

The Official Student Newspaper
of the
Abraham Joshua Heschel
High School



"We stand for what we utter..."

- Rabbi Heschel

Does a Growing School Make You Feel Smaller?

By Ezra Brodesser-Akner '26, Assistant Features Editor

This past school year, Heschel welcomed its largest freshman class into the high school, totaling 101 students. While this growth reflects the school's strong appeal, it also introduces challenges for the students, teachers, and the administration in maintaining the unique sense of community that Heschel is known for.

But what is the reason for this leap? What's behind this sudden growth? Why the increase from previous years? And how will the school address the problems that arise from this?

The rise in student numbers is largely due to a higher retention rate in the middle school. "Fewer students are leaving after eighth grade," explains Admissions Co-Director Iris Klein. "The value of a Heschel education has grown, and families want to stay." This shift has led Heschel to accept fewer students from outside. Nevertheless, the school remains committed to bringing in new perspectives, with over a third of new students in the freshman high school class, and over a dozen new students coming from outside the borough of Manhattan.

Anne Cohen, the High School Assistant Head, sees the growing student body as an opportunity. She said, "More people means

more opportunities—for friendships, new perspectives, and collaboration." However, Cohen also acknowledges that space may prove to be a significant challenge, and the administration is already discussing potential long-term solu-

and it just gets really crowded," she said.

The impact of these changes extends beyond just the student body. Julia Bernstein and Lindsay Biebelberg of the JSL team noted that planning events like the Shabbaton have

become more complex. The increased attendance doesn't just mean more rooms and larger groups—it also changes the social dynamics.

"With 420 people attending this year's Shabbaton, it's crucial to create spaces where smaller group interactions can thrive," Julia said. "We want students to build bonds with their peers, especially within their own grade."

Despite these logistical

shifts, Heschel staff remain committed to preserving the school's close-knit environment. The JSL team explained that achieving this requires a concerted effort from both faculty and students. "We need to commit to making sure that everyone feels part of this space," they said.

Looking forward, the administration is optimistic about balancing the school's growth with the community and space here at Heschel. As Anne Cohen jokes, "It's a good problem to have, right?"

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor



tions.

With more students comes the need for additional space, resources and flexibility. Upperclassmen have noted that lunchrooms and hallways are more difficult to navigate than in the past, and meeting with teachers has become increasingly difficult.

Senior Matthew Moger said, "The school has for sure been impacted by the mass amount of students. It has become impossible to find a room when meeting with a teacher."

Junior Lily Weinberg shared that even simpler things, such as transition time between classes, have become more difficult. "There's a lot of people trying to get from place to place,

October 7th Installation: A Look Into the Past and Present

By Liza Gerstein '27, Staff Writer and Claire Mendelsohn '27, Staff Writer

In December, Batia Holin's exhibit on the sixth floor, "Dream. Fracture." delivered an emotional representation of southern Israel before and after the Oct. 7 massacre.

The walls of the hallway were lined with photographs that demonstrated Kibbutz Kfar Aza's light and joy before the attack, while room 640 was filled with images of a devastated Kfar Aza.

Batia Holin aims to display the terrifying truths of October 7th through her installation. In a matter of hours, what was once a vibrant, beautiful community, was replaced with destroyed homes, families and memories of utter fear and despair.



The "Dream. Fracture." photography exhibit was visited by many students in the high

school. Teachers brought their classes to this exhibit to showcase and discuss the horror and chaos that October 7th brought to the world. The exhibit sparked discussion and reflection about how these communities, which were once a dream, were fractured in a second.

Photography by Gabe Godin

Eleventh Graders Attend Omer Neutra's Shiva Service

By Avi Spanier '26, Staff Writer

On Dec. 4, the eleventh grade traveled to Long Island to visit and comfort the family of Omer Neutra, a 21-year-old American-Israeli IDF tank commander killed in the Hamas attack on October 7th, 2023, during their time of mourning. The public shiva allowed students to express their condolences simply by being present. It was emphasized by Rabbi Dahlia that the most important aspect of the shiva was to show up for the grieving family.

The trip was brief, with only a 10-15 minute encounter with the family; however, it was clear that the students' presence made a difference. Reflecting on her experience, junior Juliette Heisler said, "It was touching and very surreal because of the closeness of it. Omer lived on Long Island and was a part of so many communities that we are connected to or know about."

"The bus ride there was longer than on the way back. We knew we were going for a short time, but it was meaningful and worth it,"

Heisler added.

Additionally, junior Ariella Roseman shared, "It [the shiva] didn't feel as awkward as I expected," adding that, like Juliette, she also found the visit to be "extremely meaningful."

Although only a select number of students were able to attend due to the short notice and limited space on the bus, others contributed to the comfort of the family in spirit. During *tefillah*, juniors wrote letters of condolence to the grieving family which the students who attended delivered.

Senior Sunrise Marks The Start of a Milestone Year

By Parker Slarskey '25, Features Editor

On Nov. 1, in honor of the early college application due date, the 2025 senior class watched the sunrise from the Central Park reservoir.

Seniors met at the park entrance at 7 a.m., dressed in their most comfortable pajamas, and huddled together to watch the sunrise.

They listened to "Here Comes The Sun" and other sunrise-related songs on a blue-tooth speaker. They held a minyan and prayed *Rosh Chodesh* tefillah. Rabbi Noam Silverman and Jessica Gribetz joined the students, and they even brought Dunkin Donuts for a special treat.

Grade representatives Noa Chorowsky, Shoham Zuker, and Eli Goldman planned the

a special breakfast at school on Nov. 1, and the senior sunrise would be a different day. Instead, the administration combined the two and brought donuts to the park." They also wanted to plan the senior sunrise before daylight savings to avoid an extra early wake up time.

The event was a success, as nearly the entire grade showed up. Senior Ezra Sapadin said, "It was nice, although I would prefer a senior sunset, so I don't have to wake up early." Perhaps his wishes will be heard in the future.



event, the first of its kind in Heschel history. However, they faced a few challenges such as scheduling and snacks. In an interview, Chorowsky said, "We originally planned to have

Photography by Olivia Levine '25, Editor-in-Chief

Seniors Strive to Make a Difference on Election Day

By Yhonatan Yehudai '25, Editor-in-Chief

This year, many Heschel seniors had the opportunity to vote in an election some considered the most important in American history. Whether the candidate these students voted for won or not, they all look back on the experience fondly.

"I found it very empowering and exciting to feel like I was a part of the [electoral] process," Senior Elana Farbiarz, who voted on election day in New Jersey, said. Senior Eli Goldman, who voted in New York, addressed the profound and meaningful nature of an American's right to vote: "If you look throughout history at the number of everyday citizens who get to choose who their leader is, that doesn't happen very

much," Goldman said. "For us to do that, I think that's quite special."

Goldman also believes that voters must

vote still made an impact through alternative methods. Senior Ezra Sapadin joined thousands of Americans and spent two weekends canvassing for Kamala Harris in Pennsylvania with family and friends.

