

Dear NFTY-MAR,

Whatever we do together, whether it's singing Birkat Hamazon at meals, arguing at Asefah or crying at Friendship Circle, we do it as a Jewish youth group. Every MAR activity, every friend and every candy gram shape our NFTY experiences and, in doing so, strengthen our Jewish identities in meaningful and lasting ways.

My name is Annie Joseph and I am running to be your Religious and Cultural Vice President for the 5779-5780 term.

If elected, I will focus on **exploring, examining, and expanding** your, my, and MAR's Jewish identity.

Together we will explore different ways to connect with what it means to be Jewish. Services are a time during the weekend when we can truly and openly see the strength of our community. These moments, when I can feel the love in our voices and see the joy in our dance moves, are why I value being Jewish so deeply. While that is true for me, I understand and appreciate that we all connect differently. As RCVP I will work to find ways for all of us to connect in our own ways. I'll do this by implementing a service **committee for each event.** **This committee will create services** designed to offer participants various opportunities to **explore, absorb, and connect to their Judaism.** Before each camp-hosted event this committee will work with the song leaders, spiritual engagement chairs and with me to design services that are unique in terms of the songs we sing, the prayers we hum, and the words we share in order to provide our region with a variety of spiritual opportunities. This committee will ensure traditions will be maintained and it will expose MARites to diverse perspectives. This will allow participants to **explore the religious side of their identity.**

Together we will examine the intricacies of our culture. I, for one, do not know everything about Israel and I certainly do not know everything about G-d. These are just some examples of the complexities that come with being Jewish in the modern world. The word Israel means "to wrestle with G-d". Together let's *wrestle* through these complex topics as a community. As RCVP, I will work with the spiritual engagement chairs and the Israel education chairs to develop dynamic programs that will allow MARites to *wrestle* with and **examine their beliefs and gain knowledge that helps develop the cultural side of their identities.**

Together we will expand MAR's Jewish identity. *Tikkun olam*- repairing the world (תיקון עולם), *ruach*- spirit (רוח), and *mishpacha*- family (משפחה) are just a few examples of how everything we do as a region comes back to our shared sense of identity. Above all else, MAR is a **Jewish** youth group. Judaism is the unifying feature that makes our community extraordinary. At a single event we can give back to the community, sing at the top of our lungs, and feel a sense of family. It is important to keep in mind the Jewish themes behind all these things. After all, being Jewish is not only what we do during services, **it is reflected in everything we do.** **We will expand and strengthen MAR's Jewish identity.**

In the end, we might not remember the countless *Birkat Hamazons*, the arguments at Asefah, or the tears at Friendship Circle, but the **Jewish identities we are building together will last us a lifetime.**

L'Shalom,
Annie Joseph

