

The Official Student Newspaper  
of the  
Abraham Joshua Heschel  
High School



"We stand for what we utter..."

- Rabbi Heschel

## Student Executive Board Elections Wrap Up at Heschel

By Miriam Gross '25, Staff Writer

On Feb. 5, in an atmosphere brimming with anticipation, student government elections began with candidates passionately competing for pivotal positions aimed at shaping the future of the Heschel High School.

Throughout the week, candidates campaigned via colorful arrays of posters containing plays on words positioned by water fountains or bulletin boards. The student body witnessed a spirited campaign season with various candidates competing for different positions.

Among the candidates, each cultivated distinctive visions for the school's future, including Eden Bar-Chama, junior Abby Bruhim, sophomore Pierce Malter, sophomore Caleb Creizman, and junior Elana Farbiarz, all eager to serve their peers and foster a vibrant community. Their enthusiastic speeches encapsulated a spectrum of aspirations, ranging from enhancing student engagement to tackling prevalent issues head-on, leading them to each gain a spot on the new executive board.

President Bar-Chama radiates an infectious enthusiasm for fostering inclusivity and

vibrancy within the school community.

"I aspire to make Heschel more fun and engaging for everyone," she said. "I want to make everyone who isn't on Student Government feel just as valued and respected as Student Government members, as well as emphasize

clubs and school talent that amplify our greatness!"

Bruhim, Spirit Vice President (VP), articulates a vision of bringing more

passion to school events.

"I want to make a change in the school and create events where everyone is excited to join in and have fun," Bruhim said.

Addressing challenges facing the student body, Malter, Student Affairs VP, stressed the importance of proactive engagement in tackling emerging issues.

"There's a lot of issues people have. More are only going to pop up. And the only way they will be solved is if Student Affairs shows up," Malter said.

Creizman, *Hesed and Tzedek* VP, spotlighted the value of personal service and accessibility to volunteer opportunities. "My main focus is to elevate individual volunteering," he said. "We have many options for *hesed* but need to increase their accessibility."

Farbiarz, Programming VP, envisions vast student empowerment. "My aspirations for VP are to create a productive and welcoming council that changes the everyday experiences of students in small ways as well as year-round projects on a big scale," she said.

As the excitement of the election subsides, the torch passes to the newly elected executive board, charged with the responsibility of translating their promises and aspirations into action. The student body's collective hopes now rest on the shoulders of these dedicated individuals tasked with steering Heschel toward a future of excellence.

Photography by Bonnie Altman



## The Heschel Shabbaton: Our Bodies in New Jersey, Hearts in Jerusalem

By Georgia Bregman '26, Staff Writer

At the Heschel *Shabbaton*, Israel may have been five thousand miles to the East, but it couldn't have been closer to our hearts in the West. This year's *Shabbaton* theme was Israel. The massacre of Oct. 7 and the war in Gaza have been a constant part of our lives these past three months, which made it a natural focus for the *Shabbaton*. The Programming Council worked hard with the JSL team to plan engaging, Israel-related activities throughout the weekend. Students had the chance to explore their feelings towards Israel, to nurture our understanding of Israel's history, and to recognize what the country means to the Jewish people.

The first event of the *Shabbaton* was the student-led theme sessions. There, students read Psalms 137 and discussed what it means to "yearn for Israel." Later, in the ballroom circle talks, students watched Edy Lucas and Dov Nelkin debate whether the best song to listen to right now is *Lo' Yehi* or *Hallelujah*, and Max Lazar and David Steinberg debate whether, on a visit to Israel, one should prioritize seeing the Kotel or the Knesset. Later on Friday night, students and faculty engaged in Friday Night Learning Sessions (FNLs).

Three very interesting FNLs were "Moral Certainty vs. Intellectual Humility," led by Rav Ayal Robkin, "Our Daughters in Israel," led by David Karpel, and "100 Days and Counting," led by Rabbi Noam Silverman.

Rav Ayal taught his group the differences between moral certainty and intellectual humility, and the group debated when they should be applied, if at all. Intellectual humility involves recognizing that there are gaps in one's knowledge and that one's current beliefs might be incorrect--in other words, having the ability

to say "I don't know." Moral certainty is the idea of believing that your opinions and morals are correct. Rav Ayal's group applied these concepts to Israeli politics and discussed which idea is more important to have as a Jew.

David Karpel told his group his daughter's *aliyah* story, and how she has been affected by the war. In 2021, Karpel's daughter moved to Israel to serve in the IDF. She has since worked in social services, helping soldiers physically and emotionally. Since Oct. 7, she has worked day and night, rarely leaving the base.

Lastly, Rabbi Noam led a conversation about people's views on Israel's progress in the war. Students shared their worries about what the war could turn into and debated whether the goals that Israel has set—saving the hostages and eradicating Hamas—are realistic.

On Shabbat, David Steinberg led an exciting game of Israel-HQ, and the winner was junior Amia Kaplan. Before returning to Heschel on Saturday night, students had a beautiful *Havdalah* service, complete with the final round of Debate *Midrash*. Rabbi Dahlia Kronish and Rabbi Natan Kapustin debated: "Do we need Israel, or does Israel need us?" Afterwards, students gathered one last time and sang songs about Israel.

When asked about the goal of having Israel as the theme, Julia Bernstein said, "As a community that has this opportunity for togetherness, it's very important to acknowledge what's going on in the world, and the ways that the Jewish people have been affected by these last months. We wanted to balance this exciting, joyful experience with the reality of the past few months."

Rabbi Jonathan Klatt similarly shared: "We didn't want the focus of the *Shabbaton* to be the war itself, and we tried to balance having

our hearts and minds thinking about other aspects of Israel." Rabbi Dahlia Kronish said that she wanted students "to understand why we care so much about Israel. To step back a little bit."

According to the results of a poll, the activities that students enjoyed the most were the Debate *Midrashim*, theme sessions, and Friday Night Learning. Students shared that the *Shabbaton* strengthened their personal connection to Israel, and the community gave them optimistic hope for the future.

Sophomore Juliette Heister said, "Instead of thinking of Israel as merely a country, the theme session made me think about how I myself am connected to Israel." Heister also shared, "Being surrounded by my community made me feel good; I know I have people, and I know I'm not going through this alone."

Sophomore Bobby Covit also appreciated the theme session. He said, "I always felt that yearning for Israel, but I never really understood it or recognized it; the theme session helped make that more clear." Similar to Heister, he felt the school's support for Israel to be stronger than ever. Covit said, "Praying for Israel together showed me that we have so many people who care."

Senior Jonny Heisler said that after Rabbi Natan and Rabbi Dalia's Debate *Midrash*, "It got me thinking about our role as diaspora Jews in the war, and what we can do more to help."

Many think that the 2024 Heschel *Shabbaton* was a success for both the faculty and student body. Students shared that they deepened their connection with Israel, had interesting discussions about many Israel-related topics, and came home feeling good about our strong, Zionist community.

## Bibas Family Remains Captive in Gaza

By Margot Hess '27 and Maya Gleser '27, Staff Writers

On Oct. 7, Hamas terrorists infiltrated Kibbutz Nir Oz and kidnapped Kfir Bibas, his brother, Ariel, and their mother, Shira. Baby Kfir, believed to be the youngest person taken hostage, was only 10 months old. On Jan. 18, Kfir spent his first birthday buried deep inside dark Gaza tunnels.

In a recent interview, Eylon Keshet, a

cousin of the Bibas family, said, "We are not sure if he can make it. Every day that he is staying there is a real, real danger to his life."

At Kfir's young age, he is only able to consume bottled formulas, raising concerns about his health. Four-year-old Ariel Bibas suffers from multiple health issues, including a skin condition that needs to be treated with proper medication. Keshet said that their family is extremely worried about Ariel's state without adequate medical attention.

Hamas officials claim that the Bibas children are dead, but without proof, the Israeli government is still hopeful that the two children are alive.

Kfir and Ariel have been honored around the world; in Tel Aviv, Berlin, Washington D.C. and other major cities, people gathered to release orange balloons into the air to honor the red headed children.

## ICJ Issues Provisional Measure Against Israel in "Ludicrous" Genocide Case

By Yhonatan Yehudai '25, Assistant News Editor

On Dec. 29, the worldwide Jewish community was taken aback after South Africa filed a case at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Israel following its military offensive in Gaza in response to Hamas' invasion on Oct. 7.

South Africa accuses Israel of violating the Genocide Convention of 1948, a human rights treaty that came into fruition as a direct result of Germany's role in the Holocaust. South Africa claims that Israel continued to commit acts of genocide that "bring about the destruction of a substantial part of the Palestinian national, racial and ethnical group." Many Israeli public officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, have unequivocally denied the allegations they are facing, asserting that the Israeli military has taken measures to prevent unnecessary civilian casualties; these include airdropping flyers to warn civilians about incoming attacks, calling civilians to tell them to evacuate targeted areas, and canceling airstrikes when civilians are in danger.

Although a final ruling could take multiple years to emerge, the ICJ already issued a

provisional ruling on Jan. 26. Although many worried the court would order a mandatory ceasefire, it did not currently find sufficient evidence that would warrant such a measure. The court instead ruled that Israel and its military must do everything in their power to prevent committing any form of genocide in Gaza. The court also declared that Israel needs to take action and allow humanitarian relief to enter the territory.

*Limudei Qodesh* Co-Department Chair and facilitator of the Current Events Minyan Ruth Fagen said she was pleasantly surprised about the ruling. "I was worried that the court would call for things that I thought would be very difficult for Israel to implement if not impossible, such as an immediate ceasefire," said Fagen. She said that the court's complete dismissal of the case, which was initially considered a possibility, seemed to her "extremely unlikely."