"We could feel like we made a difference... it was a very powerful experience," Sapadin said.

Sapadin noted that although the candidate he volunteered for did not win, he still feels as though he made a positive impact. He said that he is proud to be a part of a new generation of politically active American youth, and he hopes to inspire others through his activism.

"You could see in many people's eyes that they were happy that there's a next generation who cares where our country is going," Sapadin said. "When you show people that you are willing to fight for what you think is right, that enables them to fight for what they think is right."

Art by Olivia Levine '25, Editor-in-Chief



take this privilege seriously and conduct research on each candidate. "You're going to get as much out of it as you put in," he said.

Some seniors who were not eligible to

Senior Masterclasses Elevate the Shabbaton

By Miriam Gross '25, Opinion Editor

This year's *Shabbaton* brought our high school community together for a weekend filled with bonding, learning, and fun--but for many, the highlight of the experience was the lineup of senior-led masterclasses. After the tradition's absence in January 2024, the class of 2025 brought it back, adding depth and personality to the weekend by sharing new skills. Each masterclass offered something unique, whether it was learning how to throw a punch in *Martial Arts*, practicing babysitting basics, exploring Portuguese, or perfecting the cake pop.

The preparation of these masterclasses were integral to their execution and successful results. Senior Amia Kaplun, who led *Music*

Tags--which gave a fun introduction to singing barbershop-style harmonies--shared a bit about her experience preparing and executing: "I needed to make sure that I knew the different parts of the song I was teaching and also that I could adapt my plan to be *Shabbat*-friendly. Those who came seemed to really enjoy it!"

Senior Ayelet Spevack, who participated in the class, said, "It was so fun to sing in harmony with students in different grades. Learning catchy tags together was a bonding experience; I got to connect with people I'd normally never sing with." Amia's attention to detail and adaptability reflected the dedication of the seniors, who worked hard to create engaging and accessible experiences for their peers.

The masterclasses weren't without their

quirks, though. Senior Yotam Sabo, who co-led *Making Chocolate Treats*, admitted, "It was a little chaotic at first, but soon enough, everything started coming together, and the results were great." Sabo's words reflect the creative and spirited energy that made the weekend feel so special.

Other masterclasses combined practical skills with engaging hands-on experiences. In *Fun With Kids*, students picked up the essentials of working with young children. Junior Millie Harris, who participated in this class, reflected, "I learned many valuable lessons about babysitting that I will definitely be using in the future!"

Max Stossel Discusses Impact of Technology and Social Media on Today's Teens

By Hannah Wurzbarger '26, Editor-in-Chief

On Wednesday, Nov. 13, Social Awakening founder Max Stossel came to Heschel to discuss the psychological impacts of social media. Social Awakening is an organization that strives to help youths succeed in our modern, chronically-online world.

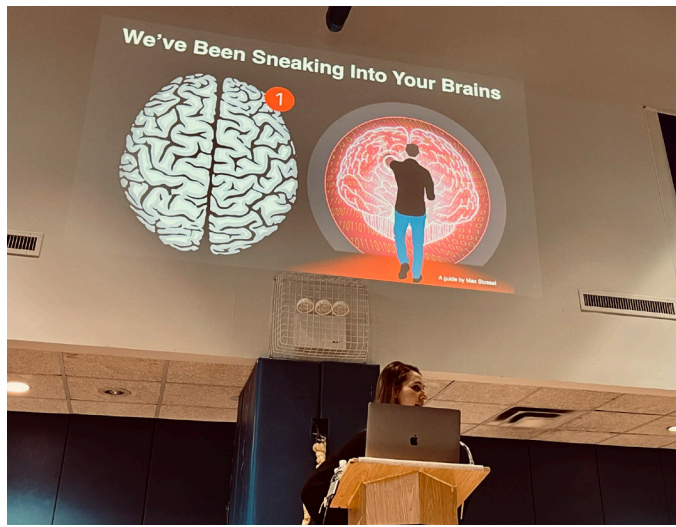
Stossel, who used to work in the social media industry as a media strategist designing notifications to distract people and running social media accounts for large corporations, explained that apps such as Instagram and TikTok do not prioritize users' wellbeing or mental health; instead, they aim to keep people scrolling as long as possible with the primary goal of making money.

Stossel also explained how these apps manipulate our psychological tendencies down to the most minute detail; for example, apps use notifications with the color red to instill a sense of urgency.

He highlighted that apps constantly send trivial notifications to encourage scrolling. Snapchat, for instance, alerts users when someone starts typing a message, whether or not the message is ever sent; users often rush to the app upon receiving this insignificant notification.

Stossel expanded beyond social media and said that dependence on and addiction to iPhones severely harm our attention spans and social skills. He displayed statistics suggesting that people are often unhappy while scrolling, yet they do it anyway; for some reason, a com-

bination of FOMO and stress successfully urges millions of users to waste hours upon hours watching brain-rotting content.



Stossel also drew frightening connections between social media and gambling addictions, harping on the idea that gambling is illegal for minors, and both social media and gambling create unhealthy dopamine responses.

Junior Zachary Altman said, "It seemed like the whole student body was very engaged; this is a topic which really resonates with everyone."

Many students have since made changes to their social media habits. Some deleted TikTok or Instagram and others downloaded an app called One Sec, which Stossel recommended to limit social media use.

Junior Rose Harnoy said, "I thought the way he presented this topic kept me very intrigued, and, since this talk, I downloaded the One Sec app and stopped using TikTok." Harnoy continued, "the One Sec app makes it so when you try to open a certain app, the screen goes blank for a second. It shows you how many times you've opened the app that day and makes you take a long, deep breath, before asking you if you'd still like to go to the app. Most of the time, it's like a wake-up call, and I choose to turn off my phone and go do something else."

Senior Olivia Levine said, "I thought the program was really well done and kept people very engaged." Levine continued, "Since the program, I've turned off most of my social media notifications."

Junior Caleb Creizman said, "I deleted Instagram during the programming." Even those who did not make any active changes to their lifestyle admit that Stossel's presentation resonated with them deeply.

Junior Pierce Malter said, "...my relationship to my phone has become more conscious after Max Stossel came to talk to us. I haven't deleted any apps or downloaded any new apps, but I definitely think what he said was very valuable."

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor

Shabbaton 2024 Makes an Impact

By Maya Ortner '25, News Editor

On the morning of Friday, Nov. 8, the high school community boarded several buses headed towards Stamford, CT, embarking on Heschel's annual *Shabbos* retreat: the *Shabbaton*.

This year's *Shabbaton* theme was Intention vs. Impact, with student and faculty-led theme sessions focusing on the importance of intention in our justice system and the world around us.

The weekend was packed with *tefillah*,

grade meetings, free time, and school-wide "circle time." During these assemblies, students and faculty participated in classic circle games

such as a rock paper scissors tournament and trivia, along with new activities like a concentration-style naming game based on the viral "name in the Bible that starts with _" video trend.

