

The Official Student Newspaper
of the
Abraham Joshua Heschel
High School



"We stand for what we utter..."

- Rabbi Heschel

November Shabbaton Pleasantly Surprises Student Body

By Hannah Wurzbarger '26, Editor-in-Chief

This year, Heschel's annual *Shabbaton* that JSL moved to November instead of January, prompted months of student discussion over its early timing. Prior to 2022, a number of *Shabbatons* took place in October to November.

During the weeks leading up to the *Shabbaton*, older grades had mixed opinions.

Prior to the *Shabbaton*, sophomore Charlotte Rose said, "I think having it in November is a good way to encourage bonding earlier on in the year, which sets everyone up to have a better year overall."

Junior Zachary Altman agreed, saying, "I think the change will be good for the freshmen.

But I do wish it were still in January, since it's a nice way to break up the semesters and relax."

Unlike Altman, who thought the early *Shabbaton* would help freshmen bond sooner but hinder the experiences of the other grades, junior Farrah Slonim expressed concern that "having it earlier might also make it harder for

freshmen who are new to the school and still making friends."

Senior Olivia Levine said the change is "mean to seniors," since college application

Freshman Hannah Schwartz said, "I think it's good that the *Shabbaton* is sooner because it sets the tone for the year."

After the *Shabbaton*, while students

generally agreed that January remains the ideal time, the consensus seems to be that the *Shabbaton* is always fun, no matter the time of year.

Junior Ellie Engel said, "I think that its previous date was a perfect marker of the end of our first semester, as well as serving as something exciting to look forward to. This change definitely takes away from those aspects." Engel continued, "I had a great time this year, and I think what's most important is being together as a community - regardless of timing!"

Senior Yhonatan Yehudai said, "Since the *Shabbaton* is usually a grade bonding experience for seniors near the end of our time together, I was a little worried we'd lose that sentiment because it was so early in the

year. I was pleasantly surprised that it was still a very fun and sentimental experience despite it being in November."

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor



deadlines fall around the time of the *Shabbaton*. Many believed this would result in unnecessary stress, causing some seniors to be unable to attend their very last *Shabbaton*.

Although the freshmen had yet to experience a *Shabbaton*, students expressed their excitement.

Eric Adams Indicted on Federal Corruption Charges

By Yhonatan Yehudai '25, Editor-in-Chief

Unsealed on Thursday, Sept. 26, New York Mayor Eric Adams' indictment revealed he is currently facing federal charges of fraud and bribery.

According to the indictment, Adams has allegedly accepted bribes for almost a decade, since he served as Brooklyn Borough president. The most specific charge involves Adams accepting a bribe from a Turkish official in exchange for allowing a Turkish consular building to open without a fire safety inspection.

Multiple members of Adams' administration have resigned since the indictment, including First Deputy Mayor Sheena Wright. Adams has refused to resign and pleaded not guilty in court. If convicted, the Mayor could face up to 45 years in prison.

Adams' insistence on remaining in office throughout the trial has called his ability to

focus on his duties as mayor into question.

"I don't understand how any human being could manage to be involved actively in

tration for his indictment, labeling it as retaliation for his past criticisms of the President's border policy. This bears some similarity to

former President Donald Trump's sentiments during his own New York trial, where he accused President Biden of weaponizing the criminal justice system against him.

"It's human nature to blame other people for your troubles," said Fagen. "I don't think there's any evidence that our federal justice system is biased in that way."

The investigation into Adams' alleged crimes is ongoing and could bring more charges against the Mayor. Adams' trial is set to start on April 21. This will come only a few months before New York's next mayoral elections, and multiple figures including former Governor Andrew Cuomo have expressed interest in running.



their own defense and simultaneously have the energy to run the city," said Limudei Qodesh co-Department Chair and facilitator of the Current Events Minyan Ruth Fagen.

Adams has blamed the Biden adminis-

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor

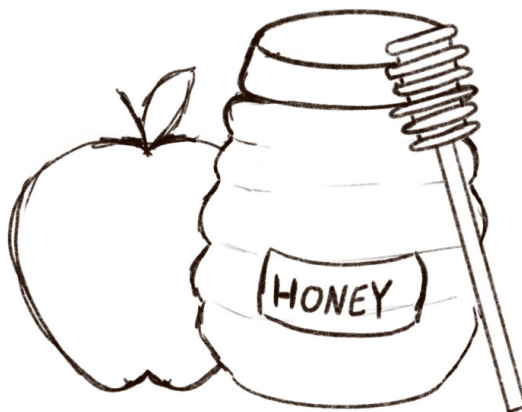
Heschel Faculty Members Host Rosh Hashanah Workshops

By Maya Ortner '25, News Editor

On Oct. 1, during the programming block, students attended a variety of *Rosh Hashanah* workshops to prepare for the holiday and welcome the new year.

