

The Official Student Newspaper
of the
Abraham Joshua Heschel
High School



"We stand for what we utter..."

- Rabbi Heschel

Conservative Activist Charlie Kirk Assassinated

By Ezra Brodesser-Akner '26, Features Editor

Charlie Kirk, the 31-year-old right-wing activist, co-founder of Turning Point USA, as well as a husband and father of two children, was fatally shot during a speaking engagement at Utah Valley University on September 10. Paramedics rushed Kirk to the hospital where he was pronounced dead from a gunshot wound to the neck. The primary suspect, now indicted, is a man named Tyler Robinson, a third-year student at Dixie Technical College in St. George, Utah.

Kirk, who rose to prominence as one of the most recognizable conservative voices targeting young Americans, had built a national following through his campus speaking tours and social media presence, as well as playing a large part in Donald Trump's victory in the 2024 presidential election.

Since founding Turning Point USA in 2012, he visited hundreds of college and high school campuses, engaging in heated debates with students who challenged his views.

The Arizona native was known for his confrontational style of political discourse, frequently appearing in viral videos of campus debates. His approach drew both devoted

followers and fierce critics. Many supporters praised his willingness to engage directly with others with opposing viewpoints, while detractors argued that his methods were divisive and that he only debated against uneducated college students.

Senior and co-leader of the Young Conservatives club, Juliette Heisler, said, "He spoke with such conviction and always brought facts to the table." She continued, "The main thing was that he kept it so civil and was really open to hearing out people's opinions, even though they certainly differed from his. He made [connecting with the youth] his mission. I can't think of any other politician, left or right, who made that effort and who so clearly prioritized and valued the minds of the younger generation."

Even those who disagreed with Kirk's politics, and there were many, were able to acknowledge his unique influence on youth engagement. Senior Leo Sohn, who holds opposing political views, noted Kirk's strategic focus on reaching younger audiences through social media and direct campus outreach.

"He was very active on social media and was definitely trying to focus on the younger generations," Sohn said. "I think that a lot of people want to feel that sort of pride in their

country and patriotism that they didn't really get from many other political commentators."

Additionally, Max Lazar, the head of the Social Studies department, said, "It's clear that Charlie Kirk was one of the most influential figures in the contemporary conservative movement."

Beyond his public persona as a political activist, Kirk was a husband and father. He is survived by his wife Erika and their two children.

"No one should ever be killed for expressing their political beliefs," Sohn emphasized. "There are many things that we don't agree with Charlie Kirk on, but we can still admit that he was an American, and he had the right to share his views, and that he should not have been killed for holding them."

This tragedy is condemned across party lines, and his death is sure to spark conversations about the rising incidents of political violence in the United States.

"This is just another example of how gun violence in this country means that there are two very young children that are going to be going to sleep every single night without both of their parents in their house anymore," said Lazar.

Two Years of the Iron Swords War

Eliya Yehudai '27, Art Editor

After the Oct. 7 attack on Southern Israel by the terrorist group Hamas, the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) launched a full scale attack on Gaza. Since then, the IDF's efforts have expanded to attacks on other terrorist organizations in Yemen, Syria, Lebanon, Iran, and Qatar. The recent strike in the Qatari city of Doha has intensified global criticism of the IDF.

As the third year of this war approaches, the IDF has started enforcing a renewed ground offensive in Gaza known as "Gideon's Chariots II." Over 300,000 Palestinians have been evacuated to Southern Gaza from Gaza City as the IDF attempts to strike the remaining members of Hamas. The IDF has stated that it is willing to stop the attack if negotiations to bring home the remaining 48 Israeli hostages are laid out.

Since Oct. 7, the families of the remaining 48 hostages have urged the Israeli government to make a deal to free all of the hostages and end the war. The Trump administration has presented its proposal for the full demilitarization of Gaza, the disarmament of

Hamas, and the release of the hostages. All negotiations have come to an indefinite stop since Israel's attack in Doha, an attempted assassination of Hamas' leaders and negotiators.

The IDF has revised some of its attack plans, putting less pressure on places they be-

lieve hostages are being held while still attempting to carry out previously planned operations. The army informed the hostage families that the process of releasing the hostages may take up

to four months and that there is no guaranteed safety for the remaining living hostages. In Gaza, the conflict has already taken over 50,000 innocent lives. The remaining population is under constant threat of starvation and Israeli attack.

This conflict may be 5,000+ miles away, but its impact is evident for Jews across the world. Since 2023, global antisemitism has risen by 5%, with over 50% of the incidents instigated because of Israel-related tensions. On college campuses, anti-Zionist students have been publicly protesting, resulting in thousands of arrests and Jewish students feeling unsafe. In Europe, demonstrations against Jews and Zionists have sparked fear of attacks in Jewish communities.

We continue to pray for peace, the safety of Israel, the IDF, and the remaining hostages still held in captivity in Gaza, as well as safety for all innocent Palestinians.



Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor

ACT, Inc. Releases Revamped Test in Hopes to Relieve Stress

By Emily Borden '26, Features Editor

Starting this fall, students preparing for standardized tests will now have the option to take the Enhanced ACT. The new version was created to give test-takers more control and less stress. The test itself is now shorter, with 44 fewer questions overall. For test-takers, this means more time per problem and less time out of their day spent at test centers.

Senior Olivia Verbitsky noted: "I felt like the shorter test took off a lot of pressure. It

felt great to have the time to look back over my answers."

The math section is the most different, now offering four multiple choice answers instead of five. In addition to the Math section, the reading passages are also being trimmed down and the section will now have four fewer questions overall.