Also taking place in the circle was "Debate *Midrash*," as faculty members took to the stage to argue theme-related topics. Issues such as whether

Herzl or Avraham was more influential, if we should mandate voting in America, and the productivity of participation grades were debated by Samantha Brandspiegel against Dov Nelkin, David Steinberg against Sam Casper, and Ruth Fagen against Rabbi Natan Kapustin, respectively.

After a community-wide Havdalah to mark the end of *Shabbat*, students gathered for Panoply and a gratitude circle, in which they expressed thanks to the JSL team, programming and spirit councils, catering staff, and everyone else who helped make the *Shabbaton* a memorable and successful event.

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor



Cozy up With a Cup of Coffee

By Noa Chorowsky '25, Features Editor

Coffee is a popular choice for many, whether you are tired after studying late into the night, in need of a pick-me-up between school and an extra-curricular activity, or craving a satisfying refreshment. Luckily, the Heschel metro area features an abundance of incredible options for coffee lovers.

According to a school survey, Common Address is the most popular place to buy coffee and other beverages. Students rave about its calming atmosphere, unique menu, and delicious beverages.

Senior Charlotte Levine said, "Common Address has the perfect cozy atmosphere to grab a drink. Every time I walk in, the employees know my name and write a cute note on my cup. I love their iced matcha latte, and sometimes I even get their delicious butter croissant."

"I love Common Address' iced cappuccino with regular milk. No other place near

school has them. Their small ice cubes are also particularly good," senior Tanys Mayman said.

Other fan favorites include Pick A Bagel coffee, with students complimenting its cheaper

especially great when I am rushing to school but am in the mood for a quick coffee. It is always bussin'."

Some students argue that the best coffee does not originate from a restaurant but rather from a coffee cart located on the walk between Columbus Circle and school.

Senior Elana Farbiarz said, "After a long commute to school, I am often very tired and don't have much time to grab a coffee. Luckily, the coffee cart is so convenient. Great deal, great coffee, great guy--his name is John!"

"I love the coffee cart. It's \$4 every time for an iced coffee with milk and a banana. The guy even knows me and my order, so it's super personal," senior Anabelle Gononsky said.

A minority of students do not drink coffee. "Coffee is for the weak," senior Eli Goldman said.

From early morning refreshers to afternoon treats, the multitude of coffee shops near Heschel offer a drink for everyone. Though coffee is certainly not necessary, it makes school days just a bit brighter!

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor



prices and fast service.

"I love to get a small iced coffee from Pick A Bagel. It's cheaper than all the other options near school with similar portions. They also get all their coffee from La Colombe so it's great quality," senior Olivia Levine said.

Senior Tessa Mank agreed, "The service at Pick A Bagel is always super fast, which is

Mixed Reactions from Juniors to Suff's

By Maddie Friedland '26, Staff Writer and Pierce Malter '26, News Editor

Two-time Tony Award-winning show *Suff's*, which the 11th grade went to see on Wednesday, Nov. 24, follows the early 20th century's women's suffrage movement. Grappling with concepts of generational and racial differences between the women fighting for their rights, the show focuses on the journey of women such as renowned journalist Ida B. Wells and a young activist named Alice Paul.

While the play depicts an era of history that the 11th grade is currently learning about, *Suff's* is suitable for audiences of all ages. Learning Lab Specialist Leora Klein brought her daughter on the field trip and plans to go back later in the show's run with the rest of her family, including her mother and sisters-in-law.

"I thought the show was incredibly important because this is a human story that should be part of everybody's historical knowledge," Klein said. "It's unfortunate that these women aren't already household names; hopefully, *Suff's* can correct that glaring omission."

Before the juniors saw the show, their

social studies teachers taught them a lesson on its historical context. Junior Jordan Nili, who felt

it really enhanced my ability to appreciate the show," he said.

However, Nili's praise for the lesson was not shared by all of his fellow students. Junior and Women Empowerment Club Co-President Gila Lehon said that she "could tell that the lesson wasn't entirely connected to the rest of the unit [in social studies]."

"The fact that we only learned about the women's suffrage movement because of *Suff's* is outrageous," Lehon said, suggesting the movement should be enshrined within the core 11th grade curriculum.

Junior Ariella Roseman thought the show toed the line between creative liberty and historical accuracy too closely: "It felt like a history book, not a musical," Roseman said.

11th Grade Dean Naomi Bergman was instrumental in planning the trip. "Jennifer Friedland, a co-producer on the show, reached out to us...I felt like it made sense to say yes, with this being an election year and students having a [social studies] curriculum focused on the 20th century," Bergman said.

In previous years, juniors have attended other Broadway productions, but Bergman said *Suff's* was the best of them. "I only wish we could go again next year," she said.

Photography by Maddie Friedland '26, Staff Writer



he had "a decent amount of knowledge going into the show," credited that knowledge to the lesson the week prior.

To Sign Out or Not to Sign Out

By Lila Nanasi '25, Staff Writer

Recently, after the final bell rang, I practically skipped out of Heschel, eager to dive into the brisk November air. Lost in my excitement, Eddie's usual reminder slipped my mind, and I didn't sign out. Nervous, I braced myself for the consequences. Surprisingly, though, nothing happened.

I started to wonder: What's the real reason behind this end-of-day protocol? Is it just another box to check off, or is there a larger purpose? To find out, I decided to go straight to the source: Amit Meir, Heschel's Director of Security.

Meir explained that there is an important reason students need to sign out. "If there's a fire or any other emergency, we can account for every student outside," he said. "If someone's missing, all I need to do is check my phone to

see if that student is still in the building or if they left early."

This precaution, as it turns out, isn't just about tracking students' comings and goings or monitoring punctuality. It's a safety protocol, allowing the security team to respond quickly and effectively should anything unexpected happen. In a fire, for instance, every second counts. If a student isn't where they should be, Meir can cross-check sign-out logs to see if they're safely off campus or still inside.

However, these logs are not only important in emergency scenarios. As Meir recounted, there have been instances in the past when concerned parents called the school, anxious that their child hadn't arrived home. With a quick check, Meir and his team can confirm if a student signed out or might still be in the building, asleep on a lounge beanbag.

Finally, I asked the question that initial-

ly sparked my curiosity: What happens if you don't sign out at the end of the day? Do they assume you're sleeping over? Amit also said that he receives a notification on his phone for every student who hasn't signed out. Then he gathers the front door team and reminds them of their responsibility to ensure that every student signs out.

So, while it might seem like a small thing to remember each day, the sign-out procedure has a bigger purpose: Keeping students safe, ensuring peace of mind for parents, and giving the school community a practical way to account for everyone. Though it's easy to let our minds wander to plans and afternoon adventures once the bell rings, taking a moment to sign out helps everyone keep track—and, in turn, helps our school stay secure.

UWS Falafel You Need to Try!

By Gila Lehon '26, Staff Writer

Need the taste of some satisfying, Israeli-style falafel, but have no clue where to go? Well, look no further! Helios has compiled three of the best falafel spots that everyone should try, uniquely different for every falafel lover.