“In Rabbi Ezra’s group, we learned about Shmuel’s birth, the story told in the *Haftarah* for the first day of chag,” junior Charlie Shiff said. “I really enjoyed learning something outside the usual curriculum, and it got me into the *Rosh Hashanah* spirit before the three day *Yom Tov*.”

Senior Maia Levin expressed a similar sentiment. “I was in Lisa’s Root and Renewal workshop, where we collected our old pictures and learned different methods of printing. I thought the program was extremely fun and interesting, and I only wish it could have lasted



a little longer,” she said.

Other students found that the workshops helped them reflect on the world’s current events, particularly relating to the war in Israel.

“My workshop, led by Rabbi Dahlia, compared Rachel in the song *Kol Berama* to Rachel Goldberg-Polin and discussed how the death of one human ripples and impacts the thread of humanity,” said senior Aerin Levine. “It both reminded me of my unit in *Talmud* last year about the value of human life and opened a new perspective about pain.”

Art by Eliya Yehudai '27, Art Editor

Heschel Hosts Annual Blood Drive

By Rocky Furst and Bella Kalimian '27, Contributing Writers

On Wednesday Sept. 25, Heschel hosted its annual Fall Blood Drive in partnership with the New York Blood Center. Over 60 students and faculty members donated blood, allowing our community to potentially save over 180 lives.

Sophomore Ezra Tiven-Gottesmen said, “Before, I was really nervous about donating because I had never done it. The entire team was really supportive and constantly checked in with me to make sure I was okay.”

In addition to the opportunity to donate blood, members of the Heschel and Tzedek Council volunteered and assisted the campaign. Sophomore Juliet Kazam, a member of the *He-*

sed and Tzedek Council, provided donors with snacks and drinks after donating.

“Being able to help out in any way, even if I can’t donate blood yet, feels really impactful for me,” Kazam said. “I’m looking forward to the spring drive when I myself will be able to donate.”

Features

Arrive at School at the Perfect Time

By Noa Chorowsky '25, Features Editor

Each morning, Heschel students face an age-old dilemma: When is the ideal time to arrive at school? This choice is imperative, as it sets the tone for the entire day, impacting stress levels, motivation, and happiness.

According to a school survey, the most popular time to arrive at school is 7:50 a.m., providing the opportunity to socialize, relax, and make your way to tefillah by 8:00 a.m.

“7:50 a.m. is the best time to get to school because you can linger in the lounge and debrief with your friends before going to tefillah,” senior Tanys Mayman said. “You also have time to get made good bars from the dining hall, which is another added bonus.”

“I always get to school at 7:50 a.m.,” senior Anabelle Gononsky said. “It is the perfect time because you can get a little giggle in with your friends, and don’t have to stress about being at tefillah by 8!”

Many students also said that 7:52 am is the best time to arrive at school, allowing for punctuality without too long to spare.

“I always try to come at 7:52 am because that gives me enough time to wait for and get in the elevator, while simultaneously allowing me not to wait in school for too long,” senior Char-

laxed note.

“7:40 am is perfect. You have the time to go to Common Address to buy coffee, then chat with your friends and drink it before you have to put it on a shelf in Egal and painfully watch