Fagen's reaction to the ruling directly opposes that of Prime Minister Netanyahu. Shortly after the court's decision was made, Netanyahu said, "The charge of genocide leveled against Israel is not only false, it's outrageous, and de-

cent people everywhere should reject it." Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant posted his response on his X account, writing, "The state of Israel does not need to be lectured on morality in order to distinguish between terrorists and the civilian population in Gaza."

Fagen said that in her opinion Gallant's post is neither "strategically wise for Israel nor accurate." She said that although it is important to address the "ludicrous nature" of Israel facing accusations of violating a treaty that was enacted because of the actions committed against the Jewish people, she still believes that, "[Israel] needs to be able to show that they don't just sign a treaty when people do bad things to the Jews, but then feel that they have no moral obligation to hold themselves accountable to that treaty."

Fagen addressed the importance of abiding by the ruling even though it is not technically enforceable. She said that Israel's response to the result is important for its "standing in the international community on the practical level of Israel's allies, particularly the UK and the United States, being able to feel like they can continue to provide Israel with the international support in the media; that I worry about."

## Caught in the Middle of a Pro-Palestinian Protest

By Georgia Bregman '26, Staff Writer

On Friday, Feb. 2, the pro-Palestinian organization Within Our Lifetime led a march from the Columbia University campus to 108th St. and Broadway.

Upon hearing loud screams and witnessing people running down the street, my family and I, who live near the site of the protest, went outside to find the root of the commotion. We saw hundreds of people gathered holding Palestinian flags and chanting "NYPD, KKK, IDF, they're all the same!" And "Say it loud, say it clear, we don't want no Zionists here!"

When my father took out his phone to film, a protester hit his arm, knocking his phone to the ground.



When my mother began filming, many protesters yelled profanities at her. A few minutes later, I got into an argument with a man. He said that Israel is committing genocide in Gaza, and that "The United Nations International Court ruled them guilty."

I immediately responded, "No they didn't! They ruled Israel innocent!"

To which he shouted, "That's propaganda! Stop believing propaganda!"

He then stuck a mini Palestinian flag in my face. Right afterward, a different man offered me his Palestinian flag. I looked at it and did not say anything.

He yelled: "Yeah, if you take my s\*\*\* I'll

slap the s\*\*\* out of you."

My father yelled at him, "Did you just threaten to hit my daughter?"

He responded: "It's girls like her that Israel is killing."

A few minutes later, when my family was all together, people circled us and screamed "Baby killers" in unison.

As we left the mob, people shouted "You are just like Hitler" and "You are a Nazi supporter."

Being in the protest was terrifying. While I had been aware of similar demonstrations through media coverage, being physically present within one was an entirely different level of fear and distress.

Photography by Georgia Bregman '26, Staff Writer

# New Angst: Novel Fungal Infection in Gaza Affects IDF Soldiers and Gazan Civilians

By Eden Bar-Chama '25, Contributing Writer

A new, unfamiliar, invasive fungal infection found within the soil in Gaza has become a new addition to the exhaustingly long list that keeps mothers of IDF soldiers up at night, as well as civilians in Gaza who suffer a humanitarian crisis.

Roughly a month ago, an IDF soldier brought to Assuta Ashdod Medical Center in Israel to be treated for a severe injury died after contracting this exact infection. This case put the infection on the radar.

The soil in Gaza, contaminated with sewage waste, is believed to be a breeding ground for this life-threatening disease. Before injured soldiers are extracted from battle, and their open wounds properly sterilized, they're often in contact with the soil, and thus at high

risk for contracting this infection.

Medical professionals are nervous about the unfamiliarity of the fungus and its resistance to known antibiotic treatments.

*The Times of Israel* quotes Professor Galia Rahav, chair of the Israeli Association for Infectious Diseases, saying that the number [of infected soldiers] had reached ten. That was a month ago. Surely, the number has increased since.

Professor Hagai Levine, the head of the medical team for the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, reminded [Israeli] Channel 12 that soldiers were not the only ones at risk of infection, and that there were grave concerns for the health of hostages still held in Gaza, in addition to Palestinian civilians. IDF soldier Netanel (Nat), a relative of Heschel community's Bar-Chama family, is one of the many actively

fighting off this infection in Soroka Hospital in Beer Sheva. Nat had entered Gaza alongside his special force unit after hearing word of the location of hostages within the tunnels.

As a commander, following the ethical protocol of IDF warfare, he entered first. Upon arrival, the unit was ambushed by Hamas terrorists. Many other soldiers were injured that day, but Nat's injuries were severe. Shrapnel from a grenade lodged in his abdomen, liver, and leg. The large gash on his lower leg and direct exposure to the soil beneath him left him vulnerable to the infection.

In a desperate attempt to prevent amputation, Nat's leg is surgically flushed out with betadine every two to three days.

## Israel Accuses U.N. Workers of Aiding Hamas Oct. 7 Attack

By Philip Efron '24, Editor-in-Chief

Many have noted the U.N.'s apparent bias against the Jewish state, yet this purported partiality has never visibly materialized on the ground. This is no longer the case.

According to an Israeli intelligence dossier provided to the U.S. government, at least 12 employees of the U.N.'s Palestinian refugee agency were somehow connected to Hamas' attack on Oct. 7. Additionally, 10% of its Gaza staff, some 190 UNRWA employees, are reported to have ties to Islamist militant groups.

Among the U.N. employees who ac-

tively participated in the Oct. 7 massacre, one is accused of kidnapping a woman, another of handing out ammunition, and a third of "taking part in the attack," according to *The New York Times*.

Seven of the 12 who contributed to Oct. 7 were also reported to be teachers for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

On Friday, January 26, the U.N. declared that they fired all 12 employees, though the U.N. secretary general António Guterres said only nine were let go.

The report also prompted eight coun-

tries, including the U.S., to suspend a portion of aid to the UNRWA.

Heschel students are disturbed and shocked by this development.

"It's just sad," senior Ethan Hess said. "They are responsible for maintaining peace and justice, and they really, really failed."

Senior Roy Mendelson agreed.

"The UNRWA, sounds great. In practice, not so much."

## Student Government and JSL Team Pull Off Another Amazing *Shabbaton*!

By Parker Slarskey '25, Assistant Features Editor

Students wait all year in anticipation of a favorite Heschel experience: the *Shabbaton*! However, many are unaware of how much work goes into planning such a complex event. In particular, the Jewish Student Life (JSL) team and the Programming Council put in a tremendous amount of work to make the weekend possible.

In an interview with Julia Bernstein, member of the JSL team, she described the planning process. She mentioned obvious parts of planning, such as the schedule and programming, as well as overlooked aspects such as arranging buses, hotel reservations, and catering.

She expressed gratitude to student government members, particularly the Programming Council for framing the entire weekend, and the Spirit Council in charge of a crowd favorite activity, *Panoply*. Additionally, she acknowledged generous offers from other faculty members to help out. Bernstein said the time

frame was challenging, because it was only a few weeks after break. Nonetheless, hard working students and faculty made the weekend possible.

Lindsay Biebelberg, another member of the JSL team, talked about the process of assigning students to groups based on Google forms. She said she first created the groups with the least sign ups to assure they get filled, and worked backwards from there. She also noted her focus on gender and grade variety.

Programming VP Eden Bar-Chama (now our newly elected student body president) spoke in an interview about her role planning for the *Shabbaton*. She and the Programming Council began planning a few weeks before

winter break. They took into consideration the previous year's *Shabbaton* and "pivoted" from there. They discussed what went well and what could be improved. As a full council, they came

up with a theme, and then they broke off into smaller groups. One group planned the theme sessions, another assigned table seating, and another was in charge of free time activities. Bar-Chama is grateful for her council's work in smaller groups, as well as collaborating as a full council. In Bar-Chama's final remarks she said, "I hope everyone enjoyed the *Shabbaton* and found it meaningful and left with a deeper understanding as to why Israel is important. And of course they had fun!"

The hard work put into planning the *Shabbaton* is not overlooked by the Heschel community, and we all await *Shabbaton* 2025!

Photography by Gabe Godin



## 325 People Arrested at Pro-Palestine Protest

By Aviva Guttman '25, Opinion Editor

On Monday Jan. 8 at 9:30 a.m. pro-Palestine protesters halted traffic on the Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Williamsburg Bridges and blocked the entrance to the Holland Tunnel. Protesters also gathered at the Holland Tunnel around 9:30 a.m., with Palestinian flags and signs in hand. Written on the posters were popular slogans like: "Lift the Siege on Gaza" and "End the Occupation."

At the Holland Tunnel, demonstrators wore fluorescent vests and linked arms to block off traffic, redirecting cars away from the outbound ramp. Soon after, police warned protesters that they had two minutes to clear the area. When they refused, police arrested 120 protesters. Police also reported that many were chanting "Free Palestine" while on the ground with their hands tied.

One demonstrator at the Brooklyn Bridge, Mon Mohapatra, 30, explained that among the protesters were people from various groups including the Palestinian Youth Movement, Al-Awda: The Palestinian Right to Return Coalition, Democratic Socialists of America, and Jewish Voice for Peace. She, and others, voiced that the protests were meant to emulate conditions in Gaza.

"We are trying to show how it feels to be trapped in a city you can't leave," Ms. Mohapatra said.

Rachel Himes, another attendee, said, "In Gaza... people have limited mobility, no freedom of movement, they cannot leave, even if they want to, they move place to place, then those places are bombed... We wanted to create that condition temporarily in Manhattan."

One protester there, David Shutkin, traveled all the way from Cleveland to attend.

Shutkin said, "I'm a Jewish person and I believe the liberation of the Jewish people is tied up in the liberation of the Palestinian people."

Over on the Williamsburg Bridge, police used hand saws to cut through lengths of plastic piping and metal chains fashioned as a traffic barrier by protesters.

