

# Kol THE VOICE OF Barrack

## Heshvan: A Glimpse from Within, and Where the Work Begins

### Tishrei: the Month of Strengths, Celebration and Potential

The annual question we ask, “When are the high holidays this year? Do they fall out *early*, or *late*?” has a clear answer: they fall out *exactly on time*! But depending on the start of Hebrew month of Tishrei, the holidays can come with what feels like a flurry of activity and non-stop energy early in September, or they can fall a bit later, allowing more time for preparation.

The month of Tishrei is referred to in the book of Kings as ירח האיתנים - Yereh HaEitanim - the month of strengths. (I Kings 8:2) While this is an allusion to the seasonal river waters that begin to rise at this time, the sages also saw it as an allusion to our ancestors - our people's founders - who were believed to have been born in this month. It is also an allusion to the many holidays that we celebrate in this month.

This year, as we all know, the High Holiday season came very early in September. (Some of us barely had time to get back from the Shore!) Experiencing the High Holiday rush followed by Sukkot festivities and Simhat Torah celebrations reinforces the concept of Tishrei as the “strong” month: From the sounds of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah, Tishrei quite literally comes in with a blast. The celebrations (and days off of school!) didn’t seem to stop until we finally reached today, the beginning of the month of Heshvan, where we can settle back into a more steady routine. Compared with Heshvan, Tishrei is a whirl of activity. But why is the Jewish calendar designed this way? Why not space out the holidays a little better? Why the mad rush followed by the quiet lull?

Perhaps this is purposeful. New beginnings (including the new year) are exciting and filled with the energy of optimism and potential, and they must then be followed by a time of hard work to make those dreams a reality. It is hard to keep the momentum going sometimes. But if you lay the right foundations, you can continuously draw strength from that initial burst. Tishrei is the spark - the burst. But Heshvan is where the real work takes place.

### Starting the Year with Momentum

At Barrack this past month there has been an exciting flurry of Jewish activity and student programming aimed at bringing our school community together. Kicking off our year on the very first day of school, our PTO and Department of Jewish Life partnered together to assemble and send out over 350 New Year’s gift packages to our students, families, and staff in honor of Rosh Hashanah. Just before Yom Kippur, our Upper School administration led 9th and 10th graders in a two-grade retreat at Camp Green Lane. [Click HERE](#) for photos of the retreat.

The next week was Sukkot. Our largest Sukkah ever (nearly 3,000 sq. ft!) was erected prominently in front of our building, where it was put to use by our prayer groups, classes, and students on break or at lunch. Our Sukkah showcased “The Great Barrack Chain - Ushpizin Project,” which

Kol Barrack (The Voice of Barrack) is a periodic publication that recognizes the new month in the Jewish calendar. In this edition, Rabbi Akiva Weiss, Director of Jewish Life, reflects on the joy of Tishrei and the opportunities that Heshvan brings—to start the new year with momentum.



### Rabbi Akiva Weiss

DIRECTOR OF JEWISH LIFE

Rabbi Akiva Weiss is in his fourth year at Barrack. He has spent over a decade as a rabbi and chaplain on college campuses working with Jewish students of all backgrounds through the Orthodox Union and Hillel. He lives near Bala Cynwyd with his wife and five children and is a volunteer firefighter with the Lower Merion Fire Department.

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enabled students to “invite” a family role model and/or other role models into our Barrack Sukkah by hanging their picture and a short description (many written in Hebrew). Pictures of our Barrack families displayed our school’s rich diversity and allowed students to learn about and take pride in each other, but also to help feel that our school Sukkah was really theirs. [Click HERE](#) for Sukkot photos.

Our Sukkot programming culminated in pre-Simhat Torah celebrations with our school’s Torah scrolls, along with a welcoming of the Lipnik Torah, rescued from the Shoah. We are proud to be the new custodians of this hallowed treasure. [Click HERE](#) for photos of the Hachasnat Torah celebration.

With all of the hagim, this has certainly been a busy month for our entire community, and there are many of us who are looking forward to getting back to a more stable routine. But the real question is *can we keep up the momentum?* Can we take the energy and the spirit of Tishrei and use it as a springboard to propel us into Heshvan and beyond? Have we laid the right foundation at the start of our year to look back on and give us strength as we push forward into the often rainy fall months?

Seeing the abundant energy and passion with which all members of the Barrack community celebrated in Tishrei, I know we will be able to draw strength from one another as we continue our work in the year to come.

Hodesh Tov!