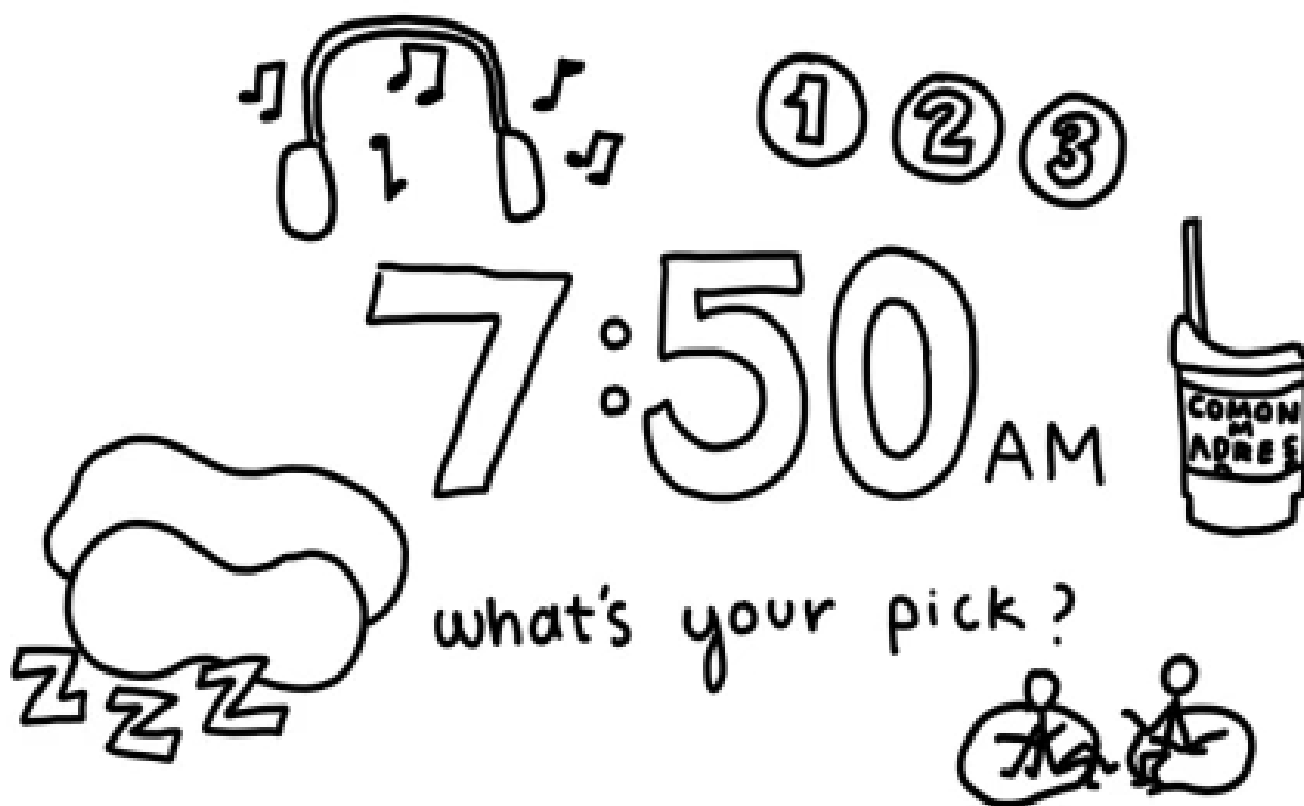
the ice melt,” senior Eden Bar-Chama said.

Some students make a riskier choice in order to prioritize their sleep. “I get to school when school starts. Not a minute earlier or a minute later,” senior Eli Goldman said.

However, he warned that if others did not have the ability to get to places exactly when they intended, they should probably “shoot for 7:53/7:54 to give themselves some flexibility.”

Ultimately, the best time to arrive at school depends on personal preferences and priorities, whether that be maximizing sleep or minimizing stress. As long as you arrive at school on time, you cannot go wrong!

Art by Ayelet Spevack '25, Art Editor



lotte Levine said.

“If my train comes on time, which does not always occur, I like to get to school at 7:52 to catch up with friends, and still not have to wake up too early,” senior Elana Farbiaz said.

A small group of students argued that getting to school 15-20 minutes early was ideal in order to truly start off the morning on a re-

What's Coming To Broadway This Fall?

By Maddie Friedland '26, Staff Writer

The fall Broadway season features a star-studded plethora of shows to entertain all theatergoers. Some talents include Jim Parsons, Robert Downey Jr., Rachel Zegler, Kit Connor, Audra McDonald, Nicole Scherzinger, and many more.

Several musical adaptations of films are premiering this fall. *Elf: The Musical*, a beloved Christmas story about an elf named Buddy, opened on Nov. 17. *Death Becomes Her*, a dark comedy about eternal life, opened soon after on Nov. 21.

Many original musicals are debuting as well. The biographical musical *A Wonderful World* opened on Nov. 11 and tells the tale of jazz musician Louis Armstrong. *Maybe Happy Ending*, a scientific-fiction story about the love between two robots, opened on Nov. 12. *Tammy Faye*, centered around the life of televangelist Tammy Faye Messner, premiered on Nov. 14 and features music written by Elton John.

Subsequently, *Swept Away*, a musical

based on the true story of survivors of a shipwreck in 1888, opened on Nov. 19. To cap off the season, *All In: Comedy About Love* debuts on Dec. 11, composed of several rom-com stories told by renowned comedians such as John

on Oct. 20 and follows the character Norma Desmond's struggle with her fall from stardom due to old age.

Moreover, *Gypsy*, debuting on Dec. 19, tells the tale of stage mom Madame Rose and her two daughters. The show will open at the Majestic Theatre, a venue that has not been used since the classic musical *The Phantom of The Opera* left Broadway.

Play lovers should not fear, as their hopes will most definitely be exceeded this season. *McNeal*, starring Robert Downey Jr., opened on Sept. 30 and deals with complex themes such as alcoholism, plagiarism, and the progression of AI.