Mayor Eric Adams shared that it took over two hours for traffic to reopen. He said, "The goal is to peacefully protest without doing major disruption to the city. Some people are not just driving to and from, across our bridges to go to their place of employment; some of them are dealing with some real emergency type issues."

The NYPD's Chief of Patrol said that 325 people were arrested during the protests and many will face misdemeanor charges and fines.

## Arts Night 2024 Showcases the Very Best Heschel Has to Offer

By Pierce Malter '23, Staff Writer

At 5:30 p.m. on Feb. 1, students, parents, and faculty alike poured into the building, awaiting the products of this semester's arts department. Pieces from Nurit Newman and Lisa Cohen's art, photography, and ceramics classes were displayed in the halls, as well as projected onto stage before the show.

The night opened with an address from Rabbi Noam. Next, emcees Eden Bar-Chama, Charlotte Levine, Zack Levy, and Ari Weinstein briefly introduced themselves, and then the show began.

Heschel's band electives were among the first performers of the evening, with all four grades making strong efforts. First up was the ninth grade band with renditions of Rihanna's *Stay*, soloed by Tabitha Cohen, and Coldplay's *Yellow*, soloed by Tamir Vidal. The band left the crowd excited for what else Adena Korn and Ned Ginsburg had been working on.

Up next was the 10th grade band. Agam Back, Rose Harnoy, Juliette Heisler, Danni Jankelson, and Molly Stevens worked together as vocalists to perform *Katan Aleinu*, a relevant piece created during the COVID-19 pandemic about overcoming adversity. In a last-minute decision, sophomore Bobby Covit stepped up to the microphone and treated audiences to *Let Her Go* by Passenger. Covit explained that, prior to Arts Night, the band had decided to run through some pieces that wouldn't be performed.

Covit recalled what led to his change of heart, saying "since I knew we weren't performing it the next day... I was like, oh, I'm gonna go all out. I'm just gonna try my hardest to sing it well. And everyone loved it."

Throughout the night, attendees were treated to poetry and prose. Senior Jayden Podchlebnik recited *Bimdorot Milchama* (*In the*

*Ask*, and, Ethan Hess, Tal Visser, Laila Posner and Zeltzer sang *Little Talks* by Of Monsters and Men. The band concluded with Hunter Bernhard, Visser and Posner singing *Good Old Days* by Macklemore.

The latter half of the evening focused on student-crafted performances, including Korn's 12th grade music theory class. Harry

Klarfeld directed audiences through a carefully planned lesson on music esoterica, with a heavy focus on *Sesame Street*.

The rock band, a student-led club, placed the passion for the craft held by its members front and center. Zeva Landa and Podchlebnik dueted 30 Seconds to Mars' *The Kill* and *Go Your Own Way* by Fleetwood Mac. While all members of the band put in extreme effort to prepare for the evening, standout performers included Weinstein on the keyboard and Freshman Ezra Tiven-Gottesman on the electric guitar.

Attendees were also treated

to a sneak peek of the spring musical, *Cinderella*, before the Heschel Harmonizers rounded off the night. Senior Michael Kaplan-Nolan and Freshman Lily Jaktupat-Schneider led Bastille's *Pompeii*, while Landa and sophomore Eli Leibold wowed the crowd on *Lashuv Habaita* as soloists, while sophomore Charlie Schiff beat-boxed.

Thanks were given to the tech and maintenance teams, the art, music, and theater teachers, and the administrations. The night was an objective success by all metrics; performers, parents, and students left the building with new appreciation for what the community can do at Heschel.

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



*Bonfires of War*), a poem written by Chana Senesh about a search for humanity in the midst of war. Sophomore Yalei Ravin and senior Serena Goldstein recited existential and original poems, respectively inspired by the works of Lawrence Ferenghetti and Orhan Pamuk. Additionally, freshman Gershon Leib and Sophomore Dani Grinker competed against one another in Heschel's Shakespeare monologue contest; the winner was not announced publicly.

The 11th grade band featured vocals from Abby Bruhim, Amia Kaplun, and Shaine Katarivas on Elton John's *Crocodile Rock* and Bridget Hendler's *Hurricane*.

After their performance, emcee Weinstein voiced a concern regarding the quality of the senior band, but his suspicions were quickly proven wrong as Sylvia Zeltzer and Jayden Podchlebnik performed a rendition of Adele's *All I*

# Trump-Colorado Ballot Case Spurs Controversy Among Heschel Students

By Karen Messer '24, Features Editor

"It's an embarrassment to America and our ideals of democracy," said Senior and Young Conservatives Club Leader Jonny Heisler, in response to the Colorado Supreme Court's effort to remove former President Donald Trump from the 2024 ballot.

On Dec. 19, the Colorado Supreme Court ruled that Trump should not be allowed to run in the primary ballot because of his role in the insurrection leading up to the Jan. 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol. The Colorado justices based their ruling on Section 3 of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which disqualifies any person from public office who has previously taken an oath as a federal or state officeholder and has engaged in insurrection or rebellion of the U.S.

The Colorado Supreme Court said that if the case were to go to the U.S. Supreme Court for appeal, Trump would be allowed to remain on the ballot. On Jan. 5, the Supreme Court agreed to hear the appeal; however, Colorado's deadline to register for the primaries was set for the same day. Colorado's Secretary of State said that she allowed Trump's name to appear on the primary ballot due to his Supreme Court appeal.

Maine's Secretary of State Shenna Bel-

lows also declared on Dec. 28 that Trump did not qualify for the Republican primary ballot because he attempted to remain in power after the 2020 election. By contrast, California, Michigan, and Minnesota ruled that election officials cannot prevent the Republican party from including Trump in the primaries.

Senior Jonny Heisler commented on Trump's disqualification case.

"I think it's all political," he said. "They hate him and they want to send a message."

Heisler added that he doesn't think the Constitutional provision applies to Trump.

"I don't think January 6th was an insurrection. It was a riot. It is an overstatement to say that it was going to overthrow the government."

He believes that there are more pressing issues that the government should direct its resources towards, instead of "disenfranchising voters."

"It's wrong on multiple fronts," said Heisler, "to use this amendment that talks about insurrection. The guy [first] has to be convicted of insurrection."

Heisler thinks this a matter worth discussing further in the Young Conservatives Club.

Junior Sophia Kasirer-Teitelbaum, one

of the leaders of the Government and Public Policy Club, views the situation differently than Heisler.

"It's something that [the Court] has every right to do," said Kasirer-Teitelbaum, "It's a smart move. It's not anti-democratic, which is what a lot of people are saying."

Kasirer-Teitelbaum believes that parts of the Constitution were written to prevent breaches of power.

"If [the government] should find evidence of him having done something to harm the U.S. once he is president, it will be too late," she says.

She adds that she is not necessarily "pro" or "anti" Trump, but what he did "put a target on the back of the United States."

Kasirer-Teitelbaum does not see this as a matter to be taken lightly.

She said: "I don't think people with a criminal history should be able to run for president, or any other extreme power position in the United States."

While some states are considering whether Trump should be disqualified from the 2024 ballot, it will now be up to the U.S. Supreme Court to put the speculation to rest.

## 84 Killed and 248 Injured at Iranian General's Commemoration Service

By Bee Levy '25, News Editor

On Jan. 3rd, 84 Iranians were killed at a ceremony honoring the four year anniversary of General Quasem Soleimani's assassination. This attack took place near Soleimani's burial site in Kerman, southeast of Iran's capital, Tehran.

Soleimani served in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and was considered one of the most powerful men in Iran. In 2005, the United States designated him a terrorist and killed him by a drone strike in 2020.

In the recent attack, two bombs were

detonated minutes apart from one another amidst large crowds of people. This time gap was intentional, as it caused more civilian casualties, especially of emergency forces aiding those who were harmed.

Iranian officials promptly blamed Israel for carrying out the attack; however, a day later, ISIS, a Sunni Muslim militant group, claimed responsibility. It was reported that two Sunni twin brothers, wearing suicide vests, entered the crowd of Shiite mourners.

ISIS issued a statement titled, "And Kill Them Wherever You Find Them," justifying

their attack and hatred of the IRGC. In a speech, an Islamic State spokesman also encouraged its supporters to kill Jews globally—suggesting that they should "barge into their homes and kill them using different methods including gunfire, bombs, grenades, and knives."

By contrast, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Ebrahim Raisi condemned the attack and made it clear that the perpetrators will face extreme punishment.

## Rabbi Saul Berman Gives Impactful Speech Commemorating Rabbi Heschel's *Yahrzeit*

By Yhonatan Yehudai '25, Assistant News Editor

Rabbi Saul Berman, a close friend of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, spoke in front of the Heschel High School on Tuesday, Jan. 2, in honor of Rabbi Heschel's *yahrzeit*.

As opposed to sharing insights about Rabbi Heschel's life as most expected, Rabbi Berman told two stories about his and Rabbi Heschel's shared experiences in Selma, Alabama, in the midst of the civil rights movement.

The focus of the speech was controversial among students. "I thought [the program] didn't really commemorate Rabbi Heschel enough, it was really more about the civil rights period," a junior said. "I feel like he could've talked more about Hes-

chel himself," another junior said.

Lindsay Biebelberg, who planned the program, believes that Rabbi Berman's stories



helped capture Rabbi Heschel's values. "[Rabbi Heschel and Rabbi Berman] view Judaism not

only as a community of people who have shared culture, ethnicity, language, etc., but also as a value system," she wrote via email afterwards. She continued that Rabbi Heschel always felt the need to "fight for the rights of marginalized people," making Rabbi Berman's speech relevant to the occasion.

Reflecting on the program, Biebelberg wrote that she considers it a success. "Some time in the future, it will be pretty awesome that we are all able to say that we heard Rabbi Berman speak," she concluded.

Despite students' mixed opinions regarding the relevance of his speech, many agree that Rabbi Berman's insights were meaningful and impressive. "I thought he was informative," said one student. "The events that he told us about were very interesting," said another.