Another big change is that the Science section will now be optional. A student's composite score will now only be calculated from the average of their scores on the English, Math,

and Reading sections. Any student who opts in to take the Science section will receive a separate score for that section. The Writing section will remain optional and independent.

The Enhanced ACT was introduced in stages. For online testers, it began in April and this September the paper version also made the switch.

With these changes, the ACT may become a more appealing option for test-takers who had previously struggled with timing or the Science section.

Features

Welcoming Ari Karpel: New English Teacher and *Helios* Faculty Advisor

By Hannah Wurzbarger '26, Editor-in-Chief

Ari Karpel (no relation to his colleague David Karpel) is the newest member of the English department. In addition, Karpel will be supporting *Helios* as a faculty advisor, joining his fellow English teachers Jodi Posner and Penny Ratcliffe.

Originally from East Brunswick, New Jersey, Karpel graduated with a BA in History from University of Wisconsin-Madison and later received a Masters in Teaching from Bard College. Karpel worked as a writer and editor for years at publications such as *TV Guide* and *Entertainment Weekly*, and as a freelance writer for *The New York Times*, *The New York Post*... the list goes on. He refers to these magazines as "the TikTok of the 1900s." During his time at magazines, Karpel primarily wrote about the movie and TV industry and even interviewed some household names like Mel Brooks, Carl Reiner, Madonna, Kristen Bell, and Mark Ruffalo.

Karpel taught at Milken Community School, a Jewish day school in LA, from 2019-

2024. He said, "I'm excited to be at a Jewish school again. I love Judaism and Israel, and the shared culture of a school where raising men-sches is a primary aim."



Karpel and his husband, Alan, a TV producer and director, moved back to NYC from LA earlier this year. Alan and Ari have been together for almost 18 years.

In his free time, Karpel loves biking, yoga, movies, cooking, and eating. Additionally, he is obsessed with farmers' markets. "The thing I miss most about LA is the incredible year-round, local bounty of fruits and vegetables," Karpel explained, "But being able to walk to a Broadway show any evening I want is a great trade-off!"

Karpel shared that every day growing up, he ate a toasted bagel with TempTee whipped cream cheese, earning him the nickname "Little Bagel." Karpel said, "Now, sadly, I'm allergic to dairy, so it's tofu or almond-milk cream cheese all the way, but I'm still a devoted Barney Green-grass fan." This bagel-lover should definitely try Kossar's (previously the iconic Pick-A-Bagel) just across the street from Heschel.

With extensive background in journalism, writing, the pop-culture world, and more, we know Karpel will contribute so much. Ari, on behalf of *Helios* and the broader Heschel community, we welcome you and look forward to getting to know you better.

Photography by Alan Poul, Contributing Pho-

Welcoming the New JSL Team to Heschel

Margot Hess '27, Assistant News Editor

As we kick off the school year, we are lucky to welcome two new additions to our JSL team, who will fill the roles of departing members Julia and Lindsay. Joining the team are Emily Schwartz and Hannah Solon.

The JSL Team is responsible for coordinating the out-of-classroom experience at Heschel, both in terms of student programming and Jewish education.

These two new members to our High School community have already shown their incredible commitment and enthusiasm concerning student government and clubs.

Recently, Emily assumed the role of Faculty Advisor for the Spirit Council. She began working with the council during pre-service, and has already contributed immensely to their success. Emily is from Highland Park, New Jersey, and she re-

cently graduated from Rutgers University where she studied psychology. She loves to travel, go on walks, and eat sushi.



Similarly, Hannah has begun to serve as the new Faculty Advisor for the Heschel and

Tzedek Council. She also began work alongside the group during pre-service, and has quickly helped drive the council forward. Hannah is from Atlanta, Georgia, and she just graduated from Columbia/JTS where she majored in History and Rabbinics. She loves the "Hunger Games" movies, sports, and caffeinated drinks.

When asked about the upcoming year, Hannah and Emily both said, "We want everyone to know our door is open for lollipops and talking! Additionally, we are both really excited for color war and the *Shabbaton*."

We want to welcome both Emily and Hannah to our community and are so thankful for the work they have already put in, and will continue to do throughout the year.

Photography by Margot Hess '27, Assistant News Editor

Peer Advisors Welcome Freshmen During Orientation

By Gila Lehon '26, Opinion Editor

The week of Aug. 25, 30 juniors and seniors gathered in school to prepare for the incoming freshman class, practicing games and leadership techniques for orientation and the year to come.

The two-day orientation, which took place on Sep. 2 and 3, was a success, keeping everyone engaged and acclimating new students to the high school.

Last year in the spring, groups of incoming freshmen who did not attend Heschel Middle School gathered. Early on the first day, these groups met again, allowing new students to relax and talk about their summers before entering the busy gym and meeting their entire grade.

Upon arrival, freshmen were directed to the gym and divided into their advisories, where their faculty advisor and peer advisors were

waiting. Each advisory played “Circle games,” a mix of ice breakers and “get-to-know-you”s, such as two truths and a lie and a cup stacking

activity.

Peer advisors, upperclassmen who are grouped to mentor advisories, then led tech sessions to teach skills like using Schoology, WiFi, and printers. The day finished with representatives from each advisory sharing the art that they had worked on in an earlier activity.