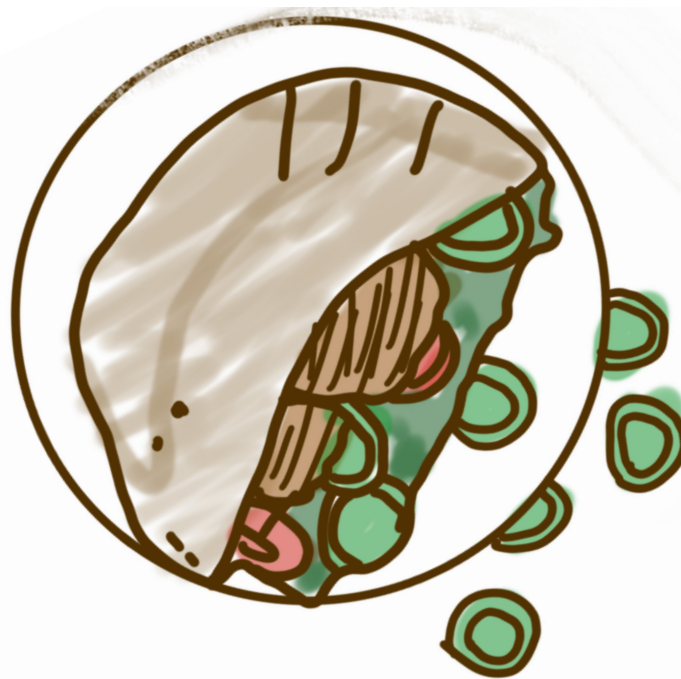
Hummus Place:

Located on Amsterdam Avenue between 74th and 75th Street, Hummus Place offers a delicious falafel pita with the classic Israeli salad, pickles, hummus, tahini, and fries on the side. Their salad and the composition of the pita is particularly good, as the toppings are nicely spread out so that each bite can have a little bit of everything. The one drawback of Hummus Place is their lack of options and customizations. Unlike the traditional falafel spot you might find in Israel with many toppings to choose from, the Hummus Place only has a few toppings. So, if you love to customize your falafel, this might not be the place for you.

Shawarma Shabazi: Shawarma Shabazi

is a small restaurant that has both shawarma and falafel, located on Amsterdam Avenue and 93rd St. The shawarma is so-so, but is a good kosher meat option. They have both pita and laffa, and a wide range of toppings. The toppings

generous, especially when getting the laffa. This makes Shawarma Shabazi a great choice for both taste and value. We definitely recommend this place for anyone who really loves toppings in their falafel.



are high quality, and the wide variety is great for anyone who likes to try new combinations, or just enjoys a lot of fixings within their pita. The pita itself is fluffy, which is great for people who love a heavier pita. The falafel is not quite as good as the one at Hummus Place, but is still tasty and very enjoyable. The servings are quite

Mamoun's Falafel:

Located on Columbus and 85th, Mamoun's Falafel offers a delicious, flavorful and moist falafel ball, certainly the best of all the spots on this list. Mamoun's pita is quite thin, so if you are not big on pita this is a good place for you. Downsides: the tahini is quite watery, and the toppings are a bit underwhelming, but Mamoun's still makes up a delicious falafel sandwich. The serving size is a bit smaller than the other places we tried, but the price is proportional to the size. If good quality falafel is your

top priority, you should definitely check out Mamoun's Falafel. However, if you are looking for a distinctive Israeli feel, Mamoun's doesn't fit the bill.

Art by Olivia Levine '25, Editor-in-Chief

Why You Should Begin Walking to School

By Bella Kalimian '27 and Margot Hess '27, Staff Writers

Each morning, we walk to school, embracing the fresh air and serene setting before our chaotic school day begins. During our walk, we share laughs, update each other on our lives, or even use this time to quiz each other for our upcoming assessments. This simple routine has become a crucial and comforting part of our day.

What makes our daily walks meaningful is that we are not alone in our commute. As we walk, we often encounter other Heschel students and faculty members, each on their own journey to school.

Curious about why walking is their preferred mode of transportation, we decided to in-

terview different students who walk from their homes on the Upper West Side. Sophomore Noah Margolis said, "I walk to school because of the fresh air and getting to say hi to the traffic woman every morning."

Senior Claudia Messer said, "I like walking because of the break it gives me between home and school."

This new insight resonates with us – the 20 blocks between school and home always provide us with a calm mindset. Spending 25 minutes each morning away from screens and simply reflecting on our lives sets us up for a successful day.

We also asked faculty member Rabbi Natan Kapustin, who showed us the financial benefits to walking. He said, "I like walking because it gives me some time to think to myself.

It has probably saved me \$10,000 in subway fare. That's not why I do it, but it's a nice perk."

On the contrary, we interviewed sophomore Josh Axel, who chooses not to walk to school. He said, "taking the train gives me a beautiful look into NYC because I get to see new faces on the subway and the breathtaking view of Columbus Circle."

The healthy exercise of walking to school every morning has become a core part of our school experience and has fostered long lasting relationships. We hope that more Heschel students will come to realize the beauty of walking, and choose it over other modes of transportation.

Tyler, the Creator Grows Up for *Chromakopia*

By Pierce Malter '26, News Editor

Tyler Okonma, alternatively known as Tyler, the Creator, released his long-awaited album *CHROMAKOPIA* on October 28th, ending a three-year hiatus; the album followed 2021's *CALL ME IF YOU GET LOST (CMIGYL)*. The album depicts Tyler balancing bravado and self-doubt; the looming truth that he's not getting any younger only adds to his turmoil.

The appeal of Tyler's evolution as an artist has always been its symbiotic relationship with his maturity as an individual. His previous albums have grappled with the struggle of external perception and his desire to succeed without compromising his authenticity. More recent projects have also focused more closely on his relationships, using the objects of his attraction to represent a more general desire for validation. On the 2019 project *IGOR*'s "I Don't Love You Anymore," for example, he calls them "too cool," claiming he "ain't trying to freeze up," referring to the vulnerability of opening up. While *IGOR* confronts the futility of seeking love from someone who will never offer it and *CMIGYL* shifts to a place of self-assurance, *CHROMAKOPIA* illustrates Tyler finally receiving love and valida-

tion and prompting the question: "What now?" The grass has always been greener on the other side for Tyler, and this is even more true now that he's hopped the fence from unrequited

feelings to mutual ones. Despite *IGOR*'s gloomy tone, Tyler is exclusively dealing in hypotheticals throughout the album, reflected by tracks with names like "Running out of Time (to Make you Love me)" and "Exactly What you Run From, You end up Chasing."

CHROMAKOPIA's propensity for hindsight sharply contrasts his earlier release. His actions and their consequences are front and center, including in songs such as "Hey Jane," where he considers the novel possibility of settling down with a woman he has gotten pregnant--a situation that requires true responsibility, and "I Killed You," where neglecting aspects of his identity proves harmful to him.