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

# Heschel High School Attends Rally Marking One Hundred Days Since Oct. 7

By Parker Slarskey '25, Assistant Features Editor slogan "Bring Them Home," hoping to spread awareness.

Nearly one hundred days after the tragedy of Oct. 7, the Heschel School, along with approximately 2500 other people, congregated outside the United Nations to stand in solidarity with the one hundred and thirty two hostages remaining captive in Gaza and to demand their immediate return. High schoolers gathered together at school in the morning and took public transportation or walked to the rally.

The rally began with singing dedicated to the hostages. Many held Israeli and American flags and posters with the faces of hostages. Volunteers distributed hats and pins with the



captive. They were taken from their home in Kibbutz Nir Oz on Oct. 7. Margalit suffers from a breathing condition at night, and Hamas stripped her breathing device from her, leaving her in critical condition; she remains in recovery. Yair also spoke about his inability to eat or

sleep, knowing his father is still in Gaza.

Released hostage Hila Rotem Shoshani traveled from Israel to speak at the rally. Hila is 13 years old and was taken hostage from Kibbutz Be'eri along with her mother and friend. She gave the first speech by a former captive in the U.S.

"Life as a hostage in Gaza is not life, it is hell. I came all the way here to ask the whole world to help us bring back all of the hostages," she said.

In response to Hila's speech, a student who wishes to remain anonymous said, "Every day in *Talmud* class we dedicate our learning to a hostage in Gaza. I remember weeks ago dedicating the class to Hila and her mother Raaya. To hear from her in person after being freed was extremely moving. In a way, it gave me hope, but also reminded me of all the other individuals still in Gaza with a story to tell."

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

## Film Industry Braces for Tough Stretch in the Aftermath of Writers' and Actors' Strikes

By Pierce Malter '26, Assistant Layout Editor

Between May 2 and Nov. 9 of 2023, writers and actors went on a record-breaking 191 day long strike, demanding better pay and working conditions. Despite the eventual success of the strike, its length led to the cancellation and delay of many films originally slated for 2024 releases, which will inevitably result in a rough year for the industry.

Before the strike, the film industry was already in an unstable state, still trying to recover to levels of production attained before the pandemic. Now, many movies have been delayed to 2025 and beyond, with some even needing to be restarted from scratch as a result of the strike.

The simultaneous release of *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer* thus became a worldwide cultural event, audiences knowing that it would be cinema's last hurrah for some time.

At the start of the strikes, studios tactically delayed the releases of certain movies that were already complete or nearing completion in order to cushion the blow. *Gran Turismo*, initially scheduled for a July premiere, was released on Aug. 25, while *Captain America: Brave New World* and rom-com *Challengers* were both pushed to mid-2024.

Despite their deficit in quality movies, studios and theaters have also begun getting creative in order to attract audiences. Paramount Pictures attempted to engineer a recreation of the summer's "Barbenheimer" trend in "Saw Patrol," using the coinciding release dates of *Saw X* and *Paw Patrol: The Mighty Movie* to convince moviegoers to voice their prefer-



ences, generating hype for the films on social media. 2024's *Mean Girls*, a cinematic remake of the Broadway version of the 2004 original, was sent to theaters on Jan. 12 despite originally being intended for a streaming-only release, and AMC theaters introduced "Screen Unseen," where audiences purchase tickets for a movie at a reduced price but aren't told what movie they are watching until it begins.

Despite the countermeasures being employed by the film industry, 2024's disappointing movie landscape will stand as a testament to the greed of film production companies and the power of workers' unions. Viewers will have to wait until 2025 for many anticipated sequels and original projects.

Art by Eliya Yehudai '27, Staff Artist

## What Javier Milei's Passion for Judaism Means for Latin-American Jews

By Daphne Stifelman '25, Staff Writer and Manuela Sinayuk '25, Staff Writers

Over the past year, Argentina has fallen into an economic crisis, facing hyperinflation and growing poverty rates. Presidential candidate Javier Milei, a far-right anarcho-capitalist with no political experience, advertised himself as the solution to Argentina's struggles. Milei won the run-off election in Nov. and took office on Dec. 10.

Milei has faced multiple controversies in the past, including allegations of misogynistic behavior, denial of climate change, and accusations of plagiarism. These incidents have given Milei a reputation for being somewhat of a wild card. Milei, who grew up Catholic, took a special interest in Judaism, and has reportedly been studying Torah for the last few years; he has even suggested the possibility of conversion.

Milei's enthusiasm towards Judaism sets him apart from other right-wing politicians

in South America. Although Milei may not be the best representative of Latin American Jews considering his problematic past, his willingness to embrace Judaism is refreshing, as he has expressed strong support for Israel in its war against Hamas.

Senior and Head of the Latin American Culture Club Maia Donath spoke about her view on Milei's conversion.

"While I don't know if he is an exemplar of the ideal person or Jew, the more allies and the more Jews the better, especially in today's political climate."

Donath recently visited Argentina and witnessed many elements of Judaism during her trip.

"I saw Orthodox Jews proudly walking around, and I saw hostage posters in the airport and around the city. It made me feel safe and at home. We had Shabbat in my apartment and lit the candles very comfortably," she said.

Recently, Argentina hosted the 2023 Pan

American Maccabi Games, celebrating young Jewish athletes from all over the world. For a week athletes battled it out, hoping to bring the gold to their home countries. Senior Hunter Bernhardt, a member of the U18 basketball team, was among these athletes. Along with a number of other young Jewish men from across the nation, Bernhardt helped bring victory to team U.S.A.

Bernhardt described Argentina as an exceptionally welcoming environment for the Jewish community.

"Everyone was very supportive of Jews and Israel," he remarked. Coming from a foreign country, this feeling of warmth was very meaningful to him. Bernhardt also had the opportunity to hear from Milei himself and the American ambassador to Argentina, and both conveyed their unwavering support for Israel.

# Federal Judge Dale Ho Comes to Heschel for MLK Day

By Elana Farbiarz '25, Staff Writer

In advance of Martin Luther King Day, Judge Dale Ho, a federal judge in the Southern District of New York, came to speak to Heschel high schoolers about voting rights, which he called “the right that protects other rights.”

Before becoming a judge, Judge Ho ran the voting rights project for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). He was a litigator and argued before many state and federal courts, including the United States Supreme Court. He was confirmed this past June and received his judicial commission on Aug. 18, 2023.

Judge Ho spoke particularly about the way that the fight around voting rights has changed over the course of American history. He explained, “Nothing in the Constitution affirmatively gives the right to vote,” but over time voting rights were expanded. And while, as he stated, this progress “has not been linear”, more and more Americans obtained the right to vote overtime. Judge Ho claimed that the contested issues around voting rights in recent years lie “mainly around processes and procedures.”

Judge Ho also spoke about opposition to voting rights by people who want to limit voting to “intelligent voters,” and the ways gerrymandering,

the process of reshaping districts for political gain, has been a prevalent issue in recent years.

At the end of the program, students had the opportunity to ask Judge Ho questions about voting rights.

One student asked about low voter turnout, in response to which Judge Ho alluded to the fact that there are multiple elections for national and local positions. He explained that this diminishes “voter energy” and that America is a “mobile society” -- people move around a lot and have trouble registering to vote when they move to new states. A senior asked Judge Ho for voting advice, and he encouraged students to “make a plan” long before election days.

Students had mixed reactions about Judge Ho’s answers to questions. As a sitting

federal judge, he was unable to answer certain questions about his politics and opinions, especially relating to current cases.

Junior Eli Goldman said that because of Judge Ho’s inability to answer certain questions



his comments were “expectedly mild.”

Junior Reuben Feingold did not particularly enjoy the program because he found it “un-engaging” and “irrelevant” to our lives.

Senior Eva Ungar enjoyed the program and

said that Judge Ho “eloquently conveyed the importance of maintaining a just democratic process and the dangers of voter suppression.”

Photography by Gabe Godin

## Features

# Epitome Releases New Issue: Submit Your Work for This Year’s Showcase

By Bee Levy '25, News Editor

Heschel’s literary and art magazine, Epitome, is an outlet through which students can express their ideas and creativity. This year’s theme is “footprints”. We all leave footprints wherever we go, making our mark on the world through every experience, journey, and adventure. We invite you to stroll through the past and walk into the future. What footprint or legacy do you hope to create? Who is walking next to you, or are you walking alone? We hope this prompt inspires you to venture forward and explore your unique footprints. Use the QR code below to submit poems, stories, or art.



## What To Do With My Winter Coat?

By Lila Nanasi '25, Staff Writer

Picture this: you finally make it to school after a treacherous journey through the blistering cold. You are all bundled up with your Super Puff zipped to your nose. You walk through two sets of glass doors and wish Eddie a good morning. Then there is a sudden, intense rise in temperature. As you ascend the atrium steps, your once-shivering body quickly becomes overheated. You frantically rip off your coat, trying to regulate your body temperature. You gather yourself. Now what? Where do you put the oversized puffer that is currently in your arms?



This is a dilemma faced by all Heschel

students. Yet, there is a simple solution: second and third-floor lockers are a perfect spot for jackets. The junior class, whose lockers are on the fifth floor, is not so lucky. A trek that high up the building can rarely be afforded given the time constraint to get to tefillah before 8:00 am. Even if you did have time, few can spare the energy.

There are a couple of options for those of us with fifth-floor lockers. *Shlepping* your coat around from class to class all day is an option, though inconvenient and uncomfortable. If you get to school early enough, there may be open hangers in the first-floor coat room. This isn’t the best option, though, as the hangers are a thin, slippery metal that inevitably lead to weighty puffers ending up on the floor. And if a puffer hung in the coat room is fated to end up on the ground, why not spare yourself the detour and join me every morning in tossing

my coat in a pile on the floor in the lounge?

