

Kol THE VOICE OF Barrack

Kol Barrack (The Voice of Barrack) is a periodic publication that recognizes important dates in the Jewish calendar. In this edition, we share the D'var Torah presented by Nerya Freidenreich '25 and Eitan Monson '25 at Barrack's 8th Grade Moving Up Day ceremony.



Tamuz: Growth & Perseverance

“EVERY BLADE OF GRASS HAS AN ANGEL THAT BENDS OVER IT AND WHISPERS, GROW, GROW.”

Chodesh Tov!

This week's parsha is Korah. And while usually people focus on the whole “mass destruction and falling into a pit in the ground” story, we want to focus on something really beautiful that comes after that destruction. In Numbers 17 verse 23, miraculously, “the staff of Aaron of the house of Levi had sprouted: it had brought forth sprouts, produced blossoms, and borne almonds,” a sign of God's allegiance with Aaron and Moshe. The staff is then preserved, to be a symbol for generations to come. This miracle is an example of growth after destruction, of the perseverance of good even through the bad.

The end of last year and into this school year has often seemed like destruction. As our everyday lives were completely destroyed. But we have learned to persevere through the hard times, making it through to the good times and growing like the staff into something beautiful. Looking back at 2020 and 2021 we learned so much about ourselves as we grew. This all started with people being happy in the Beit Midrash about hearing that we were going to miss a few days of school, not realizing the challenges that lay ahead waiting for us. Our grade was seeing each other almost six days a week including Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrations. From six days a week, we went to see no one for over five months and for some even more. COVID caused us to have to do something we had never seen or done before or even heard of. We were stuck in our houses going to online school every day starting at 10 AM. While it was nice to not have school start until 10 it was a struggle because seeing no one but our families was a bit of a challenge. Coming back to school in September was great, because, for most of us, it was the first time that we saw each other for a very long time. We started out the school year by coming in once a week then every other week before coming in every day. Our grade has gotten through this huge obstacle of COVID and managed to stay together as one grade. Everybody has grown up and our grade might be closer than ever because of COVID as we were able to come together and be with each other. Despite not going to Williamsburg or Israel, we became closer through FaceTime calls and emails. We have definitely grown as a grade and we have stayed together as one. We have turned a depressing situation into a staff of blooming flowers and almonds.

It says in the Talmud, “Every blade of grass has an Angel that bends over it and whispers, Grow, Grow.” Each of the 8th graders is like a blade of grass. The angel represents members of our families who helped us through COVID by pushing us to keep trying hard in school and helping us stay happy through the rough times. The angel is also our teachers who were there every step of the way and kept everything as close to normal as possible (by keeping the classes almost exactly the way they were in school except for the fact that we were stuck at home logging into a google meet). And the angel is also each other, the eighth-graders sitting here. We stayed connected, looking out for each other in these times of roughness. Combined with our teachers and parents, we helped each other grow together and become stronger people. Everyone in this room is an angel, supporting each other through the good and the bad, helping the grass grow.

Throughout our years in middle school, our grade has faced many challenges. From physical separation and COVID to discussions battling through political differences, each time we have persevered, becoming stronger, more united. As a religion and ethnicity, we are known to persist, not taking no as an answer. And lastly, humans, in general, have dealt with many obstacles. Religious differences, racial discrimination, natural disasters and illnesses, governmental corruption, isolation, and so much more have stood in our way. But we continue to fight against division, fighting for unity and perseverance. We have become stronger through each other. And as we exit our years in middle school and enter high school, even though some of us might not be continuing next year in the same school, we know we will continue to be strong. Because, even if we won't physically be all together, we will always be there for one another.

Just as the staff is there to support the person, and just as the flowers and almonds on Aharon's staff symbolize growth and perseverance through the generations, may we hope to continue to support each other and grow together, keeping in touch and persevering as a grade.