTY-STR enjoyable for teens. I want to run Friday night and Saturday morning services that make teens feel like they can take home the values they learned while at our events. This includes making sure the D'var Torah is an interesting focus point. My discussion topics will be based on themes of our NFTY events and I will research points relating our Torah portions to modern day values.

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

In 8th grade I joined my TYG with just about no interest at all, being forced to go. When I joined my TYG board, it wasn't about the religion as much as it was about that I realized I liked leadership and being a part of a team. Then I joined NFTY, saw the regional board, and realized I wanted to lead with teens there on a larger scale. But, I didn't know what position to run for and I didn't feel a tight connection to my Judaism yet. But slowly, through my TYG, NFTY, and URJ 6 Points Sports, I created my own version of Judaism in my life. I realized, I wanted to help someone else find their own idea of Judaism. Because without knowing it, I had gone from a kid who didn't want anything to do with her religious identity, to a teen who was really passionate about hers and she now wanted to help others find theirs. So, I want to run for RCVP so I can help create a unique, meaningful Jewish connection for anyone involved in NFTY.

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

Over the past few years I have learned many skills that I can bring to the position of RCVP. Since I was about 7, I've been playing tennis. I'm definitely not the best at it, but tennis has taught me to persevere even when I hit rough spots. I've learned that some days are just bad days and I'll have better ones. Also, sports have shaped me into a good communicator, I know that if I want to fix something, I have to be vocal about it. I didn't

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think they would help me, but sports are a big part of who I am today. My camp, URJ6 Points Sports Academy has also helped me connect with my Jewish experience and was the first time I had been immersed in a Jewish community where I was completely proud to be Jewish. Additionally, my grades have taught me the most about commitment. I am not always perfect, I can't compare myself to others, and I should always try my best. Lastly, one of the most important things that will help me as RCVP is my current board position at Temple Judea (JTY). Last year I was underclassmen representative, and I am currently RCVP. My board meetings have taught me an unbelievable amount of teamwork is needed for our programs to work, as well as patience. Being on board requires positivity, and I would be proud to be a part of that light.

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

When we are younger, we are told the classic story of Chanukah, and we grow up with that same story in our heads, that we recount every Chanukah season. The Greeks ransacked and destroyed the Jews of Judea's Temple and they were not going to have enough oil to last in order to rebuild it, however, a miracle happened, the oil lasted for 8 days! But we all know this tale. The miracle that we all know and love to share is only one small miracle over shadowing the greater one. The one less talked about and even less known. During this time, there were two groups of Jews, those who kept Torah Judaism alive, and those who were Hellenized, practicing the religion of the Greeks, praying to false gods, and focusing on superficial things like physical perfection, rather than committing oneself to Mitzvot and spiritual meaning. The real miracle was after the Maccabees were successful in beating out the Greeks, when Jewish brothers and sisters who were at odds with one another, separated by beliefs were once again united. Personally, I think this miracle far outweighs the miracle of the oil. Here we have the beautiful unification of two groups of people coming together under one sanctuary, with their full trust in God. But having full trust in God is not always easy in this current era. During this Chanukah, use this time to reflect on your own unification with God and with each other.