One step up from the lounge floor would be the short-lived jacket oasis of Jonathan Klatt’s coat rack, which he let needy students use. Recently, however, the coat rack met an untimely demise, most likely due to overcrowding: The coat rack toppled over and snapped in two. Klatt’s coat rack was regrettably rendered useless.

After the tragic coat rack accident, Junior Tessa Mank, who reported feeling lost when it came to finding a home for her coat, turned to her community. Senior Eva Unger helped Mank in her time of need, and let her leave her jacket in Unger’s coveted second-floor locker. This was only a temporary solution for Mank and her teal Super Puff, as Unger, who needed the space for her personal belongings (allegedly her yoga mat), had to revoke Mank’s locker privileges. Now, once again, Mank has joined the junior class in their search for jacket storage.

Art by Eliya Yehudai '27, Staff Artist

## Does Your Hoodie, Hoodie?

By Noa Chorowsky '25, Assistant Features Editor

In the constantly evolving fashion world, with new trends and styles emerging daily, one classic article of clothing prevails: the hoodie. Whether bundling up to brave the cold in winter or hiding from the tireless spring rains and breeze, a fashionable, durable hoodie is a necessity.

According to a school-wide survey, no hoodie emerged as the supreme choice. However, student favorites included the Fear of God Essentials hoodie, the Abercrombie Pullover hoodie, and Dandy hoodies.

"The Essentials Fear of God hoodie is extremely comfortable and is perfectly loose-fitting," junior Josh Henschke said. He pointed out slight flaws, but students should not worry, as these flaws also function as useful features. "The tight-fitting neck is uncomfortable at times, but it is a good look. The hoodie is very warm, so if you are in a warm environment, you may overheat, but you will at least be very protected in the cold."

Junior Olivia Levine said, "I love my Essentials Fear of God hoodie! It is so comfy and fuzzy on the inside and is perfect for a cozy day."

She noted that, unfortunately, the hoodie is a bit heavy, and the letters fade over time. Nonetheless, she commended the hoodie's high quality and reasonable price.

The Abercrombie Pullover hoodie was also a crowd favorite. Junior Ezra Sapadin said, "The Abercrombie hoodie is both stylish and comfortable. It genuinely has no flaws!"

Junior Tanys Mayman raved about the Abercrombie hoodie, "It fits extraordinarily well, is very soft on the inside, and comes in many colors, giving buyers a lot of choice. The price is relatively cheap at \$60, compared to most other hoodies."

Many students also complimented the Dandy hoodie brand, a newly established retailer rapidly gaining popularity. Junior Charlotte Levine commended Dandy's Let's Watch the Sunset Hoodie. "It's really soft on the inside and keeps me very warm while simultaneously not feeling too heavy. I love the design so much, too." The one flaw she

noted was the tight neck.

Junior Aviva Guttman said, "I love Dandy hoodies for so many reasons. Number one, the hoods are huge. Number two, they are thick and soft. Number three, they are the perfect shape, and the waistband is not too tight, so it falls very nicely."

On a different note, when surveyed, some students described their favorite hoodie as one that brought them great memories rather than the most stylish or comfortable one.

Junior Jordan Cohen Mintz said, "I love my tenth-grade Israel trip hoodie because it reminds me of my unforgettable experience."

Freshman Ezra Tiven-Gottesman said, "My Taylor Swift Eras Tour hoodie is my favorite because it reminds me of the amazing concert."

Undoubtedly, there are many fabulous hoodies for sale that will provide students with the style, comfort, and warmth they desire.

Art by Ayelet Spevack '25, Art Editor



## What Do Students Really Think About Heschel Merch?

By Emily Mittler '27 and Tabitha Cohen '27, Staff Writers

The Heschel High School Spirit Council has released many different styles of merchandise over the years, including hats, sweatpants, and sweatshirts featuring a variety of logos and colors. Merch is sold at events throughout the year, including Homecoming.

The student body has varying thoughts about their favorite and least favorite pieces of merch, as well as items they would be interested in purchasing in the future.

Students liked the most recent items sold at Homecoming so much that they sold out in minutes. Freshman Charlotte Zucker said, "The Homecoming merch was the best. Every-

one loved it." Students especially enjoyed the quarter zip pullover with the Heschel logo. They explained that it was a basic, cute design that could be worn both in school and out. Students also appreciated that all proceeds from this sale were donated to Israel and wanted to ensure that future profits will similarly be donated.

Students also shared notes about items they would like to see in the future and ways to improve Heschel's merch line. Students said that they would be interested in buying a matching sweatshirt and sweatpant set, a staple for colder weather. They also suggested creating new logos using a variety of colors rather than simply Heschel colors of orange and blue. In addition, students noted a desire for more frequent merch sales, including some in the lobby during lunch

or breaks.

Senior and Spirit Council member Talia Helfstein described some of the council's primary goals when creating Heschel merchandise. She commented that the goal is to create merch that does not merely feature Heschel colors, is better suited for older students, and is more affordable than the Parents Association merchandise.

Students undoubtedly appreciate their efforts, evident during Homecoming, where students waited in a line weaving out the door to purchase the limited but affordable merch. The Spirit Council works extremely hard to create Heschel merchandise that the student body will love and encourages students to offer their suggestions!

## The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes: The Perfect Prequel

By Manuela Sinayuk '25, Staff Writer

The latest addition to the *Hunger Games* phenomenon, *The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes*, surprises fans with the release of the fifth movie after an eight-year hiatus. Serving as a prequel to the original series, the film takes the viewers back to the series' origin story. It provides a deeper understanding of the universe in which the franchise is set and a better grasp of what led to antagonist President Snow's uprising and his claim to fame.



The movie delves into the early days of Panem, the nation where the series is based on, showing us the circumstances that set the stage for the *Hunger Games* saga. The film focuses on Snow's early days, which prove to be as fascinating as they are disturbing. The film gives

insight into his rise to power and what eventually led to him becoming the antagonist figure we know and love.

The film does a superb job cinematically and immerses the audience into the film. Its portrayal of the diverse regions in Panem effectively conveys the contrast between the struggling, lower-class districts with the wealthier districts and the prosperous Capital. *The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds & Snakes* expands on the *Hunger Games* world and keeps the excitement going. The movie is a must watch for those who are returners to the franchise. If you have yet to watch or read any of the content from the original *Hunger Games* series or are simply interested in this dystopian world, this movie is an excellent choice for your next movie night.

Art by Ayelet Spevack '25, Art Editor

# Wonka Returns and Doesn't Live Up to the Hype

By Eloise Bregman '25 and Georgia Bregman '26, Staff Writers

*Wonka*, starring Timothée Chalamet, depicts the origin story of Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Young Willy Wonka dreams of selling his magical chocolates; however, the police immediately shut down his illegal operations after three powerful chocolatiers feel threatened by his extraordinary chocolate and turn him in. Coerced into staying at Mrs. Scrubitt's boarding house, illiterate Wonka signs a contract in which he has to work in her underground laundromat in order to pay off his debt. He meets and quickly befriends five other captives there, deeply bonding with Noodle, a little girl who has worked at the laundromat her entire life.



A highlight of the film is the Oompa Loompa storyline. One night, Willy Wonka

catches an Oompa Loompa stealing his chocolate and interrogates him. The Oompa Loompa, played by Hugh Grant, explains that Wonka must repay the Oompa Loompa community for the three cacao beans he stole years before. The Oompa Loompa's hilarious character provides an interesting backstory to the universally beloved Oompa Loompas in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*.

*Wonka* is a musical, and if you enjoy lighthearted children's movies with a twist, this is the film for you!

Art by Ayelet Spevack '25, Art Editor

# Climate Change Makes a Mockery of Winter 2023-24

By Pierce Malter '26, Assistant Layout Editor

On Tues., Feb. 13th, students slept in, went sledding, and didn't feel any particular need to do anything resembling homework. But for most of them, this was the first snow day in four years. This past winter in particular has brought very little snow. But why- and can we expect this trend to continue?

There are a few reasons for the snow deficiency. First, the winter of 2023-24 is what's known as an "El Niño" winter. There are two jet streams that bring air temperature across the U.S, and when the polar jet stream reaches farther east than usual, tropical temperatures make it closer to the East Coast, resulting in an El Niño. Accordingly, what would be coming down from the clouds in the form of snow mostly ends up as rain. Additionally, lack of snow compounds on itself with a phenomenon known as snowpack; the presence of snow makes the

ground colder, meaning that future snow won't melt as soon as it lands. A lack of snow makes it less likely that new snow sticks instead of melting.

Although the city wasn't entirely devoid of snow before Feb. 13th, Jan. 16th marked the first time the city received over an inch of snow in 701 days, the longest snow drought in city records.

Heschel science teacher Suzy Vogel explained that although this current snow drought may not be caused exclusively by climate change, there seems to be a consensus among scientists that the gradual increase in global temperatures will eventually lead to less and less snowfall on the planet.

What can we do to help? Suzy had a few suggestions, saying, "Small changes you make in your own lifestyle can't hurt. If we all made

these changes, things would get better - changes such as driving hybrid or electric cars to limit

exhaust emissions and buying power from renewable sources if given the option. But just be out there contributing to the community of science-minded people who accept that climate change is real and vote for representatives who say they will do something about it. US Carbon dioxide emissions actually have decreased over the last 15 years or so. But

not by enough." The age of snow days, at least in NYC, could very well be coming to a close.



Art by Sigal Bezborodko '26, Staff Artist

# Travis Scott's Circus Maximus Utopia Tour Takes Over the Rap World

By Zachary Levy '26, Staff Writer

When Travis Scott's album *Astroworld*, one of the most streamed albums on the planet at the time, lost to Cardi B's album *Invasion of Privacy* for best rap album of the year at the 2018 Grammys, everyone knew Scott's next project would be spectacular. People anticipate that *Circus Maximus Utopia* will be his last full solo album. Looking at the end of his incredible career, Scott knew he could not disappoint. *Utopia* was the most listened to rap album of 2023, and was believed to become the unanimous rap album of the year, but fell just short to rapper Killer Mike.

