

Kol THE VOICE OF Barrack

Sh'vat 5780: Environmental Stewardship

The weather outside is not quite so frightful as we usually expect at this time of year. We have not had any snow days yet and we have been experiencing unseasonably warm weather. While the balmy weather might have its advantages, it also gives us pause to realize that the climate has shifted already, evidenced by glacial melting, changing habitats for many species, and more urgent concerns about coastal flooding.

Our tradition takes environmental stewardship seriously. From the reminders in the Torah about waiting for a tree to grow up before harvesting its fruits to the first Psalm which compares a studious and diligent person to a tree planted beside streams of water, yielding fruit in season and never fading, we are reminded to be caretakers. The poetic descriptions of lilies and other flowers in Song of Songs remind us of the natural beauty that has the capacity to awaken our senses and bring us pleasure.

The Hebrew month of Sh'vat provides an opportunity for us to celebrate Tu B'Sh'vat, (this year it falls on Monday, February 10th) the New Year for Trees, and to reaffirm our commitment to responsible environmental safekeeping.

At Barrack, we are taking this opportunity to both reflect and take action to help our environment and our world.

Plastic water bottle ban

Our school leadership, in cooperation with the students on the Environmental Action Club and JLI (Jewish Leadership Initiative), are marking this month of Sh'vat in partnership with a school-wide assembly and by raising awareness about ways in which we are obliged to think about how we treat the environment. Having enacted a plastic water bottle ban in the school at the beginning of this school year, we have been seeking to cut down on unnecessary waste by encouraging everyone to bring their own reusable water bottles and we no longer give out water bottles at school functions.

E-cycling Drive

We are always on the lookout for improving our school's approach to paper and plastic recycling and we will be conducting an e-cycling drive in March for old computers, phones, printers and other equipment.

Easy steps to air quality improvement

Having done research into the dangers to our air quality caused by idling buses and cars, a sign will be going up soon to ask everyone waiting in our parking lots to come inside out of the cold instead of sitting alone in their driver's seats while running their engines. Young lungs are at work throughout our campus!

Learning About Tu B'Sh'vat

To celebrate Tu B'Sh'vat, our Jewish studies classes and Shaharit groups will be learning about Tu B'Sh'vat seders and about the seven species native to the land of Israel that are celebrated in Deuteronomy 8:8: wheat, barley, grapes,

Kol Barrack (The Voice of Barrack) is a periodic publication that recognizes the new month in the Jewish calendar. In this edition, Rabbi Judd Kruger Levingston, Director of Jewish Studies, shares his thoughts with our school community.



Rabbi Judd Kruger Levingston
DIRECTOR OF JEWISH STUDIES

Judd has served as Director of Jewish Studies since 2009. He currently teaches 7th, 11th and 12th grade classes in the Jewish studies department and serves as the advisor to the Derech Eretz Council and to the Environmental Action Club. He is the proud parent of Ivan '12, Miranda, and Serena '20, and he is the author of *Sowing the Seeds of Character: The Moral Education of Adolescents in Public and Private Schools* (Praeger, 2009). Judd holds a certificate in Chinese Studies from Peking University in Beijing, an A.B. in History and Science from Harvard University, an M.A. in Education followed by rabbinic ordination and a Ph.D. in Jewish Studies from the Jewish Theological Seminary. jlevingston@jbha.org

figs, pomegranates, olive oil and honey. This year, many of us also will look at and question the verses that follow, in which the Children of Israel are promised that they won't lack for food or for other natural resources on the land.

Our school is set near a small stream and coy pond, surrounded by groves of trees, and when walking or running the paths, often bumping into others also enjoying the outdoors, I am reminded of a richly evocative passage from Avot de-Rabi Natan that reflects both a sense of urgency that we should have around the environment and a sense of patience that reminds us that there is a place for delayed gratification:

Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai received the Torah from Hillel and Shammai and he used to say,

"If you have a sapling in your hand,
and someone should say to you that the Messiah has come,
stay and complete the transplanting,
and then go welcome the Messiah."

Whether you are using your own water bottle, setting aside your electronics for the drive next month, planting trees, contributing trees to a forest or waiting until the weather is a little warmer, Happy Tu B'Sh'vat!

Rabbi Judd Kruger Levingston, Ph.D., P '12, '20
Director of Jewish Studies