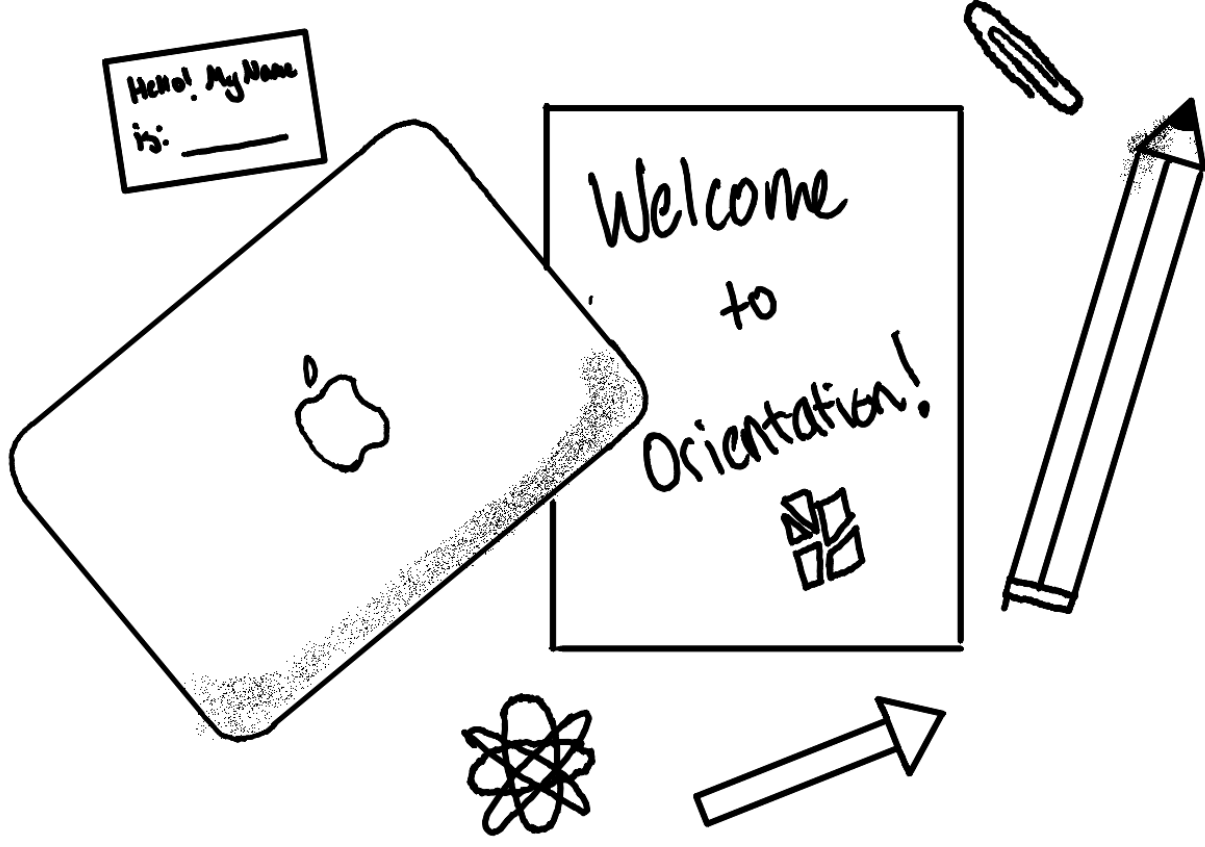
The second day of orientation included short classes, allowing freshmen to get comfortable with the building and find their classes without the chaos of other grades in the hallways.

“My favorite part was tie-dyeing our Class of 2029 shirts,” said Freshman Elizabeth Harris.

Orientation concluded with the grade gathering in the gym, debriefing, and getting

ready for their first full day of school.

Art by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor



competition – these games are a staple of orientation.

Later, freshman advisories practiced their egg-dropping skills, a classic color war

Vanilla Chai Muffins

Eliya Yehudai '27, Art Editor

As the fall chill creeps in, warm up with these delicious vanilla chai muffins.

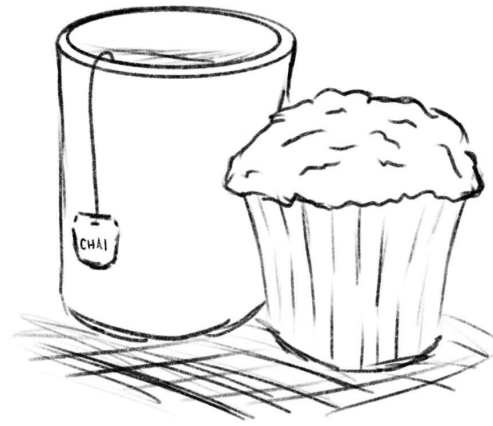
Ingredients:

- 1 cup flour
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp salt
- 1/2 cup buttermilk
- 2 chai tea bags
- 3 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 egg
- 2 tbsp vanilla sugar

Instructions:

- In a medium bowl, mix together flour, sugar, baking powder, cinnamon, and salt.
- In a small microwave-safe bowl, microwave the buttermilk for 1 minute. Place the tea bags inside and allow them to steep for 10 minutes.
- In the same bowl as the buttermilk, add the vegetable oil, vanilla extract, and egg.
- Pour wet ingredients into dry.
- Stir together until fully combined.
- Cover batter and allow it to rest at room temperature for 30 minutes.
- Preheat oven to 400°F.
- Place cupcake liners into a greased muffin tin.
- Scoop rested batter into liners and sprinkle tops with vanilla sugar.
- Bake for 18 minutes or until golden brown

Enjoy!



