“Kol Yisrael Arevim Ze-La-Ze. All the people of Israel are responsible for one another” (Shevuot 39a). By setting this precedent, we can create a NFTY that is stronger and healthier for years to come. The profound impact that NFTY and The URJ have had on my life will forever stay with me. Throughout my participation in almost all of The URJ Youth’s programs, I have had the honor of bearing witness to the holiness that takes place in this beautiful community. Whether it be at Mitzvah Corps, Heller High, Kutz Camp or NFTY, this holiness has presented itself in various ways, yet always maintains its strength wherever it may be. It is with great passion that I take on the responsibility of keeping that holiness alive.

Therefore, It is with the utmost gratitude and honor that I, Joshua May, declare my candidacy for the position of NFTY’s Religious and Cultural Vice President for 5780-5781. Now is the time for us as a movement to empower and inspire to help everyone become better and stronger. Understanding, Connecting and Overcoming allows NFTY to make greater strides in creating a better Jewish world.

Understanding: All narratives should be celebrated equally by NFTY. It is important to recognize that diverse opinions strengthen our community and that everyone should be encouraged to form their own relationship with Israel. As your RCVP I will work with each region to create an environment, rooted in Jewish values, that will allow all viewpoints to be heard and feel welcome. It is extremely important to recognize that one size does not fit all. Every region is unique, and I will work with all leaders to establish a culture that works best for their region.

Connecting: I believe it is important that we as NFTY evaluate our relationships with our various partner organizations. It is crucial to understand the positions of other Israel Organizations and create partnerships (Shutafut) with those that allow NFTYites to benefit from their experiences. I will also continue to strengthen our relationship with Netzer Olami and will make an effort to encourage Noar Telem (Netzer Israel) teens to attend NFTY Convention. I will also encourage regions to work with their local federations to bring Shinshinim to Regional Events. By doing this, we can spark a passion for Israeli culture in every NFTYite. And Lastly, I want to work with recent NFTY in Israel/Heller High participants to allow them to share experiences and bring back new ideas to their regions and synagogues.

Overcoming: Civil discourse is key to allowing controversial programs to thrive. I will work to create a universal document on civil discourse and handling controversial programs/conversations rooted in Jewish values from NFTY’s 13 Principles such as Kef v’Ruach, Shutafut and Tikkun Middot. By recognizing civil discourse in ProFo and recognizing when there is a need for guidelines we can allow for all perspectives to be heard and respected.

Religious and Spiritual Experiences: I will work with Regional RCVPs to involve at-large members in leading t’fillot and other religious experiences. Also, by creating and sharing a database for pluralistic services we can broaden NFTYite’s perspectives on worship. In addition I will encourage novel mediums to enhance spiritual and religious passion. Lastly, I will strengthen NFTY’s RCVP Network by joining Regional RCVP Network calls to understand the grassroots of RCVP work all around North America.

By establishing these new efforts and encouraging a multitude of perspectives, we can strengthen our relationship with Israel and each other to create a better NFTY for everyone.

B’ahava,
Josh May