Tracks such as "I Hope You Find Your Way Home," "Thought I was Dead," "Sticky," and "Rah Tah Tah" feature Tyler boasting about his accomplishments and the distance he has traveled, physically and metaphorically, to reach his commercial and ideological success. However, unlike similar pieces on previous albums, these songs seem less like challenges of his detractors and more akin to desperate attempts to convince himself that what he's saying is true. Tyler's struggle with the concept of time is a driving force throughout the album. It forces listeners to examine themselves under the same grungy green light featured prominently in the album's music video and alternate cover. Tyler starts the track "Tomorrow" with the line "My mother's hands don't look the same... these jet black hairs are turning grey," suggesting a fear of getting old. Tyler elaborates later in the song, saying "my brodie had another baby that's like number 2... and all I got is photos of my 'rari and some silly suits."

While it might be tempting to claim the album or song's subject matter excludes younger listeners from relating to it, the opposite is true. While not every listener is approaching middle age or watching their friends start families, the fear of letting life pass you by is one that spans generations.

Art by Eliya Yehudai '27, Assistant Art Editor



Chef Manager Erik Grinberg Brings New Spin to the Cafeteria

By Pierce Malter '26, News Editor

Cater To You Chef (CTY) Manager Erik Grinberg is eager to bring lunch to the next level. Heschel is the most recent of the myriad stops on his culinary journey. Grinberg first stepped into a kitchen at the age of 18. A friend offered him a job at one of his restaurants, and Grinberg accepted. "[It had] very long hours and low pay," Grinberg recalled, "but I wanted to try it out."

After a few years, he took his experience to New York, where he worked in the kitchens of the Michelin-starred *Le Bernardin* and *Per Se*. After briefly heading home to Israel, he decided to return to New York, where he found work at Soho's *Le Coucou* before joining with Israeli Restaurateur Meir Adoni's *Nur*.

"I'm constantly looking for ways to progress in my career," said Grinberg, recalling the decision to apply to work with CTY. Although he mainly had restaurant experience, a stint at the Waldorf Astoria in Israel prepared him for the challenges large-scale food preparation would bring. Grinberg worked first at the Nightingale-Bamford school, and later at St. Hilda's and St. Hugh's, before ending up at Heschel in his seventh year with CTY.

"I see this job as steering the ship; like the crew on a ship, everyone has their job, and someone has to steer, to keep us on course." Heschel is the largest school Grinberg has worked with, "but it all transfers over." Grinberg

Even so, a rigorous allergen and dietary-need evaluation is Grinberg's first step in designing menu items. "That narrows down my basket a bit... From there, I see if it's something people will eat. Importantly, I also see if we can

make it well. We have a lot of equipment here; I'm very fortunate."

Grinberg's schedule keeps him busy; he starts handling deliveries at around 6 AM and is planning, supervising, and ordering for around twelve hours. But in his limited free time, he enjoys exploring New York: "Living in the city, I'm taking my time to see the hidden parts. It's kind of this cycle of going back and forth between places that have no connection to [Israeli] culture and the places that are strongly connected," said Grinberg, reflecting on his career's path over the years. "I'm thrilled to be here... all of the places I've worked have



led to this." Ultimately, Grinberg's goal at Heschel is "to fix things for people; [he likes] to be given a problem and come back with a solution." If you see him around the school, share your thoughts with him. "The bottom line for me," says Grinberg, "[is] seeing people get what they want, seeing people happy."

Photography by Pierce Malter '26, News Editor

TAFF Works to Prevent Fast Fashion

By Serena Yunis and Claire Mendelsohn '27, Staff Writers

The phrase “fast fashion” is used to characterize inexpensive clothing rapidly produced by mass market retailers. It is one of the main contributors to climate change and causes a significant waste surplus.

In an attempt to combat this issue, in 2024, Charlie Sender and Dylan Berkowitz, established Teens Against Fast Fashion (TAFF) in Miami Beach. As the nonprofit expanded, sophomores Claire Mendelsohn and Serena

Yunis founded a chapter of TAFF in New York City.

TAFF aims to spread awareness about the dangers of mass consumption and encourage stylish, eco-friendly alternatives through education. Ultimately, TAFF strives to integrate environmental mindfulness and fashion.

TAFF achieves these goals through events such as clothing swaps. Ideally, this will help to limit fast fashion consumption and provide a sustainable way of obtaining new clothing. Additionally, presenting this issue and explaining it to young children and teenagers

is another form of educating others about this crisis.

Charlie Sender, founder of TAFF, said that the mission of this non profit is to “raise awareness, promote sustainable alternatives of consumerism, and merge fashion and environmental consciousness.”

Having the ability and power to further improve our environment is a very special privilege and an opportunity that everyone who is able to, should take part in.

The Helix Launches at Heschel

By Mia Bilon '28, Staff Writer

The Heschel Helix, formed this year, is a student-run science publication. The club consists of thirteen students, led by two Editors-in-Chief, juniors Ella Nadel and Hannah Wurzburger, as well as faculty advisor Suzy Vogel.

“I always had a passion for science, and I am a part of many other science clubs, including Women in STEM. I thought creating this paper would allow me and other students to think

beyond Heschel’s curriculum and dive into different fields of science. I also wanted to create a place where students can openly write about topics of interest,” said Nadel.

The Helix staff meets one to two times a month during lunch on Wednesday to brainstorm article ideas.

“My favorite part about the club is sharing our ideas for the next issue. I enjoy it when writers ask challenging questions and really express their interest in their articles. It’s amazing that everyone is so passionate about science and

writing,” Nadel continued.

The Helix plans to publish an online publication once or twice a month, along with a large print magazine at the end of each semester. The first issue, currently in development, will contain articles on the recent Nobel Prize winners, research that the writers have conducted, and science-themed crosswords and games.

The Helix is one of more than 70 clubs offered at Heschel this year, ensuring a rich and diverse extra-curricular experience for students.

Common Address Barista Captures Heschel’s Heart

By Daphne Stifelman '25, News Editor

The moment the lunch bell rings, high school students rush to Common Address for a midday pick-me-up. Whether ordering an iced latte or a hot chocolate, one aspect is consistent: their favorite employee.

Tatiana Stephen, a 24-year-old barista, is a household name at Heschel. Best known for her signature touches of drawing hearts and writing names on her favorite Heschel customers’ cups, Stephen has transformed grabbing a coffee into a warm, personal experience, making her an integral part of our school

community. “You guys are really funny!” Stephen

students. “We look forward to it. We know who’s coming, when you’re coming, who you’re gonna come with...”

Stephen noted that her favorite drinks to make are iced matcha and chai lattes. While she does make a delicious vanilla latte, it’s not the drinks that attract Heschel students to Common Address; it’s Stephen’s cheerful and friendly spirit.

Senior Bee Levy said, “Sometimes, even if I don’t want a coffee, I still go in to say hi.”

“Everytime I would go to Common Address with someone, Tatiana wanted to know their name, so she got to know all our names,” senior Parker Slarskey recalled.

“She draws hearts on my coffee cup, which makes me feel really appreciated and welcomed,” said senior Aerin Levine.

“Tatiana knows my mom and gives me cookies to give to her!” senior Anabelle Gononsky said.