Art by Eliya Yehudai '27, Art Editor

Heschel Administration Unveils New Lateness Policy for 2025-2026 School Year

By Leo Sohn '26, News Editor

Continuing their efforts to increase student timeliness, the Heschel administration has implemented a new lateness policy for the current school year.

According to the policy, “Each late arrival will be given a ‘point’ value that corresponds to the number of minutes by which a student is late to school.” If a student arrives between 8:00-8:10, their lateness counts for one point.

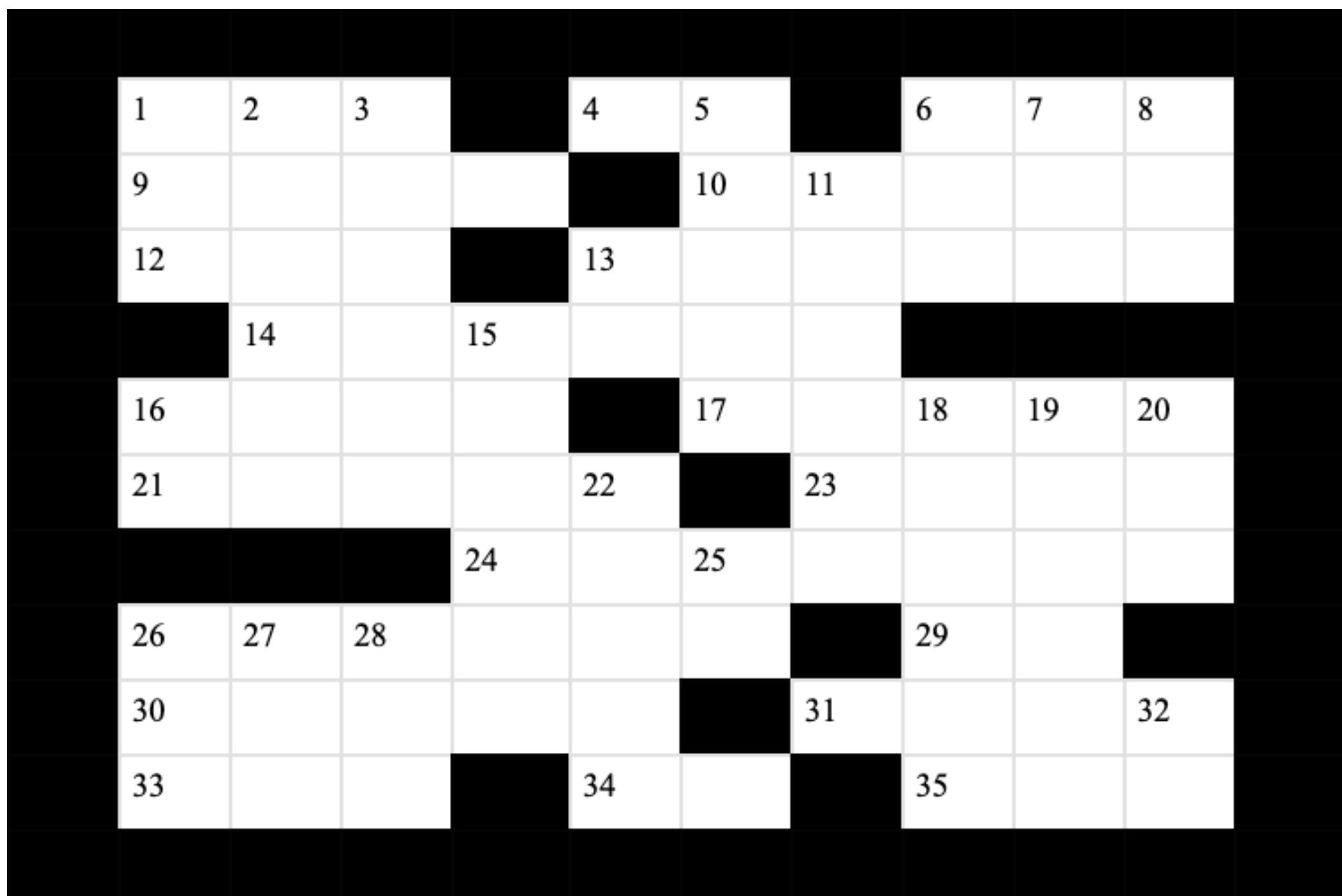
If they arrive between 8:10-8:30, their lateness counts for two points. Any arrival after 8:30 is worth four points. Once a student accumulates six points, they will receive a 7:30am detention. After ten points, the student will lose off-campus privileges, which can be earned back with ten consecutive timely arrivals.

For students outside Manhattan who may be at higher risk to delays due to long commutes, fear not. Students outside the borough have been granted a more lenient policy: if the

student accumulates ten points, they will serve a 7:30am detention, and if they earn 14 points, they will lose their off-campus privileges.

An anonymous Heschel senior, notorious for their lateness, responded to the new policy saying, “After I heard about the new policy I decided to arrive on time as often as I can this year.” So far, this student has successfully arrived at school on time every day! The Administration hopes that this new policy will inspire others to do the same.