"It blurred reality and fantasy, so at a certain point, I couldn't really tell what was real," said junior Hannah Wurzburger.

Oh Mary!, a comedy that follows Mary Todd Lincoln in the days leading up to President Lincoln's assassination, opened on July 11. However, it is still technically part of the fall season. *Comedy Yellow Face*, which grapples with the intricacies of race, opened on Oct. 1. *Left on Tenth*, a show inspired by Delia Ephron's memoir, opened on Oct. 23. *Cult of Love*, a show that follows a chaotic family Christmas, opens on Dec. 12. Lastly, the comedy *Eureka Day*, opening on Dec. 16, describes a vaccination debate in an elementary school.

This fall has an abundance of shows for all theater lovers to enjoy and an all-star roster with captivating performances.

Photography by Yalei Ravin '26, Layout Editor



Mulaney and Chloe Fineman.

Following the success of last season's musical revivals, such as *Merrily We Roll Along* and *Cabaret*, this fall features no shortage of classic show returns. *Sunset Boulevard* opened

Heschel's Classrooms Encounter iPad Epidemic

By Maya Ortner '25, News Editor

It's a well known fact that some teachers at Heschel accept notes on computers, and others prefer to have students write in notebooks. But a third note-taking option has become increasingly popular: iPads.

In many former notebook-only classes, students now write on personal iPads brought from home. While some faculty members find this method comparable to computer use, others, like physics teacher Suzy Vogel, see it as a suitable alternative.

"For the most part, I think it's a great

idea as long as students use the iPad like they would a notebook," said Vogel, whose students frequently use iPads. "It's easy to organize, they

lightens the heavy backpack load; and unlike a laptop, it's easy to tell what a student is doing and if they are off task."

Senior Lucy Rayman, who prefers to take notes on an iPad, said, "I use an iPad because I like having all of my notes organized in the same place. It both saves a lot of space in my bag and prevents me from losing important notes."

But the method has some downsides as well. Not all students have access to an iPad, and not all teachers approve of iPad use for fear that it could become a distraction. Nevertheless, for students who are able to take notes on a tablet, there certainly are many perks.

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor



can keep their handouts with their notes, it's easy to share notes with absent friends, and it

Manhattan Coffee Shops in Review

By Gila Lehon '26, Staff Writer

Finding a good cup of a coffee can be a more challenging feat than some may assume. However, it is always a challenge I am ready to take on. If you are unsure of whether to try one of the newer coffee shops, have no fear. I have gone ahead and tried them out, so you can know where you must go and where you most definitely should not go.

Mast Market: 4.8/5. A hidden gem, located on 77th and Columbus, Mast Market is a combination of a café and a wellness market. An iced cappuccino with almond milk costs just over \$5. The coffee is creamy and of delightful taste – not too strong with a lovely flavor. The fact that their blend is so good is very impressive, especially when getting an espresso drink, as often smaller coffee shops struggle with strength due to their use of their own precise blend. The service is very gracious and the wait time is incredibly short. They have outdoor and indoor seating, so it is a nice place to be if you want to get some work done.

Frame Coffee: 3.9/5. Located on 74th and Amsterdam, Frame Coffee offers the perfect balance of coffee staples and fun, indulgent drinks. An iced cappuccino with cinnamon sugar costs a little more than \$6. The espresso does have a particular taste, so whether you enjoy Frame Coffee may largely depend on your blend preferences. It's a little on the stronger side in terms of flavor, but is very enjoyable. Their menu has some more flavorful and fun drinks along with standard coffees, making a good go-to coffee shop that has a coffee for you

no matter your mood and preference of the day.

Moka & Co.: 3.5/5. Newly opened on 92nd and Broadway, Moka & Co. offers Yemenite coffee and has many options. It tastes authentically Yemenite, with strong notes of cardamom in its blend. The price is quite high, with the majority of their coffees costing upwards of \$8, and one dollar extra for special milk. The

large seating space and a variety of snacks and drinks to choose from. An iced cappuccino at \$6 (including \$1 extra for almond milk), is a quality cup of coffee that many will enjoy. The blend is of medium strength, with a bit of distinctness to it, but nothing too overpowering. However, I do not suggest getting the more flavorful and indulgent drinks from White Noise; although they

make a strong effort to make these drinks meticulously, they can never seem to get them quite right. So, when going to White Noise Coffee, it might be best to stick to the staples.