The *Circus Maximus Utopia* Tour is much more than a regular tour. The energy, anticipation, production, and crowd experience is unrivaled. This tour goes beyond the tradi-

tional concert format, creating a multi-sensory and life changing experience. Named after the ancient Roman circus, known for its glory and beauty, Scott's tour lives up to its name by offering a larger-than-life experience. Travis Scott is recognized as one of the best, if not the best, live performing rapper ever. He invites fans on floats that twist and turn above the crowd, produces interactive light shows that respond to the audience's energy, and inserts explosions throughout the arena. Every element is carefully laid out to engage fans throughout the show. He is most famously known for his unmatched energy. He always gives it his all until the end. As the tour's name suggests, Scott takes his fans on a journey through *Utopia*, featuring songs from his newer albums as well as iconic hits from his past.

Social media platforms exploded with fans sharing their experiences from the *Circus*

*Maximus Utopia* Tour. Many of his fans describe the concert as "mind-blowing" and an "unreal experience." His fanbase agrees that Scott's performance of "FE!N," is the best part of the show. In his unique style, Scott performs the song once all the way through, and then proceeds to repeat the chorus over and over again. Notably, one time after he finished the chorus, he said, "I'M FEINING FOR MORE!!!" and proceeded with the chorus again. Many fans say that each time through, the song sounds better and they get louder. To keep his fans involved, Scott followed "FE!N" with the song, "Sicko Mode." He created the setlist carefully to form a perfect flow and ensure that the audience remained engaged from start to finish. With this tour, Travis Scott has ensured that he will go down as one of the best live performers ever.



# Heschel Basketball Teams Has Mixed Seasons

By Ariel Zeltzer '27, Staff Writer

The Heschel basketball teams had plenty of success and challenges in the 2023-24 season. The boys' Varsity team secured the 4th seed in the playoffs after a 38-36 victory against the SAR Sting with a game-winning shot by senior Hunter Bernhardt. Unfortunately, their season came to an end with a 37-47 loss to Ohr Yisroel in the playoffs.

Senior Ben Hymowitz, the starting center on the boys' Varsity team, enjoyed the season this year.

"This season has been full of ups-and-



downs and has overall been a fun ride," he said.

The boys' Junior Varsity (JV) team ended the season at 0-12.

Freshman Noah Margolis, the starting shooting guard for the boys' JV team, said, "It's upset-

ting because we know that we are not playing to our full potential. There are holes in our game that we definitely need to fix."

The girls' Varsity team is not playing in a league this season, but continues to have practices, while the girls' JV team sits at 1-6.

Junior Leeraz Joseph, small forward for the girls' Varsity team, says the team was initially unhappy about not being in a league.

"When we first heard that we weren't going to be in a league, we were very discouraged and disappointed," she said. "But throughout the season, we've recognized that not being part of a league is helpful. We didn't have the best results in the league, so taking a step back to work on core skills was helpful for us."

Freshman Sophie Klarfeld, the starting power forward for the girls' JV team, is dissatisfied with their performance. "Our record isn't as good as it should be," she said. Klarfeld identified "a lot of space for improvement" for the team.

Congratulations to all the teams on their hard-fought seasons.

Photography by Jezel Encarnacion

## Spring Sports Preview

By Sammy Fisher '25, Assistant Sports Editor

After a spectacular winter season of Heschel athletics, the spring sports teams look poised to continue the success they have enjoyed in recent years.

Leading the charge is the baseball team. After a quarter-final loss in their league two years ago, the Heat improved to a semi-final loss last year. Although they came up short in both years, the team is full of young talent that will continue to improve as they progress through high school. Led by star juniors Eli Goldman, Sammy Fisher, Jonah Gross, and Abe Charkow, the baseball team looks to finally bring the coveted Yeshiva League baseball trophy to the fifth-floor hallway.

When asked about the upcoming season, Charkow said, "The whole team has been putting in work, fueled by our anger from last year's result. We don't want to just play, we want to win."

Adding to Heschel's spring dominance

is the Ultimate Frisbee team. The team was a powerhouse in both the leagues they played in last year, coming in 3rd in one and 2nd in the other. Playing in two leagues is an incredibly difficult task as it increases the number of games the team has to play. The team chose to do this because they found that playing in just one league was too easy, as they had gone 16-0 the year before. They were also ranked fifth in the state but were not able to go to the state championships because it conflicted with Shavuot. The Heat will look to continue their incredible run and hopefully bring the state championship to the Heschel High School.

When prompted about the team's motivation this year, junior Nate Weiss said, "After a strong season, we want to prove that we can compete with the best teams in New York again. I trust Coach Bell to return us to States."

Heschel's tennis teams are also full of incredible talent. Although they did not make the playoffs last year, the girls' tennis team, led

by junior Josie Herz, is full of great players and is sure to win more this year. The boys' team found more success last year as they made it to the playoffs.

Junior Jesse Kalimian said, "This team has a bunch of great athletes and once we figure out how to best apply that athleticism to the court, we can improve mightily."

Lastly, the girls' hockey team has been, is, and will be a powerhouse within the Yeshiva League. Led by senior captain Lynn Gindi and junior captain Miriam Gross, the team looks to follow up their deep playoff run last year with a championship season.

When questioned about this year's team, Gross said, "We are eager to start the season. We feel like we will continue our Yeshiva League success and be very good this year."

## Roosevelt HS Coach and Player Dismissed After Shouting Antisemitic Rhetoric at Leffell Opponents

By Sylvia Zeltzer '24, Editor-in-Chief

A girls' Varsity basketball game on Jan. 4 between the Leffell School in Hartsdale and Roosevelt High School in Yonkers ended after the third quarter due to antisemitic remarks from Roosevelt players. An investigation of the incident was conducted by game officials, coaches, and Leffell students. After review of footage from the game and interviews with witnesses, the committee dismissed the Roosevelt coach and one player from the Roosevelt team. The investigation is still ongoing and the names of the two dismissed parties have not been made public.

The statement concluded that "should the District determine other students were involved in the incident, further action would be taken by the school District where appropriate."

Leffell's Varsity team canceled their game in Yonkers on Jan. 8 as a result of the events, and it is unlikely that they will play Roosevelt again

this season.

Leffell does not play in the Yeshiva League, but ideas of joining it have been circling their halls since the Jan. 4 game; however, Leffell Student Body President Aliza Sapiro Polishook does not expect their administration to go through with it.

"These are horrible instances, but they don't reflect the majority of game play that we have," said Sapiro Polishook.

Further, the student body has handled previous antisemitic incidents in a light-hearted manner. After Bronxville High School played a Kanye song in a post promoting their match against Leffell, students reported the post and canceled the match. The Bronxville team apologized and both teams sang *Havdalah* after Leffell's loss.

In a statement condemning the incident, Yonkers Public Schools' Interim Superintendent Luis Rodriguez and Mayor Mike Spano apologized to the Leffell students and the entire Leffell

community.

The media attention has not affected Leffell's handling of the situation.

"Just because we're getting five seconds on FOX News doesn't mean that our school would respond any differently," said Sapiro Polishook.

Additionally, the media has not focused as much on the Leffell school itself, but rather on the varsity player and Editor-in-Chief of Leffell's newspaper *The Lion's Roar* who wrote an Op-Ed reflecting on her experience.

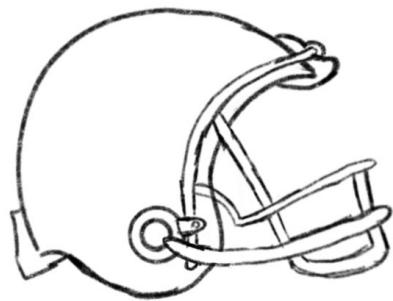
"News vans are at her house," said Sapiro Polishook. Though they were jarring, the events have not shifted the mood at Leffell. "It wasn't the first experience with antisemitism that we've faced, but it was definitely the first of its kind."

Yonkers Public Schools are planning to administer further "counseling and guided training sessions amongst the school community to prevent this from happening again," said officials in a joint statement.

# Michigan's Wolverines Take Home the Championship

By Nathaniel Friedman '25, Staff Writer

On Monday, Jan. 8, the Michigan Wolverines faced the Washington Huskies in the College Football Playoff (CFP) championship game. The big story in the leadup to this game was the cheating allegations against Michigan. The Wolverines were accused of illegally stealing opposing teams signals, and, as a result their head coach Jim Harbaugh, was suspended for three games. Despite this, Michigan still made it to the championship as the one seed with an undefeated record. They had



already beat Alabama, the fourth-ranked team in the nation, in overtime to win the Rose Bowl. Due to this, they were the favorites going into the championship.

Washington also came into the game with an undefeated record, led by sixth year senior starting quarterback Micheal Penix Jr. Penix finished as the runner up for the Heisman trophy award, which is given every year to the best college football athlete.

He was phenomenal in the semifinal game against the University of Texas at Austin, where

he threw for 430 yards and two touchdowns.

It was clear from the beginning that Washington was outmatched. Michigan scored two long rushing touchdowns early and never looked back. While the Washington defense was able to improve as the game moved along, they were still playing down a huge deficit and were unable to come back. Michigan's defense kept harassing Penix, and even though they only recorded one sack, they never allowed him to get into a rhythm. Washington, which is known for its explosive plays, was only able to score one touchdown, and the final score of the game was 34-13.