Photography by Parker Slarskey '25, Features Editor



said, recalling her encounters with Heschel

One Bowl Blondies

By Eliya Yehudai '27, Assistant Art Editor

Take a break from studying to make these delicious one bowl blondies!

Ingredients:

- ¾ cup melted butter
- 1 cup light brown sugar
- ½ cup white sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- Salt to taste
- 1 ¾ cup all purpose flour
- ½ cup semi-sweet chocolate chips

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 345°
- Put melted butter and both sugars in a bowl, mix until thoroughly combined
- Add in eggs and vanilla, mix until combined
- Mix in salt and flour until fully combined
- Add in chocolate chips
- Pour into a parchment-lined baking tray
- Bake for 25-30 minutes

Enjoy!

Photography by Eliya Yehudai '27, Assistant Art Editor



Jewish QB Attempts to Take BYU to the Promised Land

By Sammy Fisher '25, Sports Editor

As Brigham Young University (BYU), a Mormon institution, began its season rattling off nine straight wins, all of the attention was on their quarterback.

Jake Retzlaff has begun his junior season impressively. With 23 total touchdowns and nearly 2,000 yards passing in just his first eight games of the year, Retzlaff has lit the BYU campus aflame with excitement, as he has Jewish college football fans around the country.

It has not all been easy for the Jewish QB. As a BYU Cougars game fell on *Yom Kippur*, Retzlaff was forced to make a tough decision about whether or not to play. In the end, he decided to

play, while acknowledging the importance of the day for him and his religion.

"It's going to be a special day [since] there's a Jewish kid playing football on *Yom Kippur*" he said, "because if that makes headlines, that means I get to be another light for somebody else, and that means I have to win. I've got to go win the game." Retzlaff has embraced being a role model for Jewish kids, and he wants to keep on winning because he knows that is the path to even more inspiration.

Junior football fanatic Leo Sohn said, "Retzlaff's story is inspiring, and it's great to see him thriving at BYU."

Art by Eliya Yehudai '27, Assistant Art Editor



Giants and Jets Disappoint Fans Once Again

By Leo Sohn '26, Staff Writer

The NFL regular season is officially over, marking another disappointing year for the Giants and Jets. The Jets started the season with high hopes: Aaron Rodgers was set to return from the season-ending injury he suffered in week one of last year, and they boasted offensive stars in Garrett Wilson and Breece Hall, along with defensive standouts like Sauce Gardner, C.J. Mosley, and Haason Reddick.

Unfortunately, the Jets did not have the season that they had imagined. Despite their superstar power, the Jets' offense started stagnant, and the defense was without Haason Reddick, who refused to play until he could get a new contract. As a result, they finished the season with a record of 5-12.

The team's ownership has seemingly entered panic mode, firing head coach Robert

Saleh after the week five loss to the Vikings. It seemed there would be no hope left for the Jets this season, but then they traded for superstar wide receiver Davante Adams in exchange for a 2025 conditional third-round pick. Haason Reddick also finally ended his holdout and agreed to sign an adjusted contract.

The Jets hoped that these two key additions could help their team turn the season around, but so far nothing has changed. In another questionable move by the Jets' owner, Woody Johnson fired the team's general manager. The team is entering the offseason with many more questions than answers.

The New York Giants began the season with high hopes but low expectations. They finished last season last in the division but hoped to upgrade through free agency and the draft. In the offseason, the Giants lost star players Saquon Barkley and Xavier McKinney, both of

whom have excelled on their new teams, much to the dismay of Giants fans.

This season, the Giants struggled with a 3-14 record and an offense that ranks among the league's worst. They have also been hit by injuries to key players like Graham Gano, Jamie Gillan, Kayvon Thibodeaux, Andrew Thomas, Dexter Lawrence, and many more.

However, there are some bright spots.

The Giants' defense has been impressive, especially their defensive line led by Brian Burns. Furthermore, the rookie Wide Receiver, Malik Nabers, emerged as one of the best in the league. While this season might be over, the Giants have a promising foundation of young players to build on. They will go into the draft looking for a quarterback and praying for a better future.

Girls Basketball is Off to a Promising Start!

Olivia Levine '25, Editor-in-Chief

On Nov. 4, the Heschel girls basketball team played their first game against the Hillel Heat, another team in the Yeshiva League. The game started with a tipoff from senior Eliska Levinson, who then promptly scored a layup. As the game went into the second quarter, the score was close, with Heschel only leading by four points. However, due to multiple three-point shots made by sophomore Tamar Schwarz, junior Rose Harnoy, and freshman Mia Edery, Heschel secured a hard-fought victory by a score of 23-20.

Senior Tessa Mank said, "It was a close game, but in the end, we used our teamwork and extensive skills to get the dub."

Coming into the Nov. 7 game against the Kushner Cobras, hopes were high for Heschel to continue their win streak. Although Heschel started off with a strong first quarter, by the

second and third quarter the team lost its mo-



mentum. In a last-ditch effort, Heschel scored 10 points in the last quarter, but it was too little, too late as the game ended in a 44-27 Heschel loss, the first loss of their season.

Junior Rose Harnoy said, "This team has a lot of potential, and I'm so excited for the rest of the season!"

During the Weiner Tournament, the team competed against a variety of teams coming from Israel, Canada, Maryland, New Jersey, and New York, allowing for them to experience a variety of playing styles and driving team bonding. Although their record by the end of the trip was 2-4, the team could feel improvements both in their team dynamic and playing.

Captain Elana Farbiarz commented, "It was a great opportunity for the whole team to bond which helped us both on and off the court."

Junior Libe Wartski said, "Now, we're growing stronger on the court because of the tournament. I see a significant improvement in our confidence and our knowl-

edge of the game."

Stay tuned to see what else the Heschel Girls Basketball team accomplishes this season!

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor

Heschel Basketball Looks Strong



By Jake Rothenberg '27, Sports Writer

The 2024-2025 Heschel boys junior varsity and varsity basketball seasons are underway. The varsity team looks to expand on its success from last year, when it made the playoffs for the first time in five years. The JV team looks to turn things around this season after a disappointing season last year.

The varsity team has lots of new faces this season. Unlike last year's team, which had no sophomores, varsity has brought in two sophomores this year. Noah Margolis and Ariel Zeltzer look to make an impact on the court in their first seasons.

The varsity team picked up where it left off and won its first game of the season against JEC. Team Captain Jordan Cohen-Mintz led the squad with twenty-one points. After the win to start the season, Heschel went on a losing streak and lost the next four games to Hillel, Ramaz, SAR and TABC. Heschel won a huge bounce back game against Kushner at homecoming by the score of 56-47. Heschel then beat Hillel and Ohr Yisroel but lost to North Shore which places the heat at a respectable 4-5 record going into the break.

The Heschel boys and girls varsity

basketball teams also had the opportunity to compete at the Weiner Family Basketball Tournament in Baltimore, Maryland. Both teams displayed resilience and grit over the long five day event competing against other Jewish teenagers from the Tri State area, Maryland, Canada and Israel.