Café d'Avignon: 4.25/5. Located in Essex Market on the Lower East Side, Café d'Avignon offers a tasty blend of coffee, the perfect pick-me-up for a day downtown. The blend is earthy, but still has a subtle sweetness to it. It is very creamy and flavorful, yet not too pungent. Some might not like this blend due to personal preference. However, its milder taste makes it a much more approachable blend. Majority of the coffees are around \$5-6, so not cheap, but not outrageously priced either. There is seating outside, but minimal space within the market itself.

All in all, everyone has their own preferences, but a good coffee can make or break one's day, so better

safe than sorry when it comes to choosing your coffee for the day!

Photography by Hannah Wurzbarger '26, Editor-in-Chief



shop has lots of room to sit, but it does take a while to receive your drink in proportion to the guests waiting. I did not enjoy it in particular. However, if you know you like Yemeni coffee, or coffee with strong spiced flavor, then this is the place for you.

White Noise Coffee: 3.85/5. Located on 57th and 11th, White Noise Coffee offers a

Butternut Squash Soup

Miriam Gross '25, Opinion Editor

As the air turns crisp and leaves start to change colors, our taste buds crave autumn's warm, earthy flavors. This season brings out the best in hearty, comforting dishes, and this recipe is no exception. People have been raving about one-sheet-pan tomato feta pasta, so here's a fall-inspired spin: a creamy feta butternut squash soup. It's the perfect way to embrace the new season, and it's sure to become a favorite in your seasonal recipe rotation!

- Ingredients:
- 3 cups butternut squash, peeled and cubed (16 ounces total)
 - 1 large sweet onion, cut into wedges
 - 1 sprig fresh sage
 - 1 sprig fresh rosemary
 - 1 sprig fresh thyme, plus more leaves for garnish
 - Kosher salt, and freshly cracked black pepper to taste
 - 1 whole garlic head, cut in half lengthwise
 - 1 6-ounce feta block, plus 1 more ounce for garnish
 - 3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil

- 4 cups vegetable or chicken broth

Instructions:

- 1) Preheat oven to 400°F.
- 2) Combine butternut squash, onion, sage, rosemary, and thyme in a large baking dish. Toss with 2½ tablespoons olive oil, ½ teaspoon salt, and fresh cracked black pepper. Nestle each half of the garlic head into the vegetables, cut side down.
- 3) Create a hole in the center and place feta block. Drizzle with remaining olive oil.
- 4) Roast until squash is tender and feta is caramelized: about 30-35 minutes.
- 5) Remove herbs and squeeze out roasted garlic. Transfer vegetables and cheese to the blender;
- 6) Add broth and blend until smooth. Warm on the stove when ready to serve. Ladle soup into bowls; garnish with extra feta and fresh thyme leaves.

Enjoy!

Photography by Miriam Gross '25, Opinion Editor



Heschel Students Compete for a Cause in the Heschel Open

By Mia Biloon, '28, Staff Writer

The Heschel and Tzedek council on Sept. 15 announced the Heschel Open, a pickleball tournament open to all high school students aimed at raising money for charity.

Heschel and Tzedek Council Vice President Caleb Creizman said, "Normally, the Heschel and Tzedek Council has two major events: Goals for Gelt and Hoops for Heschel. At the end of last year, I decided I wanted us to host a third major event. After lots of discussion and totally out of the box ideas, such as Chess for Heschel, our council decided on a pickleball tournament: The Heschel Open."

While the goal was for students to have fun, there were some criteria and regulations: participants' partners needed to be in the same grade, all games were doubles, and all games were played to seven points. In total, there were 62 players making up 31 teams.

Every participant paid a \$12 entry fee. The money raised was donated to Tuesday's Children, an organization that provides support to 9/11 families, fallen soldiers, and 9/11 responders and their family members. On Sept. 11, Heschel High School students had the honor to hear from a representative of this organization and learn more about it. In total, the event raised \$744. Many players donated extra and

many non-participating students donated too.

While all games were supposed to take place in the high school gym during lunch the week of Sept. 23, some games extended into subsequent days. The 10th graders played on Sept. 24 and the 11th graders competed the following day on Sept. 25. The 11th graders finished their games the week of Oct. 7.

The Heschel and Tzedek council is currently working to find a date for an all school inter-grade championship. Stay tuned for more information!

Heschel Girls Varsity Basketball Off to a Promising Start

By Olivia Levine '25, Editor-in-Chief

The Heschel Girls varsity basketball team is off to a promising start with fourteen up-and-coming players. The team returns this year, hoping to prove itself to the rest of the league. Because of the talent from the freshman class, there is no junior varsity team this year, allowing freshmen to play in the varsity league.

"I am confident we will be successful in the league this season," senior Tessa Mank said. "The team dynamic is amazing and I can see how every player is putting in the work."