Art by Eliya Yehudai '27, Staff Artist

## David Portnoy Wins One Million Dollars Bet on the Michigan vs. Alabama Rose Bowl

By Serena Yunis '27 and Claire Mendelsohn '27, Staff Writers

The college football semi-final game, known as the Rose Bowl, took place in Pasadena, California on Jan. 2. The Michigan Wolverines played a long-awaited game against the Alabama Crimson Tide.

David Portnoy, Michigan alum and owner of Barstool Sports, a popular sports and pop culture blog, bet \$1 million dollars on Michigan defeating Alabama in the Rose Bowl.

"I will be betting 1 million on Michigan.

That's how confident I am," Portnoy posted on X.

The huge bet was no surprise in light of Portnoy's gambling history. Although Portnoy has had many successful bets, he has had an immense number of losses as well, including a \$70,000 bet on the 2022 Super Bowl. Eventually, he decided to quit gambling. Despite this, Portnoy remained confident that the Wolverines would defeat the Tide.

As thrilled as Portnoy was after Michigan's victory, he still showed some sympathy towards the Alabama team.

He expressed his joy on X about Michigan advancing to the college national championship game in Houston.

"Now we're going to Houston. We ain't done. This is about the national title," Portnoy said.

After the Michigan Wolverines were triumphant against Washington in Houston, they won the National Championship. Michigan fans celebrated this victorious win in Texas along with their team and are eager for upcoming games.

## NFL Comeback Player of the Year Award Sparks Controversy

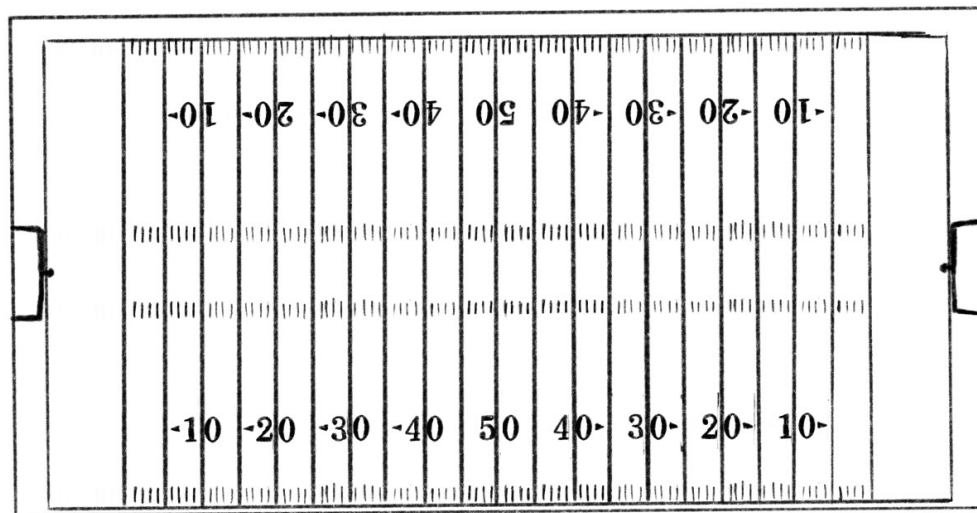
By Felix Harari '24, Sports Editor

When Buffalo Bills safety Damar Hamlin collapsed on the field just minutes into a critical matchup against the Cincinnati Bengals last January, the sports world held its breath. Hamlin suffered a cardiac arrest on the turf of Cincinnati's Paycor Stadium, with players of both teams crowding around him, kneeling, praying, and crying. Focus immediately shifted from seemingly trivial matters such as playoff seeding to a life-or-death situation. Thankfully, medical staff from both teams were able to save Hamlin using CPR, avoiding the worst-case scenario. Yet it still seemed his football career was over.

Miraculously, on Oct. 1, Hamlin returned to the field. The Bills blew out the Miami Dolphins in this game, and while he didn't record any stats in the matchup, the fact that Hamlin was simply able to suit up with his teammates inspired just

about everyone.

It is this story that has propelled Damar Hamlin to be the favorite for *NFL Comeback Player of the Year* (CPOY). Yet his stat line for the season is abysmal, recording nothing but two tackles. This raises the question of wheth-



er or not Hamlin is actually deserving of the award. Yes, what he accomplished is nothing short of a miracle, but shouldn't the award be given to a player who has shone after an injury

or a hiatus?

The obvious runner-up to Hamlin is Cleveland Browns' quarterback (QB) thirty-eight-year-old Joe Flacco, who has shot back into NFL stardom after multiple years of mediocrity. After spending the first weeks of the season as a free agent, the Browns signed Flacco and started him at QB after their starter, Deshaun Watson, suffered an injury. Flacco has led his team to a 4-1 record and a playoff berth.

"The award should not be based on who had the worst injury," senior Rafi Katz said. "Hamlin barely played, while Flacco excelled in a difficult situation. Going from the practice squad to putting up pro-bowl numbers fits the criteria for the award far better."

Alternatively, senior Ezra Beinart proposed that the award should be renamed the *Damar Hamlin Comeback Player of the Year Award* and be given to Flacco.

Art by Eliya Yehudai '27, Staff Artist

# Harvard's President Resigned, but for the Wrong Reason

By The *Helios* Editorial Board

On Jan. 2, Claudine Gay, Harvard's former President, resigned after only six months in office. While Harvard's board claims the reason for her resignation was plagiarism, the real motivation for this resignation is more complicated.

It is no coincidence that after the abysmal congressional hearing in which Gay evaded the question of whether those who call for the genocide of Jews on campus should be punished, she resigned. In fact, her resignation seemed like the proper solution to combat antisemitism on campus and restore Harvard's reputation as a top university.

In a world where Jews already feel more alone than ever, they must now face attacks

by the media for the "unjustified," "racist," and "sexist" resignation of Claudine Gay. If Harvard truly wanted to disown Gay's statement at the congressional hearing, the reasoning behind her resignation should have directly included the antisemitism she allowed.

Instead, Harvard failed to give a clear-cut reason. By doing so, they failed to recognize a larger issue. Harvard cannot hide from the larger problem on their campus: rampant antisemitism. In their mission to satisfy the masses, they have failed to maintain the moral standard they set for themselves.

Many students who hold pro-Israel views feel unsafe even after Gay's resignation. In a lawsuit issued on Jan. 10, Jewish students claim that Harvard has discriminated against them and promoted the ideals of the pro-Pales-

stinian groups taking over campus, making Jewish students feel at risk. How is it acceptable for those on a campus that promotes civil discourse to feel as if they cannot express their opinions or identities without serious risk?

In short, Harvard must take accountability for their actions over the past three months. They cannot continue to use Claudine Gay as a scapegoat. They cannot make students on campus feel as if they don't belong. Education should not be ruled by a violent mob. Education should not discriminate against vulnerable groups. If Harvard wants to continue to be regarded as an institution of academic excellence, they must hold themselves to higher moral standards.

# Heschel Needs to Start Caring More About *Mincha*

By Simon Arenson '26, Staff Writer

One of Heschel's key values is pluralism. If it wants to live by this ideal, the administration must accommodate all types of Jews—Orthodox and Reform, observant and secular. While Heschel works to ensure all students feel comfortable and are able to practice as they see fit, the administration often fails to accommodate more religious students—especially with regard to *mincha*.

This issue became evident to me in mid-December, the day Goals for Gelt was set to take place. The program, which would raise money through soccer, was a wonderful idea. However, it was scheduled during *mincha*.

This is not an aberration. As sophomore Noah Barnett said, "More often than not, when the administration needs to make room in the schedule, they will either remove or double book *mincha* or otherwise make it impractical for students to attend."

For example, early in the school year, *mincha* took place immediately after the clubs

fair, when most students were still in the gym and thus unable to daven *mincha*.

"I feel a little bit hurt by the way *mincha* is in general, [often subject to] inconsistencies and double booking. It gives me a sense that *tefillah* is the second choice," said sophomore Eden Litt.

I understand the logic of the administration. As very few people attend *mincha*, they do not see it as a priority. While this does make some sense, it mocks the pluralistic ideal, which holds that everyone should be able to practice Judaism in their own way. The fact that *mincha* is so often disregarded demonstrates that Heschel does not care enough to accommodate their more observant students, albeit they are a minority.

"I feel like at this school, there are a mix of priorities," Litt said. "But we should never disregard something that is so central to this school, such as *tefillah*."

As a Jewish day school, Heschel does care about *tefillah*. Yet their concern seems to be relegated to shaharit.

"*Mincha* should also be a priority," said sophomore Jordan Zarestsky.

Notably, the administration is not solely responsible for the failure of *mincha* at Heschel; few faculty and even fewer students care about *mincha* as a time for prayer.

"This lack of respect among students, faculty, and the administration for *mincha* saddens my heart," Litt said. "For example, when you ask a teacher to meet, many suggest *mincha*'s time slot. They view *mincha* as rest time, not prayer time."

While *mincha* should not be mandatory, the school must respect the students who wish to pray. Teachers thus should not be allowed to meet with students during *mincha*.

"Judaism should be a forethought, not an afterthought," Barnett said.

As a pluralistic school, Heschel shouldn't force this mentality upon everyone. But, as a pluralistic Jewish school, Heschel should respect everyone—including the most religious students.

# Kanye's Antisemitism Should Be the Least of Our Concerns

By Tessa Mank '25, Opinions Editor

Prior to the recent spike in antisemitism following the events of Oct. 7, rapper Kanye West had made multiple antisemitic comments, among them the threat to go "deathcon 3 on the JEWISH PEOPLE," which he said on X, formerly known as Twitter, in Oct. of 2022. At the time, his offensive comments stood out; antisemitism wasn't as widespread of an issue as it is now. However, the absurdity of his remark discredited him and his statement, and many people regarded it as a joke.

Following his comment, Kanye's social media presence dwindled, and his brand deals were cut. On Dec. 26, 2023, Kanye posted an

apology to Instagram. Unlike any public apology issued before, Kanye wrote his in Hebrew. The irony is what makes me the least concerned about Kanye's social media presence.