Crossword



Across

- 1. Tease playfully
- 4. Resting atop
- 6. Australian farmers lost a war against this bird
- 9. Taylor Swift's legendary 2023-2024 tour
- 10. Anglo-Celtic, e.g.
- 12. Theo, popular podcaster
- 13. Breathe in
- 14. Indigenous people of the Southwestern US
- 16. Smaller crossword
- 17. Public gathering place
- 21. Calorie units used in Europe
- 23. Once ____ a Mattress, this year's high school play
- 24. "The Girl From _____," Bossa Nova standard
- 26. Tossed your cookies
- 29. Resident assistant
- 30. Immigration to Israel
- 31. Emmanuel, German transcendental idealist
- 33. Not bright
- 34. Kansas, abbr.
- 35. Distress signal

Down

- 1. Make a growling sound with a car engine
- 2. Sardonic, sharp
- 3. Minions love this fruit
- 5. Skilled Japanese stealthy assassin
- 6. English class, abbr.
- 7. ____ Brooks, director of Spaceballs
- 8. Utilize
- 11. Japanese military leader
- 13. "AI" in French
- 15. Blame, disparage
- 18. La Bohème and Aida, e.g.
- 19. American Pecorino cheese imitation
- 20. ____ de Armas, Knives Out star
- 22. Talk
- 25. __ hominem argument
- 26. Poor or morally wrong
- 27. Muhammad, famous boxer
- 28. Outer edge
- 32. " __ pmo"

SRI Summer Highlight: Lior Sela

By Avi Spanier '26, Online Editor

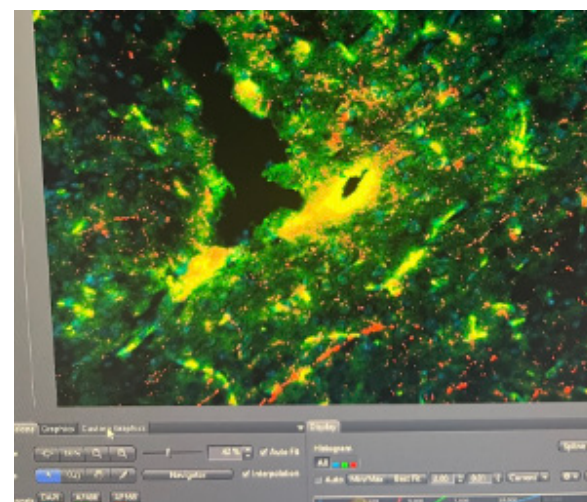
Over the summer, Senior Lior Sela participated in a five-week Science Research Initiative (SRI) program at Rutgers University, centered around neuron growth and death factors. They and another student worked closely with the PhD students and university professor who mentored them. Throughout the program, they ran experiments, tested genes from previously collected samples, and prepared sliced-up brain tissue for observation.

A large part of their work involved staining samples: attaching proteins and antibodies to tissues, then adding fluorescent indicators to

highlight the different proteins (pictured right). This process allowed them to observe how neurons function under a microscope during various stages of development.

The team also experimented with editing different genes to understand how it can affect neurons. Overall, Sela said "I loved the experience. I thought it was a really good hands-on method of learning."

From this opportunity, Sela gained a clearer understanding of how research is conducted in a lab setting, and that it deepened their interest in scientific research.



Photography by Lior Sela '26, Contributing Photographer

Knicks Off-Season Review: Are They Title Favorites?

By Lev Dubler-Furman '26, Editor-in-Chief

The Knicks' 2024-25 season was extraordinarily promising, yet simultaneously soul-crushing. Led by star point guard Jalen Brunson, the Knicks cruised through the regular season, finishing with 51 wins, which secured the 3rd seed in the Eastern Conference.

While the regular season was a story of consistency, the playoffs brought chaos. After muscling through a gritty Pistons team in the first round, the Knicks were then matched up against a dominant Celtics team. Miraculously, the Knicks pulled off two improbable comebacks and managed to send the Celtics home in six games. Faced with a young Pacers team in the Eastern Conference Finals, the Knicks seemed poised to reach the finals, and many favored them to win it all. However, the Knicks-Pacers Game 1 crushed their title dreams.

After the Knicks dominated the first half, the Pacers pulled off what is likely the most improbable comeback in NBA history. Pacers star Tyrese Haliburton played a pivotal role, sending the game into overtime with a miraculous, rim bouncing buzzer beater, after which he recreated Reggie Miller's famous "choke" gesture. The Knicks never quite recovered, falling to the Pacers in only six games.

At face value, the Knicks season was an

absolute success. Any other team would likely move onto the next season without making major changes. Knicks fans, however, did not share that same sentiment. The nature of the Knicks' defeat left fans with the taste of failure in their mouths. It was not just misfortune, but coaching mistakes that resulted in the Knicks' defeat. Which is why shortly after the season ended, the Knicks fired head coach Tom Thibodeau.

After a long search, the Knicks announced Mike Brown as their new head coach. A former coach-of-the-year and experienced coach, Brown most recently served as the head coach for the Sacramento Kings in the 2023-24 season. While Thibodeau prioritized defense, Brown is known to be strong on both sides of the ball. He runs a pace and space scheme that will look to capitalize on the star-studded one-two punch of Jalen Brunson and center Karl-Anthony Towns. But perhaps the largest difference between the coaches will be how Brown utilizes the bench.

Thibodeau was notorious for overplaying his starters, tiring the team's front five and failing to make use of the bench. Brown will likely run a more balanced offense.

And the Knicks have equipped him with a new and improved bench to make use of. Despite having little money to work with, the Knicks made four key signings. First, with the money freed up from Precious Achiuwa's de-

parture, the Knicks signed former 76er Geurshon Yabusele to a deal just under the mid-level exception. Yabusele is a power forward who can shoot and defend all five positions on the court. He is a big improvement from Achiuwa and is sure to shine off the bench.