On Nov. 4, Heschel will play its first Yeshiva League game against Hillel. To prepare, the team's practice mainly focuses on game speed scrimmaging, with select parts of practice dedicated to going over plays and improving

certain skills such as dribbling, shooting, and defensive footwork.

Junior Rose Harnoy said, "I'm so excited to see what the team accomplishes this year. We'll be back in the league stronger than ever and ready to prove ourselves!"

Heschel Basketball Looks To Expand On Last Season's Success

By Sammy Fisher '25, Sports Editor

The Heschel varsity basketball team is ready to build on its success in the 2023 season, when it made the playoffs for the first time since 2019.

Under the leadership of then-rookie head coach Ethan Nardone, last year's team outperformed its pre-season expectations on its way to a nine-win season and a trip to the playoffs. Players on last year's team effusively praised their new head coach and gave him most of the credit for the team's improvement.

The team will look a lot different this year, however, as last year's seniors, most notably Hunter Bernhardt and Imri Rom, have graduated. The team remains confident that it will maintain its success with faces

new and old.

Senior and team veteran Shoham Zuker

cause we know that the Yeshiva League championship is up for grabs this year, and we want to be the team that takes it home."

The first practices of the season have instilled similar confidence even among players who were not on the team last year. Senior and Heschel basketball rookie Samson Furst said, "We know that we have the talent to compete with anybody this year. For us, it is really about playing our brand of team basketball in order to succeed."

As the season approaches, the team is confident and prepared to begin its race to bring the Yeshiva League championship trophy back to the hallways of the Heschel School.

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor



said, "The team is full of passionate players be-

Three Heschel Students Will Represent the USA at Maccabiah 2025

By Ariel Zeltzer '27, Assistant Sports Editor

Three Heschel student-athletes will travel to Israel to represent the United States at the Maccabiah Games in the Summer of 2025. Sophomore Aiden Barnea will play U18 Boys Outdoor Soccer, along with his brother, freshman James Barnea, who will play U16 Boys Outdoor Soccer. Sophomore Ariel Zeltzer will play on the U16 Boys Basketball Team.

The Maccabiah is the world's largest Jewish athletic competition and the second-largest sporting event in the world – in terms of number of athletes competing – after the Olympics. The Maccabiah Games have taken place every

four years in Israel since 1932.

This year, for the first time, Maccabi USA's National Team will expand to feature two teams for some sports. This is because the Maccabiah program aims to provide more American Jewish teen athletes with a strong connection to Israel in light of the "trying times for Israel and Jewish communities around the world," according to the Maccabi USA website.

Zeltzer said, "Representing the United States at Maccabiah 2025 is an amazing opportunity. It's so meaningful to connect my two most important commitments – basketball and Israel."

Aiden Barnea echoed Zeltzer's state-

ment, saying, "It's an honor to be able to represent my country in doing the thing that I love."

James Barnea said, "It feels like an opportunity to represent something bigger than myself, and to be able to do so with my brother makes it all the better."

The Maccabiah games will be held from July 8 to July 22 in different venues across Israel. In addition to the "Juniors" league (ages 15-18), competitions occur in the "Open" league (no age limits), the "Masters" league (various age categories) and the Paralympic league.

Boys Varsity Soccer Wins the 2024 Championship For The First Time in 15 Years



By Jake Rothenberg '27, Staff Writer

With a 5-1-1 record, the boys varsity soccer team had a strong season. Although the team lost some key seniors from last year, new team members made up for the loss of upperclassmen.

Sophomores Jesse Feit, Tamir Schuster, Ron Schuster, James Barnea and freshman Jacob Feig are newcomers to this team. Sophomores Roni Leaderman and Aiden Barnea had season-ending injuries, but plan to return next year.

After a 3-1 win against Staten Island Academy and a 7-1 win against Long Island Lutheran to start the season, Heschel took on Kew Forest in its third game. Heschel absolutely dominated this game, winning 11-0. The team continued its streak, winning 4-1 against Waldorf, including a hat trick from freshman James Barnea. Heschel then took on Staten Island Academy for the second time this season, but

lost 1-0.

When asked about its first and only loss of the season, Coach Jaime Gonzalez Palma said, "We had 75% possession of the ball, we moved the ball nicely and even though we couldn't score, at the end of the game the coaches, referees and parents told me that we were a real soccer team on the pitch."

After the upsetting loss, Heschel added another win against Kew Forest and a 0-0 tie against Waldorf to end their season with a dominant 5-1-1 record.

Before the Heschel team played its first playoff game, striker Aaron Koffman said, "The Heschel team has the ability to bring home the championship this year."

Head Coach Jaime said, "We get new blood with the freshman kids that gives me the hope that the championship will come very soon."