The girls team finished in fifth place with a respectable 2-4 record. Although their final result fell short of their aspirations, the team displayed a strong campaign and greatly improved from last year.

After the tournament head coach Megan McKenna said, "Even though we have a lot of newcomers, the seniors have embraced it. I can see the support amongst the team rooting for each other to succeed during games. We have a fun filled roster, and I am looking forward to the impact the trip will hold for the rest of the season."

The boys team finished pool play at the tournament with a spectacular 5-0 record. The team faced Boyar in the semi-final game, a team which the Heat had already beaten in pool play.

After beating Boyar, the boys team had its eyes on a championship, which would be the school's first in this tournament since 2014. The team faced off against CHAT in the champion-

ship game, and after falling behind early in the first half, the team could never really find their footing and ended up losing 34-18.

After a successful tournament, sophomore Noah Margolis said, "We succeeded in the tournament because we worked together and supported each other. We played with confidence and brought the best level of play that we could."

The boys and girls teams had lots of success in the Weiner Family Basketball Tournament and look to take this momentum into the rest of the season.

The JV boys team has introduced multiple new players, with only five returning players on a seventeen-man roster. The team won its first game in convincing fashion, taking down Kushner 60-47 at home. The team is currently 1-7 after losing to JEC twice, Hillel, Ramaz TABC, SAR and Frisch all teams which made the playoffs last year.

Heschel basketball is playing quality basketball and look to take their successes into the Yeshiva League playoffs.

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor

The 2024 MLB Season: What a Ride

By Zachary Levy '26, Sports Writer

The MLB season has ended with the Los Angeles Dodgers earning their eighth World Series title in franchise history. It was a season for the ages, with monumental moments, starting with Shohei Ohtani's contract before the season started and ending with the New York Mets' postseason run.

While Ohtani may often be a topic of conversation surrounding the MLB, it's for good reason. Ohtani signed a monster 10-year, \$700 million contract with the Dodgers, leaving the Angels. With Dodgers fans over the moon and the rest of the league in shock, nobody could wait to see what this would do to the league.

Ohtani and the Dodgers showed why every penny was worth it. Not only did the Dodgers end the season with the best regular-season record and win the World Series, but Ohtani finished top in the NL MVP voting, putting up historical numbers. He was the first MLB player ever to join the 50/50 club, with 50 home runs

and 50 stolen bases.

As for the Dodgers' World Series counterpart, the New York Yankees, Captain Aaron Judge was unanimously voted to win his second AL MVP.

"That's my GOAT," said junior Nate Abramson. Judge put up one of the most impressive statistical batting seasons ever, with 58 home runs and 144 RBIs, while batting .322 with an OPS of 1.159.

Pitching was on another level this season. The 2024 season was only the second time ever, and the first time in 13 years, with a winner of the pitching triple crown in both the AL and NL. Detroit Tiger Tarik Skubal and Atlanta Brave Chris Sale both led their leagues in wins, ERA, and strikeouts. Sale, 35, showed how dominant he was, while Skubal, 28, put his name on the map and let the league know he was here to play.

"As a pitcher myself, I can't even begin to explain how dominant Sale and Skubal were," said senior Abe Charkow. Both pitchers won Cy

Young in their respective leagues.

New York's other home team, the Mets, had one of the most fun and historical seasons in a long time. The team went 28-27 in the first 65 games, or 11 games under .500. But the team's fortunes changed in game 66, with the team posting a record of 61-38 for the rest of the season and the best record in baseball after the All-Star break. The Mets finished the season at 89-73, in sixth place in the NL and with the last Wild Card spot. The team advanced to the NLDS against the Phillies but lost to the World Champion Dodgers in the NLCS.

When asked to reflect on the Mets season, Junior Jordan Nili said, "The season was something out of a movie. It was the best season I have ever watched as a sports fan and I can not wait for next year."

The 2024 MLB season was special, and fans eagerly await next season's Opening Day on March 27, 2025.

Jewish NBA Players to Watch

By Ariel Zeltzer '27, Sports Editor

Three talented Jewish athletes promise to shine on the court in the 2024-2025 NBA season. NBA All-Star and Sacramento King Domantas Sabonis continues to dominate in rebounding (averaging 13.4 rebounds per game) and with his amazing touch in the paint.



His impressive

Portland Trailblazer Deni Avdija re-

skills have solidified him as one of the league's top big men (Sabonis stands at 6'11"). Sabonis converted to Judaism out of a desire to share the faith of his wife Shashana. He keeps kosher at home, observes Shabbat and studies Torah with Rabbi Mendy Cohen at Chabad of Sacramento.

mains the only Israeli in the NBA for the 2024-2025 season. After a breakout year with the Washington Wizards, Avdija was traded for a large package that included two first-round picks and established veteran Malcolm Brogdon. Avdija has entered his fifth season in the NBA and is poised to make a significant impact. His versatility and ability to guard all five positions make him a valuable asset to the team.

Brooklyn Net Amari Bailey is a promising young talent. His athleticism and scoring ability at only 20 years old have drawn comparisons to some of the league's top guards. While Bailey is still developing, his potential is undeniable.

Opinion: The views and opinions expressed in these pieces are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of Helios.

Abigail Denburg Shows Students the Deep Value in Military Service

By Gila Lehon '26, Staff Writer

On Monday, Nov. 11, Heschel high schoolers welcomed Abigail Denburg to speak during the annual Veterans Day program. Denburg, the daughter of Heschel college counselor Dorothy Denburg, reflected on her career trajectory in both the military and her civilian job, emphasizing how her Jewish identity intersects with and is influenced by her service.

While Veterans Day programming is usually not very relatable for me, this program was different. Through hearing a young person's personal experience with the military and her ability to connect her passions to her time served, I saw the military in a new light. Since Denburg grew up as a Jewish New York City teen not too long ago, I and many others saw our own upbringings and experiences mirrored in hers.

Denburg's ability to accomplish great heights at her day job as Vice President of

Global Growth at INSITU, a Boeing company that designs drones to be purchased by militaries around the world, while also advancing in



the military taught me a powerful lesson: With determination and care, it is possible to fulfill multiple commitments and have meaningful aspirations. This year, Denburg has served about six weeks in the military in total, a large time commitment for someone who has very large

career aspirations in her civilian job.

Denburg's position in the Navy, one supports the purchase of the drones she works to market. Particularly through hearing about the ways in which Denburg's Jewish identity is strongly complemented by her service, I was able to clearly see the fulfillment in one's life that army service can provide, and how it can be customizable to each individual. Denburg spoke about the ways in which Jewish values of service and community are very present in the military, allowing her to have a deeper and more fulfilling relationship with her work in the Navy.

Having more speakers like Denburg, who can engage the student body and showcase diverse life paths, will help students understand the vast array of opportunities available to them.

Photography by Gabe Godin

Are Handwritten Essays Beneficial?