Next, the Knicks brought in Jordan Clarkson to provide the second unit with a scoring punch. A former sixth man of the year, Clarkson is a walking bucket. Finally, the Knicks brought back wing Laundry Shamet and signed former sixth man of the year Malcolm Brogdon to compete for the last spot on the roster. Barring a trade, they will not have the capacity to keep both of them, leaving them to compete for New York's final roster spot.

"This is our deepest team in years," said senior Ezra Brodesser-Akner. "Being able to trust our bench will make a big difference come playoff time"

With these new additions to the bench and a new coach, the Knicks have improved in almost every way in preparation for the 2025-26 season. They enter the season one of the favorites to win the Eastern Conference, with a real shot to win it all. "I can't wait for the season to begin. This team is truly special," said senior P.J. Abramson. They will look to start strong in the opener October 22nd against an equally talented Cavaliers team, their only true competition out east.

Team Israel Impresses at the EuroBasket Tournament

By Ariel Zeltzer '27, Sports Editor

Team Israel made a remarkable run at the EuroBasket 2025 tournament, advancing to the Round of 16 for the first time in a decade. Led by rising NBA star Deni Avdija, the team showcased a bright future for Israeli basketball. On their way to the Round of 16, Israel took down basketball powerhouse France in a stunning 82-69 victory, their first win against the French in 28 years. Israel also defeated Iceland and Belgium, earning their spot in the knockout phase.

Senior Ezra Brodesser-Akner was

shocked that Israel made it so far: "What an incredible run by team Israel, getting into the knockouts!" he said.

The momentum carried Israel to the knockout rounds in Latvia, where their run ended against a dominant Greece team. Despite their strong fight, Israel lost 79-84 to a Greek squad led by two-time NBA MVP Giannis Antetokounmpo. However, the game highlighted Israel's ability to compete with Europe's best, with Avdija delivering a stellar performance.

Despite the loss, Junior Aiden Barnea said, "It's incredible to see this team playing with such heart and making us all believe in Israeli

basketball again."

While Avdija was the undeniable leader for Team Israel, other players like Tomer Ginat and Roman Sorkin provided vital support throughout the tournament. Their collective "one for all and all for one" attitude and their impressive performance against top-tier competition have given Israeli basketball fans plenty of reasons to be optimistic about the future of their national team. Their success at EuroBasket 2025 has set a new standard and shown the world the potential of Israeli basketball.

Girls' Varsity Volleyball Serves Up the 2025 Season

By Bella Kalimian, Editor-in-chief

The Girls' Varsity Volleyball team has kicked off the season with an incredible start.

The team members practice around three times a week, and everyone's hard work is already showing results. Their most notable achievement was their victory over Stonybrook High School on Sep. 15—a first in Heschel history! The girls on the court brought their A-game, and those on the bench brought energy and many cheers.

This year, the team consists of twenty-two girls—which is extremely large for a six person game. Reflecting on this, junior Jordanna Mansdorf

said, "Being part of the team taught me that every role matters, whether on the court or cheering on the sidelines. Showing up, supporting



your teammates, and practicing hard is equally as important as the points we score."

Head Coach Jazel Encarnacion has emphasized this point throughout the season. Positive energy on the bench is essential toward facilitating a low-stress playing environment.

The spirit and sheer skill of the team is bound to carry them to championships this season. Make sure to come support them when you have the chance!

Photography by Eden Barlev '29, Contributing Photographer

What Goes On During Preseason?

By Bella Kalimian '27, Editor-in-Chief

Have you ever wondered what your peers are up to when they attend Heschel Preseason? Heschel offers three fall sports: volleyball, soccer, and cross country. Only volleyball and soccer hold preseason practices. Here's a rundown of what goes on!

The girls' volleyball teams, both varsity and junior varsity, attended preseason for eleven days before the first day of school. Varsity played from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., and junior varsity played from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Each team received an hour break for lunch.

A typical volleyball day involved an hour of conditioning, scrimmaging against teammates, and drills to work on hitting, serving, and bumping.

Sometimes, the team lost its rhythm and played poorly: on those occasions Jezel Encarnacion, the varsity volleyball head coach, rewarded her athletes with the gift of running up and down the stairs!

Junior Mika Afriat said, "Preseason was an invigorating two weeks spent making wonderful connections and playing my favorite sport."

On the final day of preseason, each

both boys and girls. The soccer teams reported to Dewitt Clinton Park, located a few blocks south of Heschel. Their practices spanned from 10 a.m. to noon. The girls started with running and drills for the first hour and played a scrimmage against each other for the second (vice versa for the boys).

Junior Margot Hess said, "Soccer preseason was both a great opportunity for our team to bond as a group and to advance our skills in preparation for the season ahead of us. Our progression throughout the days was remarkable, and we are excited to begin our games this coming week!"

The cross country team does not hold preseason practices. Junior Ziv Gedzelman, co-captain of the team, said, "Preseason would be really beneficial for the cross country team, especially since many members are out of practice from the summer. It's hard to get the team into shape before meets start in late September."



volleyball team played a scrimmage against Calhoun School. The game served as a chance to assess the skills the girls had worked on throughout preseason.

Heschel also offers varsity soccer for

Photography by Georgia Bregman '26, Contributing Photographer

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

The Controversy Over the Phone Policy

By Serena Yunis '27, Assistant Opinion Editor

The start of the 2025-2026 school year marked the beginning of the in-school phone ban. Each morning, students must hand in their phones and only regain access to them at the end of the day, or if they take lunch out.