Heschel took on Portledge in the semifinals where they won 2-1 including two goals

from sophomore Uri Dayan both assisted by sophomore Aaron Koffman.

Heschel then played a strong Stony Brook team in the finals and won 5-3. Koffman scored the game winning goal, which gave Heschel the lead with four minutes remaining. Senior Captain Nati Eshagoff also scored two goals in the championship. Uri Dayan won playoff MVP with an impressive three goals in two playoff games.

Sophomore Goalkeeper Jesse Feit said, "It felt extra special to win considering the team has not won the league in 15 years. We plan to repeat next season."

The Heschel team had an outstanding season and looks forward to continuing this dominance into the 2025 season.

Photography by Jake Rothenberg '27, Staff Writer

Opinion

Heschel High School Unveils New Rooms to Widespread Criticism

By Lev Dubler-Furman '26, Contributing Writer

Due to the high school's growing size, three new classrooms were created at Heschel in advance of this year: 634, 702 (the MPR), and the new physics lab. While new rooms should be a reason to celebrate, some are disappointed with the results.

"It's like a prison cell," junior Eden Litt said regarding the new physics room.

"I hate it," senior Abby Bruhim said about 634. But why do so many dislike the new rooms?

When you walk into the physics room, its flaws are apparent. Immediately, you notice the lack of flooring and roofing that gives the physics room its barren, prison-cell-like feel.

When asked about her new room, physics teacher Suzy Vogel, the only person

who teaches in the room, said that she likes it. "I prefer the high ceilings with exposed infrastructure," Vogel said. "It's by design." However,

she does admit to there being a weird echo in the room. Overall, the student opinion differs vastly from Vogel's; the majority of students hate having class in the new room.

The root of students' anger around room 634

is that it wasn't meant to be a classroom in the first place. Originally an office space, 634 was converted into a classroom this year. Since it was never meant to be a classroom, 634's shape does not allow for the traditional horseshoe setup that Heschel favors for natural group discus-

sion. Rather, students sit in one long line with a few seats jutting out from either end. In 634, the spacing and orientation of the desks makes conversation forced and awkward.

The MPR, in contrast, has been a successful and needed addition. Despite occasional interruptions from Lower School passersby, the MPR is the size and layout of a typical high school classroom.

However, the fact that two thirds of the new rooms are viewed negatively makes you wonder: was this truly the year to get rid of our use of the library as a classroom?

While the library can accommodate even the largest classes, it is no longer used as a classroom. In my opinion, bringing the library back could move some classes out of 634 and reduce scheduling problems. Get on it, Student Affairs Council!

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor



Tal Becker: What He Gave & What He Asks

By Eden Bar-Chama '25, Contributing Writer

For many students, Australian-Israeli lawyer and diplomatic advisor Tal Becker's visit to our high school was monumental in itself. But it was his calculated, intelligent, and thoughtful responses that have stuck with me for the past few weeks, earning him a spot in my personal cannon of modern day Jewish heroes.

At the beginning of his interview, Becker laid out the nature of the conflict, saying, "The premise of this war is one of fighting those who try to take away the possibility of peace." Within our arguably ignorant Western world, obsessed with polarizing issues and assigning political agendas to everything, Becker reminds us that it is necessary to take a step back and consider the simplicity of this matter.

He emphasized that our ethical code and moral compass should be the only thing guiding our opinions about this conflict. Violence and terrorism, he argued, should not be viewed with nuance nor through a political lens. Instead, we must take a firm stance on issues that align with our values.

Becker also noted that "change does not happen in the negotiation room; it happens on the streets of our societies." It struck me that a man who participated in the fruition of the 2020

Abraham Accords still recognized he was one piece of a larger puzzle. He showed humility and admirable awareness of the critical role public consensus and attitude play in political change. One cannot function without the other in alignment.

sway, and shape the perceptions of the international community, thereby influencing societies and governments at large.

Becker's words reminded me that we find ourselves in a unique age dominated by social media, where everyone follows what is "in" - catchphrases, perspectives, etc. Recently, Jews have been on the receiving end of criticism across party lines, since Israel is "out."

Accordingly, Becker, who served in the negotiation room, emphasized how vital it is to change Israel's public impression and invest our efforts in gaining UN and ICJ support to create actual political change in the Jewish favor. These non law-making organizations, whose values are often diminished within our community, are rather pivotal, no matter how much they have wronged us these past few years.

In terms of looking forward to a peaceful future in the Middle East, Becker said, "Like it says in *Pirkei Avot*...it is in

the Jewish spirit to debate. Nonetheless, we must remember we do not know all the answers."

