

Dear NFTY-NW,

In 1964, the Israeli government began planting trees in the Negev desert. This led to the creation of the Yatir forest, one of the biggest forests in Israel. Where there was once no vegetation to speak of now stands 4 million trees. The Jewish people have always had the right mix of determination and ingenuity to step outside of the box and create where there was previously nothing. NFTY is no exception to the precedent our ancestors have set for us, but in recent years we have stalled; relying too much on the templates our predecessors have left us. **To adapt to the changes the Covid 19 pandemic has brought upon us NFTY NW must change the status quo and begin to reinvent how we operate.**

Over the past few years, membership has undergone significant decreases in the Northwest region. What was once a minor decline in membership became accelerated due to the world events going on. The lack of demand for virtual programming this past year has seen a huge drop in participation. **This is fixable.** The demand for in-person events and for the community Northwest has built has not gone away nor lessened. But if we continue to only use traditional recruitment methods to make people excited about NFTY, the excitement will slowly begin to fade away.

I will ensure that NFTYx becomes an instrumental tool in relighting the NFTY fire in our current members, and will also make it easier for more people to join. In simple terms, NFTYx is the umbrella term for events outside of kallahs. **Due to the financial effects of Covid-19 on the URJ, we will only have 1 kallah next year.** In order to keep the NFTY spirit alive, there has to be additional programming to kallahs. NFTYx lets us do that by allowing us to host events whenever and wherever we want. More than that, it lets anyone host an event. It gives the regional board the autonomy to fulfill the promises of pop-up events that have been a constant during election time. Versatility in **location** will allow us to engage with all of the northwest bringing an increased level of attention to often overlooked areas. Being able to choose event dates and their **frequency** will make it easier to keep members engaged. Finally, the adaptability in **scale** will allow new members to experience NFTY without committing to an entire weekend. I promise to utilize NFTYx to its fullest to ensure NFTY comes back kicking.

Anyone can host an NFTYx event. The URJ provides a list of alumni that are willing to staff events, and that is all you need to run an event. This system has been in place the entire year but has been used by no one. Members have been told that they can host events this way, but have received no information on the process. As president, I will communicate to every member what opportunities they have and how to utilize them fully. I will hold information sessions at the start of the year to show members how to create NFTYx events and walk members through the process. I will also be working closely with our NFTYx chairs, which will be chosen throughout the region, to ensure that members have ample support to host NFTYx events. While making the opportunities available is a great first step, the process isn't complete until we can ensure proper support.

In order to properly aid members running NFTYx events, I will be establishing a Northwest Discord server. Discord is an online messaging platform in which you can create invite-only "servers" where both text and voice channels can be utilized. This would allow the regional board, NFTYx chairs, members, and potentially alumni to work cohesively. Any effort to streamline the process of running NFTYx events is welcome. While a Discord server is just one way to do this, there are many other platforms we can try. The regional board and I will work hard to come up with ideas that make it easier for members to achieve their goals.

When you run out of an ingredient, you check everywhere in the cupboard before going to the store for more. Northwest must do the same with members. There are **untapped groups** of Jewish youth that Northwest must start engaging with. We cannot just send emails to advisors and ask them to pass

along flyers. The regional board and I will go to temples both new and old and hold live promotional presentations to teens. Person-to-person interactions are the heart of NFTY events, and they need to be the heart of our recruitment efforts as well. This paired with single night NFTYx events will make teens more willing to give NFTY a try.

If all of you are like me, you are looking forward to going back to in-person kallahs, entire weekends devoted to spending time with your favorite people. In the past few years, these weekends have come to have a level of predictability to them. In many ways, the predictability that comes with tradition is what makes NFTY such a comfort for us, but the programming and general structure could stand to be reevaluated. While working on virtual programming this past year, I realized that the best way to create new programs suited for online was to stop trying to replicate what we did in person and just come up with ideas that suited the digital space. With this in mind, the regional board and I came up with many innovative ideas for events. The second we stopped trying to replicate what has been done in the past and began to create from a new perspective, good and relevant ideas started flowing out. As president, I will facilitate a creative workspace for my board and push them to look beyond what we have already done. **Traditions are the core of NFTY, but we can keep our traditions intact while reinventing how we program our events.**

It is hard to make a change in NFTY. Normally there are only four events a year, and the regional board does not want to change too much at a time to avoid ruining a good thing. However, this year will be different. With the regional board finally being able to organize pop-up events as they see fit, and the scheduling and formatting of events being up in the air, there is a great potential for change. It will be easier to try new things with the smaller scale of NFTYx events. Programs such as new member nights, where we meet up at a skating rink and new members skate for free. We can have beach days, go kayaking on lake union, ski together in Washington, Vancouver, and Idaho all on the same day. The possibilities are endless and I will give my board the resources to shoot for the sky! More than that, if elected as president I will strive for change. Risks are meant to be taken and I feel confident that the regional board and I will know when and where to make changes.

This being said, in-person events are unfortunately not a guarantee. The regional board has no control over this particular decision. The URJ makes these decisions and they do not take them lightly. We will not be in person until the URJ feels that it is safe. As a result, we must be prepared for whatever happens. A fact of this position is that whoever is elected as president will have to be flexible and prepared for anything. This is a challenge I am prepared to take. I will plan for both in-person kallahs and virtual programming. There is simply no way to know what will happen and the regional board must be ready to react to whatever situation we are given. Once we have an idea of what next year will be like, the regional board and I will work extremely hard to give you, the members, the best experience possible.

NFTY is, and will always be, first and foremost about community. We come to events year after year because of the relationships we have built. But every year the community changes a little bit, people come and people leave. An ever-changing community needs to come with ever-changing strategies to accommodate it. However, the good memories and friendships that make Northwest what it is will never change. NFTY will face difficulties this year, we will be forced to pivot heavily from our status quo. With difficulties comes the potential to change and evolve, go above where we have gone before and make long-lasting impactful changes. NFTY must adapt and I believe I have the rigorous work ethic, adaptability, and creativity to lead my regional board through making these changes and facilitating an amazing year for our members. **That is why I, Noam Hashash, declare my candidacy for the position of NFTY Northwest President for the years 5781-5782.**

Sincerely,
Noam Hashash