Last year, the possibility of a phone ban stirred rage and confusion amongst the student body—especially considering how many teachers had expressed that the phone bins worked well. The administration's implementation of a phone ban seemed rather abrupt. They claimed that the ban was executed in order to have more bonding within the grades; the students felt this answer was not concrete enough to implement a complete ban.

Students were concerned about not having a cell phone during out-lunch because they felt unsafe walking around the city without it. This problem was resolved, as stu-

dents are allowed to access their phones during out-lunch.

Now, the most widespread complaint has been the difficulty of navigating through school without having easy access to schedules, amend-

Junior Lily Weiss said, "It's definitely something to get used to, and it's going to take time. [The crowded atrium at dismissal] makes getting out of school time consuming, a safety hazard, and a fire hazard."

The challenge of grabbing phones at the end of the day has caused frustration amongst the student body. Students now rush to leave the building in order to grab their phones, which creates utter chaos in the lobby. Additionally, the ban has altered students' time management. Students now try to arrive at school as close to the bell as possible so they do not need to hand in their phones; this system is clearly flawed. If the administration could find a way to lessen the chaos, it would ease the stress of the students and improve the overall experience.



ed schedules, and not being able to frequently check gmail.

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor

AI Is in Your Daily Routine

By Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor

Over the past 18 years, since the invention of iPhones, society has become increasingly reliant on technology. Today, people are skeptical of the rise of Artificial Intelligence, a reaction similar to that of the introduction of iPhones. But AI is here. Students know how to use it and will continue as long as it's to their benefit. Even if students understand that it can short-circuit their learning, they know that most students and professionals in the real world have adopted it in some form.

Many adults openly admit to using AI as

a personal assistant for their own organizations, work, and even book writing. In a recent conversation, one such adult asked me how Heschel had been dealing with the change. I had no clear answer as to the direction we were headed, and I was disappointed, because if any student should know Heschel's plan for the policy, it's me as Student Affairs VP.

In a meeting at the beginning of the year, the administration discussed creating an AI policy that focused on trust, requiring students to acknowledge how they use AI and to pick a few school-approved tools. These were just ideas, and the only certainty was that one policy for

the whole school wouldn't be specific enough. The issue now is that there is no concrete policy. Many teachers want to include students in the conversation, but many students feel that teachers are simply disparaging its use no matter the circumstances.

If the administration includes students in the conversation on AI policy, we as a community can work to learn how each person uses it and develop a policy that suits each individual.

Administration Adopts a Better Lateness Policy

By Gila Lehon '26, Opinion Editor

The old lateness policy did not work. The school previously implemented the MTT – more than ten-minute – system in order to categorize the severity of lateness. However, this system failed to address the larger issue, which was that there was no differentiation between a student who arrived at 8:11 a.m. and a student who arrived at 10:30 a.m. The new point system works to solve this problem.

According to the current policy, students receive points corresponding to how late they are: lateness of less than ten minutes is one point, between ten and 30 minutes is two points, and any longer than 30 minutes is four points.

In-borough students are allotted six

points before detention, whereas out-of-borough students are allotted ten. After ten points



for in-borough students and fourteen points for out-of-borough students, the student will

lose their off-campus (commonly referred to as “out-lunch”) privileges. A student must come to school on time for ten consecutive days before regaining their out-of-school lunch privilege.

While six points (which can be as little as two lates) for detention is not enough for in-borough students, the new lateness policy is a step in the right direction, working to create a more equitable lateness policy.

This policy makes more room for circumstance and more realistically addresses the problem of lateness in a way that reflects the reality of life outside of Heschel. In real life, if you are slightly late to a meeting, there are real repercussions, but those repercussions increase the later you are. In this way, the new lateness policy better prepares Heschel students for environments outside of high school.

Photography by Liam Barlev '26, Photography Editor

New ACT Format Makes Testing Less Stressful

By Olivia Verbitsky '26, Online Editor

The ACT is rolling out major changes in 2025: the Science section is now optional, and Reading, Math, and English all have fewer questions. The Reading section decreased from 40 to 36 questions; the Math section decreased from 60 to 45 questions; and the English section shortened from 75 questions to 50 questions. In addition, the Math section will offer four answer choices instead of five. The entire exam takes just over two hours for students with regular time to complete, whether they choose to take it online or by hand.

These changes are a relief. The old ACT dragged on for hours, and for students with extended time, it could stretch to nearly five. A test of this length is exhausting which makes it hard for students to perform their best. With fewer questions and less testing time overall, the new ACT feels more manageable and far less overwhelming.

One of the best changes is in the Math section. With only four answer choices instead of five, each problem feels less intimidating. Students will gain confidence from this, and the section will feel less like a guessing game.

Still, not everyone views these changes

positively. One student who took the new ACT in September said the proctors struggled with the updated instructions. Since some students took the optional Science section and others did not, it created delays. Senior Emily Borden explained, “The ACT is giving too many options and the proctors don't know how to handle it.” Her comment raises a real concern: While the new format has its benefits, smoother implementation will be key to ensuring those benefits are felt across the board.