By Parker Slarskey '25, Features Editor

English Teacher Stefan Dorosz assigned the first essay in his senior "Moral Dilemmas" elective to be handwritten in class. Over the course of nine classes, students wrote six to eight double-spaced pages by hand, using three classes to gather quotes and make an outline, three to write a first draft, and three to polish their final essay. Students were prohibited from taking their papers home or using computers in class.

Doroz explained his rationale behind the assignment: "Writing by hand was designed to give students distraction-free time and space to think about the text and think through their ideas. It was designed to free them from feeling pressured to write something 'perfect'."

On a personal note, he noted that the best papers he wrote in graduate school were initially written by hand.

As someone who processes information more effectively by taking handwritten notes instead of typing on a computer, I was excited about this assignment, and I was already used to handwriting all of my previous essay outlines. Writing coherently and cohesively, however, wound up being challenging. It was more difficult to look back on my writing. Also, I couldn't go back and erase or rewrite sentences as easily as I can with a computer.

Another downside to this assignment was the amount of class time it took up. Rather than taking advantage of class time to engage in conversation or learn new material together, we spent nine classes independently writing—something that could be done at home.

I am used to writing essays on my own time in a comfortable environment; it was certainly an adjustment to write in an uncomfortable chair in a room with 20 other students, sometimes at the end of an eight-hour day.

On the other hand, eliminating the option of all assistive technology, such as ChatGPT or Grammarly, was beneficial. This assignment helped my writing process in ways I did not expect; although I've never used AI to help me on an assignment, I have certainly gotten caught up looking through dictionaries and thesauruses online.

Additionally, I never realized how frequently I strayed from my train of thought when opening other desktop tabs until they were no longer accessible--writing by hand helped me focus solely on my writing and thoughts. Furthermore, I discovered the advantage of writing a first and final draft. Due to the time constraint, I was only able to write a first draft for part of the paper. I noticed my final draft was significantly better, as I could see my original thoughts and then try to improve them.

Discover Your Voice: Taffy Brodesser-Akner Inspires Heschel Journalists

By Bee Levy '25, Editor-in-Chief

On Thursday, Nov. 7, the *Heschel Helios* hosted award-winning journalist, author, and Heschel parent Taffy Brodesser-Akner. Among her most notable accomplishments is her acclaimed work for *GQ* and *The New York Times*. Her debut novel, *Fleishman Is in Trouble* (2019), received critical acclaim and was adapted into a Hulu mini-series in 2022. Her second novel, *Long Island Compromise*, was released in 2024.

Brodesser-Akner shared writing tips, guiding us to look at what's happening in our school and greater community and advising how to ask the right questions so we, as student journalists, can uncover the hidden truths that are around us. A journalist, she advised, is just a person with "a question

and a pen." She used her expertise to prove to the crowd of aspiring writers that journalism is accessible. Brodessa-Akner remarked, "It

message that every perspective matters and every question deserves exploration. Whether you're a freshman making a case for why the



lounge is the best spot in school, a sophomore passionate about a new school policy, a junior balancing unprecedented pressures, or a senior reflecting on Senior Sunrise or your last *Shabbaton*, our voices belong in these pages. Brodessa-Akner reminded us that a student does not need to be a seasoned writer or commit to weekly articles. Sometimes, the most powerful stories come from those who step forward armed with nothing but curiosity and conviction.

I invite you, the unexpected observers, the ones who've been watching and waiting for your moment to speak, to join us during Thursday clubs. The pen is yours. The platform is ready. What story will you tell?

doesn't matter if you are writing an article about fortune telling or a report on inflation, there is something for everyone in a magazine."

As an Editor-in-Chief, I was struck by the profound simplicity of Brodessa-Akner's

Photography by Jodi Posner, Helios Faculty Advisor

Students Should Not Attend Parent-Teacher Conferences

By Emily Borden '26, Staff Writer

Twice a year, parent-teacher conferences give parents the opportunity to meet with teachers about their child's performance in a given subject. Heschel strongly encourages students to attend these conferences to further communication between families and teachers and give students an active role in their learning journey. While it may seem beneficial, this one-size-fits-all approach fails to recognize nuanced situations.

Parent-teacher conferences are designed to facilitate open and honest conversations about students, but when the students are present, the full parent-teacher transparency can feel restricted.

An anonymous parent said, "I felt that I couldn't be one hundred percent open and honest next to my child because I didn't want

to make him feel more insecure and less confident." The Heschel parent continued, "My child has some learning difficulties and he needs extra help in certain things, and it's easier to talk about certain issues one-on-one."

For parents with students who have learning difficulties, these conferences are especially crucial for coming up with plans and strategies. The parent explained that worrying about their child's reactions is an unnecessary burden.

While students may benefit from certain feedback, not every student should participate in parent-teacher conferences. Teachers already update students through their comments on assessments, report cards, via emails, and discussions. Parent-teacher conferences are an opportunity for parents to feel free to ask questions openly and have discussions about their child's progress without the added pressure of

their child's presence.

As an 11th grader, I feel that my attendance at parent-teacher conferences is not always necessary or beneficial. It can sometimes complicate the conversation. When I am there, I feel that teachers soften their feedback and avoid bringing up certain points to spare my feelings, which makes it hard to get their full points across. I feel that these conversations are much more efficient when I am not in the room. It's not about avoiding feedback, but rather allowing a more honest and direct conversation where my parents and teachers can be fully transparent with each other.

While some students may benefit from blunt and transparent feedback, it may destroy others' confidence. The parent admitted that conferences "are not always a good fit, but it does depend on the student."

Shabbaton 2024: Shaping Our Impact Through Intention

By Liza Gerstein '27, Staff Writer

The Heschel High School's *Shabbaton* theme of "Intention vs. Impact" was a choice that could not be more relevant in today's world. The theme explores how our actions impact the people around us, and whether the intention behind them outweighs that impact. This is a crucial aspect of being a high school student.

This theme gave students a space to reflect on the bigger picture: To what degree do intentions matter? In the theme sessions and Friday Night Learning, the focus on Intention vs. Impact helped us consider if having the right intentions makes a difference in the impact of one's actions. These discussions were eye-opening as students discussed court cases such as the

Alec Baldwin shooting case. We discussed the legal and ethical issue of whether the director is guilty of murder since a prop gun went off during filming. This encouraged students to dissect how intention matters regarding US law and how that relates to resulting consequences.

I noticed that there could be many different perspectives for any case. For me, this raised another question: Is it ever possible to know what someone's intentions are? I believe that you can never fully know someone's intentions unless they directly express them. However, seeking the best in others can help inspire me to become a more intentional person.

What stood out most to me was the emphasis on community responsibility. The *Shabbaton* gave me and other students the opportu-

nity to reflect on our impact within the Heschel community and beyond. In my view, both intention and impact are significant, but impact often carries more weight. Good intentions do not erase negative consequences, while positive outcomes can emerge from actions driven by unclear motives. These aspects of the *Shabbaton* are what makes Heschel such a special place, equipping students with tools to become intentional contributors to our community. Whether students decide for themselves that intention does or does not matter, the importance of these discussions is that our actions result in a lasting impact on others.

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