

My Fellow NFTYites,

עומד אחזה מי לפני דע

## Know Before Whom You Stand

These words hold an essential message for the governance of the Reform Jewish Youth Movement. This quote discusses the importance of generational leadership, appreciating the pioneers of the past and also recognizing the potential leaders of the future. We must draw on every ounce of knowledge and experience we have in order to build and sustain our future, by both studying our past and cultivating current innovation. We stand before past NFTYites who have built the movement into what we know today, and we stand among current NFTYites who have the potential to empower NFTY even further.

**With my love for this movement I, Maya Levy, pledge to honor all that NFTY represents in my candidacy for your 5779-5780 NFTY President.** The generational leadership that drives our movement is a powerful force that continually inspires our community, cultivates connections, creates opportunities, and empowers the Jewish leaders of tomorrow. Youth engagement is imperative to the preservation of the Reform community, and its vitality must be secured. I envision securing and reinforcing the future of NFTY through strong leadership, collaboration, and partnership.

To maintain and further our growth, we must **empower participants to pursue their visions**. As NFTY evolves, our established methods may not continue to produce the desired outcomes. We cannot shy away from crafting new structures and challenging past systems that no longer fulfill the needs of today's NFTY. Distinguishing between tradition and innovation is essential to ensuring the future of this community. Our movement is changing more than ever, and we must learn to embrace that in the coming year.

The NFTY President has the unique opportunity to work with adult leaders in building the future of the movement. In this coming year, I hope to work with the URJ in facilitating the transitions and changes in Mitzvah Corps, Kutz, and other URJ youth programs. As NFTY President, I will ensure that there are opportunities for participants to give feedback and suggestions for these changes so that you can help craft the future of your movement. Incorporating only one youth voice into these decisions is unfair to the participants of NFTY, who may be members of the movement for up to four more years and will therefore be most affected by the changes made. In order to incorporate the participant's voices in the development of the movement, I hope to establish "office hours," where I open a zoom link to participants for a few hours to hear any feedback about NFTY. I would also like to send out a monthly update where I explain any decisions I have helped make, and why they were made. This will hopefully act as a way to increase transparency about the decisions made in our movement.

NFTYites are paving the way to pursuing change in their communities and the Reform movement. I have seen the raw passion inside NFTYites and seen first hand how it can be harnessed and turned into something incredible. To maximize all of our leaders' potential, I hope to release Committee and Task Force applications earlier so that these forces for change

have the ability to work on their initiatives for an entire year. I also hope to take steps to reduce the bureaucracy involved in joining these committees so that more people can become involved and more time can be spent acting on initiatives. NFTY is a catalyst for change, and the Cabinet can mobilize our movement to pursue initiatives if given the time to do so.

We must also **look around our movement in order to look forward**. When thinking about how we can improve our movement, leaders often think, “What else can we do?” While this is a significant question, more importantly we must ask ourselves “What *are* we doing?” Each NFTY region is doing extraordinary and unique work, but unfortunately their experiences are often isolated within the region. In order to advance our movement, we must learn from the successes and failures of others. The NFTY Program Bank is outdated and cluttered, but has potential to be a substantial resource for our regional leaders. As President, I will refill the bank with recent programs, as well as commentary on any successes or drawbacks encountered by the leaders who have run it. I will also create a resource of regional recruitment techniques and initiatives to revitalize the way each region recruits.

Since NFTY is the youth branch of the URJ, in looking around our movement we must also look to the staff and lay leaders of the URJ. These people hold wisdom, experience, and passion for the youth of the Reform movement and are great resources for helping further NFTY. I hope to establish strong connections between NFTY’s leaders and the URJ, so we can learn more about the history, triumphs, failures, and both effective and ineffective initiatives of NFTY’s past. In strengthening our partnership with the URJ we can drive our movement to further success.

NFTY, as a youth movement, has the opportunity to **invigorate youth connection to the Reform Movement**. To do so, we should build upon relationships with Reform synagogues and create easy channels for our congregations to learn about NFTY, and for their youth to engage with the movement further. By cultivating relationships with our temples, we can partner with leadership on religious school programming and post-B’nai Mitzvah engagement. We cannot hope to recruit teens for NFTY if they have no passion or connection with their religion. Being a Reform Jew allows for embracing individuality and cultivating a personal connection to the culture. We must make an effort to show temple youth what being a Reform Jew can mean, and by building a strong foundation, we will create strong regions and in turn, a strong movement.

Through my involvement in this movement, I have had the honor of working with innovative, intelligent, and inspiring teens and adults. I hope to create a candidacy that embraces all that you can accomplish and fosters a NFTY that remains powered by you. It is not my job to decide what NFTY looks like in the years to come, rather it is my job to listen to and support you as you lead the movement. There is change ahead, and with change comes growth. I pledge to pursue this growth, with each of you by my side along the way. Together, we can create a NFTY that we are proud to call our own.

B’Ahavah,  
Maya Levy