While I neither believe it is okay to give someone a 'pass' for such horrendous behavior, nor forgive Kanye for his targeted and harmful tweet, I think it is important to acknowledge his attempt to apologize. But the absurdity of writing an apology in Hebrew discredits any statement he ever made, essentially turning it all into a joke. By no means is it acceptable to make such hurtful comments, especially with Kanye's platform; furthermore, his apology proves how absurd everything he has said is. I condemn his statement and all statements like it.

His tweet, however, cannot be compared to recent displays of antisemitism on social media. Following the attacks of Oct. 7, many high-profile people have posted disturbing anti-Israel statements, and unlike Kanye's posts, these posts hold real significance. Politicians, political organizations, and notoriously provocative celebrities pose a much larger risk of influencing the general public on social media. An example of this is Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's remark, which said, "AIPAC is racist and bigoted." This type of post should be our primary concern.

# Who is Liable for the Influx of Preteens at Sephora?

By Emily Borden '26, Avi Spanier '26, and Olivia Verbitsky '26, Staff Writers

Sephora, a popular makeup and beauty supply store, has recently seen an influx of tweens and children under 10 shopping there. With no supervision, they run around the store and destroy makeup and skincare samples, placing additional stress on employees who have to act as babysitters.

We interviewed a local Sephora worker about her experiences with the tweens.

“Every child that has shopped here has been extremely disrespectful to the staff,” said a Sephora employee. “One even raised her voice at me and threatened to get me fired.”

She explained that the children come to Sephora unsupervised and treat the samples like playtoys.

“They don’t understand that these products are made for adult and that they are harmful to their skin,” she said.

A few popular brands that pose risks to children include Drunk Elephant, Glow Recipe, and Sol De Janeiro. Although the main consumers of these brands are children, most of their products are designed to be marketed to adults, since they contain ingredients such as retinol, an ingredient used to reduce wrinkles and aging. Retinol can also cause redness, irritation, and dryness.

It is known that these products are bad for young skin, yet kids still use them. This

could be because social media apps such as TikTok and Instagram force kids to grow up too fast. When children watch their favorite influencers promote trendy products, they want to follow them. For the preteen epidemic at Sephora to stop, parents need to monitor the content their kids consume. By limiting their social media intake, children will develop at the right pace and won’t feel the need to grow so fast.



Art by Ayelet Spevack '25, Art Editor

# My Experience at the Grounds of the Nova Festival

By Lily Rose Keinan '27, Staff Writer

At 5:30 a.m. on Dec. 25, my family and I woke up. Having parked our car in Shuva, Israel, a moshav in the south of the country, we anxiously waited to volunteer. When Hamas attacked, many of the residents of Shuva died, leaving the kibbutz with a labor shortage.

While we planned to work the grounds on this Moshav, we ultimately had to leave due to heavy rainfall from the night before. In an attempt to salvage our day, we decided to visit the location of the Nova festival instead to pay our respects and mourn those who were targeted on Oct. 7.



When we reached the park where the Nova festival took place, I closed my eyes and pretended for a second that I was in the same beautiful place but merely to enjoy the beautiful scene.

I started walking towards the memorial held for those who were kidnapped on Oct. 7. There, I saw the belongings of those who had been killed, kidnapped, or traumatized. I felt glass from broken car windows crunch beneath my feet.

As I walked through the display, looking at photos of the hostages, who were now in Gaza, and saw their eyes, I felt something I couldn’t pinpoint. I didn’t feel a tear trapped in my eye or a scream attempting to escape my lips; I just felt sick – helpless, that

this terrible tragedy happened and I couldn’t do anything about it.

After leaving the park, I didn't want to talk. I just wanted to be alone, engulfed in a flame of silence and loneliness. I spent the next hour and a half trying to lighten the weight in my stomach and only partially succeeded. For the rest of the day, I thought of what I saw – the trees and rubble and the dirt on the ground where the tragedy had occurred. I'd soon have to return to my world, though for me, it would never be the same.

Photography by Lily Rose Keinan '27, Staff Writer

# Antisemitism on Campus Forgotten Amidst Debate Over Claudine Gay’s Resignation

By Daphne Stifelman '25, Staff Writer

On Jan. 2, Harvard University president Claudine Gay stepped down after a six-month tenure, the shortest presidency in the school’s history. Dr. Gay was the second Ivy League president to resign over the past month, the first being Liz Magill from the University of Pennsylvania.

Both resigned after a congressional hearing in Dec. about campus antisemitism, where Republican Representative Elise Stefanik asked the university presidents whether they would take disciplinary action against students using the widespread chant, “free Palestine from the river to the sea,” which Stefanik described as “calling for the genocide of Jews.” Citing Harvard’s commitment to free speech on campus, Gay testified that the question of whether these pro-Palestinian slogans violate Harvard’s code of conduct is a question of “context.” In response, Jewish members of the Harvard community

criticized her for tolerating antisemitism on campus.

Since she took office in July 2023, Gay’s critics have questioned her qualifications. After the congressional hearing, multiple allegations of plagiarism against Dr. Gay circulated. Given the negative attention she had already attracted at the hearing, this further backlash from academics ultimately pressured Gay to step down.

*The New York Times* deemed Gay’s resignation the result of “a proxy fight over campus politics,” and I agree. Both opponents and supporters of Gay have reacted to her decision with extreme partisanship. Conservative critics celebrated the resignation as a victory against diversity, equity, inclusion (DEI) programs in the workplace, believing that Gay was only selected for the position because of woke politics.

Vivek Ramaswamy, former Republican candidate for president, wrote on X, “It was a thinly veiled exercise in race & gender when they selected Claudine Gay.” Meanwhile, her

left-wing supporters argue that Gay’s resignation was the outcome of conservatives’ determination to destroy the independence of private universities.

This unproductive discourse over woke-ness and the politics of education distracts from what should be the more relevant aspect of this debate: antisemitism. 73% of Jewish college students have reported dealing with antisemitism since the beginning of the 2023-2024 school year. The fact that Claudine Gay, the president of one of the most prestigious universities in the world, refused to explicitly condemn calls for genocide against Jews is extremely concerning, and that should be the focus of this debate. America’s response to Claudine Gay’s resignation is very reflective of our partisan political state, where both sides of the political spectrum are so obsessed with defending their beliefs that they lose sight of more threatening issues.

## The Issue with Friday Lunch

By Maya Ortner '25, Staff Writer

Heschel's Friday lunches—which often feature breakfast for lunch, pizza bagels, and grilled cheese—are some of the best and most exciting of the week. After a long week of classes, these lunches should provide a delicious sendoff for the weekend. However, these meals are often difficult to obtain due to excessive overcrowding in the dining hall.

On every other school day, lunch periods are staggered to ensure that the lines aren't too long. Yet, due to the shortened Friday schedule, there is only one 25 minute lunch period for the entire high school. As a result, the lunchroom becomes exceptionally crowded with lines curling around

the lunch room and through the door.

Furthermore, as there is no passing period before or after lunch on Friday, students have very little time to secure and eat lunch before the start of Period 6.

After the Period 4 bell rings on a Friday, I often sprint to the lunch room before the rush. If I come any later, it would be nearly im-

possible to eat before the end of the period. I've spent entire lunch periods waiting in lines that seem to get only longer as time passes, ultimately leaving empty handed at the sound of the bell.



“It's difficult to have four grades in one dining hall, especially with such a short lunch period,” said junior Mia Perry. “Sometimes I don't have time to get food, so I just grab a bagel instead.”

With the addition of *Hachana* into the Friday schedule, there simply isn't enough time left in the day for *tefilah*, six class periods, and a full length lunch. If a second lunch period cannot be added to mitigate line-crowding, the removal of *Hachana* may be the only solution to this issue.

Even on a shortened day, it's very important that students have access to enough lunch.

Art by Romy Aschengrau '27,  
Contributing Artist

## Students Feel Overwhelmed by the Number of Guest Speakers Regarding War in Israel

By Parker Slarskey '25, Assistant Features Editor

Part of the schedule that enhances learning at Heschel is the programming slot. The school has been lucky enough to fill this time with diverse activities that complement the standard academic curriculum. In past years, this time was filled with speakers, grade meetings, school-wide spirit events, and peer bonding. Since the events of Oct. 7, the school has decided to exclusively devote this block to programs about Israel. Although providing information and insight on the war is necessary, Heschel is bringing in too many speakers to talk about the same matter, thus making the matter less significant to the student body.

Aside from the programming block, the school has incorporated many other activities devoted to Israel during advisory, class periods,

or after school. For example, the history department held an information session on the history of Israel and Gaza, students had the opportunity to discuss their feelings regarding the war in advisory groups, and the school attended city-wide protests and rallies. The programming slot, however, was strictly reserved for speakers.

We heard from a number of different people, each speaking to a different aspect of the war. We heard from Shira Perez, a teenager whose brother was taken captive. She spoke from a personal perspective and shared devastating stories from her own life. We heard from Heschel parent and IDF Maj. General Nadav Padan. He talked about the diplomatic aspects of the war and important decisions made by the IDF. We heard from another Heschel parent, Yana Lukeman, who talked about supporting the U.S.-Israel relationship through Congress.

She urged students to take action themselves and send letters to officials.

Each speaker provided different insights; however, the number of speakers has been overwhelming. With the topic of the war already consuming many aspects of our lives, extensive programming is unhelpful. Many students dread speakers and search for ways to skip the program or zone out and fall asleep while the speaker presents. Bombarding students with speakers is an ineffective way to bring attention to the topic. Instead, the administration should consider limiting the number of speakers and discussing the conflict in different, more engaging ways. This could be conversations in smaller groups, informative articles sent out via email, or sending communal support to Israel through videos, pictures, or donations.

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