No Assessments for Seniors Can Backfire

By Gila Lehon '26, Opinion Editor

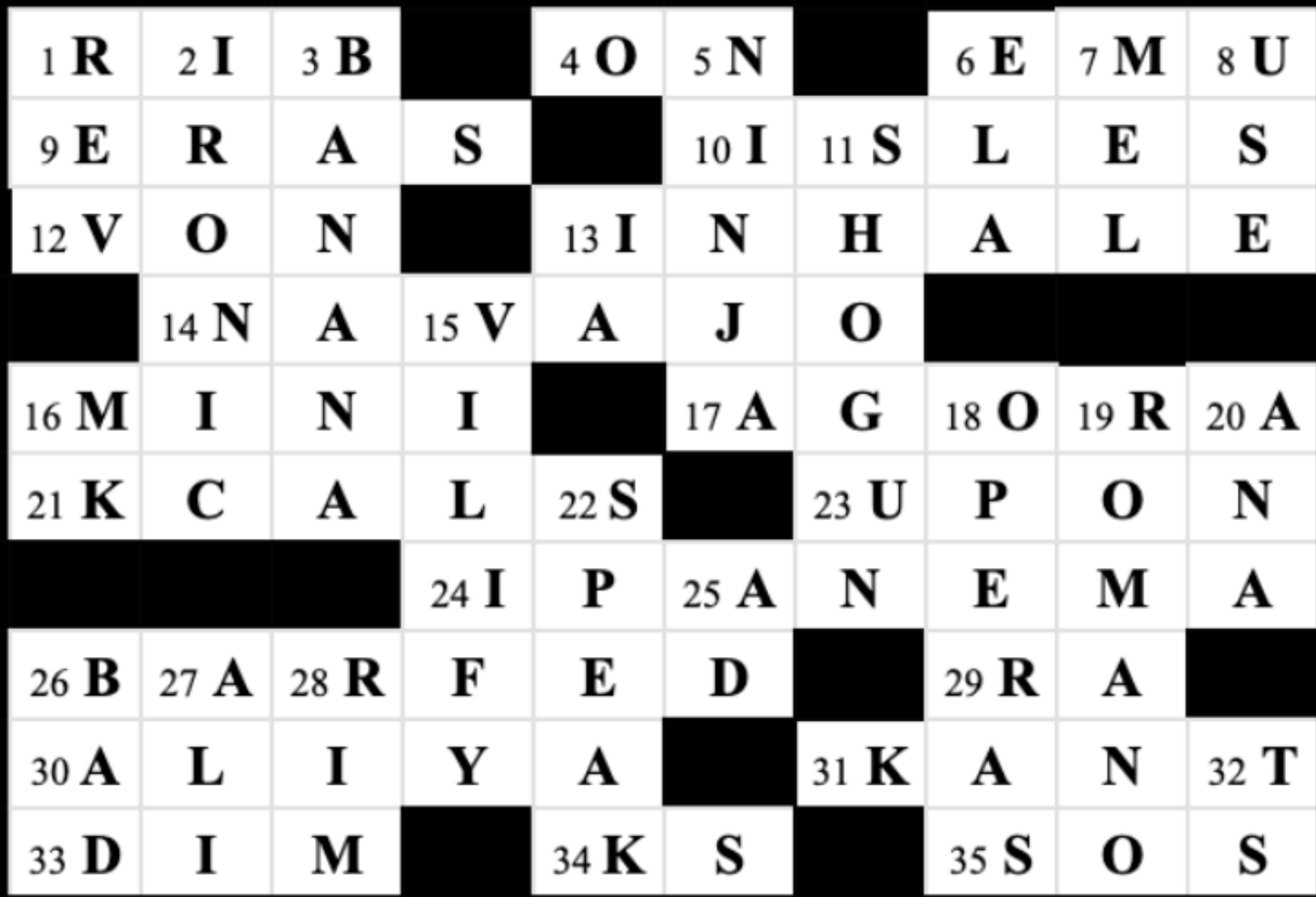
From Sep. 30 to Oct. 20, seniors will have a period of no tests or homework to allow them to focus on their college applications.

While a minimal workload is perfect to allow for time to work on applications, there are dangers to this policy. The fact that seniors will have fewer assignments in the gradebook

means that early grades received in courses hold disproportionate weight in a student's overall grade. Oftentimes, it can take a couple of assessments for a student to find their footing in a course, but that is not an option for seniors, as Early Decision schools request grades in mid November.

The outlined period includes many break holidays with no school, and has many no

homework nights already. Therefore, it might benefit seniors to have assignments during regular days in October to give them an opportunity to boost their grades. While the senior class appreciates this policy, it requires seniors to be incredibly intentional and careful with each assignment they hand in before and after the three-week no-assignment period, making each test and homework much more stressful.



Helios 2025-2026 Editorial Board and Policies

Hannah Wurzbarger '26,
Lev Dubler-Furman '26, and
Bella Kalimian '27
Editors-in-Chief

Leo Sohn '26
News Editor

Margot Hess '27
Assistant News Editor

Ezra Brodesser-Akner '26 and
Emily Borden '26
Features Editors

Charlie Shiff '26
Assistant Features Editor

Ariel Zeltzer '27
Sports Editor

Jake Rothenberg '27
Assistant Sports Editor

Gila Lehon '26
Opinion Editor

Serena Yunis '27
Assistant Opinion Editor

Liam Barlev '26 and Eliya Yehudai '27
Media and Art Editors

Yalei Ravin '26
Layout Editor

Olivia Verbitsky '26
Online Editor

Avi Spanier '26
Assistant Online Editor

Jodi Posner, Penny Ratcliffe
and Ari Karpel, Faculty Advisors

To submit a letter to the editor or an opinion
piece, please email us at helios@heschel.org. We
welcome all views.

Interested students should attend an assign-
ment meeting during select clubs blocks in the
library. Opinion pieces reflect the views of the
author and not of *Helios* and its editorial board
or its advisors.

Email us: helios@heschel.org

Call us: (212) 246-7717 || Find us:
heschelhelios.org

*To submit a correction, email
helios@heschel.org*