Though the unknown seems uncomfortable or scary, Becker calls us to action with moral clarity, urging us to take on societal responsibility. Current methods, he relayed, are obviously not working, so we must continue engaging in dialogue with fresh perspectives and an open mind to reach an urgent solution.

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor



Thus, we all have the responsibility, not just lawmakers to make societal strides. We must be conscious and intentional and take on changemaking as a personal goal.

Midway through his interview, Becker recalled the night before his International Court of Justice statement, where he refuted South Africa's claim that Israel is committing genocide within the Gaza Strip. He described the experience as "sickening," expressing how the audacity of the allegation itself, along with its insurmountable implications, was absurdly unsettling. Becker highlighted how a stance declared by the United Nations or by the I.C.J. can stick,

Fixing the Elevator Policy: Banning Isn't the Answer

By Avi Spanier '26, Staff Editor

Using the elevators at Heschel has always been convenient, but many students abused them by taking short trips, causing overcrowding and delays for those with classes on higher floors or people with medical needs.

In response, the school administration limited elevator use to ten people, but after students ignored this rule, a full ban was implemented, allowing access only to those with a doctor's note and elevator pass.

Junior Emily Borden feels strongly about the elevator policy. She said, "Honestly, I think it's really annoying. I can understand why they would want to do something about the

elevators, but banning it for everyone seems like a bit of an overreaction. Also, it's such a hassle

heavy backpack while making sure I get to class on time." Borden ultimately suggested the ad-

ministration get rid of the ban.

She and many students, myself included, believe that banning elevator use for everyone is an overreaction. No one wants to come to class sweaty and panting or struggle to carry a lunch tray to the Learning Lab.

Instead of this extreme measure, the administration should look into more reasonable solutions, such as bringing back teacher monitors to enforce the ten-person rule during busy times.

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor



having to walk up six flights of stairs with my

Increasing Number of Clubs is Harming Club Leaders and Members

By Tessa Mank '25, Online Editor

lessens overall membership. Students pick between similar clubs, resulting in a smaller turn-

the sole purpose of clubs- to create community and enrich your understanding on a given topic.

Clubs will always be a hallmark of Heschel and a significant contributor to our vibrant student life. But this year, several new clubs have been added, with around 70 clubs for a student body of approximately 370 people. As a leader of a niche club, I do not mean to discredit people pursuing their interests by starting a club; however, I've found that many of the new clubs resemble pre-existing ones.

These overlapping interests create a sense of inflation around extracurriculars and leadership opportunities. Having multiple clubs that focus on similar topics



out and possibly less engagement. It undermines

Part of the issue stems from the desire to hold a leadership role. Becoming a club leader should not be automatic; rather it should come from dedication to a club and its focus. The goal of joining a club shouldn't be to claim a title or enhance your college resume, but to enrich your high school experience.

This "club inflation" is also representative of Heschel's positive aspects. Taking initiative is an important value in our community; however, we have to become leaders for the right reasons, and not just for a title.

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor

Pluralism of Voices: A Call for Challenging Perspectives

By Aviva Guttman '25, Opinion Editor

On Sept. 17, my peers and I had our first town hall on the nature of pluralism at Heschel: how we're embracing it and the areas in which we can improve. Students spoke up, voicing a wide range of opinions. Some said that it was fairly easy to disagree within the Heschel community, especially within the classroom, while others felt that real disagreements aren't always welcomed or simply don't occur frequently. The comments and questions that arose during that town hall have stayed with me over the past few weeks.

Listening to Tal Becker speak on Sept. 25 left me in awe of his insights and perspectives. However, as I processed the program, I couldn't help but think about a comment a participant

made during the town hall; most of our speakers share views that align with the majority of the Heschel community.

Upon further reflection, I came to realize that our speakers often serve as a means to reflect on and reinforce the stances which the majority of the student body already shares. While it's surely valuable to hear from people who share the same view as many of us, we must also acknowledge the value of challenging our assumptions. Rarely do we have speakers who push us out of our comfort zones with opposing viewpoints.

I do recognize that spotlighting controversial opinions might be difficult and that Heschel already does try to incorporate opposing views in other arenas. The Dual Narratives course, for instance, does not go unnoticed and

is valued by many seniors. I also remember a program during my freshman year, where Heschel students heard from two Palestinian sisters, Yara and Huda Amayra, on Zoom. While I think that was a step in the right direction, I would like us to have more opportunities where we are exposed to new perspectives that make us challenge our usual ways of thinking.

In an environment like ours, where we pride ourselves on pluralism and encourage critical thinking, I believe it's crucial that we expose ourselves to different perspectives, even when – or especially when – they make us uncomfortable. By only affirming the ideas we already hold, we risk creating an intellectual echo chamber where debate and growth become stagnant.

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